

# HEALTHY SCHOOL CELEBRATIONS

**Let's Party!** From birthday parties to holiday celebrations, there are many celebrations in elementary schools. Along with the fun, usually comes food. Just one school party can include pizza, sugary juice drinks, chips, cake, and ice cream, *plus* a goodie bag with candy.

Offering so many treats so often can contribute to unhealthy eating habits. However, with a few easy changes, parents, teachers, and school administrators can shift the focus of school parties from unhealthy food to healthy fun.

## IDEAS FOR HEALTHIER CLASSROOM CELEBRATIONS

- ◆ Have a scavenger hunt for items or information in the classroom or around the school. Have children search for items related to the party theme.
- ◆ Provide "free choice" activity time at the end of the day.
- ◆ Provide extra recess time.
- ◆ Celebrate creatively by setting up craft stations and playing music in the background. Ask parents to provide the supplies such as clay, craft paper, pencils, markers, paints, and stickers.

For holiday craft ideas see:

<http://www.dltk-kids.com/crafts/holidays.html>

- ◆ Plan special party games.
- ◆ Have a dance party.
- ◆ Read a children's book related to the party theme.
- ◆ Allow children a trip to the treasure box (parents can supply it with small toys, books, note pads, paints, etc.).
- ◆ Allow students to pick a book of their choice and ask the principal or a parent to come in and read it.

For a list of children's holiday books visit:

<http://childrensbooks.about.com/od/holidays/Holidays.htm>



## SCHOOL WELLNESS POLICIES

Federal law requires every school district to have a local wellness policy. These policies must address nutrition education, physical activity, school meals, and all other foods and beverages available at school.

Check your school's local wellness policy to see if it addresses school celebrations. If it doesn't, join the school wellness committee and work to include healthy celebrations as a part of your school's local wellness policy.

Provide parents with healthy ideas for birthdays and other celebrations. List only healthy items on the class party sign-up sheet.

Experts recommend limiting celebrations that involve food to no more than one party per class per month, and that each party include no more than one junk food item (see [schoolwellnesspolicies.org](http://schoolwellnesspolicies.org) for a model policy).

*For more information visit*

*[http://www.cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy/policy\\_options\\_healthycelebrations.html](http://www.cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy/policy_options_healthycelebrations.html)*



# BIRTHDAY PARTIES!

Keep in mind that each student's birthday can mean multiple celebrations: one at home with family, a party with friends, and then another at school. Food need not be part of *school* parties. Instead, find ways to recognize the child, celebrate them, and make them feel special.

## Ways to celebrate a birthday & recognize a child on their special day:

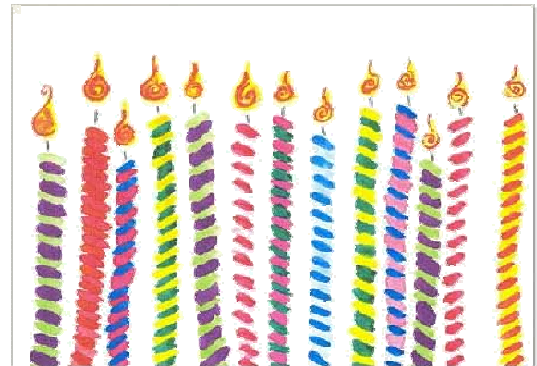
- ◇ Make a sign, sash, crown, button, or badge for the birthday child
- ◇ Let the birthday child be the teacher's assistant for the day; they can do special tasks like make deliveries to the office or be the line leader
- ◇ Let the birthday child choose an activity or game
- ◇ Allow the student to pick a book and ask the principal or a parent to come and read it
- ◇ Play an indoor game of the student's choice

## HEALTHY PARTY SNACKS

Serve snacks with fun plates, napkins, cups, or straws or have a tasting party where children can vote for their favorite healthy snack.

Use cookie cutters to make sandwiches or fruit more interesting!

