



# Manual and materials for Meal times

<http://www.toddlerswellbeing.eu/>

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# Wellbeing and Daily Life

Daily life and pedagogic routines: acculturation moments (Silveira, 2002, 2013).

Early years settings are spaces full of educational opportunities. Opportunities to learn to do, be, know and live together (Delors, 1996).

We must reflect upon each moment the child spends at the setting, as all moments are educational.



# Why should we reconsider meal times?

- All moments the child spends at the setting are educational.
- Meal times are important to establish bonds among toddlers and with adults, to learn about the culture the child lives in, and to become autonomous.
- A healthy development depends on what you eat, but also on how, where and with whom you eat.



# Wellbeing and Daily Life

- Which cultural patterns do you instil during meal times at your setting?
- Do you promote any type of social habit (saying 'enjoy your meal', saying 'thank you' after being served, etc.)?
- Do you work on developing sensitivity towards the environment and the responsible use of food (for instance, making sure no food is thrown away or reusing leftovers?)
- What do you think a healthy school/setting lunch is?

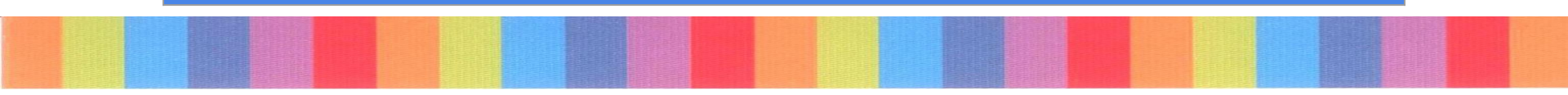


# Wellbeing at meal times

## Exchange time

- Time for establishing relationships and for peer-to-peer interaction. Time to share and make bonds.
- Quiet times, no rushing and respecting each child's rhythm.
- Adults who stand by the child with respect, a positive attitude and a good educational touch.

- **And what about you, adult? Do you like to talk in a relaxed atmosphere with your friends when you go to a restaurant or in any celebration? You do, right? And the children, can they do it during meal times at school?**



# Wellbeing at meal times

## The autonomy of the child

- Focusing on participation and collaboration in:
  - Hygiene moments.
  - Setting and clearing the table.
  - Helping oneself to food.
- Focusing on respect for:
  - Amount of food and amount of time each child needs.
- Standing by the child.



# Wellbeing at meal times

## The autonomy of the child

Two-year-olds often tell us: ‘No, not you, me alone!!!’ because they want to and can do many things alone. Do you take this into account at lunch time? Can the children set the table? Can they decide how much they want to eat? Can they help clear the table? Can they help themselves to food?



# Wellbeing at meal times

## Where and how we have lunch

- Sharing the table and cultural habits through the way we set the table.
- Providing furniture, crockery and cutlery that promote children's autonomy.
- Making sure that air circulation, lighting and ambient sound are pleasant.

Providing a homely atmosphere, rather than a scholarly atmosphere.





# Wellbeing at meal times

## Where and how we have lunch

**How do you set the table when you have guests and you want them to feel well? How do we set the table to make children feel well at the school/setting dining-room?**



Mas Balmanya

# Sections in the Manual

- Materials for reflection

Research-based contributions from the fields of psychology, sociology and pedagogy.

