

MLC Montessori Learning Centres, Inc.: Nutrition Policy

Vision Statement

The staff and parents at MLC recognize the impact of health in a child's life. Healthy eating, food enjoyment and independent healthy eating habits support future well-being and foster optimal growth, development, and learning ability. We understand the importance of modelling positive eating behaviour and encouraging positive role models of healthful living, including healthful food choices. We acknowledge timely nutrition-related issues in our current society including the increasing incidence of overweight and childhood obesity, bone and dental health, the higher rate of iron-deficiency anaemia among children, as well as the role healthful food intake plays in determining future risk of chronic disease, including diabetes, osteoporosis, cardiovascular disease, and cancer. In addition, we understand that healthful food intake underlies academic performance and emotional well-being. Our school strives to achieve the recommendations for overall intake of nutrients and energy and is based on the Manitoba Child Day Care Nutrition Regulations, Dietary Reference Intakes (DRI's), Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating, and The Manitoba School Nutrition Handbook. We are aware of the issues of food sensitivities, intolerances, and allergies, and currently follow the Unified Referral Intake System (URIS) to ensure optimal health of children in our school.

Montessori Learning Centre's goals are to:

1. Promote healthy eating and positive attitudes toward food.
2. Promote healthy self-esteem related to the above issues.
3. Provide a supportive nutritional environment that emphasizes and fosters a child's efforts in becoming responsible for their overall health and well-being.
4. Recognize the integral role that healthy food choices and adequate energy intake play in supporting a child's ability to concentrate and learn, including effects on memory, problem-solving abilities, creative thinking and overall academic success and performance.

Montessori Learning Centre's Nutrition Policy

MLC's Nutrition Policy strives to address the issues we believe are of relevance to our school and include the following:

(1) Acceptable Foods

- a. The Manitoba School Nutrition Handbook is utilized to decide on appropriate healthy food choices.

(2) Special Events

- a. MLC recognizes that there is some flexibility when celebrating special events (Annual Winter Concert and Family Picnic). In these instances, parents sign up for healthful foods as well as special foods that are acceptable on rare occasions. Food is not the focus of the event. On the occasion that a vendor is chosen for the event, particular attention will be given to ensure high quality, healthful food choices are provided.
- b. Children's birthdays celebrate each individual child and their special day. We avoid food as the focus of the event. A special celebratory "birthday walk" and sharing of pictures of the child has been established at MLC.

(3) Classroom Rewards

- a. MLC does not use food as incentives and/or rewards.

(4) Fundraising

- a. MLC recognizes and will strive towards raising funds for the school by selling non-food items and/or healthy food and beverage choices if they choose this option for fund-raising.

(5) Food Security

- a. A snack is provided in the morning and afternoon classes, in accordance with the Manitoba Child Day Care Regulations, to meet the nutritional requirements and ensure no child goes hungry. The snack menu is posted on the bulletin board for parents to see.
- b. Teachers provide reminders for children that the snack is available and give a "last chance" reminder before putting the snack away for the morning/afternoon.

(6) Eating Environment

- a. MLC has two microwaves that are used to provide warm lunch options for students attending the lunch program.
- b. In order to provide parents with knowledge of what their child has consumed, the leftovers from their lunch are kept in their lunchbox and sent home.

(7) Teachers and Parents as Leaders

- a. MLC teachers eat their lunches with the children attending the lunch program and acknowledge their role as healthy role models in eating and making healthful food choices.

(8) Food Allergies and Food-Related Chronic Disease

- a. MLC follows the Unified Referral Intake System to prevent any child attending the school from suffering a food-related allergic reaction. This involves alerting all parents not to bring in peanuts or any other type of nut product into the school as well as any other food item identified as causing a severe allergic reaction. The particular foods that must be eliminated may change slightly as the student population changes.
- b. Children with identified adverse food reactions are provided with specific snacks devoid of the offending ingredient. It is the parents' responsibility to ensure MLC staff are aware of any allergic or adverse food reactions. In the case of adverse reactions to specific foods and/or ingredients, every effort will be made by the MLC teachers to ensure the child avoids the particular food. In addition, parents are required to assist in teaching their child what foods they must avoid.
- c. MLC posts in the food preparation and lunch area all foods that must be avoided and specific information on each child with a food allergy or food-related adverse reaction.

(9) Food Packaging and Waste

- a. MLC has taken and will continue to take an active role in promoting environmentally friendly practices including promoting the use of reusable containers for children's lunches and recycling juice boxes and any other suitable product.

- b. In an attempt to avoid excessive exposure to plasticizers from heating food in plastic containers, MLC teachers avoid heating lunches in these containers and heat them in other suitable containers (i.e. glass bowls or plates)

(10) Food Safety

- a. MLC follows strict guidelines in dealing with food safety. The guidelines are posted in a visible location in the food preparation station. They include:
 - i. Proper hand washing with warm water before handling foods for the daily snack.
 - ii. The food preparation area is used solely for that purpose and is sanitized before snack preparation.
 - iii. All classroom tables, water taps, door knobs, and the food preparation counter are sanitized (chlorine concentration at 100 parts per million) at the end of each class.
 - iv. Food trays, dishes and utensils are first washed with very warm water and rinsed. These items are then put into a disinfecting rinse (chlorine concentration at 50 parts per million) for at least a minute.
 - v. It is required that we use a test strip to ensure the proper concentration of the disinfecting rinse used for snack dishes as well as for that used for disinfecting tables, taps, the food preparation counter and door knobs. The snack trays, dishes and utensils are allowed to drip dry.
 - vi. The thermometer in the refrigerator must read between 1 to 6°C.
- b. MLC must pass a health inspection annually in order to maintain our Licence from Manitoba Child Care.

(11) Local Food Producers and Suppliers

- a. On occasion, MLC may bring in local foods when seasonally available. All foods comply with the safety practices as well as the allergy and adverse food reaction avoidance protocols.