

WEALTHY CELEBRATIONS

Complete Toolkit



SNAP-Ed

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION



About Healthy Celebrations



It's a special day! Let's Celebrate!

Celebrating special occasions is an important part of practicing self-care. It gives us a break from the norm and helps us to slow down and have fun, create lasting memories, build relationships, and feel special. These can all be important elements of maintaining a healthy body and mind. Healthy Celebrations aims to reinforce these important traditions, all while supporting students' whole body wellness.

Schools and Wellness

Children spend a major portion of their time at school. They consume between 40% and 60% of their calories during the school day. And they are actively forming lifelong attitudes about health behaviors while they're at school.

Eating and activity habits matter

There is nothing innately wrong with celebrating a special day with cupcakes, a movie, or a pizza party. When used in moderation, these behaviors can all be a part of a healthy lifestyle. But when they start to become the norm rather than the exception, we begin to form unhealthy behavioral habits—habits that can lead to loss in energy and attention span, as well as a host of chronic illnesses.

An Opportunity!

Let's look at healthy celebrations as an opportunity! By utilizing healthy celebrations, we can broaden students' perceptions (as well as our own) about what it means to treat oneself, to show oneself love, and to have a good time. By finding creative ways to incorporate healthy behaviors into school celebrations, we can help to normalize some of the activities that we know help to grow happy, healthy kids.

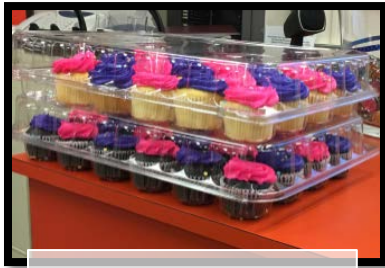
Benefits of Adopting Healthy Celebration Guidelines:

- Help students develop healthier eating habits and more active lifestyle
- Normalize participating in physical activities and enjoying nourishing food
- Level the playing field for parents
- May lead to improved cognitive performance and psychological wellbeing, and decreased risk of many chronic illnesses among students
- Less mess for teachers to clean
- Make party days and birthday celebrations feel extra special

We hope you'll use this toolkit as a resource to help you put together fun, easy, and extra-special celebrations at your school

Creating and Intentional Environment

Healthy celebrations can be very simple. The ultimate goal is to create an environment in which physical activities, non-food incentives, and healthy snacks are the norm on special days, rather than sweets, highly processed foods and sedentary behaviors.



Sugary & highly processed foods



Non-food incentives



Sedentary behaviors

Replacement behavior

Replacement behavior

Replacement behavior



Healthy snacks



This can be done on a day-to-day, party-to-party level at teachers or administrators discretion, or it can be achieved through school-wide healthy celebrations guidelines. While school-wide guidelines have the potential to create the largest impact, we believe that any healthy change is good change. In the following pages, we will provide you with celebration ideas that can be used for any type of special event, as well as some tips on implementing a school-wide set of healthy celebration guidelines. Please take time to look through this guide and consider which changes could be implemented in your school.

Celebration Ideas: Healthy snacks, general

When preparing for celebration day, one of the first questions to ask yourself should be “Do I want to include food in this celebration?” If your answer to this is ‘yes’, there are limitless affordable, healthy options to serve. It’s only a matter of how creative you want to get, and how much time you want to spend.

If you’re looking for some healthier snacking ideas that don’t require any prep, consider the following options:



- Popcorn
- Pretzels
- Grapes
- Veggies with dip
- Hummus and whole wheat tortillas
- Fruit with yogurt dip
- String cheese



- Mandarin oranges
- Bell peppers and bean dip
- Tuna salad with whole grain crackers
- Graham crackers
- Trail mix
- Freeze dried fruit
- Granola bars



Or, if you’re looking for something a little more interactive, the following recipes are simple, fun, and can be put together on a limited budget. Consider having students participate with assembly:

Trail Mix



Popcorn



Whole Grain Breakfast Cereal



Whole Grain Fish Crackers or Pretzels



Dried Fruit

Get creative with this healthy trail mix recipe! Don’t be afraid to add new fun ingredients. Just remember to go for whole grains and unsweetened items. See how many food groups you can include!

Healthy soda



100% fruit juice concentrate



Carbonated Water

Kids LOVE this easy fruit soda recipe, and may start asking for it again and again. Just mix one 2 liter bottle of club soda with one 12 oz container of fruit juice concentrate. Double the recipe to provide enough juice for a class of 25 to have about 5 oz. each.

