

# Resources from WPS Parent Education Seminar

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## 10-page Master list of Lunchbox Ideas

To join our mailing list and download our 10-page Master List of Lunchbox Ideas, just click the button below.

***\*Please note that you need to confirm your subscription to our mailing list before you will get the download! Check your inbox (and/or spam folder if you don't see it in your inbox) for a confirmation email from us 3-5 minutes after you subscribe.***



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## The Next 187 School Lunches

Rosanne Robinson, RD  
Dietitian for kids & families | Mom of 2  
Admittedly, a non-lover of making school lunches 😊



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## Let's talk about the next 187 lunches ...

ONE 3 Key Mindset Shifts	TWO What do I Pack in their Lunch?	THREE Common Lunchbox Complaints	FOUR Can my Child Pack their Own Lunch?	FIVE What if it Comes Home Uneaten?	SIX Navigating School Food Rules
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## Blueprint Nutrition

- Private practice since 2017
- Team of 5 Dietitians
- Child/Youth Nutrition and Sport Nutrition
- Virtual 1:1 counselling
- Online courses @ Blueprint Nutrition Academy

**We believe in:**


- HAES (Health at Every Size) Approach
- Removing shame and guilt from food/eating
- Nurturing body resilience
- Honoring person, family and cultural food traditions



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## My Lens

- BSCs in Kinesiology & Nutrition
- Dietitian in pediatrics since 2009
- Worked at McMaster Children's for 7 years
- Mom of 2 kiddos:
  - an adventurous + a hesitant eater
- Live in a culturally-defined 'thin' body
- Economic means to buy food without undue stress or hardship
- Job flexibility to cook homemade meals




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## The Duality of Packing Lunches

- I'm not excited about packing lunches
- It's my least favorite activity
- It's the hardest meal to navigate for my oldest
- It often brings out the worst in me

- I GET to send my kids to school
- I GET to pack lunches
- I GET to show them how to plan ahead
- I GET to write a new narrative around lunches



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3 Key Mindset Shifts

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### 3 Key Mindset Shifts Before You Pack

1. What I pack (and what my child chooses to eat at lunch) does not make me a 'good or bad' parent!



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### 3 Key Mindset Shifts Before You Pack

2. Lunch does not need to be perfectly balanced to have a good learning day at school.



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### 3 Key Mindset Shifts Before You Pack

3. The barriers to eating lunch are high for many kids. It's okay and normal to include preferred foods.



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What to pack

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### BUT FIRST REMEMBER!



The goal is to fuel our child's entire body for learning at school.

**ENOUGH FOOD AND SAFE FOOD** trumps variety!



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### BUT FIRST REMEMBER!




It's estimated that the brain accounts for up to 60% of a child's basal energy requirements. **It needs a lot of nutrients, including glucose, which comes from carbohydrates.**




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**BUT FIRST REMEMBER!** 


**“Balance” may not occur at lunch.** There are two other meals and snacks where that can happen during their day.



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**BUT FIRST REMEMBER!** 





It's okay if your child's lunch is a work of art. **It's okay if it's not.** You do you!! Teachers aren't judging you!!



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**WHAT TO PACK**  
AN EASY (FLEXIBLE) EATER



-  2 “Colourful” foods – aka Veggies/Fruits
-  2 Protein foods (1 calcium-rich if possible)
-  2 Whole Grains
-  1 ‘Treat’ Food

- **Start here. Then, ADD MORE depending on appetite.**
- Don't let the compartments dictate what you pack for lunch
- Some days will lack a food group
- Look at 3-5 days of lunches vs. 1
- Continue to offer new foods to promote variety

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**WHAT TO PACK**  
AN EASY (FLEXIBLE) EATER

An example:


- 3 veggies
- 2 fruits
- 2-3 protein foods
- 2 whole grains
- 1 ‘treat’







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**WHAT TO PACK**  
A SELECTIVE EATER



-  Pack.
-  Whatever.
-  Works.
-  It's OKAY.

