

Characteristic 9

Making informed choices

A characteristic of good practice in primary schools is that pupils demonstrate and apply their awareness of consumer preferences and the reasons for food and drink choices.

Overview

- Staff are aware of the factors that affect food and drink selection and choice.
- Staff consider and apply factors affecting food and drink choice when making decisions for themselves and pupils.
- Staff develop Schemes of Work and lessons that integrate factors affecting food and drink choice and demonstrate progression.

- Staff develop and/or select resources and ingredients that support pupils to make informed choices, exploring a range of factors.
- Staff provide pupils with the opportunity to apply and justify their knowledge through planning, verbal/written tasks and food preparation activities leading to making informed choices.



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The wonderful thing about food education within a primary school curriculum is that it can be approached from so many subjects and so many topic areas.

As well as the growing and cooking aspect of food education, we have also included lessons in eating where children use all of their senses to explore healthy food. It is a great way of engaging children in the pleasures of food. By first looking at fruit and vegetables, then describing the feel, sound and smell of them, they are much more inclined to actually taste them. From there, the whole enjoyment of a full food education curriculum can then be explored.

JASON'S TIPS

1. Find your champions within your school community. This can either be staff members who have an interest in food or cast your net wider to parents and grandparents.
2. There is always space to grow vegetables in a school in even the smallest of spaces. Get children to plant seeds in seedling trays and look after them in the classroom before transplanting outside.
3. Try to go different types of fruit and vegetables that the children will not get to see in the supermarkets. Purple carrots, white beetroot, trombone courgettes etc. Children are more likely to cook and eat food that they have nurtured themselves.



Putting the characteristic into practice

Exploring factors affecting food choice

In practice, staff:

- provide opportunities for pupils to learn that the choices people make around food and drink depends on a number of factors, such as allergy, intolerance, age, religion, personal choice, time of day and occasion;
- devise lessons to allow pupils to explore personal preferences, such as challenging pupils to conduct a survey to find out about class food preferences;
- run food tasting lessons, teaching pupils how to use their senses to taste and evaluate different food;

- ensure the procedures for food tasting are safe and hygienic, being aware of food allergies and intolerances and prevention of cross-contamination.

Other examples:



Applying food choice

In practice, staff:

- teach pupils to consider the factors involved in food and drink choice when making decisions for themselves and others;
- challenge pupils to create new, or modify existing, recipes for specific people and occasions, e.g. look at menus from a range of high street food outlets, choose a meal for a specific need and justifying their choice;
- demonstrate how informed choices can be made through using food labels, ingredient lists and nutrition information (front and back-of-pack labels).

- encourage pupils to use their findings from food tasting to modify recipes, dishes and menus, and justify decisions and changes made.

Other examples:



Putting the characteristic into practice

Exemplary practice

Governor, Head teacher, Senior Leadership Team

- Set up a sensory food tasting testing area and kit for pupils to use when they carry out testing. The kit could contain a selection of different sized plain crockery, e.g. four small, medium and large white bowls/plates; cutlery; water glasses; pens; pads and laminated copies of different sensory tests with instructions.

Curriculum lead/co-coordinator

- Create a display in the entrance hall or library area highlighting the factors affecting food choice.
- Work with parents/carers or members of the local community to offer a variety of cultural experiences to staff and pupils, e.g. tasting sessions, talks or cooking activities, using local or traditional ingredients/techniques.

Class teacher

- Task pupils to draw a picture of themselves. Around the portrait, ask them to list all the factors that affect their food decisions and preferences. Ensure they explain their answers.
- Look at a range of food packaging. What information is used to make a choice? Ask pupils to make a list.

- Visit a local supermarket and investigate the 'on-the-go' food on offer. Discuss with pupils the range available and why it might be popular.

- Show older pupils how to calculate the energy and nutrients provided by a recipe or diet, stating ways in which it has been improved, e.g. less salt, more fibre. (You could use the *Explore Food* nutritional analysis tool, available at www.foodafactoflife.org.uk.)

Other examples:



A list of useful websites to support this characteristic can be found on page 33.