Fruit smoothie



2 ripe bananas and 2 apples



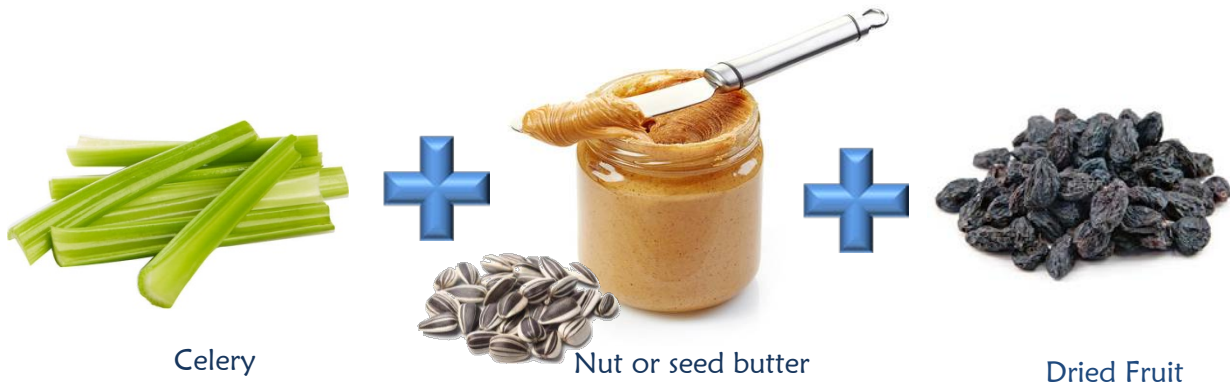
1 tbsp. nut or seed butter



2-3 cups Milk or milk substitute

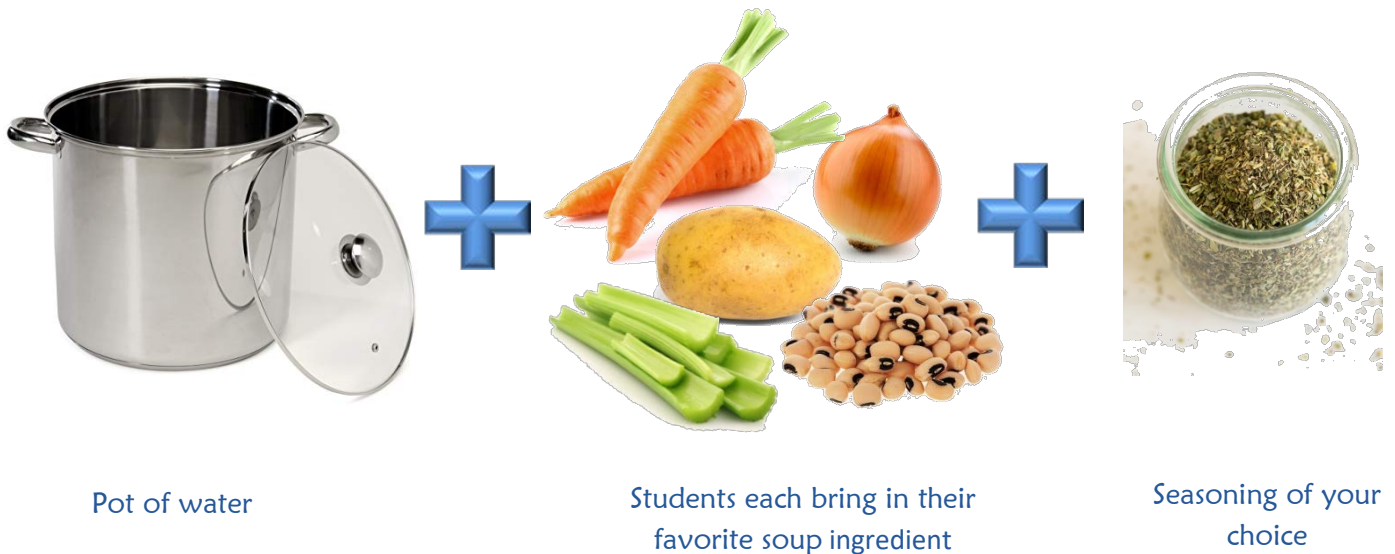
You'll need a blender for this recipe, but it only takes a few minutes to whip together, and it's tons of fun! Swap out the apple for whatever fruit you have available. Add salad greens if you want to give kiddos an extra nutrient boost! You may need to make two or three batches for an entire class to get 4- 6 oz. each.

Ants on a log



Students will love this classic combo! Sub out for sunflower seed butter if you have tree nut allergies. Get creative with you dried fruit! Dried currants or diced dates are delicious in this recipe!

