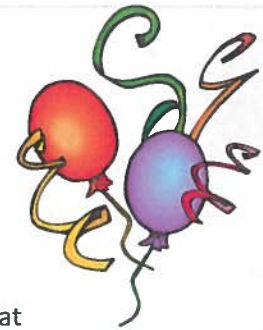


Healthy Birthdays, Celebrations & Family Events¹



Birthdays, celebrations, and family events are great opportunities to promote a healthy lifestyle, provide consistent messages and create excitement around nutritious choices at school. Plan events that emphasize healthy foods and align with classroom lessons or shift the focus and plan non-food events centered on physical activity, music, art and games. Host events that make it easy for children to practice making healthy choices.

Birthdays – *the birthday child can:*

- Be the teacher’s helper.
- Wear a special crown, sash, button or badge all day.
- Donate and/or read a favorite book to the class.
- Choose the class music for writing or independent study time.
- Receive a personalized birthday card from the teacher via email or snail mail.
- Choose a game or activity the class does for the last few minutes of the school day.
- Have special time (for a walk, game or other activity) with the teacher, principal or another adult.
- Receive a “Celebrate Me” book from classmates with written stories, poems or drawings about the birthday child.



*Children like
adventure – don’t
be afraid to try
something new!*

Promote Healthy Living

Plan family events that get parents engaged and on board with healthy living, as this will create more buy-in and support for a healthy school food culture. It also makes it more likely that healthy habits will be reinforced at home.



*For a list of healthy
school food ideas for
snacks, celebrations
and family events visit:*

www.ActionforHealthyKids.org/Tipsheet-Food-Ideas

Family Events

- Health fairs
- School garden work days
- Cooking lessons or “Iron Chef” competitions
- Physical activity events with healthy snacks or prizes (dance contests, fun runs, obstacle courses, bike-a-thons, sock hops)
- Screenings of movies that promote healthy living
- Nutrition classes for the family from community partners like your cooperative university extension service
- Fall festival with active fall-themed games and a farmers’ market
- Walk-to-school month with parent participation
- Creation of school teams for local runs or walks
- Parents and teachers vs. kids sports competition
- 30-day challenges – pick a healthy habit and organize a competition around it, starting with a kick-off event and ending with a celebration



Healthy Celebrations

Celebrations

- Give children extra recess time instead of a party.
- Have a dance party. Let students select the music. Invite the principal and other school staff!
- Get students involved in planning and preparing for celebrations – let them make decorations and favors and let them choose the games.
- Create a book honoring what is being celebrated that day. Have students draw pictures showing what the day means to them.
- Organize a special community service project instead of a party. Invite senior citizens in for lunch, collect goods and make cards for sheltered families, organize a project outside for Earth Day.
- Have students vote on a special class art project or craft. Invite a local artist to come in and do a demonstration.
- Arrange a treasure hunt around the classroom. Provide a special non-food treat at the end. Use a theme that ties into what the kids are learning in class.
- Ask students to come up with healthy party ideas, and ask parents to send in healthy recipes and ideas for activities, games and crafts. Create a “healthy classroom party guide” to distribute to parents.
- Plan around holiday themes. Students can make cards for winter holidays, decorate the classroom with hearts for Valentine’s Day, and learn an Irish step-dance for St. Patrick’s Day. Search education websites for ideas.



When food is offered

- Make good nutrition the expectation and the easy choice – offer fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low fat/fat-free dairy products and water.
- Check your school’s wellness policy or school improvement plan to see if they contain any guidelines or goals about foods for birthdays, celebrations, and family events. If they don’t, find out what it would take to address this issue.



Resources

Coalition for Activity and Nutrition to Defeat Obesity (CanDo) & Healthy Kids Club

Guide to Healthy School Celebrations:

www.ActionforHealthyKids.org/HealthyPartyGuide-CanDo

Action for Healthy Kids® partners with teachers, students, parents, school wellness experts and more to fight childhood obesity, undernourishment and physical inactivity by helping schools become healthier places so kids can live healthier lives. Our programs, tools and resources make it possible for everyone to play their part in ending the nation’s childhood obesity epidemic.

www.ActionforHealthyKids.org

The websites listed in this document are provided as a service only to identify potentially useful ideas and resources for creating healthier school cultures. Action for Healthy Kids is not responsible for maintaining these external websites, nor does the listing of these sites constitute or imply endorsement of their content.

¹ Adapted from “Healthy Celebrations,” Connecticut State Department of Education, May 2005 & “Healthy Celebrations at School,” Ohio Action for Healthy Kids, 2012

NON-FOOD CELEBRATION IDEAS



CHOOSE A PRIZE

- Pencils or erasers
- Stickers
- Books
- Enter a drawing or raffle for a bigger prize
- Earn tokens or points toward a prize



GET MOVING

- Lead a special physical activity break
- Host a special event such as a dance or kite-flying party
- Provide extra recess or PE time
- Turn on the music and let students dance for a few minutes
- Have a themed parade around your school



SHAKE UP YOUR ROUTINE

- Let student choose a special activity or be a teacher's helper
- Allow student to select a special book or invite a guest to read aloud
- Go on a scavenger hunt
- Host a special dress day where students can wear hats or pajamas



SHOW RECOGNITION

- Give a certificate or ribbon
- Post a sign in the classroom or on a prominent bulletin board
- Give a shout-out in the morning announcements
- For birthdays, allow child to wear a crown or special sash

HEALTHY SNACK & BEVERAGES IDEAS*

*Use the [Alliance's Smart Snacks Product Calculator](#) to ensure items meet the USDA Smart Snacks in School nutrition standards. Ensure food allergies of any participants are known before serving any food item.



BEVERAGES

- Water
- 100% fruit juice with no added sugar
- Fat-free or low fat milk
- Fruit smoothies (made with frozen fruit with no added sugar and fat-free or low fat yogurt)
- 100% fruit juice slushes with no added sugar
- Silly Water—add fruit and herbs to plain water for fruit-infused blend



FRUITS & VEGGIES

- Fresh fruit—trays, salads or kabobs
- Fresh vegetables—trays, salads or kabobs
- Canned fruit or fruit cups (in water, 100% fruit juice or light syrup)
- Frozen fruit or fruit cups (in water, 100% fruit juice or light syrup)
- Frosty fruits—freeze your own fruit (frozen grapes make a great summer treat!)
- Dried fruit with no added sugar



WHOLE GRAINS

- Whole grain crackers, pretzels or cereal bars
- Small whole grain bagels or waffles or pancakes topped with fruit or nut or seed butter
- Low-fat or air-popped popcorn (no added butter or salt)
- Graham crackers
- Baked whole grain tortilla chips with salsa or bean dip



PROTEINS

- Fat-free or low fat yogurt (serve alone or as dip for fruits or veggies)
- Nut or seed butter (serve with fruit or whole grain crackers)
- Nuts or seeds
- Trail mix made of nuts or seeds and dried fruit with no added sugar
- Low-fat cheese (serve with fruit or whole grain crackers)
- Hummus (serve with vegetables or whole grain crackers)

For more information, contact Stephanie Joyce, MS, RD/LD, SNS, National Nutrition Advisor at the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, at stephanie.joyce@healthiergeneration.org

