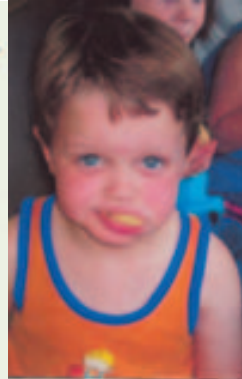


# Eating at kindergarten

★ Nathan eating some scones at kindergarten. He had been watching the other children eating & wanted to try some as well. Maxine helped Nathan break the scone in half so that he could eat the middle piece that was soft. 'Yummy' was what he said after he had eaten some. Nathan ate the remaining soft part of the scone.

2012



As part of the kindergarten environment, we have been planting and growing some vegetables. The children have helped with preparing the soil, planting, watering, and weeding. They are now reaping the benefits and help themselves to tomatoes when they want them.

We were talking about other vegetables that we grow at home and were very lucky to have Maxine bring us in some corn and a corn plant. There was a lot of discussion about how it grew, what it had needed to grow, and where the corn grew on the plant. We were then able to have a piece for ourselves.

YUMMY!!!!

**April**

Kai time

Nathan is very unsure about eating at kindergarten. He doesn't like it when there are lots of children at the table. On this day he had been following Matthew & watched Matthew get his bag & followed. He nibbled his sandwich. As soon as Matthew had finished, Nathan put his bag away as well.

13 June

Nathan comes inside and says, "Morning tea." "Yes," says Maxine. "Wash your hands." Nathan washes his hands and then goes to get his bag. He comes back. "My bag lost." "Have another look," says Maxine. Nathan finds his bag and sits down to eat. He starts to eat his sandwiches, looks at Maxine, holds up four fingers, and says "I eat four." He stays and eats all his sandwiches.

### Short-term review

- First time Nathan has initiated eating on his own.
- He ate all his sandwiches. Over the last two terms, he has struggled to eat one. With adult help, he has built up to four.
- He ate them in 10 minutes, previously taking 30 minutes or more.
- He joined three other children at the table. Nathan's comfort zone is increasing around other children.



June

Teacher: Kim

Nathan is having morning tea with a large group of children. This is a huge milestone as he never used to do this and is now comfortable joining in. He now even eats when we do baking, whereas before, he took it but never ate it.



### What's happening here?

Nathan had no teeth to chew with, and refusing to eat was a health issue for him and a worry for his family. In these learning stories, Nathan is shown beginning to eat at kindergarten. The teachers find ways to help him feel more comfortable and interested in the group experience of morning tea.

One of the strategies they used early on was to move the table to another area of the kindergarten that was not as busy so that Nathan could feel more comfortable eating morning tea. They also arranged for Nathan to eat with a small group of children, and they shared the goal of eating with Nathan so that he could see how he was doing. By attending to his feeling of belonging, they gradually increased the amount he was able to eat from his lunchbox.

This exemplar demonstrates that goals are not always about skill acquisition, but can be about developing a learning disposition to allow the desired skill to emerge. Nathan's IP included a measurable goal: "Nathan will eat one thing from his lunchbox." However, for his teachers, the goal was first and foremost to engender Nathan's sense of familiarity and trust at morning teatime.

### What aspects of inclusive assessment does this exemplify?

By documenting Nathan's progress in feeling comfortable enough to eat at kindergarten, his teachers are able to show his family what they are doing and how successful they are in this. Nathan's grandmother said that the photograph of Nathan sitting on the bench with his mouth full was the best picture that she could have been shown. Nathan could also see his success in the pictures.

### How might this assessment contribute to this child's learning and development?

There are some very practical outcomes from these assessments. Nathan needs to eat, both for his health and because chewing strengthens the muscles children use to develop speech. It is not possible to force someone to eat; what Nathan's teachers do, very sensitively, is to take advantage of moments when Nathan takes an interest in eating, for example, when he wants to do what the other children are doing. The documentation and photographs of these successful eating moments in his folio build up Nathan's expectation that he is one of the children who eat at kindergarten.

### What might this tell us about informal noticing, recognising, and responding in this place?

Nathan's teachers notice that Nathan needs "space" from the other children to feel comfortable and recognise that providing this might help him feel confident enough to eat. Their response – to move the eating place and, in a supportive way, make it clear to Nathan that they expect him to eat – is successful. Much of that success comes about because the teachers know Nathan well.