

Food Positivity

Chapter 20 Bonus Handout:

A Parent's One-Pager for Teachers

How to Share the “Parent’s One-Pager for Teachers”

The one-pager for teachers (front and back) is found on the third and fourth pages of this PDF. This resource is designed to help you protect your child **without putting extra work or pressure on their teacher**, who is likely already juggling enough! It will be most impactful when you share it thoughtfully, early, and with a collaborative approach.

When to Share It:

The ideal times to share this resource are:

- At the **beginning of the school year** (meet-the-teacher night, open house, or early conferences)
- During a **parent-teacher conference**
- If a specific food or nutrition lesson has already come up that you are concerned about

You don’t need to wait for a problem to arise, but you also don’t need to approach the teacher with fear or urgency.

How to Share It:

Whenever possible, share this **in person**, not as a long email. If email is the only option, keep it short and use the one-pager to do most of the talking.

You might say something like:

“I wanted to share this because eating disorder prevention and body trust are important health priorities for our family. I know you don’t always have control over curriculum, and this isn’t a critique of your teaching. If certain lessons come up, I’d really appreciate a heads-up so I can decide whether to opt my child out.”

A Note on Opting Out:

Opting your child out of a specific lesson is a valid and appropriate option. But you don't necessarily have to opt your child out of every lesson related to food or bodies. Use your judgement to determine the best option for *your* child.

Remember:

- One lesson is unlikely to undo the Protective Shield you're building at home
- You can respond *after* a lesson if needed
- Broader change belongs at the **district level**, not on a classroom teacher's shoulders

If Your Child's Teacher Is Open to Going Further

Some teachers are already noticing how diet culture, food moralizing, or body-based messaging can show up in classrooms—and may feel relieved to know a parent is thinking about this, too. If your child's teacher expresses interest or curiosity, you *can* gently continue the conversation.

This doesn't need to be formal or immediate. It might simply look like listening, expressing appreciation, or letting them know you're supportive if they ever want to learn more or think differently about food and body lessons.

You might say something like:

"I really appreciate your openness around this. I know you have a lot on your plate, but if you're ever interested in learning more about eating disorder-informed or body-positive approaches to food education, I'm happy to share resources or support in whatever way feels helpful."

If a teacher chooses to engage further, follow their lead. Some may want resources (we recommend a copy of *Food Positivity*!) others may just want validation that they're not alone in noticing these challenges. Even a brief, respectful exchange can help teachers feel supported—especially in systems where they often feel constrained.

And if a teacher isn't open to that conversation, that's okay too. Protecting your child and preserving the relationship is always enough.

Family Concerns about Food & Nutrition Lessons

(a Food Positivity resource)

Thank you for all you do for our children! In our family, eating disorder prevention and body trust are important health priorities. We understand that teachers may be asked, or required, to use specific instruction materials for food and nutrition education. Our goal is not to change your classroom instruction, only to protect our child when certain messages may not be a good fit for their development.

Quick Facts:

Research shows that children begin forming beliefs about food and bodies early in life:

- A 2023 *Journal of the American Medical Association* meta-analysis found that **22% of children and adolescents engage in disordered eating behaviors.**¹
- **By age 5**, many children worry about their body size. **By age 9**, dieting behaviors are common.²
- In one study, **14% of youth with anorexia identified a school health class or curriculum as an early trigger**, among many contributing influences.³

For some children, certain nutrition lessons—especially those that categorize or moralize food—can unintentionally increase anxiety or rigid thinking around eating, even when they are well-intended.

Lessons We're Concerned About:

We know that many food-related lessons are positive and age-appropriate, and we are not seeking to opt out of food learning as a whole. We are specifically concerned about the following types of lessons:

- Sorting foods into “healthy/unhealthy,” “good/bad,” or “sometimes/everyday” categories
- Stoplight systems (red, yellow, green foods) or rule-based food charts
- Moralized language around sugar, snacks, treats, or “junk food”
- Calorie counting, food tracking, or comparing foods by calories or sugar grams
- Framing exercise or movement as a way to “earn” food
- Asking students to draw or design a “healthy plate” or identify “correct” meals
- Messages that link food choices to weight, disease
- Body-based measures of health (such as BMI)

We ask that you **notify us in advance** if a lesson falls into one of the areas above so that we may consider opting our child out of that specific activity. If opting out is ever necessary, we are happy to follow whatever process the school prefers.

Thank you for your understanding. Please contact me if you wish to discuss this further.

(Child's Name)

(Parent's Name)

(Contact information)

Want to Learn More?

This one-pager is adapted from ***Food Positivity: How to Ditch Diet Culture and Talk to Kids About Food*** by Diana Rice, RDN and Dani Lebovitz, MS, RDN (Jossey-Bass, 2026), a book written primarily for parents that also includes content on how children learn in classrooms.

Food Positivity explores:

- How food and body messages shape children's learning, identity, and emotional safety
- Why some common nutrition lessons create confusion or shame—even when well intended
- What developmentally attuned, inclusive, and experience-based food education can look like in practice

Many educators find the book helpful for reflecting on classroom language, aligning health-related lessons with whole-child learning, and navigating food and body topics with greater care and confidence.

If you're interested in learning more, *Food Positivity* offers research-backed context and a child-centered framework that complements the best practices of education and healthy child development. Find it at your favorite major book retailer.

References:

¹ López-Gil, J. F. et al. (2023). Global proportion of disordered eating in children and adolescents: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 177(4).

² Davison, K. K., Markey, C. N., & Birch, L. L. (2003). A longitudinal examination of patterns in girls' weight concerns and body dissatisfaction from ages 5 to 9 years. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 33(3), 320–332.

³ Lin, J. A. et al (2023). Triggers for eating disorder onset in youth with anorexia nervosa across the weight spectrum. *Eating Disorders*, 31(6), 1–20.