

Celebrations at School

Federal law requires every school district to have a local wellness policy. These policies address nutrition education, physical activity, school meals and all other foods and drinks available at school. Since foods and drinks are a part of every school day, local wellness policies can build healthy school environments that support successful students eating smart and moving more. Research shows that children and teens who eat smart and move more focus better and have fewer behavior problems. They also have better math, reading and writing test scores. As families, educators and administrators, you have the chance to put the policy into practice. You can make a difference by encouraging healthy options for fundraising, concessions, school stores, vending, classroom rewards and school celebrations.

School and classroom celebrations are a fun way to strengthen the message that healthy food choices lead to healthier bodies and minds. Your local wellness policy can define how celebrations are carried out. It is important to show students that there are many healthy options to choose from, rather than to only ban "bad" foods. Decide when food will be part of group celebrations and encourage celebrations that include activities other than eating. If school celebrations do involve food, work with the Child Nutrition Program to offer healthy options and support school meals. Remember to make sure that foods are safe, healthy and served in appropriate portion sizes. For better choices, consider using foods and drinks that meet the NC Nutrition Standards for à la carte foods and drinks.

Take Action Now

School Board Members

- Are school and classroom celebrations covered in your district's local wellness policy? If not, include in your policy a guide for foods used in celebrations.
- Show your support for the local wellness policy.

School Health Advisory Council/School Wellness Committee Members

- Work with teachers and schools to encourage the use of this handout for ideas on healthy celebrations.
- Support the implementation of healthy school and classroom celebrations.

Principals

- Enforce the district wellness policy for school and classroom celebrations that promote healthy food choices and physical activity.
- Consider adopting a stricter school and classroom celebrations policy for your school.

PTA Members and Families

- Identify community partners who can help.
- Support and bring healthy foods or drinks to a school or classroom celebration.

School and Classroom Celebration Ideas

- Make your own pizza party using chopped vegetables, fruits and low-fat cheeses
- Make your own fruit sundae bar with fresh fruit and low-fat yogurt/sorbet
- Host a culture club - ask students to find and prepare healthy recipes from different cultures
- Play indoor games of the students' choosing
- Engage children in a special art project
- Take the children on a field trip
- Turn on some music and have a dance party
- Take a fun walk around the school with the principal or teacher
- Play games outside or host a field day – allow extra recess time

Snack ideas

- Snack cake squares topped with fruit and reduced-fat whipped topping
- Low-fat yogurt with fruit and granola topping
- Oatmeal raisin cookies and 1% low-fat or nonfat milk
- Fig bars
- Trail mix
- 1% low-fat or nonfat milk
- Sugar-free pudding
- Baked chips and reduced-fat dip
- Fresh apple wedges and caramel dip
- Reduced-fat popcorn
- Whole-grain crackers and cheese cubes
- Fresh-cut vegetables and reduced-fat ranch dip or salsa
- 100% fruit juice (8 oz.) with no added sweeteners
- Water

Example School Celebrations Policy in North Carolina

Clay County Schools:

Classroom snacks and celebrations should reinforce the importance of healthy choices. "Foods of minimum nutritional value" as defined by USDA may not be distributed to students during the school day. Seasonal celebrations involving food shall be limited to 4 times per year in elementary schools and 2 times per year in middle schools. Celebrations and parties shall *feature* activities other than eating and shall take place after the lunch period. Providing healthful food in appropriate portions is strongly encouraged, with "treat" foods limited to one of the party refreshments. Schools shall be supplied with examples of healthy food ideas and activities for parties, to be shared with parents. If food is prepared and brought from home, any food allergies among students are clearly communicated. Parents who offer to bring food for a class from non-commercial sources are given written guidelines for safety of food items brought from home.

For more information on local wellness policy...

www.actionforhealthykids.org
www.nchealthyschools.org
www.nutritionnc.com
www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com