- Materials for observation

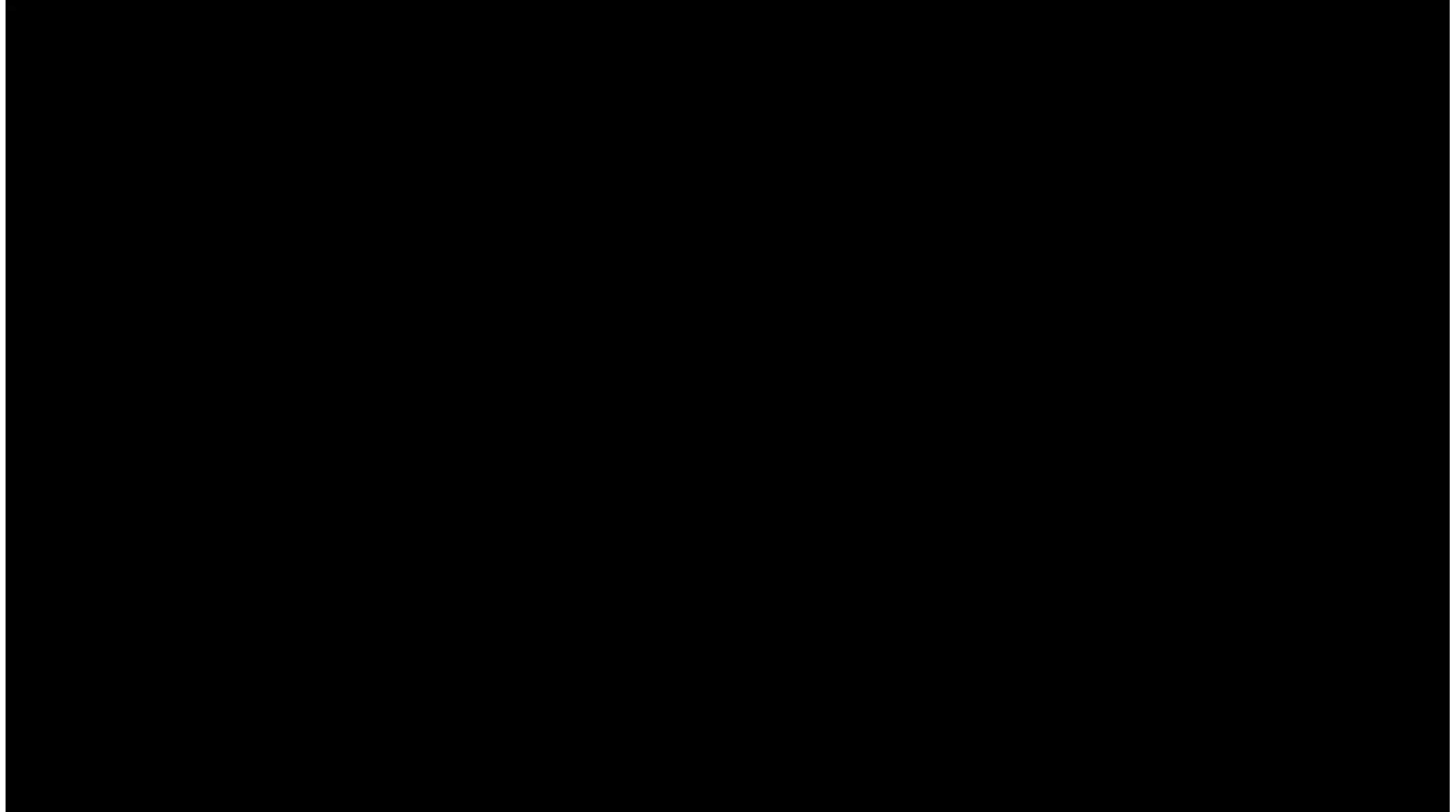
Observation guidelines to assess meal times.  
Tool to enable analysis, discussion, and the improvement of educational quality at meal times.



# Why should we reconsider meal times?

- Do you think that it is important that the team of practitioners reach agreements about the role of the educator in hygiene moments and during meal times?  
Why?
- Do you hold meetings with practitioners, kitchen personnel and lunch time assistants?
- Does your educational project include a description of how lunch time works and how important it is?

# Experience at Escola Bressol Mas Balmanya and Petita Escola



Kat Hogarth  
Barnes Children's Centre

Meal and Snack Time



# The Importance of the Practitioner

To promote independence in children we need to give them the right tools for the job

Enabling participation requires organisation of the space and providing extra time for certain activities

How much should we do as practitioners?







