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## IEHA Program Lesson Submission

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| <b>Month/Year Materials Created:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | April 2026                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Topic Title:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>Gather, Eat, Connect: Making Mealtime Matter</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Topic Description:</b><br>(Information should be researched, educational, approved for use (if you are not the author, seek approval from materials author), and presented in a format that would allow an individual to read, study, and teach to other peers. <b>All copyright issues should be resolved before submission.</b> ) | Decades of research have shown that families who eat together regularly have better physical health, better mental health, better academic and social outcomes and stronger bonds than families who don't have dinner together. Yet fewer than half of all American families report eating dinner together at least once a week. Research also shows that sharing meals with other adults improves physical health, mental health and social well being. Look beyond your traditional definition of "family". Family meals also include eating as a couple, with friends or at your Homemaker Club! |
| <b>Short Goal/Objective Statement for Lesson:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 1. Inform about the research behind the benefits of family mealtime<br>2. Introduce examples of engaging activities for families and link to additional resources<br>3. Provide opportunities to practice and engage with the activities as a group                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

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# Gather, Eat, Connect: Making Mealtime Matter

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## Lesson Objectives:

1. Inform about the research behind the benefits of family mealtime
2. Introduce examples of engaging activities for families and link to additional resources
3. Provide opportunities to practice and engage with the activities as a group

## Materials:

- Pens/pencils
- Coloring pencils or crayons
- Copies of the handouts
  - o Why Shared Meals are Good For Adults
  - o Would You Rather Prompts
  - o The Family Dinner Project Brochure
- Copies of the Dinner Games
  - o Pass The Page
  - o Who's Coming to Dinner
  - o Where In The World
  - o Concentration abcs
  - o 54321 Activity
  - o 20 Things I Love About \_\_\_\_
- OPTIONAL: A Meal *\*Doing this lesson around a meal is ideal, but not required*

## Introduction:

Say: What if there was a single activity that was proven to have lifelong benefits for the physical, emotional and social health of every person who engaged in it regularly? What if that activity was available to almost anyone who wanted to do it, right in their own homes? That activity exists, and it's the family dinner.

Decades of research have shown that families who eat together regularly have better physical health, better mental health, better academic and social outcomes and stronger bonds than families who don't have dinner together. Yet fewer than half of all American families report eating dinner together at least once a week.

## Gather, Eat, Connect: Making Mealtime Matter

Research also shows that sharing meals with other adults improves physical health, mental health and social well being. Look beyond your traditional definition of “family”. Family meals also include eating as a couple, with friends or at your Homemaker Club!

*Pass out the “Why Shared Meals are Good for Adults” handout. Read through or allow the group to discuss their experiences.*

*Ask: What’s the last conversation you had around the dinner table? What did you talk about?*

*Say: Let’s look at some examples of engaging conversation starters and games.*

*Pass out examples of the “Would You Rather?” prompts. As a group, go around the room and have everyone ask someone one of the questions.*

*Choose one or two of the “Dinner Games” to do with the group.*

The Family Dinner Project (TFDP), locally adopted through Purdue Center for Families, is a growing movement of food, fun and conversation about things that matter. A non-profit organization based out of the offices of Project Zero at Harvard University, they are dedicated to increasing the frequency and quality of shared meals for all families.

How to get more information? *Pass out the “The Family Dinner Project” brochure.*