

LEARNING  
READINESS



## Eat Healthy Dinner With The Family

**E**ating a healthy dinner with the family means sitting at a table, with the TV off, using plates, napkins and dinnerware, while enjoying food from the basic food groups – meat, dairy, carbohydrates, fats, and fruits and vegetables. The most recent food pyramid from the U. S. Department of Agriculture encourages us all to eat more fruits and vegetables each day. Not only will we be healthier, but the research tells us that our brains will work better when our diet is healthy. For your child to do her best in school, proper diet is, therefore, essential. *Uncle Dan's Report Card* gives you a way to encourage your child to eat properly by increasing her awareness of those essential fruits and vegetables required for a good diet.

Currently, one of the greatest predictors of good behavior and academic achievement in school is the family dinner. Children who eat dinner with the family at least three times a week are

better behaved and achieve at a higher level than those who don't. What's the magic of family dinner? First of all, at the dinner table, people talk to each other, and the stimulation of language results in better achievement in school. Then when children are included in the dinnertime discussion, they

are validated because their opinions mean something to other family members. Finally, they learn manners and the social skills required to get along with others. Family dinners, whether at home or in a restaurant, are important for family bonding, learning, and social development.

### Ways to practice this habit together:

- **Make fruits and vegetables available for your child every for snacks and meals.**
- **Plan family dinners at least three nights each week.** Use dinner plates, knives, forks spoons, napkins... and manners! Eating at restaurants is best for your child when you can conduct family conversations.
- **Encourage manners**, such as using napkins to wipe one's mouth; cutting food with a fork or knife; using a spoon to eat certain foods, such as cereal, instead of fingers; speaking when one's mouth is not full; and taking turns in conversation.
- **Praise your child's using manners** by noticing when she wipes her mouth with a napkin (not her sleeve!) and asks for a dish to be "passed" instead of grabbing for a piece of bread, for example.

