

SET THE TABLE FOR SUCCESS:

Integrating Family Style Dining into Child Care

Supply Appropriate Furnishings and Tableware

- ☞ Provide developmentally appropriate furnishings, including sturdy, child-sized tables and chairs, which allow children to be seated comfortably.
- ☞ Use child-sized cups, plates, bowls, and eating utensils.
- ☞ Enable children to serve themselves with child-sized serving bowls, pouring pitchers, and easy-to-grasp serving utensils.

Develop a Mealtime Routine

- ☞ Establish routines to help children know what to expect and what is expected of them.
- ☞ Wash hands before and after mealtime.
- ☞ Allow children to help set the table.
- ☞ Use a song or transition activity to signal children to come to the table.
- ☞ Place cards with pictures of the children to help them find their seats at the table.

Allow the Children to Take the Lead

- ☞ Build children's self confidence through active roles during mealtime.
- ☞ Assist children in passing the serving dishes and serving themselves. (But not hot foods!)
- ☞ Increase children's sense of control through choosing what foods to put on their plates and how much to eat.

Provide Adult Support and Supervision

- ☞ Sit at the same table, or within arm's length of the children, to adequately supervise and support children's developing feeding skills.
- ☞ Model eating behaviors, table manners, and appropriate social interaction.
- ☞ Encourage children to taste new foods or to at least put them on their plates.
- ☞ Facilitate mealtime conversation to help children discover concepts related to food—such as color, shape, size, texture, quantity, number, temperature, taste, and smell.

Plan for Spills and Easy Clean-Up

- ☞ Place paper towels nearby for easy clean-up.
- ☞ Smile and encourage the children to promote a positive mealtime atmosphere.
- ☞ Carefully supervise to prevent little mouths on the serving utensils or little fingers in the serving bowls.
- ☞ Teach children to help clean up by placing trash in a garbage container and used plates and utensils onto trays or into receptacles for washing.