Links to the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia

Eat a Rainbow of fruits and vegetables
This document is designed to assist educators, service providers and families to engage with the Eat a Rainbow program, using the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia. It is a collaborative work of Country Health SA and the Department of Education and Childhood Development Early Childhood.

Acknowledgments

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‘Eat a Rainbow’ of fruits and vegetables is a simple and effective concept promoting fruit and vegetables to young children and their families. Eat a Rainbow encourages the exploration of a range of fruits and vegetables of many colours in a child-friendly way.

This fun and appealing concept has proved popular with children, families and educators. It is a useful way to encourage children to increase their intake and range of fruit and vegetables. It teaches children that a range of different colours of fruits and vegetables are needed for good health.

Suggested strategies for implementing Eat a Rainbow activities within early childhood settings, schools and at home are outlined in the ‘Eat a Rainbow Implementation Guide’ accessible at [http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/eatarainbow](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/eatarainbow). These strategies are flexible and can be adapted to meet the needs of different settings, cultures and age groups.

A broad range of useful teaching resources are also freely available from this website.
Early childhood pedagogy

Meaningful interaction with the children in our care requires us to acknowledge that many factors influence children’s learning and wellbeing, including strong and trusting relationships. Children bring with them a range of experiences and skills which shape their attitudes and values towards food choices. Acknowledging that children’s learning is integrated and interconnected, the Eat a Rainbow program can incorporate a broad range of activities that deliver many learning outcomes.

Belonging

Children belong first to a family, a cultural group, a neighbourhood and a wider community. These influences help to shape children’s values and attitudes towards food choices. Children will bring existing experiences, skills and awareness about food when they transition to child care, preschool or school.

Encouraging children to share their experiences is meaningful way to introduce the Eat a Rainbow concept and begin the Eat a Rainbow adventure.

They enjoy eating with friends, cooking, taking on roles in play and growing food. They learn about food qualities and start making good choices about food.

Becoming

Children are learning about the relationship between health and the pleasure of food. Exploring food through activities in the Eat a Rainbow program can enhance children’s knowledge and help construct positive values about healthy eating.

Having the opportunity to develop confidence in trying new foods in a safe, encouraging environment can spill over into increased confidence to try other new experiences. They may develop a more adventurous spirit.

Eating is an essential part of life. Developing good food habits in early childhood encourages a positive attitude towards enjoying a healthy diet and lifestyle later in life.

Being

Children exist in the here and now and have a right to be a child and experience the joys of childhood. Through the Eat a Rainbow program, children can experience food with all their senses - seeing, feeling, tasting, smelling and touching foods. They have an opportunity to explore their likes and dislikes. They may discover that their food preferences can change over time.
1. Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships

Nurturing relationships that provide consistent emotional support and encouragement will assist children to develop confidence to explore a wide range of fruits and vegetables.

Acknowledging children’s existing experience and skills, their positive food choices and their concerns will help them feel respected and valued.

2. Partnerships

The Eat a Rainbow program provides many opportunities for active participation and engagement in the home as well as in early childhood and community settings.

Learning experiences can be facilitated by working in partnership with families, other service providers and the community.

3. High expectations and equity

The Eat a Rainbow program creates many opportunities to celebrate success and achievement.

It encourages and challenges children to ‘be brave’ and explore unfamiliar fruits and vegetables in a variety of ways. Children can gain a great sense of achievement when they overcome fears about trying new foods on their ‘rainbow adventures’.

All children can experience success in this program. If some children are too reluctant to eat new foods, simply handling them, or sniffing or licking them can be celebrated.

4. Respect for diversity

Eat a Rainbow provides opportunities for children and families to share cultural, community and family values related to growing, cooking, preparing and eating fruits and vegetables.

Similarities and difference can be explored while fostering a deeper appreciation and understanding of food.

5. Ongoing learning and reflective practice

The Eat a Rainbow program is suited to play an ongoing role in the early childhood curriculum. Feedback from parents and caregivers from several sites indicates that it is valued and appreciated.

Ongoing program development will benefit from critical review and reflection on the outcomes of Eat a Rainbow activities. Assessment of children’s learning can help inform future strategies. Different perspectives and new learnings can be shared with other sites.
Practice

Holistic approaches
The holistic approach to implementing the Eat a Rainbow program recognises that children’s learning is integrated and interconnected. It acknowledges children’s relationships with family, community and the natural world. The rainbow concept can be used in many other learning activities such as art, craft, story-telling, gardening and cooking.

Responsiveness to children
Eat a Rainbow activities build on each child’s own personal experience, culture, abilities and interests related to fruits and vegetables. Each child’s individual strengths, skills and knowledge are valued, and their personal food preferences are acknowledged.

