

Mealtime Guidelines

Mealtimes are an essential part of the day and the staff of Little Red Schoolhouse is striving to improve them. It is easy to get caught up in the hustle and bustle of our daily lives and overlook the opportunities for special moments with our friends and loved ones. When meals are eaten on the go we are disconnected from others and from the world around us. Mealtimes not only create a schedule for our young students, they help children learn important social behaviors and cues. Therefore, we have developed Mealtime Guidelines for the children of Little Red and we encourage you to strive towards these ideas at home as well. We use glass plates, bowls and cups. We use these items to provide a healthier atmosphere. As you may know, there is valid concern regarding the content of BPA in plastics and we have opted to eliminate the use of plastics as much as possible in our school. By using glassware we are also teaching the children how to appropriately handle dishes and glasses. We set the table family style with plates, silverware and glasses and then teach the children the importance of helping clear the table.

We use child size metal flatware. We not only use this type of flatware for health reasons (the plastic ones can break down with saliva) and for environmental reasons, but also to allow the children to become familiar with utensils most similar to the ones we use as adults.

We do not use Sippy-Cups. Again, by steering away from plastics, and providing glasses for the children, we are encouraging good oral muscle development while enhancing fine motor skills. Cups also teach the importance of taking the time to enjoy a drink and sitting down at the table while drinking. Please send liquids in a canteen, a Nalgene container or water bottle.

We have designed a Food Prep area in each room. There is a Food Preparation area in each classroom designed to allow the children to gain real life skills. In each room the children use age appropriate tools to peel, grate, sift, mix, spread, measure and slice foods. They will also help to prepare daily snack and participate in simple baking projects.

We have designed a Dish Area in each room. This area is used to teach the children the Practical Life skill of cleaning up after Mealtimes. The clean-up steps advance as the child progresses through the classrooms.

- In the Chickadee room, the teachers begin teaching the cleanup process by allowing the older infants to hold a clean wet rag and wipe their faces or the table tops.
- In the Chipmunk room (the younger toddler room), the children are asked to clear their plates in the trash and put them on the designated dish tray. They can also help wipe up the table.
- In the Pika room (the older toddler room), the children clear their plates into a small trash can and place them on the designated dish cart.
- In the Snowbunny room, the children clear their plates in the trash, rinse them in a dish tub filled with water and place them on the designated dish cart.
- In the Bears' rooms, the children clear their plates, wash them in the soapy water tub, dunk them in the rinse tub and then place the plates in the drying rack.

We have designed a community eating area in each room. During Mealtimes we push the tables together and all of the children and teachers sit with one another. This allows the group to socialize and practice table manners. The groups practice skills such as asking for and passing the silverware cup, dishing up only what they think they can eat and talking quietly amongst one another rather than yelling from table to



table.

The administration and teachers of Little Red have been, and continue to be, devoted to the above ideas as we hope to create more cohesive and independent classrooms. It is through these repeated experiences that children gain the beautiful skills of sharing, conversing and interacting with others. In order to help us with these tasks, we ask you to work on the above ideas at home. Consistency is incredibly important for the children. We cannot have success without your help and support and we thank you for your efforts. Please let us know if there are any questions, comments or concerns regarding this area, as we would be happy to address them.

