

## Little Food Explorers: Early Learning Framework Connections

Early Learning Framework Principle	Little Food Explorers Alignment
Children are strong, capable in their uniqueness and full of potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructs educators to respect individual readiness to engage with food—children decide if or how much they will taste.</li> <li>• Affirms each child as a capable and curious food explorer.</li> <li>• Encourages children to express preferences, make choices, and participate at their own comfort level.</li> <li>• Recognizes that food learning is not linear, children engage in different ways and on their own timeline.</li> <li>• Encourages educators to honour each child's identity, lived experience, and cultural food traditions.</li> <li>• Builds relationships with food and others, supporting interdependence and belonging in shared learning environments.</li> </ul>
Families have the most important role in contributing to children's well-being and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognizes families as children's first and most influential teachers.</li> <li>• Sends home recipe cards and booklets to engage families in food exploration and reinforce learning at home.</li> <li>• Offers communication tools (e.g., permission cards, Positive Mealtimes booklet) that support respectful dialogue and shared understanding.</li> <li>• Encourages families to share food traditions and experiences, honouring cultural and generational knowledge.</li> <li>• Promotes inclusive messaging and flexibility to meet the needs of diverse families, including those experiencing challenges.</li> <li>• Encourages educators to support and respect parental food choices during mealtimes and food activities.</li> </ul>
Educators are researchers and collaborators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positions educators as co-learners who explore food alongside children, rather than as transmitters of information.</li> <li>• Encourages open-ended observation and listening, helping educators notice how children express curiosity, preferences, and comfort with food.</li> <li>• Supports intentional reflection on practice—educators are invited to adapt activities based on children's responses and emerging interests.</li> <li>• Encourages educators to examine personal beliefs about food, mealtime behaviour, and nutrition messaging to ensure inclusive and non-judgmental practice.</li> <li>• Creates space for diverse food stories, traditions, and relationships with food, reinforcing the need to question assumptions and honour multiple perspectives.</li> <li>• Offers activities that are flexible and emergent, allowing educators to make thoughtful, intentional choices in how they engage with children and families.</li> </ul>

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Early years spaces are inclusive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasizes that all children can participate in food exploration and make their own choices about whether to taste the food. Encourages pressure-free experiences that respect diverse comfort levels, sensory needs, and developmental stages.</li> <li>• Uses neutral, inclusive language about food and eating, avoids judgment and labelling (e.g., “good” or “bad” foods).</li> <li>• Encourages educators to reflect on their own food-related beliefs and assumptions, promoting respectful, culturally responsive practice.</li> <li>• Acknowledges family diversity by encouraging educators to support family food choices and welcome a wide range of cultural food traditions.</li> <li>• Provides simple, flexible activities that can be adapted to accommodate different learning needs, abilities, and classroom contexts.</li> <li>• Supports inclusive meal and snack routines where every child can feel a sense of belonging, regardless of what or how much they eat.</li> </ul>
People build connection and reconnection to land, culture, community and place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps children explore where food comes from (e.g., milk from cows, apples from trees, beans from the ground), supporting a sense of connection to land and food systems.</li> <li>• Invites discussion about how foods are grown, harvested, and prepared—encouraging curiosity about local agriculture and traditions.</li> <li>• Incorporates ingredients that are accessible, familiar, and relevant to families and communities across BC.</li> <li>• Encourages educators to invite families and children to share their own food stories and cultural traditions.</li> <li>• Fosters respect for food as a shared resource and opportunity for community connection.</li> <li>• Offers opportunities for outdoor food discussions or gardening extensions, further connecting children to place.</li> </ul>
Environments are integral to well-being and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourages calm, predictable snack and tasting routines that promote emotional safety and comfort.</li> <li>• Suggests seating children and adults together for food experiences to promote belonging and respectful interaction.</li> <li>• Provides open-ended materials (e.g., Mystery Can, real kitchen tools, diverse foods) that invite sensory exploration, critical thinking, and dialogue.</li> <li>• Promotes culturally responsive food choices and inclusive language that reflect children’s identities and honour family food traditions.</li> <li>• Recognizes that food experiences can happen in varied environments—including outdoor spaces and group learning areas.</li> <li>• Encourages unhurried food exploration with minimal transitions, allowing children time to observe, prepare, and reflect.</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helps educators observe how children engage with food materials and adjust the environment to promote full participation, independence, and relationship-building.</li> </ul>
Play is integral to well-being and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Frames food exploration as playful inquiry—children engage through seeing, smelling, touching, and storytelling.</li> <li>Encourages hands-on experimentation (e.g., mixing, measuring, guessing mystery foods) as a way to learn through the senses.</li> <li>Includes open-ended, playful activities such as Mystery Can and “Who Am I?” that promote curiosity and participation.</li> <li>Positions tasting as optional and exploration as the goal, supporting spontaneous and purposeful engagement with food.</li> <li>Allows children to build food-related theories (e.g., “Where does milk come from?”) and test ideas through cooking and conversation.</li> <li>Invites educators to observe food play moments to reflect on children’s thinking, preferences, and comfort levels.</li> <li>Encourages playful dialogue about food, identity, and community, supporting children’s social and emotional development.</li> </ul>
Relationships are the context for well-being and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourages shared food experiences that promote connection between children and educators (e.g., sitting together at the table).</li> <li>Uses food as a relational tool—children explore food alongside peers, educators, and family members, deepening social bonds.</li> <li>Promotes responsive practice through the Satter Division of Responsibility—educators respect children's cues and comfort levels.</li> <li>Builds respectful partnerships with families by valuing their food choices, culture, and home routines.</li> <li>Invites educators to practice a pedagogy of listening by observing and reflecting on children’s reactions to food and exploration.</li> <li>Encourages group conversations and collaborative food prep, supporting empathy, cooperation, and shared learning.</li> <li>Reinforces that food learning happens in relationships—with others, with the food itself, and with the places it comes from.</li> </ul>
Learning is holistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engages children’s minds, bodies, and senses through smelling, touching, preparing, and talking about food.</li> <li>Supports learning across multiple domains—fine motor (e.g., cutting), language (e.g., describing textures), emotional (e.g., comfort with trying), and social (e.g., sharing with peers).</li> <li>Encourages children to create and test theories (e.g., “What happens when I mix these ingredients?”).</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respects non-linear learning—children may observe, explore, or participate in different ways and at different times.</li> <li>• Allows children with diverse learning styles and abilities to engage in ways that are meaningful to them (e.g., visually observing vs. hands-on tasting).</li> <li>• Uses food as a medium for integrated learning—connecting to culture, communication, nature, and community.</li> <li>• Supports expression of ideas through conversation, movement, art, and exploration—recognizing multiple forms of knowing and doing.</li> </ul>