



Creating Healthy Schools

6.2 Foods Served at Parties and Celebrations

What is the current policy?

Our school district understands the importance of providing nutritious foods and beverages that meet the standards set by U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans. To reinforce healthy habits at our schools, we will limit the foods and beverages served during parties and celebrations throughout the school day to no more than one party per class per month. Each party will include no more than one food or beverage

that does not meet nutrition standards for foods and beverages sold individually. The district will distribute a list of healthy party ideas and celebration guidelines to parents/guardians and teachers. Schools shall inform parents/guardians of the classroom celebration guidelines. Classroom celebrations will focus on activities (e.g., giving free time, extra recess, music and reading time) rather than on food.

Ideas!

How can your school get more involved?

There are several ways you can become active with school wellness. Here are a few examples:

Birthday Celebration Ideas

- Create a “celebrate me” book for the birthday child. Have classmates write stories or poems and draw pictures to describe what is special about the birthday child.
- Let the birthday child choose an activity or game.
- Choose the class music for writing or independent study time.
- Make a sign, sash, crown, button, or badge for the birthday child.

Holiday Celebration Ideas

Fall holidays

- Focus on costumes for Halloween. Have a parade or costume contest.
- Have students draw a picture of what they are thankful for on Thanksgiving.

(more on back)

Why is this important?

Making healthy food choices helps to create a positive learning environment. Foods served during classroom celebrations are often foods that are high in fat, added sugars, and empty calories like cake, candy, chips, pizza or soda. Celebrating with these food items promotes unhealthy food choices and can increase the risk of gaining weight and other health problems. It is important to set a positive example promoting healthy food items during parties and celebrations.



Resources:

- The Center for Science in the Public Interest has created a Healthy School Celebrations document with recipes for healthy celebration foods and celebration ideas broken down by month. Information can be found at: http://cspinet.org/new/pdf/healthy_school_celebrations.pdf
- The Connecticut State Department of Education has produced information regarding healthy celebrations that includes activities to replace food at school celebrations as well as the benefits of healthy celebrations. Information can be found at the following links: <http://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/Resources/HealthyCelebrations.pdf>
Also: http://www.mdpta.org/documents/Healthy_Celebrations.pdf
- Action for Healthy Kids has information on ideas to modify birthday celebrations as well general school celebrations. This document is available at: <http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/game-on/find-challenges/1786-ten-tips-for-making-the-switch-to-healthy-celebrations>

Two other versions of this policy item are available for both administration and family to assist with implementation.



Ideas!

Winter holidays

- Go caroling and sing for other classes or at a senior center for December holidays.
- Have students write down one positive comment about each classmate and pass them out for Valentine's Day.

Spring holidays

- Plan a St. Patrick's Day scavenger hunt that leads to a pot of gold filled with treasures such as markers, pens, pencils, erasers, etc.
- Decorate flower pots for parents/families and plant a flower or seed.

General Celebration Ideas

- Create a healthy party idea book. Ask school staff and parents to send in healthy recipes and ideas or activities, and games.
- Instead of food, ask parents/families to donate a book for the classroom or school library. Read it to the class or invite the child's parents to read it to the class.
- Organize a special community project like inviting senior citizens for lunch or making blankets for animal rescue shelters.
- Take into account potential food allergies.

Healthy Food Ideas

- Fruit smoothies
- Fruit kabobs
- Low-fat trail mix
- Low-fat or nonfat milk
- Celery topped with peanut butter and raisins
- Low-fat yogurt
- Graham crackers
- Whole grain crackers with cheese
- Dried fruit
- Low-fat popcorn