

Wellness

Administrative Procedure: 536.5



Healthy Celebrations

Making the Healthy Choice the Easy Choice

School celebrations provide a unique opportunity for fun while practicing healthy food choices. Schools can take advantage of classroom celebrations to serve food that tastes good, is nutritious and provides students with an opportunity for nutrition education experiences.

But it's Just a Cupcake...



Typically, foods for school celebrations include cupcakes, candy, cookies and soda. So what's the harm? There is nothing wrong with an occasional treat, but unhealthy choices have become the norm rather than the exception. Parties, treats used as classroom rewards, food fundraisers, vending machines, snacks and school stores constantly expose children to high-fat, high-sugar, low-nutrient choices.

Our children's overall eating habits are poor. Only two percent of children meet all Food Pyramid recommendations. Most children do not eat enough fruits, vegetables or whole grains. Obesity rates among children are on the rise, with serious health consequences. Constant exposure to low-nutrient foods makes it difficult for children to learn how to make healthy food choices. By providing students with nutritious choices wherever food is available (including the classroom), schools can positively influence children's eating habits.

Benefits of Healthy Celebrations

1. 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.

2. Provide Consistent Messages

Providing healthy classroom celebrations demonstrates a school's commitment to promoting healthy behaviors. It supports health lessons instead of contradicting them. Healthy celebrations promote positive lifestyle choices to reduce student health risks and improve learning.

3. Promote a Healthy School Environment

To positively change eating behaviors, students need to receive consistent, reliable health information and opportunities to use it. Healthy celebrations are an important part of providing a healthy school environment.

4. Create Excitement about Nutrition

Children are excited about new, different things, including fun party activities and healthy snacks. Teachers need not worry that children will be disappointed if typical party foods aren't served in school. Holiday treats and traditional birthday parties will still be available at home.

5. Protect 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 non-food celebrations or, if food is served, obtaining it from known sources such as the school food service program.



Moorhead Area Public Schools Nutrition Philosophy during students' school day

School meals are the main source of nutrition.

Snacks are to:

1. supplement the meal;
2. help, not hinder, students' nutrition;
3. provide serving size and calories based on age/activity;
4. be consumed infrequently.

Parents can decide on use of discretionary calories at home.

* See Administrative Procedure 536.6 on discretionary calories.



How-Tos for Healthy Parties

- ∞ Variety is the "spice of life" and the "life of the party." Plan several contrasting activities – active and quiet, indoor and outdoor, individual and group.
- ∞ Try something new. Children like adventure. In addition to familiar games and foods, offer something different.
- ∞ Plan creative experiences such as art, music and cooking.
- ∞ Involve children in planning and preparing the party. Let them make decorations and favors.
- ∞ Put food in its proper place. Refreshments should complement the fun, not become the "main event."
- ∞ Be sure that each child receives a prize or favor, if such awards are given.
- ∞ Don't use food as rewards or prizes. Select a physical activity instead.
- ∞ Choose food for fun, good taste and health. Parties that feature healthful foods provide opportunities for children to practice making wise food choices.

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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.
- ∞ Give children extra recess time instead of a class party. For birthdays, let the birthday child choose and lead an active game.
- ∞ 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.
- ∞ Instead of a party, organize a special community service project (e.g. invite senior citizens for program). 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, 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.

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Healthy Food Ideas:

- ∞ Low fat or non-fat milk, 100% juice, water, flavored/sparkling water (without added sugars or sweeteners), sparkling punch (seltzer and 100% juice)
- ∞ Fruit smoothies (blend berries, bananas, pineapple and ice)
- ∞ Fresh fruit assortment, fruit and cheese kabobs, fruit salad, fruit with low fat whipped topping
- ∞ Dried fruit (raisins, cranberries, apricots, banana chips)
- ∞ Vegetable trays with low fat dip, celery and carrots with peanut butter and raisins
- ∞ Whole grain, salt free crackers with low fat cheese cubes, string cheese or hummus
- ∞ Multigrain waffles or pancakes topped with fruit
- ∞ Whole wheat mini bagels or whole wheat English muffin with peanut butter or jam, fruit or mini whole grain muffin (low fat)
- ∞ Low salt pretzels, low fat popcorn, rice cakes
- ∞ Low fat cheese or turkey sandwich, wraps, or pitas (with low fat condiments)
- ∞ Quesadillas or bean burrito with salsa
- ∞ Low fat granola bars
- ∞ Baked tortilla chips with salsa or bean dip or pita chips with hummus
- ∞ Trail/cereal mix (whole grain, low sugar cereals mixed with dried fruit, low salt pretzels & nuts)
- ∞ Low salt nuts and seeds