Mindful Eating: Exploring Eating with Awareness

A Grade 4 to 7 Lesson Plan

Overview:

Grade 4 to 7 students will practice mindful eating in an age-appropriate and engaging way. Through discussion, and a guided tasting activity, students will practice paying attention to how their food looks, smells, sounds, feels, and tastes. This lesson plan supports curiosity and comfort with food and helps children develop a positive relationship with eating.

Estimated time: 50–60 minutes
Food cost: 10$

Learning outcomes:

By the end of the lesson, the students will:

- Identify and describe how the five senses are used to explore and experience food.
- Apply mindful eating strategies during a guided activity.
- Demonstrate curiosity when exploring new foods.
- Reflect on how mindful eating can enhance awareness, enjoyment, and comfort around food.

Curriculum links:

This lesson supports Big Ideas and Learning Standards in the Physical and Health Education BC curriculum and can also link to other subject areas. Find out how this lesson can support your curriculum goals, here.

Materials:

- ☐ Book, video, or song related to mindful eating
  - Ideas include:
    - No Ordinary Apple: A Story about Mindful Eating by Sarah Marlow
    - I hear a pickle by Rachel Isadora.
    - Mindfulness for Kids, Mindful Eating by Smile and Learn
- ☐ Food item – Two pieces per student along with a few extras to account for spills
  - Ideas include:
    - Apple, pear, or orange slices
    - Berries
    - Dried fruit like dried apple rings or raisins
    - Cheese slices or cubes
    - Plain crackers or rice cakes
- ☐ Napkins or small plates, one per student

Supplies for optional extension activity (page 7):

- ☐ Paper and colouring supplies for poster making

Tips for choosing foods for this lesson

When selecting foods for this activity, consider the following:

- Allergy and safety checks: Review student allergy and dietary information ahead of time.
- Simple and familiar: Select foods that most students recognize, such as apples, pears, cheese slices, or plain crackers.
- Portion size: Provide small, bite-sized pieces.
- Cultural and dietary inclusivity: Be mindful of cultural food practices and dietary restrictions.

Selecting safe and inclusive foods promotes a positive experience for all students.

Tips for choosing an introduction book, video or song

When selecting a story, video, or song to introduce mindful eating, look for resources that:

- Highlight sensory noticing: Materials that focus on how food looks, smells, feels, sounds, or tastes.
- Promote positive food messages: Avoid messages about "good" or "bad" foods.
- Include clear sensory descriptions: Resources that describe textures, colours, shapes, or other sensory details.
- Encourage curiosity: Content that invites students to wonder and explore.

Procedure

1. Preparation
    - Read through the complete lesson plan.
    - Set up book or storytelling video/song on computer, if applicable.
    - Gather and prepare food and supplies needed.

Refer to Kitchen Equipment for your Classroom for more preparation and food safety tips. For additional food safety information, visit HealthLink BC.

2. Setting the stage
    - Reduce distractions in the room (e.g clean desktops, turn down loud music, turn off and/or put away computers).
    - Have students wash their hands.
    - Have students sit comfortably at a table or their desks.

3. Introduction to mindful eating
    - Explain to students that today they will be exploring mindful eating.

> *Today we're learning about mindful eating. Mindful eating means using our senses—smell, sight, hearing, touch, and taste—to pay attention to our food and the environment around us, because both can shape how we eat and feel.*
>
> *It's not about eating perfectly. It's about being curious, noticing flavours and textures, and enjoying the experience in a way that feels comfortable. Mindful eating can help us feel more open to trying new foods and build positive habits as we grow.*

    - Read or watch storytelling video/song. Followed by a class discussion.

Explaining mindful eating to students

Mindful eating is the practice of engaging the senses to connect with the eating experience while developing awareness of their eating environment and habits. For this grade level, the focus is on noticing aromas, textures, flavours, and taste, as well as what's happening around us. Mindful eating is not about achieving a particular outcome; it is a skill that develops over time through practice and patience.

This approach supports a positive relationship with food by encouraging curiosity and comfort when exploring different foods. By engaging their senses and paying attention to their eating environment, students can notice details they may have missed before. Mindful eating isn't about eating perfectly; it's about slowing down, experiencing, and connecting with food in a meaningful and supportive way.

4. Sensory warm-up activity

- Invite students to close their eyes and think about a favourite food or a food they ate recently.
- Lead students through a guided reflection of each sense, one at time, pausing to let them imagine and notice their experience.

> ***Sight:*** *What colours or shapes do you see when you imagine this food?*
> ***Hearing:*** *Does this food make a sound when you touch it, squish it, tap it or break it?*
> ***Touch:*** *What does it feel like when you touch it?*
> ***Smell:*** *Take a deep breath, what does this food smell like?*
> ***Taste:*** *Imagine taking your first bite, what does it taste like? What flavours do you notice?*

5. Guided food exploration

- Place two pieces of food on each student's plate. Students will eat the first piece as they normally would and use the second for the guided activity.
- After the first piece, lead students through a slow sensory exploration of the second piece using the script below. Pause after each prompt to give students time to notice and share their observations.
- **Note:** This is a slower paced activity, and students should be relaxed. Mindful eating takes practice and patience.

