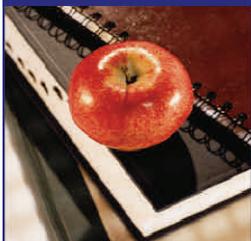


GUIDELINES FOR HEALTHY SNACKS AND CELEBRATIONS



Promoting a Healthy School Environment

Birthday parties and holiday celebrations at school provide a unique opportunity to make healthy eating fun and exciting for children. Schools can take advantage of classroom celebrations to serve nutritious foods that taste good and provide students with an opportunity to learn about healthy eating.

But It's Just a Cupcake...

Foods for school celebrations often include unhealthy choices such as cupcakes, candy, cookies and soda. While there is nothing wrong with an occasional treat, unhealthy foods are often the norm rather than the exception. Parties, food rewards, food fundraisers, vending machines, snacks and school stores often include foods that are low in nutrients and high in fat, added sugars and sodium.

Healthy choices are important because children's eating habits are poor. Children ages 2 to 18 consume almost 40 percent of their calories from solid fats and added sugars.¹ Their diets do not include enough fruits, vegetables (particularly dark green and orange vegetables and legumes), whole grains or calcium-rich foods, and are too high in sodium, saturated fat and added sugars.² Currently, 17 percent of children and adolescents ages 2 to 19 are overweight and 1 in 3 children are overweight or obese.³ Between 1980 and 2004, obesity tripled among children and adolescents.⁴



Constant exposure to low-nutrient foods compromises children's health and learning. By providing students with nutritious foods, schools can create an environment that positively influences children's health and learning, and teaches healthy lifestyle choices that will continue into adulthood.

Benefits of Healthy Celebrations

- ▶ **Healthy Kids Learn Better:** Research clearly demonstrates that good nutrition is linked to better behavior and academic performance. To provide the best possible learning environment for children, schools must also provide an environment that supports healthy behaviors.
- ▶ **Provides Consistent Messages:** Providing healthy classroom celebrations demonstrates a school commitment to promoting healthy behaviors. It supports the classroom lessons students are learning about health, instead of contradicting them. Healthy celebrations promote positive lifestyle choices to reduce student health risks and improve learning.
- ▶ **Promotes a Healthy School Environment:** To improve eating behaviors, students need to receive consistent, reliable health information and ample opportunity to use it. Healthy celebrations are an important part of providing a healthy school environment.
- ▶ **Creates Excitement About Nutrition:** Children are excited about new and different things, including fun party activities and healthy snacks. School staff and parents need not worry that children will be disappointed if typical party foods aren't served in the classroom. Holiday treats and traditional birthday parties with cake can still be available at home.
- ▶ **Protects Children with Food Allergies:** When parents send in food, it is difficult to ensure the safety of children with food allergies. Schools can protect food-allergic children by providing nonfood celebrations or, if food is served, obtaining it from known sources such as the school food service program.

Classroom Parties/Group Snack*

Alternate ways to celebrate birthdays and holidays that don't include food sharing should be considered and will be posted on the district website in "Guidelines for Snacks/Celebrations"

School staff and their designees will make sure that a variety of foods, including healthy foods, are offered at classroom parties and events that include food sharing.

Only 100% juice, milk, or water will be available as beverage choices during the school day to include classroom parties.

Classroom parties will be limited to serving one dessert item, with the emphasis on a variety of healthful choices.

Healthy food item ideas will be posted on the district website to assist parents with their choice of food items to provide when sending in food for a classroom party or event

IDEAS FOR HEALTHY CELEBRATIONS

Schools can help promote a positive learning environment by providing healthy celebrations that shift the focus from food to the children. Choose a variety of activities, games and crafts that students 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 Students

- ▶ Plan special party games and activities.
- ▶ Recognize students in your classroom as “Student of the Day,” or “Week.” Highlight student’s strengths and positive attributes.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ For birthdays, let the birthday teen choose and lead an active game for everyone.
- ▶ Instead of a party, organize a special community service project, e.g., invite senior citizens in for lunch, make “curechiefs” for chemotherapy patients or blankets for rescue dogs. Involve students in planning the project and providing needed materials.
- ▶ Drawings for donated prizes among students who meet certain performance standards
- ▶ Extra homework opportunity, or bonus points
- ▶ Late homework pass / reduce homework
- ▶ Short outdoor walking activity / 5 minute chat break



Resources

Action Guide for School Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies. Connecticut State Department of Education, Revised 2009. <http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2678&q=322436>
Healthy School Environment Resource List. Connecticut State Department of Education. http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Nutrition/hse_resource_list.pdf

References

- 1 Reedy, J., & Krebs-Smith, S.M. (2010). Dietary Sources of Energy, Solid Fats, and Added Sugars among Children and Adolescents in the United States. *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*, 110(10):1477-1484
- 2 U.S. Department of Agriculture Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion. (2009). The quality of children’s diets in 2003-04 as measured by the Healthy Eating Index – 2005. *Nutrition Insight*, 43. Retrieved on October 6, 2011 from <http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/Publications/NutritionInsights/Insight43.pdf>.
- 3 Ogden, C.L., Carroll, M.D., Curtin, L.R., Lamb, M.M., & Flegal, K.M. (2010). Prevalence of high body mass index in US children and adolescents, 2007-2008. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 303(3):242-249.
- 4 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. (2006). *Prevalence of Overweight Among Children and Adolescents: United States, 2003-2004*. Retrieved on October 6, 2011 from http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hestat/overweight/overweight_child_03.htm.

Healthy Food Ideas*

*Check for food allergies before serving.

Low-fat or nonfat milk, 100% juice, water, flavored/sparkling water (without added sugars or sweeteners), sparkling punch (seltzer and 100% fruit juice)

Fruit smoothies (blend frozen berries, bananas and pineapple) or fruit and low-fat yogurt smoothies

Fresh fruit assortment, fruit and cheese kabobs, fruit salad, sliced fruit with low-fat yogurt dip

Dried fruit without added sugars or sweeteners

Vegetable trays with low-fat dip, celery and carrots with peanut butter and raisins

Whole-grain crackers with low-fat cheese cubes, string cheese or hummus

Whole-grain 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

Whole-grain bagel slices with peanut butter or jam, low-fat whole-grain muffin, whole-wheat English muffins and hot pretzels

Pizza with low-fat toppings (vegetables, lean ham, Canadian bacon), pizza dippers with marinara sauce

Ham or turkey sandwiches or wraps with low-fat cheese and low-fat, low-sodium condiments

Low-fat pudding, low-fat yogurt, squeezable yogurt, yogurt smoothies, yogurt parfaits or banana splits (low-fat yogurt and fruit topped with whole-grain cereal, granola or crushed graham crackers)

Quesadillas or bean burritos with salsa

Low-fat whole-grain granola bars

Low-fat whole-grain tortilla chips with salsa or bean dip

Trail or cereal mix (whole-grain, low-sugar cereals mixed with dried fruit and pretzels)

Nuts and seeds without added fat



Smith Vocational and Agricultural High School highly values the health and well-being of every staff member and will plan and implement activities and policies that support personal efforts by staff to maintain a healthy lifestyle. The school should establish and maintain a wellness committee. The committee should develop, promote, and oversee a multifaceted plan to promote staff health and wellness. The plan should be based on input solicited from school staff and should outline ways to encourage healthy eating, physical activity, and other elements of a healthy lifestyle among school staff.

Adapted from the Connecticut State Department of Education, *Healthy Celebrations (Revised 2011)* and *Healthy Fundraising (Revised 2011)*. <http://www.ct.gov/sde/nutrition>.