

What Schools Can Do

Ideas for Healthy Celebrations

Schools can help promote a positive learning environment by providing healthy celebrations that shift the focus from the food to the child. Choose a variety of activities, games and crafts that children enjoy. When food is served, make it count with healthy choices! Parties can even incorporate a fun nutrition lesson by involving children in the planning and preparation of healthy snacks. Try these ideas for fun activities and healthy foods at school parties and other celebrations.

Activities to Celebrate the Child

- Plan special party games and activities. Ask parents to provide game supplies, pencils, erasers, stickers and other small school supplies instead of food.
- Create a healthy party idea book. Ask school staff and parents to send in healthy recipes and ideas for activities, games and crafts. Compile these ideas into a book that staff and parents can use.
- Give children extra recess time instead of a class party. For birthdays, let the birthday child choose and lead an active game for everyone.
- Instead of food, ask parents to purchase a book for the classroom or school library in the birthday child's name. Read it to the class or invite the child's parents to come in and read it to the class.
- Instead of a party, organize a special community service project, e.g., invite Senior Citizens in for lunch, make "curechiefs" for chemotherapy patients, and blankets for rescue dogs. Involve parents in planning the project and providing needed materials.
- Create a "Celebrate Me" book. Have classmates write stories or poems and draw pictures to describe what is special about the birthday child.
- Provide special time with the principal or another adult, such as taking a walk around the school at recess.
- Create a special birthday package. The birthday child wears a sash and crown, sits in a special chair and visits the principal's office for a special birthday surprise (pencil, sticker, birthday card, etc.)
- The birthday child is the teacher's assistant for the day, and gets to do special tasks like make deliveries to office, lead the line, start an activity, and choose a game or story.



Additional Resources

Alternatives to Food Rewards. Connecticut State Department of Education, 2004 (rev. 2007).
<http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=320754#Resources>

Classroom Party Ideas. University of California Cooperative Extension Ventura County.
http://ceventura.ucdavis.edu/newsletterfiles/Hansen_Trust_Newsletter10234.pdf

Healthy Fundraising. Connecticut State Department of Education, 2005 (rev. 2007).
<http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=320754#Resources>

Let's Celebrate! Texas Department of Agriculture, 2005. http://www.squaremeals.org/vgn/tda/files/2348/3677_Outside%20the%20Cake%20Box.pdf

Let's Party: Party Ideas for School and Home. West Virginia Department of Education, 1994.
<http://wvde.state.wv.us/ctrc/materials.html>

Let's Play: Innovative Games and Activities for Kids. West Virginia Department of Education, 2002. <http://wvde.state.wv.us/ctrc/materials.html>

For healthy snack resources, see the Connecticut Nutrition Resource Library catalog ("Cooking for Kids" section) at <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2626&q=320754#Resources>

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Healthy Food Ideas*

- Low-fat or nonfat plain or flavored milk, 100% juice, water, flavored/sparkling water (without added sugars or sweeteners), sparkling punch (seltzer and 100% fruit juice)
- Fruit smoothies (blend berries, bananas and pineapple)
- Fresh fruit assortment, fruit and cheese kabobs, fruit salad, fruit with low-fat whipped topping
- Dried fruit (raisins, cranberries, apricots, banana chips), 100% fruit snacks
- Vegetable trays with low-fat dip, celery and carrots with peanut butter and raisins
- Whole-grain crackers with cheese cubes, string cheese or hummus
- Waffles or pancakes topped with fruit
- Pretzels, low-fat popcorn, rice cakes, bread sticks, graham crackers and animal crackers
- Angel food cake, plain or topped with fruit
- Bagel slices with peanut butter or jam, fruit or grain muffin (low-fat), whole wheat English muffin, hot pretzels
- Pizza with low-fat toppings (vegetables, lean ham, Canadian bacon), pizza dippers with marinara sauce
- Ham, cheese or turkey sandwiches or wraps (with low-fat condiments)
- Low-fat pudding, low-fat yogurt, squeezable yogurt, yogurt smoothies, yogurt parfaits or banana splits (yogurt and fruit topped with cereal, granola or crushed graham crackers)
- Quesadillas or bean burrito with salsa
- Low-fat breakfast or granola bars
- Low-fat tortilla chips with salsa or bean dip
- Trail/cereal mix (whole-grain, low-sugar cereals mixed with dried fruit, pretzels, etc.)
- Nuts and seeds

*Check for food allergies before serving.

For more information on a healthy school environment, contact Susan Fiore, MS, RD, Nutrition Education Coordinator at susan.fiore@ct.gov or (860) 807-2075.

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