

Promoting a Healthy School Environment



It's only a cupcake...

Obesity is one of the most serious health concerns for our children. More than one-third of children and teens are overweight or obese and many are developing diabetes before they reach elementary school.

Schools provide an excellent venue to teach children about the importance of nutrition and physical activity for health. While there is nothing wrong with the occasional treat, unhealthy choices have become the norm rather than the exception. School celebrations provide an opportunity to make healthy eating fun and educate children about different ways to celebrate that are not centered-upon food.



Child-Centered Activities

- Play indoor games of students' choosing
- Create a birthday poster or book for the child and have classmates draw a picture or write a message to describe what is special about the child
- Allow the child to be a special helper for class activities
- Create a special "birthday tool-kit". The child gets to wear a sash, crown, and sit in a special decorated chair

Healthy Food Ideas

- 🍎 Fresh fruit
- 🍎 Snack cake without icing
- 🍎 Low fat yogurt with fruit and granola
- 🍎 Custom trail mix (raisins, cereals, pretzels, and nuts or seeds in separate containers with small cups and plastic spoons for "scooping") allow children to create their own custom mix)
- 🍎 Fig bars
- 🍎 Whole grain crackers with cheese
- 🍎 Fresh cut veggies with ranch dressing
- 🍎 100% fruit juice or water

Non-Food Ways to Celebrate: Ideas for Parents

- 🦋 Bring balloons or bubbles (from the dollar store) instead of snacks
- 🦋 Let your child dress in a thematic way and bring ideas for crafts promoting the theme (princess, pirate, flowers, bugs, etc.)
- 🦋 Come during your lunch-hour and read the child's favorite book aloud to the class

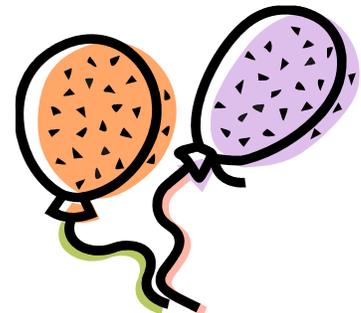
Benefits of Healthy Celebrations

- Promotes a Healthy School Environment!
- Healthy Kids Learn Better. Children who are more physically active and who benefit from good nutrition tend to perform better in the classroom.
- Protects Children with Food Allergies. Non-food celebrations allow children with allergies to fully participate in celebration activities.
- Reinforces Healthy Messages. Providing healthy celebrations provides consistent messages and supports what children are learning in the classroom about healthy behaviors.

Additional Resources

- *Healthy Celebrations*. Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Health and Nutrition Services and Child/Family/School Partnerships
http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Student/NutritionEd/Healthy_Celebrations.pdf
- *Healthy Kids Learn Better: A Coordinated School Health Approach*. Oregon Department of Health Services, 2008.
<http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/ah/cshp/cshp.shtml>
- *Classroom Party Ideas*. University of California Cooperative Extension Ventura County
http://ceventura.ucdavis.edu/newsletterfiles/Hansen_Trust_Newsletter10234.pdf
- *School Celebrations*. North Carolina Division of Public Health, NC Cooperative Extension and North Carolina Action for Healthy Kids
<http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/>

Information compiled and presented by Kathy Gunter, Ph.D.
Extension Family Community Development Specialist, College of Health and Human Sciences
For more information: kathy.gunter@oregonstate.edu



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