

# KID'S Corner

# SCHOOL is Back in Session

by Amber D. Huett



Your summer vacation is over. You traded flip flop sandals and bathing suits for clean tennis shoes, cute flats and freshly pressed clothing; you are going back to school!

*I have 21 kids. So, back-to-school is a crazy time.*

Okay, okay, the 21 kids happen to be my third grade class in Memphis, Tenn., but it still is an exciting time for a teacher, too. I get to see kids eager about being back in the building and learning. And while learning might be why some students are ready to be back at school, they are also pumped to be back with friends, laughing and having a good time.

And before they are back in the building, they will wander the aisles of local stores searching for the hippest of school supplies. Remember to plan for what is not on the official list: food to pack in your lunch.

Bringing your lunch means planning ahead and keeping things interesting as you prepare for 180 school days of brain fuel! It is important to remember that while food tastes good, the **CALORIES** in our food are actually energy for our bodies.

While school has been in session for a couple months, the familiar groans of “this again?” have echoed in our not-so-quiet lunch line. While kid favorites tend to be pre-packaged crackers with cheese and meat, fruit juices and potato chips, there are more nutritious options that you could be packing for lunch. Your body needs proper **NUTRIENTS** to focus, think clearly to ace an exam and snag all of those class participation points!

## Food for Thought

After noon, my class still has three hours of math, writing, science and social studies to stay alert, engaged and participating. Some of the most unfocused students have not just made poor food choices, but skipped lunch altogether. The saying “food for thought” is very true! In order to think about and process what we learn, we must **EAT**.

The bad moods that students can feel at school may not be just the worksheets, tests and papers, usually it's from skipping lunch. Skipping lunch can leave you feeling frustrated, emotional, tired or hungry and cause you to have a difficult time **CONCENTRATING** or making good decisions.

Leaving the processed, packaged foods on the store shelves in favor of healthier options will be good for your body and you can have fun while making lunch more interesting.



Fruit and Yogurt



Baked Chicken  
Sandwich

# What to Pack for Lunch

## Make it a Family Activity

Lunch isn't the only time that we need to eat the right foods to fuel our bodies. It is also important when we prepare breakfast and dinner in our homes. This can be a fun way to spend time with your parents, siblings or other guardians, like grandparents or aunts and uncles. Spend the evenings coming up with healthy recipes and make extra for lunch the next day! You should ask for help when making meals at home, but try some of the following dinners that make a delicious leftover lunch that will keep you going through your school day:

1. Turn a baked chicken, potato and salad dinner into a brag-worthy sandwich for lunch. Grab a piece of whole grain bread and add chicken, lettuce and a healthy spread such as a spicy mustard or low-fat mayonnaise or Miracle Whip. Add crunchy, cool carrots and a healthy dip such as hummus.
2. Does mom have a great vegetable soup? As the crisp fall weather approaches, take an insulated **THERMOS** of soup; add some whole grain crackers and you have that comfort of home right at the school lunch table! This hot item will be the new cool thing to bring!
3. Think international: try some stir fry with noodles, veggie eggrolls or chicken tacos where you can build your own with mini whole-wheat shells and enjoy them a second time with new toppings.

## Packing it up

When it comes to school lunches, remember to keep your mind open and ask adults, including teachers, lunchroom staff, school nurses, physical education teachers and coaches, when you want your food to do more for you. Packing up your lunch doesn't have to mean the same chips and sandwiches that might leave you feeling **TIRED** or unable to focus. Remember to take care of your mind and body by feeding it fuel it can use!

### **About the Author:**

*Amber D. Huett is an OAC Advisory Board Member and a gastric-banding patient. She is a third grade teacher in Memphis, Tenn., with Teach for America. She has a bachelor's degree in political science and journalism from Bradley University in Peoria, Illinois, and a master's degree in public administration from the University of Illinois-Springfield.*

## The Lunch Challenge with Friends

When others around us are making good choices about food, research shows that we also make good decisions. You can be a good influence on your friends by being creative about what to pack for lunch! Try one of the following healthy food themes to keep that 30-minute lunch fun and your body healthy and ready to learn:

**Focus Foods:** Have each person in your usual lunch group bring something new and healthy that will help them focus, but is also tasty! Many foods have the right things for our body to help us focus and learn better.

1. **NUTS**, such as almonds or walnuts, can be mixed in with yogurt or fruit. The **PROTEINS** in nuts have been known to support learning and focusing.
2. Natural sugars found in **FRUIT** also help you to stay alert and focused more than processed sugars, such as that found in canned or pouched juices. That's perfect for those less-than-interesting math lessons that can follow lunch time!
3. Blueberries, mixed with strawberries or a low-sugar cream cheese or yogurt, can give your **MEMORY** a boost. Who couldn't use a little more help for those exams?

**Mix it up:** Sometimes the healthier foods can cost our families more money, especially fruits and vegetables. If your school rules allow it, get a group of your friends to all bring a vegetable, fruit, whole wheat crackers or cheese. Have your parent divide up enough for the group and switch it up! You get an interesting meal each day and it will make packing up a lunch easy for you and your parents, and give you something to look forward to for lunchtime variety.

In the story you just read, "School is Back in Session – What to Pack for Lunch," you may have noticed certain words in all caps and bolded. These words are important terms for eating healthy this school year. Below, you'll see a double puzzle. See if you can unscramble each word and figure out the final phrase!

## What to Pack for Lunch

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Answer: Eat Healthy

Unscramble each of the clue words.  
Copy the letters in the numbered cells to other cells with the same number.



# ABOUT THE OBESITY ACTION COALITION (OAC)

The Obesity Action Coalition (OAC) is a National non-profit organization dedicated to giving a voice to individuals affected by obesity and helping them along their journey toward better health. Our core focuses are to elevate the conversation of weight and its impact on health, improve access to obesity care, provide science-based education on obesity and its treatments, and fight to eliminate weight bias and discrimination.



VIBRANT COMMUNITY



NATIONAL AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS



ANNUAL CONVENTION



ADVOCACY



PUBLIC EDUCATION

## LEARN, CONNECT, ENGAGE

The OAC knows that the journey with weight can be challenging but we also know that great things happen when we learn, connect and engage. That is why the OAC Community exists. Our Community is designed to provide quality education, ongoing support programs, an opportunity to connect, and a place to take action on important issues.

### Through the OAC Community, you can get access to:

- Weight & Health Education • Community Blogs
  - Community Discussion Forum
  - Ongoing Support • Meaningful Connections
- AND MUCH MORE**



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