- ◇ Fruit Smoothies (see recipe)
- ◇ Trail mix (pretzels, dried fruit, whole grain low-sugar cereals, sunflower or sesame seeds, etc.) Parents can bring in the ingredients and kids could make their own
- ◇ Fruit Kabobs made with a variety of fruits
- ◇ Yogurt parfaits with non-fat or low-fat yogurt, low-fat granola and fruit
- ◇ Angel food cake topped with fresh fruit
- ◇ Light or low-fat popcorn
- ◇ Low-fat pudding
- ◇ Applesauce or other fruit cups
- ◇ Raw veggies served with low-fat dip like salad dressing or hummus
- ◇ Berries with low-fat whipped topping (Cool Whip)
- ◇ Bananas or strawberries & chocolate syrup as a dip
- ◇ Graham crackers with jam or apple butter
- ◇ Fresh apple slices with caramel or yogurt dip (see recipe)
- ◇ Have each parent bring in one type of fruit and kids can make their own fruit salad
- ◇ Raisins or dried fruit such as bananas, apples, peaches, apricots, plums, etc.
- ◇ Whole grain tortilla chips and salsa
- ◇ Whole grain crackers like Triscuits with reduced-fat cheese



## RECIPE

### FRUIT MUFFINS

\*Preheat oven to 400 degrees



In a small bowl sift together:

- 1 3/4 c whole wheat pastry flour
- 3/4 tsp. salt
- 1/4 c sugar
- 2 tsp. baking powder

In a large bowl:

- Beat 2 eggs
- Add 2 T vegetable oil
- plus 3/4 c skim milk

Combine liquid and dry ingredients together with a few swift strokes (don't over mix). Add 1/2 c mashed ripe banana *Or* 1/2 c chopped apple. Spray muffin tin with cooking spray oil and fill muffin cups 3/4 way full. Bake at 400 degrees for 20-25 minutes.

\*Recipe yields 1 dozen muffins

# HEALTHY HOLIDAYS

## September

SET THE RIGHT TONE FOR THIS YEAR'S PARTIES.  
KEEP IN MIND THESE HEALTHY PARTY TIPS:

1. Celebrate without food; shift the focus from food to fun.
2. Limit each party to include no more than one junk-food item.
3. Create a healthy snack list and have parents sign up to bring in an item from the list:  
see. [http://cspinet.org/new/pdf/school\\_snacks.pdf](http://cspinet.org/new/pdf/school_snacks.pdf)



## November

### THANKSGIVING

- Have students write or draw a picture about what they are thankful for and share it with the class.
- Create a garland of gratitude. Cut leaf shapes out of construction paper and then crinkle them up to create the lines in a leaf. Flatten them out and have children write what they are grateful for. Use a piece of string and tape the stem of the leaf over the string. Display garland in class.
- Do a service project as a class field trip.



### Healthy Party Snacks:

- Turkey roll ups
- Spread apple butter on whole grain english muffins or graham crackers
- Serve warm apple cider
- Pumpkin dip (see recipe below)

### PUMPKIN DIP

*(from the Dannon Institute)*

#### Mix the following ingredients:

- 3 T canned pumpkin
  - 1 c low-fat vanilla yogurt
  - 1 T orange juice concentrate (use 100% juice)
  - ½ tsp. of cinnamon (optional)
  - 1 T maple syrup (optional)
- Dip in with graham crackers**



## October

### HALLOWEEN

Kids will get plenty of candy trick-or-treating. Try to keep the focus on fun at school.

- **Focus on the costumes!** Have a parade or costume contest.
- Instead of candy, try small toys like: temporary tattoos, stickers, small plastic spiders or ghosts, spooky plastic rings or false teeth.
- Decorate pillowcases or bags for trick-or-treating.

### Healthy Party Snacks:

- Apple Cider
- Apples with caramel or yogurt dip
- Pumpkin dip and graham crackers (see recipe below)
- Roasted pumpkin seeds
- Snack cups of canned peaches or mandarin oranges (canned in juice or light syrup)
- Oranges, cantaloupe, tangerines, mangos or dried peaches
- Carrots with low-fat ranch dressing
- Use Halloween cookie cutters to make sandwiches or fruit look frightfully delicious!



## Dec/Jan



### WINTER HOLIDAYS

- Have students make holiday cards for nursing home residents or decorate pillow cases to give to a homeless shelter.
- Go caroling and sing for other classes or at a senior center.
- Decorate the classroom with a winter theme (snowflakes, snowmen or snow angels).
- Collect personal care products and prepare kits for a homeless shelter or take a service project field trip to visit a nursing home, homeless shelter, or a food bank.
- Make snow globes out of baby food jars and white glitter or plastic snow flakes. Fill with water until a half inch is left at the top (use a hot glue gun to seal the lid).

