

starting healthy habits young

St. Thomas School's NEW DINING PROGRAM Teaches Students About Healthy Lifestyles

By Kirk Wheeler, Head of School at St. Thomas School



Starting healthy habits at an early age makes it much easier for children to stick to them later in life. Because children spend their weekdays at school, teachers play a critical role in helping children develop a healthy lifestyle. In fact, research shows that coordinated school health programs not only have the potential to help young children adopt healthy habits but also prevent and control obesity and other chronic diseases. A healthy lifestyle goes beyond healthy eating – in addition to nutrition,

helping children learn mindfulness and the importance of day-to-day exercise and rest will give them a well-rounded view of what it means to live healthfully.

At St. Thomas School (STS), we approach health education in a holistic manner, creating an integrated program that focuses on children's social, emotional, and physical well-being. As part of this approach, we recently partnered with SAGE Dining Services to create a dining experience that is more than just lunch: it's a chance for students to chat with each other while exploring healthy meal options and learning about environmental stewardship.

STS's Dining Program focuses on five principles: educating students about healthy eating habits, creating awareness of food sources, building appreciation for community, teaching the art of conversation, and managing wastefulness. Teaching children about these principles helps lay the foundation for a lifetime of nutritious eating, sustainable living, and community building.

When was the last time your child asked for a salad instead of pizza? Chances are, the answer is never. When given the choice between processed and fresh food, most children will go for the unhealthy option because it tastes good. It's up to us to teach them the value of making healthy choices, encourage them to try new foods, and ultimately help them develop healthy eating habits. At STS, our chef prepares a variety of healthy meal options so students can try new foods, discover their preferences, and learn that eating vegetables doesn't have to be a dreaded chore. Our chef's creations go beyond your standard steamed broccoli: he gets creative in the kitchen by adding sauces, spices, and other ingredients, so the dreaded greens are almost unrecognizable. We also encourage students to balance their plates with proteins, vegetables, and starches, but let them decide how much of each item they want so they can learn to self-manage portion control. This lets students learn how to make healthy choices that work for them.



In order to teach students about locally-sourced food, STS has a school garden where students plant and harvest fruits, vegetables, and herbs during science class. Our chef coordinates with the science teachers to align plant harvests with upcoming menus so students eat the food they planted. This helps students develop an appreciation for their lunch by allowing them to experience firsthand the sources of their food.

Teachers and students also eat together during meals. This gives students a chance to talk and share with each other and teaches them the art of conversation. It also broadens typical lunchtime conversation topics for both teachers and students, allowing them to learn new things from each other. In addition to seeing meaningful lunchtime conversations, we've noticed some students asking for a second serving of vegetables. This is partly because of our chef's mouth-watering vegetable recipes, and partly because children mirror the tendencies of their peers. If a student sees their older classmate eating green beans, they might be more inclined to try them, too.

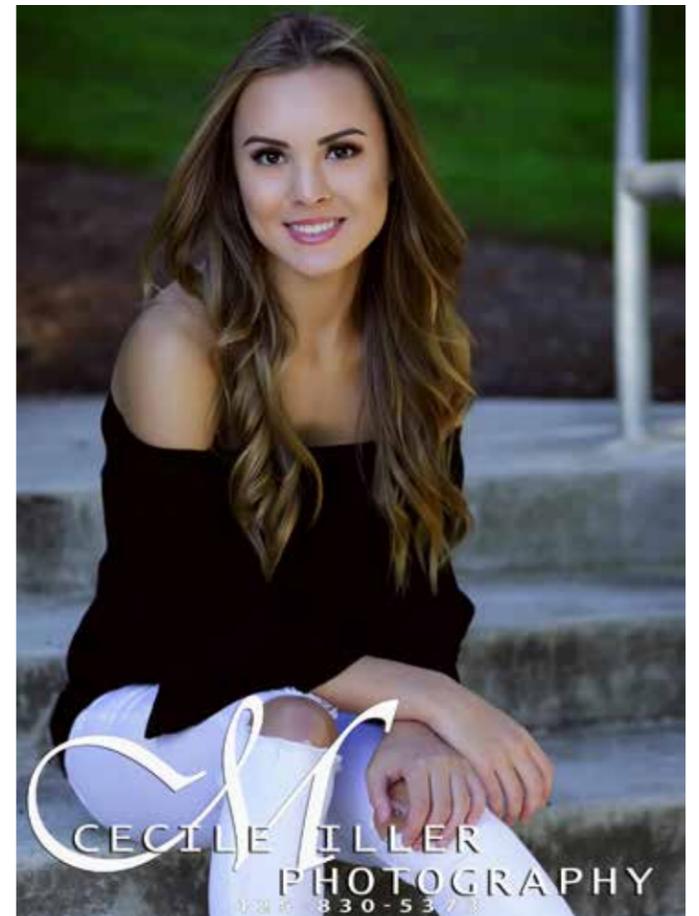
In tandem with teaching the art of conversation, creating a dining experience helps children learn good manners, something that is more crucial than ever in today's fast-paced society. Learning how to host, make others feel welcome, and be a polite table guest, are valuable life skills that are important at any age. At STS, each lunch table has a host whose role is to start conversations, excuse others from the table, and make sure the table is cleared at the end of lunch. This helps children learn leadership skills and become more comfortable hosting social gatherings.

Another aspect of a holistic health program is teaching children about waste management. Understanding where food comes from and where uneaten food goes, are important building blocks for becoming an economically conscious citizen. At STS, we weigh and track uneaten food. Tracking wasted food makes students aware of their impact on the environment, and encourages them to only take as much food as they can eat. Oftentimes, young children can be wary of trying new foods, so our chef encourages them to "just try one" so they don't throw away a full serving if they end up not liking it. Approaching waste management from the lens of tracking uneaten food instills a sense of mindfulness and intention among students that they can carry into aspects of their lives outside of just food waste.



In addition to healthy eating habits, as children experience developmental milestones and encounter stressful situations, educating them about the importance of rest and the art of meditation can help them cope with hardships now, and throughout their adult lives. Teaching children how to calm themselves and talk through their emotions builds a foundation of mindfulness that becomes second-nature as they mature and are faced with the stress of everyday life.

A healthy lifestyle requires a holistic approach that includes balanced nutrition, exercise, mindfulness, and a sense of community. By teaching children the importance of wellness at a young age, we can set them up for a lifetime of joyful and healthy living.



GoRoof TuneUp

We are in your Neighborhood



Call us at:
303-536-1777
visit us at www.gorooftune.com

Don't buy a new roof
when all you need
is a Roof Tune-UpSM

Free Roof Inspection
Free Written Report
Five Year Warranty

Total Roof Repair Maintenance Restoration





Clyde Hill - Hunts Point - Medina - Yarrow Point

the Points *Living*

An Exclusive Newsletter for the Residents of The Points Communities • January 2017

MEET THE
Ostrom Family



Your Stories. Your Photos. Your Community.