



# Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired Outreach Programs

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## Active Learning Study Group

March 3, 2015

3:00-4:00 PM

Facilitated by

Kate Hurst, Statewide Staff Development Coordinator

[katehurst@tsbvi.edu](mailto:katehurst@tsbvi.edu)

Matt Schultz, Deafblind Education Consultant

[mattschultz@tsbvi.edu](mailto:mattschultz@tsbvi.edu)

Developed for

Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired

Outreach Programs



# Early Learning Step-by-Step

## Chapter 7: Learning to Eat

### Learning to Eat – Adult’s Approach

- Adult shares spoon with infant to play with as adult eats
- Adult uses teaspoon to feed – child still sucking, expels food to chin – adult scrapes chin and holds spoon at ready for next bite
- Adult moves to bigger spoon and continues to scrap chin
- At end of dinner adult scrapes plate to get one more spoon for child
- While adult is feeding allows child to use fingers to some degree to play in food
- If teething gives teething biscuit to chew
- Adult gives child spoon while feeding with another spoon
- Adult fills spoon for child and places on plate
- Adult reduces feeding to minimum
- Adult accepts child uses fingers sometimes and spoon sometimes, but removes plate if infant is making too much mess.
- Sometimes adult insists in helping infant though child is determined to eat his/her way.



Figure 1 An infant in a bib sits in a highchair; an adult hand holds a babyspoon with green pureed food in front of the baby. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spoon>



Figure 2 A toddler holds a fork in one hand while her other very messy hand hovers over a plate of food. The toddler has a very messy face. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toddler>



Figure 3 A toddler wearing a bib uses his fingers to place something in his mouth while his food is held upside down in his other hand. Creative commons photo.

## Learning to Eat - Infant's Approach

- Child grasps and let go of spoon give for play
- Child grasps and keeps spoon
- While holding spoon accidentally taps on table, own head, adult, etc.
- Infant mouths spoon and moves from hand to hand
- In high chair infant grasps food using ulnar grip and brings to mouth – smears food into mouth
- Infant snatches spoon from adult while being fed, lets go of it so it falls on table, plate, floor
- Infant taps spoon consciously towards table, plate, head
- Infant sticks spoon into food without getting any in spoon
- Infant tries to put food on spoon and bring to mouth
- Using a spoon
- Infant eats some food using fingers – grasp crumbs, one finger in bread/milk – develop pincer grasp
- Infant grasps and lets go of some food
- Infant puts bits of food in glass of milk
- Infant places food on table next to plate or lets go so that it falls on floor
- Infant eats most food using fingers and spoon
- Pincer Grasp
- Infant snatches adult's fork
- Child tries to stick fork into bites of food – lifts elbow using the muscle strength of upper arm and shoulder
- Child eats using fork
- Child tries to cut food with knife
- Child practices using fork and knife simultaneously – lifts elbows
- Child stops eating if adult interferes too much or tries to teach
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Figure 4 Opening image in the video of a baby spoon feeding. From Creative Commons. YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rJschk2zgCw>



Figure 5 A toddler feeds using a pincer grasp; the opening image of a video. From Creative Commons YouTube - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d5czMVfFEj4>

## Changes of the Adult's Approach

- For a bottle fed student- if student cannot reach midline, offer a warm doll's bottle for them to hold.
- Forcing the child to hold the bottle is ineffective.
- Should we be scraping the student's chin after each spoonful? What is this teaching? Use a serviette!
- Adapt the amount of food on the spoon.
- Place the spoon on the plate after each bite. Even if the student cannot see this step, they may be able to hear it.
- Helps facilitate the child's understanding of the spatial relationship between the spoon, the plate and the food.
- Refrain from plate scraping. If we don't want them to do it, then we shouldn't do it.
- For a spoon fed student- a spoon should be placed in their hand for each feeding.
- Never guide the child's hand and spoon to his mouth or plate. Your job is to give them an opportunity to initiate this movement.

## Facilitation of the Learning to Eat

- Opportunities to experience eating and practice the skills required to do so is the way!
- Students who have only been fed or training (hand guided) are not being given the opportunity to learn and practice the skills.
- Learning to eat looks different for all children dependent on level of development, and the nature of disability.
- First and foremost, provide opportunities to play with spoons. Pushing them, grasping them, letting them go, holding on to them, manipulating them.
- Blind child never sees others using spoons or silverware.
- They need time and experience touching the silverware, listening to the sounds they make and combining the sounds and movements together.
- This takes a lot of time and experience to learn these concepts.
- Provide these opportunities by placing spoons in the Little Room, on the Positional Board, in a box of toys or in a box with other cutlery.
- Use a "Buncher" while feeding- helps a child tap without quickly losing the spoon.
- When child begins to chew, introduce a fork.
- After child takes bite from fork, replace food without touching the child's hand.
- When child begins to bring fork to the plate, touch the end of the fork to help stab the next bite, not the child's hand.
- Provide other activities or games to facilitate increase in strength needed to stab food, not during the mealtime.

### **It facilitates the child's learning to eat if...**

- the spoon or fork fits the size of the child's hand.
- the plate has a shape and size that makes it easier to use fingers or utensils.
- a piece of dycem prevents the plate from sliding.
- the handles of the cup are easy to grasp.
- the bites are adapted to the right size.
- the the food offered is one that the child likes.
- the atmosphere during mealtimes is pleasant.

**Notes:**

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Figure 6 TSBVI logo.



This project is supported by the U.S. Department of Education, Special Education Program (OSEP). Opinions expressed here are the authors and do not necessarily represent the position of the Department of Education.

Figure 7 IDEAs that Work logo and OSEP disclaimer.