Learning through play
Both the rainbow theme and exploring food can easily be incorporated into children’s play. Children can be given opportunities to explore, solve problems, imagine, create and construct their own food and rainbow experiences through play. This will expand their thinking and enhance their desire to know and learn.

Intentional teaching
Intentional teaching uses strategies such as modelling and demonstration, open questioning, explaining, facilitating shared thinking and problem solving.

These strategies can be used to extend children’s thinking and learning about fruits and vegetables, and their link with health and well-being.

Learning environments
Fruit and vegetables are grown, sold, prepared and eaten in a range of environments, including gardens, markets, shops, kitchens and community spaces. This offers many learning opportunities.

Learning environments that relate to children’s interests invites the sharing of ideas about growing, cooking, preparing and eating fruits and vegetables.

Cultural competence
Food-based programs such as Eat a Rainbow provide good opportunities for children and families to share their cultural traditions and family practices and learn from each other. Celebrating various cultural food practices highlights the diverse range of fruits and vegetables that people grow and eat, and the many ways they can be prepared and cooked.

Continuity of learning and transitions
Eat a Rainbow program activities can be extended to support children’s learning as they transition between home, early childhood settings and school. Eat a Rainbow resources have been developed for all these settings.

‘Rainbow Adventurers’ in pre-school settings become ‘Rainbow Researchers’ at primary school level.

Assessment for learning
The Eat a Rainbow program offers many opportunities for authentic learning. Eat a Rainbow activities can facilitate and progress learning in each of the five areas outlined in the next section. Assessment can celebrate the achievements of children and share success with families.
Each child will demonstrate their learning in unique and varied ways that can be related to each of the five learning outcomes. Some examples of evidence are provided below. There will be many other ways that children demonstrate learning within and across the outcomes, as Eat a Rainbow is integrated into the learning program, and as educators adapt Eat a Rainbow strategies for the specific needs of children and families in their care. Space is provided for staff to record these other specific examples for each learning outcome.

**Outcome 1: children have a strong sense of identity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children eat well when they are in supportive environments as exemplified by:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt; eating at regular times</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; being able to communicate their need for food and drink</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; eating a variety of fruits and vegetables</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; being confident to explore new and different foods using a variety of sensory experiences</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children’s developing independence allows them to make choices about healthy eating as exemplified by:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt; choosing new and different foods</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; being able to eat independently</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; sharing food with others</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; eating in a social setting</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children become knowledgeable and confident in recognising and choosing healthy food as exemplified by:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt; talking about their food and other foods</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; understanding what healthy foods are</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; sharing information about what they eat at home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; talking about where different foods come from, how they are grown, cooked, prepared and eaten</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; sharing with others about foods from their culture/country</td>
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<tr>
<th>Children learn healthy and respectful eating behaviours as exemplified by:</th>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; eating with others in a group</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; expressing their feelings about different foods</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; being thankful for having sufficient good food to eat</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; knowing when they have had enough to eat</td>
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### Outcome 2: children are connected with and contribute to their world

**Children develop an understanding of the role of food within groups and communities as exemplified by:**

- Recognising that they have a right to a regular and healthy diet
- Cooperating with the rules and limits in place when food is being prepared, served, and eaten
- Understanding that eating times are enjoyable social friendly occasions
- Inviting other children to join them at eating times
- Offering other children roles in playing games involving food and eating
- Expressing opinions about food choices
- Exploring different experiences of food – tasting, cooking, gardening, shopping

**Children respond to the food selections of others with respect as exemplified by:**

- Showing an interest in different foods
- Exploring foods and eating habits from other countries and cultures
- Understanding that good food is essential to all people for good health
- Listening to stories about different foods and eating habits
- Sharing and trying foods different from the usual
- Noticing and reacting positively to the healthy eating habits and foods of others

**Children become aware of fairness in the supply and promotion of food as exemplified by:**

- Recognising that some people have better access to good food than others
- Understanding that food resources can be shared
- Being proactive in projects which promote sharing food resources
- Thinking critically about food advertising and the properties, good and bad, of advertised foods

**Children become socially responsible and show respect for the environment in which food is produced as exemplified by:**

- Creating and tending to gardens which grow food
- Exploring through play farming and fishing
- Understanding that food comes from many different sources – plant, animal, mineral, elements of nature and is sometimes artificially processed.
- Developing attitudes of caring for environments and resources which foster food production

*Please add your own examples here:*
Outcome 3: children have a strong sense of well-being

Children’s social and emotional well-being is strengthened by the provision of a happy healthy eating environment as exemplified by:

- Being confident to try eating many foods
- Expressing happiness and satisfaction in food options offered
- Being able to personally regulate eating routines, rules, and social behaviours
- Offering ideas for meals and snacks
- Engaging in imaginative play roles with food as a focus - being a chef, a cook, a parent, a gardener, a shopper, a farmer
- Making creative representations of food through different media eg collage, painting, modelling, sand, clay, play-dough