**THE GOAL IS TO FUEL YOUR CHILD!**

- Adequate calories over anything else
- Don't let the compartments dictate lunch
- **P.S. Fruit has similar nutrients to veggies!**
- Some days will lack a food group
- Look at 3-5 days of lunches vs. 1 day

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**WHAT TO PACK**  
A SELECTIVE EATER:

An example:

- 1 veggie
- 1 fruit
- 1 protein
- 1 whole grain
- 2 ‘treats’



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## WHAT TO PACK

### A HIGHLY SELECTIVE EATER:

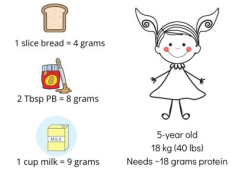
- Build on what is going well
- New foods → introduce at home FIRST then add once accepted
- 'Learning-to-like foods → Pack SMALL portions
- Work on new foods during meals eaten at home (weekends/holidays)
- Keep food neutral → avoid getting angry if they don't eat their lunch

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## WHAT TO PACK Q&A:

### THEY DON'T LIKE ANY PROTEIN FOODS! HELP!

- Your child's protein needs are lower than you think
- Consider unconventional sources too (e.g., grains)
- Offer protein-rich foods with breakfast



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## WHAT TO PACK Q&A:

### WHAT'S A GOOD PB SUBSTITUTE?

Introduce these at home first!

- Sunflower seed butter
- WOW butter (soy butter)
- Tahini (sesame seed butter)
- Pumpkin seed butter



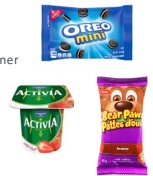
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## WHAT TO PACK Q&A:

### IS IT OKAY TO SEND 'PACKAGED' FOODS?

Yes! Here are a few things to consider:

- Can they open the package on their own?
  - If not, open it up at home and put it in their bento box or container
- If they open the package and don't finish the food, will it spill?
  - If yes, open it up at home and send in a container with a lid
- Does the 'shiny package' compete with other foods?
  - Remove the packaging so everything is on an even playing field



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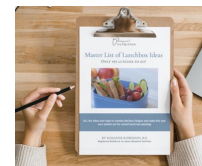
## Optional: Sign-up for Master List



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## DOWNLOAD YOUR MASTER LIST

- PG 2-3 Suggestions by Food Group
- PG 4 Main Entrées
- PG 5-6 Sandwiches
- PG 7 Thermal Food Jar Ideas
- PG 8 Homemade Snacks
- PG 9 Crackers
- PG 10 Granola Bars



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Common Lunchbox Complaints

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### SOGGY FOOD (SANDWICHES, CRACKERS)


- Wait to pack sandwich or crackers until the morning
- Pack certain sandwich components separately
- Put 'wet' foods between meat and lettuce (will act as a barrier)
- Wrap sandwich in plastic/foil for extra protection



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### SQUASHED FRUIT


- Pack fruit in a container to keep it contained
- Try a fruit kabob with fruit pieces speared on a stick
- Make a fruit salad with a bit of 'juice' in it
- Putting a chocolate chip in the center of raspberries
- Avoid delicate berries and choose 'harder' fruits
- Try sending dried fruit (fruit leather, small pieces) etc.



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### BROWN APPLES

- Core and slice apple, put back together with an elastic around it
- Cover the sliced apples in cinnamon
- Cover the sliced apples in lemon juice
- Buy very SMALL apples so they can eat whole



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### "SWEATY" CHEESE

- Try 'freezing' the cheese in the morning so that it's very cold but thawed by lunchtime
- Try different kinds of cheese (e.g., Babybel, Laughing Cow) that are less likely to do this than cheese slices



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### WARM YOGURT

- Pack adequate cold packs in lunch
- Pack yogurt in a small thermal jar that you've primmed for cold temperatures
- Encourage them to eat it at first break



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### LUNCHBOX LEAKS

- Consider the orientation of how the food sits in their bag all day vs. how you packed it
- Are your containers truly leak-proof?
- Is your kiddo able to shut them tightly?



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### "I DON'T LIKE \_\_\_ (VEGGIES)"

- Instead of getting angry, ask an open-ended question → "Can you tell me more?"
- Still send it but send a smaller amount
- Send fruits and work on veggies at home
- Is this a hill you want to die on?
- Why does this food refusal trigger you?



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### ARE YOU READY TO PASS THE TORCH?



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### WHOSE JOB IS IT TO PACK LUNCHES?

