

Build a Healthy Lunch Lesson

Grade level: Elementary

Iowa Core: Healthy Literacy – The essential concepts and skill sets for health literacy provide a framework for building capacity among Iowa’s students to think critically about the decisions that affect the health status of themselves, their families, and their communities.

Lesson Overview:

Eating well and being physically active every day is key to a child’s health and well-being. There are new requirements for school meals. They will help school districts build on the work they are already doing to provide more fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and healthier main dishes in the school cafeteria. Some new signage has been added to cafeterias to assist students in selecting a reimbursable meal. This lesson explains the signage and teaches children how to make healthy food choices in the cafeteria.

Objective:

Students will be able to:

- Identify the 5 colors of a healthy school lunch
- Identify foods which fit in each color
- Build their favorite healthy school lunch

Supplies:

- One copy of a monthly school lunch menu per pair of students (or can be placed on projector)
- One copy of “Build a Healthy Lunch” poster to display in front of room (or can be placed on projector)
- One copy of “Build a Healthy Lunch” handout per student or students could draw the outline of the tray.

Classroom Activity #1 - Discuss foods in the different colors on the lunch tray.

Distribute copies of monthly school lunch menu or place on projector and display the “Build a Healthy Lunch” poster.

- Vegetables (green section of the tray) – Eating vegetables helps food move through your body as many are good sources of fiber.
 - Have students look at the monthly school lunch menu and share some vegetables that are on the menu during the month.
 - *Ask students:* Are there any orange or red vegetables? (carrots, tomatoes, red pepper, squash, sweet potato, etc.) Dark green? (spinach, romaine lettuce, broccoli, etc.) Any dried beans/peas (black beans, pinto beans, kidney beans, etc.)? *Note: Dried beans/peas can also count in the meat/meat alternate section!*
- Fruit (red section of the tray) – Eating fruits can help heal cuts and bruises as many are a good sources of Vitamin C.
 - Have students look at the school lunch menu and share some fruits that are on the menu during the month.
 - *Ask students:* What fruit is your favorite?
- Grains (brown section of the tray) – Grains help give you energy to get through your school day.