# Promoting Independence

Having a menu available before hand

Washing hands

Choosing their plate, bowl and cup

Deciding where to sit, and who with

Being able to ask questions and ask for help

Serving themselves

Pouring their own drinks

Feeding themselves in their own time

Clearing away their plate, bowl and cup

Washing hands and wiping their face

Helping to wipe down the table and put things away







# Snack Café Results

1. Has your child used the self-serve Snack Café during our Stay And Play sessions?		
Yes 15 (79%) + “mostly ignores it”	No 4 (21%)	Don't Know

2. What, if anything, has your child had a go at doing all by themselves at Snack Café? (Please tick all that apply)		
Waiting for a seat 4 (21%)	Washing hands 9 (47%)	Choosing a plate or bowl 8 (42%)
Choosing something to eat 12 (63%)	Peeling fruit 4 (21%)	Cutting food 7 (37%)
Feeding themselves 15 (79%)	Pouring a drink 3 (16%)	Cleaning up after eating 6 (32%)
Something else (Please tell us what!) “Selecting cup from the drawer” “Drying hands” “Using the velcroed visual clues from the board” “Wipe by herself her hands”		



# Snack Café Results

4. As a result of seeing them at the Snack Café have you tried letting your child be more independent at snack times or meal times at home?

Yes  
12 (63%)

No  
6 (32%)

If yes, what have you or your child done? No answer 1 (5%)

"Drinking from a cup rather than a flask"

"He was pretty independent anyway, but started introducing a knife more at lunch and dinner"

"Cut her own food"

"a bit of tidying up"

"Eating by herself, drinking from a grown-up cup"

"Feeding themselves"

"Letting him do the spooning by himself"

ments

"I do let him be more independent as he is willing to do things himself, eat himself"

"Used cups from them having a beaker, peeling their own fruit"

"Telling me hat she wants to eat and what colour the bowl she wants to use is, using the spoon and fork by herself."

"Already did BLW (Baby Led Weaning) from start so very used to this concept, I think it's great to do it at the CC though because I know we aren't typical"

"no, but will now"





# Manual and materials for Meal times

Harrieth E.K.Strøm  
Sandvedhaugen Barnehage, Norway



- What brought about the strategy?
- Implementation
- Impact of strategy
- The road ahead



# What brought about the strategy

During our training week in Kingston, the project group watched a video of a meal time in one of the settings in Barcelona. It made an impression on us.

We watched toddlers who were allowed to

- be more independent
- make their own decisions
- collect their own food
- tidy up after themselves
- talk to each other during the meal without excessive adult control
- and decide where they wanted to sit at the table and who they wanted to sit with





- We saw that these children mastered far more skills relating to the meal situation than we allowed our children to
- We also saw children who seemed to be more helpful and observant towards each other
- We became very aware that major changes were both necessary and appropriate





## Implementation

The manual provided us with an excellent and specific professional tool for a new approach to meal times

We focus on children's sense of achievement, independence, communication, learning, enjoyment, participation, self-realisation, togetherness and WELLBEING.

As a result we started to look more closely at all of our daily routines and how they could include learning opportunities.



We looked at the physical environment

- We made "food stations" where the children were given responsibility for collecting cups, plates, butter knives and lunch boxes.
- We encouraged them to take responsibility for every aspect of the meal and afterwards - they tidied their own things and washed their faces and hands.





We looked at the practitioners role

- The practitioners discussed how we could achieve our goals and concluded that the key reason we saw so little independence, for example, was down to us — the adults. We needed to have far greater trust in the children being able to do what they wanted and a stronger belief that their wellbeing would improve if they were simply allowed to try and manage for themselves

# Before

- High chairs and high tables
- No verbal introduction before the meal
- The staff went to the kitchen to fetch forgotten items like cups and plates during the meal

# Now

- Low chairs and low tables (we have bought them second hand)
- We tell the children what they are going to eat and what we will do
- The children now fetch their forgotten items themselves





# Impact of strategy

For the children

- The communication between the children around the table increased
- We adults played a more withdrawn role and focused more on supporting the children's communication. We undoubtedly became much better at distinguishing between toddler's play and joyfulness on one side, and noise and "bad manners" on the other side.
- The children became far more independent and more involved in preparing food, laying the table and sweeping up afterwards -and we could see that their sense of achievement increased their wellbeing
- We also saw that the children wanted to become far more involved in other everyday situations.



## For the practitioner

- We adults became more "playful" in our communication with the children.
- We observed more
- We were able to support the children more easily when they needed it. We saw that their wellbeing improved.



## For the parents

- The parents also saw that the children learned new skills and wanted to "do things themselves" at home too.



## The road ahead

- We have to implement the "TOWE way" to do things to all of our classes
- We have to make sure that new staff will be educated





Thank you very much...  
And enjoy your meal!!