Children take an increasing responsibility for their own health and well-being through developing healthy food habits as exemplified by:

- Recognising when they are hungry
- Making healthy eating choices
- Understanding the properties of healthy food and why it is good for your body
- Beginning to understand that healthy eating contributes to feeling well
- Developing an understanding that healthy eating goes together with physical activity for a healthy lifestyle
- Developing an understanding that good food choices contribute to good dental health
- Enjoying eating times, and engaging in food related play and activities
- Telling others about healthy eating and it’s benefits

Please add your own examples here:
**Outcome 4: children are confident and involved learners**

Children’s developing dispositions of curiosity, cooperation, confidence, creativity, commitment, enthusiasm, persistence, imagination and reflexivity are supported by engagement with healthy eating activities and experiences as exemplified by:

- Expressing wonder, delight and interest in food activities eg cooking, tasting and gardening
- Engaging enthusiastically in healthy food activities and experiences
- Displaying curiosity by tasting, cooking and growing different foods
- Exploring imaginative play roles where food is central to the role
- Expressing thoughts and ideas creatively to share with others
- Involving themselves and others cooperatively in inquiry projects which investigate food
- Persisting with feeding self and trying new foods

Children’s developing skills and processes such as problem solving, inquiry, experimentation, hypothesising, researching and investigating are supported by engagement with healthy eating activities and experiences as exemplified by:

- Engaging in questioning why some foods are preferred over others
- Comparing the nutritional properties of different foods
- Investigating the sensory aspects of food
- Understanding and applying names to different foods and food groups
- Visiting and exploring places where food is produced or manufactured
- Selecting food ingredients and amounts for cooking
- Reflecting on how cooking changes the appearance, taste, texture of food

Children transfer and adapt their learning about healthy eating across contexts as exemplified by:

- Expressing the understanding that healthy eating happens in all places
- Engaging in play that reflects preparing, eating and exploring food in many different ways
- Talking about healthy eating habits at home and away from home
- Making connections to food cultures from other places

Children resource and develop their own learning about healthy eating by connecting to people, place, technologies, and materials as exemplified by:

- Engaging in food related activities and play with adults and other children
- Listening to and engaging in healthy eating activities with health professionals
- Developing an understanding that special people can help us to improve our eating habits
- Being involved in projects which investigate food and healthy eating
- Using senses to explore food
- Using ICT to explore food – where it comes from, how it is grown, different cultural practices
- Using creative resources to express and promote ideas about food and healthy eating
- Having opportunities to express feelings, thoughts, ideas about food and healthy eating
- Having opportunities to plan eating experiences

*Please add your own examples here:*
Outcome 5: children are effective communicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children express their ideas and opinions about food verbally and non-verbally as exemplified by:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Talking about food and its contribution to a healthy lifestyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Naming and describing many different fruits, vegetables, and other foods</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; Explaining preferences for the taste and texture of different foods through words, symbols or creative representations</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; Signalling when they have had enough food or when they are hungry</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; Sharing stories about favourite foods</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; Listening to the food experiences of others</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; Singing songs about healthy foods</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; Engaging in group discussions about food and healthy eating</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; Engaging in play scripts which centre around healthy eating</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children engage with a range of texts which support their growing knowledge of healthy food as exemplified by:</th>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; Reading and looking at books, pictures and multi-media texts which focus on foods and healthy eating</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; Listening to stories about food and healthy eating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Recognising and naming pictures, photos and representations of different foods</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; Responding critically to visual food advertisements and signage</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children express their ideas and make meaning of their understanding of healthy eating and good food through using a range of media as exemplified by:</th>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; Taking on roles of food producers, preparers and consumers of food, shoppers, health professionals etc in their play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Drawing, painting, making books and posters, taking photographs and constructing models which express feelings and understandings about food and healthy eating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Sharing stories about healthy eating and other food experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Engaging in real life experiences which involve food - cooking, shopping, gardening</td>
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<tr>
<th>Children begin to understand patterns and the relationships between healthy eating and a healthy lifestyle as exemplified by:</th>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; Counting, sorting and classifying foods according to their properties</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; Understanding that when food is cooked it changes properties</td>
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<td>&gt; Comparing small and large serves of food</td>
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<tr>
<th>Children use information and communication technologies to access information, investigate ideas and represent their thinking about healthy eating and food as exemplified by:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt; Using ICT to access information about food and healthy eating</td>
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<tr>
<td>&gt; Playing games on technological devices which relate to healthy food choices</td>
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*Please add your own examples here:*
Eat a Rainbow is an initiative of
Country Health SA Local Health Network

For more information

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