*"Around 10 or 11 years is when kids naturally start developing good food management skills, which can include packing their own lunch. They may (or may not) be ready before then."* Eilyn Satter, MS, MSSW, RD

Before this age, we should be more concerned about them being relaxed at mealtimes, listening to their hunger and fullness cues, and as parents, supporting them through the division of responsibility - which includes no-pressure mealtimes.

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### REFLECTION TIME ...

What are your food/eating goals for your family and your kids this school year?

Is packing their own lunch a logical next step that aligns with those goals?

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## WHOSE JOB IS IT TO PACK LUNCHES?

If kids want to do it earlier, that's great... **but they still need our guidance!**  
Before we get too excited, let's consider a *mindset readjustment* ...

Letting your child pack his/her lunch is **NOT** about getting rid of a chore. It's about giving your child a privilege ... a privilege to provide for themselves.

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## INVOLVING KIDS WITH LUNCH PREP

- For younger children parents decide the options, but then offer choices:
  - "Do you want strawberries or grapes for fruit today?"
  - "Would you like tuna salad on a wrap or with crackers?"
- As your child enters adolescence, they will become increasingly responsible for meals as they gradually transition over to deciding the "what" with your guidance. *You still do the grocery shopping.*

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## KIDS PACKING? HERE'S HOW!



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## EXAMPLE OF A PACKING STATION



- This requires a chunk of time to prep on weekends.
- Invest in some clear containers to put the prepped food into so that the kids can easily see what's in it
- *PS - You do not need to do this!*

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## RED FLAGS TO LOOK OUT FOR!



- **RED FLAG** = child packs a sandwich Monday morning, doesn't eat it, keeps it in their lunch so it looks like they have a new sandwich but re-fills snacks.
  - Child is not mature enough to pack their lunch on their own
- **RED FLAG** = child is packing inadequate amount of food for nourishment
  - May be an early sign of a restrictive type of eating disorder


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Here's what NOT to do ...




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### LUNCH COMING HOME UNEATEN?

**Checklist:**

- ✓ Can they open up their containers easily, without needing help?
- ✓ Are you focusing too much on variety vs. adequacy?
- ✓ Are your portion sizes of food too big, leading to overwhelm?
- ✓ Are you keeping hot foods hot and cold foods cold?
- ✓ Where is your child eating? Is it too noisy? Too short a time?
- ✓ Is "lunchbox bullying" occurring at school?
- ✓ Are classroom food rules making it challenging to self-manage?
- ✓ Is their appetite influenced by their medications?



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School vs. Teacher vs. Parent vs. Child

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“We had a big difference in opinion last year with my youngest’s teacher. The teacher was telling them they had to eat all their healthy food before eating their treats. My youngest is becoming very concerned and obsessed about what would be considered a treat in her lunch each day. I always say it’s her choice what she eats out of her lunch and the order she eats it in but that’s not the message at school.”

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### School Lunch: Whose job is it?

#### Parent's Job

To decide what foods to send to school.

This is influenced by:

- Parent's budget
- Parent's time to prep
- Parent's nutrition values
- Child's food preferences
- Child's allergies/intolerances
- Child's appetite
- Time child has at school to eat etc.

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### School Lunch: Whose job is it?

#### Child's Job

To decide how much they'll eat and when.

This is influenced by:

- Hunger
- Activity level
- Emotions / mood
- Sensory input
- Medical conditions
- Food preferences etc.




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### School Lunch: Whose job is it?

#### School's Job

Decide location of meals and timing.

This is influenced by:

- School board-wide directives
- School schedules
- Supervision availability for breaks
- Etc.

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### School Lunch: Whose job is it?

#### Teacher's Job

Create a safe place for kid's to eat.

This is influenced by:

- Grade level of students
- Student personalities
- Classroom dynamics
- Various needs amongst the students
- Resources / support available etc.




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### WHAT TO DO IF YOU'RE CONCERNED

- **Get ahead of things – make the educator aware**
  - Consider: pros/cons of lunchbox note vs. in-person conversation
- **Find out: was this a one-off comment or an official school policy**
- **If teacher dependent – talk to teacher directly (respectfully)**
  - Consider: ask your child's input on how you might talk to their teacher
- **Tolerate the rule and expose your kids to different food perspectives at home**

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### Blueprint Nutrition

Child/Adolescent Nutrition + Sport Nutrition

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