Reminder on participation

Any level of student interaction with the food is optional; however, students are encouraged to remain seated as part of the exploration. As needed, the food can be moved away from the student to help them continue participating in the activity in a way that feels comfortable for them.

Activity Script

> *In front of you are two pieces of the same food. Go ahead and eat one piece the way you usually eat. Save the second piece, we'll explore that one together in a different way.*

> *Now we're going to eat mindfully together and use our senses one at a time. Before you touch the food, take a moment to* ***look*** *at it closely. What do you notice?*
> - *Prompt Questions: What colors, patterns or details stand out? What shape is it? Does anything surprise you when you look closely?*

> *Now listen to the food. What* ***sound****s do you notice when you tap, squeeze, or break it?*
> - *Prompt Questions: Is the sound sharp, soft, loud, or quiet? Does the sound change depending on how you move or break the food? Do different parts make different sounds?*
> - *Example descriptors: Crisp, crunchy, soft, hollow, wet, faint, loud*

> *Next, hold the food in your hand and* ***touch*** *it with your fingers. What does it feel like?*
> - *Prompt questions: How would you describe the texture? Does it feel the same on every part, or does it change?*
> - *Example descriptors: Firm, smooth, bumpy, grainy, sticky, waxy, dry, cool, warm*

> *Bring the food close and take a deep breath in through your nose. What does it* ***smell*** *like?*
> - *Prompt questions: Is the smell strong or mild? Do you notice the smell right away or did you need to take a deeper breath? Does it smell the same each time you smell it?*
> - *Example descriptors: Sweet, fruity, fresh, strong, mild*

> *Finally let's* ***taste*** *the food. Start by taking a lick. Next, take a bite of the food and chew slowly. What do you notice?*
> - *Prompt questions: What flavours did you notice? Did they change as you kept chewing? How did the flavour compare between the lick and the bite?*
> - *Example descriptors: Sweet, salty, bitter, savoury (umami), sour, tangy, creamy, juicy, spicy*

6. Reflection and wrap-up

- Hold a group discussion or pair-share. Discussion questions can include:

> *How was eating the second piece different from the first?*
> *Did you notice anything new about your food?*
> *What sense stood out the most?*
> *How would distractions (like watching a show or scrolling on a device) affect mindful eating?*
> *How would being in a rush affect mindful eating?*
> *How did slowing down feel?*

Supporting diverse student experiences

Mindfulness is a lifelong learning process. Mindfulness and mindful eating are closely related to self-regulation. Learning to be present and enjoying the experience of eating can be challenging. It is normal for students to engage with their senses in different ways or find it difficult to focus at times.

It is important to avoid framing student observations as "right" or "wrong" and to be mindful not to draw attention to these differences in ways that could encourage comparison among students. Even a single mindful bite during a meal can positively shape the eating experience.

- Wrap up by reminding students that mindful eating takes time and practice.

> *Just like any skill, mindful eating takes time and practice. By being a mindful eater for even one bite, we can discover new things about food and about ourselves.*

7. Clean-Up

- Invite students to help clean their space.
- Compost food scraps.
- Dispose of napkins and leftovers, wash hands and wipe desks.

Optional extension activity: Mindful eating poster making

- Invite students to create mindful eating themed posters, either individually or in small groups.
- Poster ideas may include:
    - A drawing or depiction of a food item
    - One or more senses in action
    - A short mindful eating message or slogan (ex: Pause. Taste. Enjoy.)
- Encourage students to think about how colours, shapes, and design can communicate calmness, curiosity, and the different senses
- Completed posters can be displayed in the classroom.

Prompts to help students get started:

- What part of mindful eating stood out to me today?
- Which sense was the strongest/most interesting for me today?
- What short phrase could encourage someone to take a mindful bite?
- What words describe mindful eating?

More Information for Teachers

Want to do more nutrition education with your class? Explore our other lesson plans or check out our Passport to Healthy Living (Grade 4-7) or BC at the Table (Grade 7-12) program. program.

References:

1. Teach Nutrition. Mindfulness and Mindful Eating in the Classroom. Mindfulness and Mindful Eating in the Classroom | Teach Nutrition Alberta

2. Teach Nutrition. Mindful Eating. Mindful Eating | Teach Nutrition Maritimes

3. Canada's Food Guide. Be mindful of your eating habits. Be mindful of your eating habits - Canada's Food Guide

4. Canada's Food Guide. Take time to eat. Take time to eat - Canada's Food Guide