



Cooked up by AAPI Montclair

# Talking with Students About Food Acceptance and Lunch Shaming

A Guide for Educators

1. Sometimes children may feel shame or embarrassment about their foods and/or cultures, especially when criticized or judged by peers. To counter this, it could be helpful to engage your class with books and activities that celebrate different cultures and foods. Have conversations with your class about the variety of cuisines that exist in every culture. This can help foster respect for classmates' diverse food traditions and backgrounds.
2. Try to be aware and observant of children's behaviors at mealtimes, watching for behaviors such as shrinking down, or covering or attempting to hide their food. These may be indicators that they are feeling some shame or embarrassment about their food or have had a negative interaction with a peer about it.
3. If you are aware of a child having a negative lunch experience, please try to intervene appropriately. It may also be helpful to talk with and process the experience with the child or offer them some positive encouragement or validation afterwards.
4. Please practice cultural competence and demonstrate respect and understanding for the diversity of your students' lunches and food choices. If a student complains to you about a classmate's lunch, you can calmly use language such as, "All food is yummy. Everyone just likes to eat different foods, and some look or smell different than others."

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