Talking Points for a Mealtime Vision
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When we set out to do something, a vision helps us make that occur. For example, when we envision decorating a room, we think about items from flooring to lighting. We think about how the sun flows into a room as we consider window coverings. We consider who might visit as we plan seating arrangements. We choose things that are aesthetically pleasing, and perhaps easy to clean. We consider emotional aspects of a room, planning a room that evokes a certain feeling.

Think about using a similar approach to create visions for mealtime environments for children in group settings. Consider these points:

**Child-Healthy Nutrition**
What is presented to eat is the #1 consideration. Planning for solid nutrition is essential.

**Mealtime Physical Environment**
Look at the possibilities for room arrangement, the needs for child-sized furniture, the choices for utensils that match children’s skills and the types of tableware for presenting food in a way that helps children succeed in self-serving. Think about the things that will be needed for safely serving food.

**Mealtime Social Environment**
Consider the expectations you have for interactions at the mealtime. Plan seating arrangements, expectations for child-to-child interactions, teacher-child relationships, routines, schedules, how people take turns, and how food is passed and served among people at the table.

**Mealtime Auditory Environment**
Examine the sounds surrounding the table, including both meal and non-meal related sounds such as music and adult comments made away from the table.

**Mealtime Language Environment**
Be thoughtful about adult schedules that maintain adult modeling and strategies to make the most of mealtimes as a language-rich time. Think about schedules and routines that allow children to make requests, build vocabulary, engage in give and take in conversations, and develop efficient listening skills for other people’s comments and directions.

**Mealtime Emotional Environment**
Think about how the mealtime and events before and after mealtimes include routines that provide security and consistency for children, and schedules that provide reliable expectations for children and adults. Think about strategies for introducing foods and helping children make decisions about how much and what to eat. This part of the plan includes strategies for impacting how children and adults FEEL about what is happening.