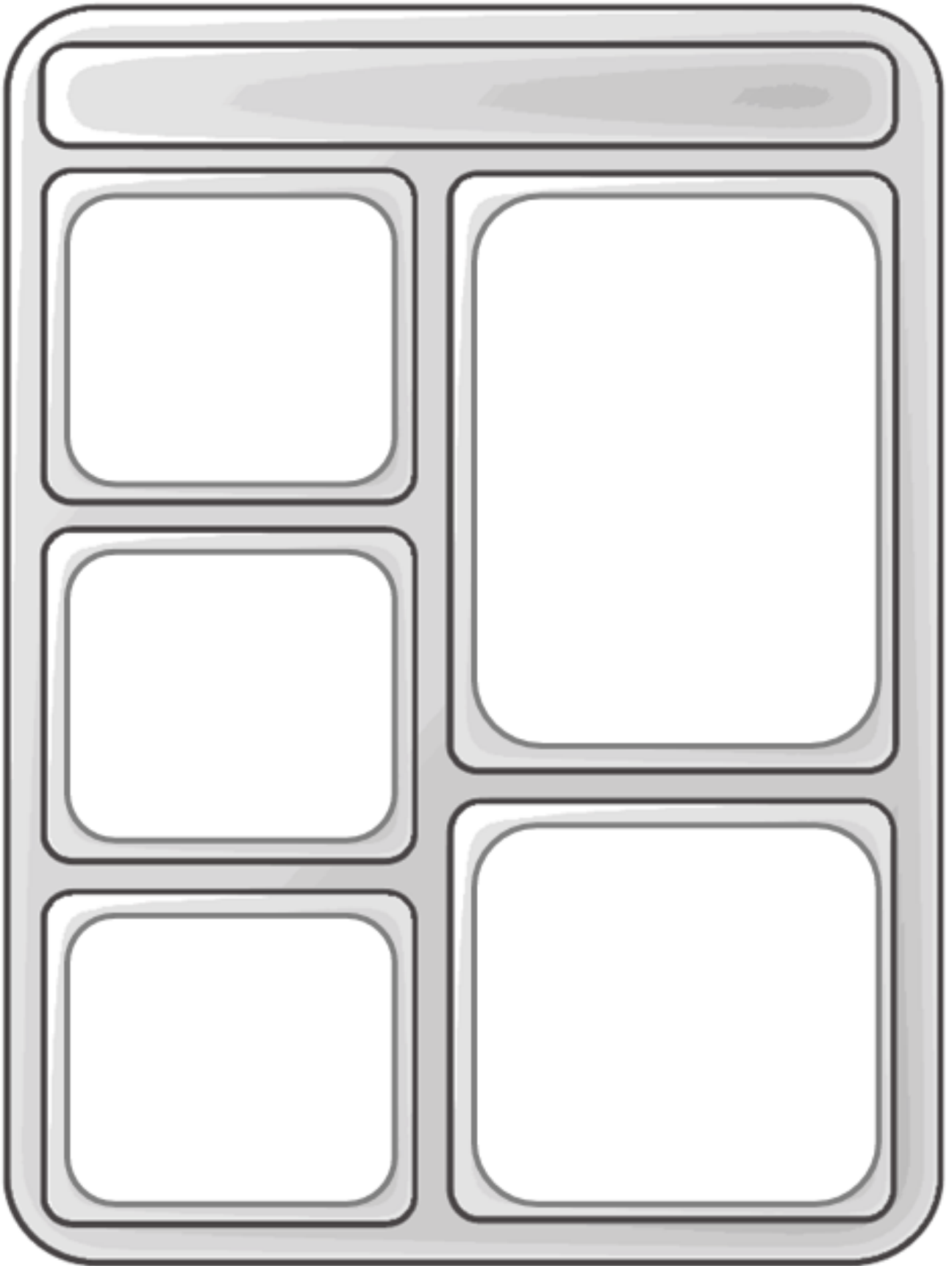
- Have the students look at the menu and share some grains that are on the menu during the month
- *Ask students:* Can you find any whole grain choices?
- Meat/Meat Alternate (purple section of the tray) – Meat/meat alternates provide us protein to grow strong muscles.
 - Have students look at the menu and share some meat and meat alternates that are that are on the menu during the month. *(Note: cheese and yogurt are considered meat alternates in a school lunch compared to in MyPlate where they fit in the “milk” group)*
 - *Ask students:* What meat/meat alternates are your favorite?
- Milk (blue section of the tray) – Milk is a good source of calcium that helps make our teeth and bones strong.
 - Have the students look at the menu to see what kinds of milk are available each day.
 - *Ask students:* What kind of milk do you choose at lunch?
- Candy and Soda (does not have a segment on the tray)
 - *Ask students:* Do you know why candy and soda do not have a place on the tray?
 - *Answer:* These foods may taste good, but do not help our bodies grow and be healthy, so they are foods we only eat sometimes. If we eat too many “sometimes foods,” we are not hungry for the foods that help us to grow.
- Have students look at the tray.
 - *Ask students:* What two colors take up the most space on the tray?
 - *Answer:* The red and green sections, which are the fruit and vegetables. “Make half your plate fruits and vegetables!”

Classroom Activity #2 – Build a Healthy Lunch!

- Distribute the “Build a Healthy Lunch” handout to each students
- Instruct students to trace the outside of each section of the tray as shown on the “Build a Healthy Lunch” poster. Then have them draw their favorite lunch choosing foods from at least three of the colors on the tray.
 - Combination Foods: These are foods that would fall in more than one colored section of tray because they contain a combination of foods. An example would be pizza. It contains a grain serving and a meat/meat alternate serving so it would be in both the brown segment and the purple.
 - REMINDER! Students need to make sure to take a fruit or vegetable to make a school lunch. *Note: students are now required to have a serving a fruit or vegetable or combination on their tray with an additional 2 items to make their lunch reimbursable. If they do not have a fruit or vegetable they will be charged a la carte prices.*

Have students share their ideas and describe how their choices fit in the different colors of the tray.

Tip: To reinforce the “Build a Healthy Lunch” concept, read the daily menu to the students each morning and discuss as a class what color each menu item would belong in.



Build a Healthy Lunch