### Healthy Party Snacks:

- Hollow out red and green peppers and fill them with a dip like low-fat ranch, hummus or guacamole and serve with vegetables
- Make fruit kabobs and alternate red and green grapes or red/green apples
- Serve green beans, broccoli, and tomatoes with a low-fat dip

### TASTY TRAIL MIX

#### Mix the following ingredients:

- 1 c dried fruit
  - 1/2 c raisins
  - 1 c Wheat Chex cereal
  - 1 c Cheerios
  - 2 c of pretzel sticks
- Serve in individual containers or let children scoop their own from a bowl**

# HEALTHY HOLIDAYS

## February



### VALENTINE'S DAY

- Have students write down one positive comment about each classmate, e.g. you're a good friend, you have a nice smile, or you are fun, and pass them out.
- Create a Valentine's Day card holder. (Cut a paper plate in half, have children paint or color the plate and write their name on it. Use a hole punch to cut holes around the bottom curve of the plate. Stitch the two halves together with colorful ribbon or string. Make a handle with the string so children can hang them at their desk).

### Healthy Party Snacks:

- Have cherry tomatoes and red peppers served with hummus or ranch dressing
- Serve strawberries, raspberries, dried cranberries, red grapes, pomegranate, or apple slices
- Very-Berry pink smoothies (see smoothie recipe and use strawberries for the fruit)



## April/May

### SPRING PARTY

- Plan a nature walk to see plants re-awakening in the spring weather.
- Decorate plastic eggs with paints, glitter and stickers and put physical activity messages on the inside (e.g. hop on one leg 5 times OR do 6 jumping jacks). Have an egg hunt and kids can act on the messages.
- Decorate flower pots for parents and plant a flower or seed.
- Have parents donate plants that children can plant in the school yard or at a housing project, senior center or other community site.

### Healthy Party Snacks:

- Carrot muffins
- Carrots with hummus or a low-fat ranch dressing
- Berries with Cool Whip
- Fruit Smoothies (see recipe below)

#### BASIC SMOOTHIE

Ingredients:

½ to 1 c fresh or frozen fruit

1 c plain non-fat yogurt

½ c fruit juice

About 4 ice cubes or use frozen fruit and skip the ice

Directions: Combine all ingredients in a blender and process on high until ice is crushed and the mixture is smooth and creamy

## March

### ST. PATRICK'S DAY



- Teach an Irish step dance.
- Decorate the room with shamrocks made from construction paper.
- Plan a St. Paddy's day scavenger hunt that leads to a pot of gold filled with treasures, such as markers, pens, pencils, erasers, etc.
- Read about Irish history or a story about St. Patrick.

### Healthy Party Snacks:

#### Make It a "Green" Day

- Serve kiwi (cut in half and serve with a spoon)
- Have cucumbers, celery sticks, broccoli, sugar snap peas, green beans, or green peppers with hummus or a low-fat dressing like ranch or thousand island
- Serve whole grain tortilla chips with guacamole
- Try edamame (pronounced "eh-dah-MAH-may"). It is fun to eat and easy to serve



## June

With the end of school comes numerous celebrations. Keep the focus away from food and plan activities to highlight the end of the school year and the coming of summer.

- Fresh produce is easier to come by in summer. Talk about fruits from around the world and discuss where they originated.
  - Have a tasting party with star fruit, papaya, mango, kiwi, guava, and/or pineapple.
- Visit a local farm, garden or orchard to learn about fruits and vegetables that grow in your area.
- Have children make a collage or write a story about what they plan to do over the summer.
- Have students write stories or put together items that remind them of the past school year and take them home.
- Plan an outdoor game/activity to enjoy the warmer weather.

#### FRUIT DIP

Ingredients:

½ c vanilla low-fat yogurt

1 tsp. honey

¼ tsp. cinnamon

¼ tsp. nutmeg

Directions: Mix ingredients together until blended.

Serve with your favorite fruits!