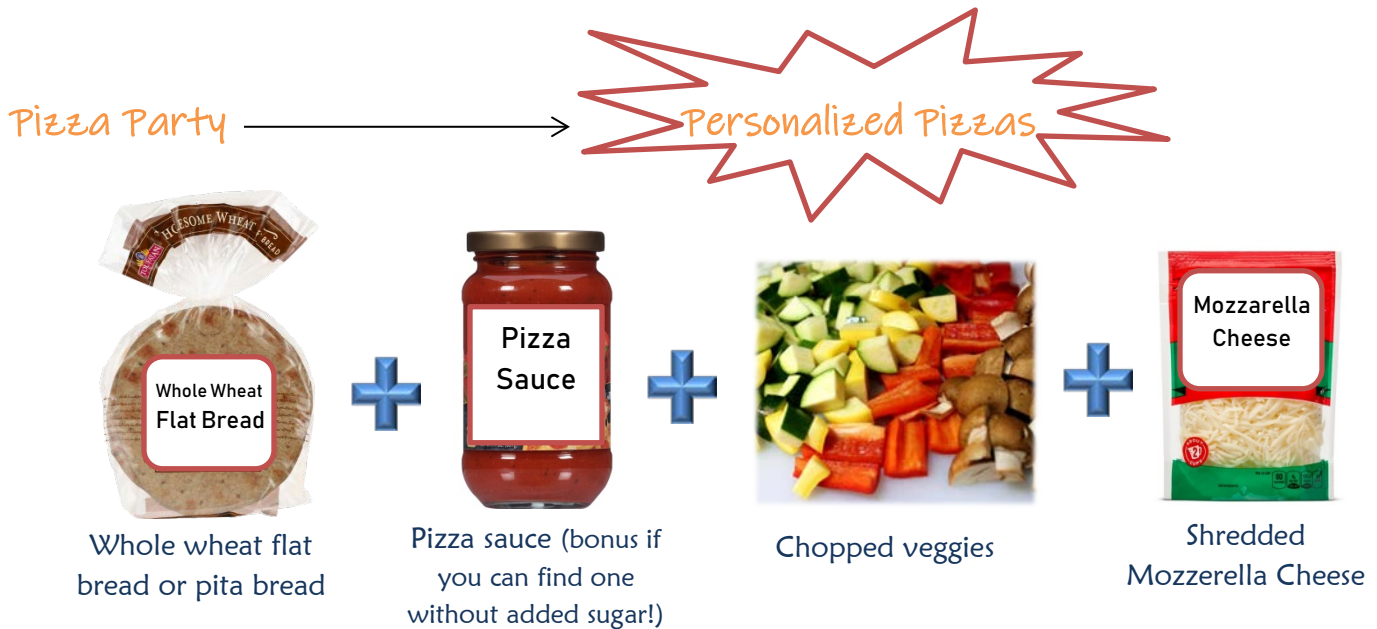
Stone soup



Ask students to bring in their favorite soup ingredient for this fun, interactive feast. All you need is a pot of water and a hot plate to heat it on. Mix veggies, beans, broth, seasoning, or whatever you have at hand see what you get! Stone soup is perfect for Thanksgiving, or any special day when you want to talk about sharing and team work.

Celebration Ideas: Direct Substitutions

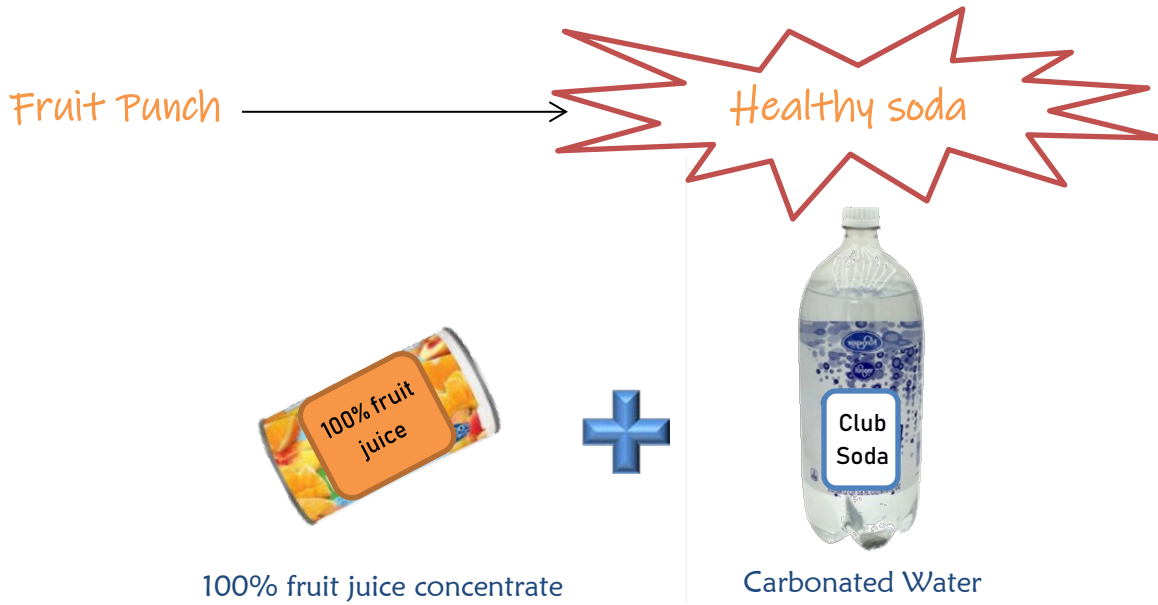
When you're craving a specific food celebration, look into these simple substitutions to add a little extra nourishment to the mix.



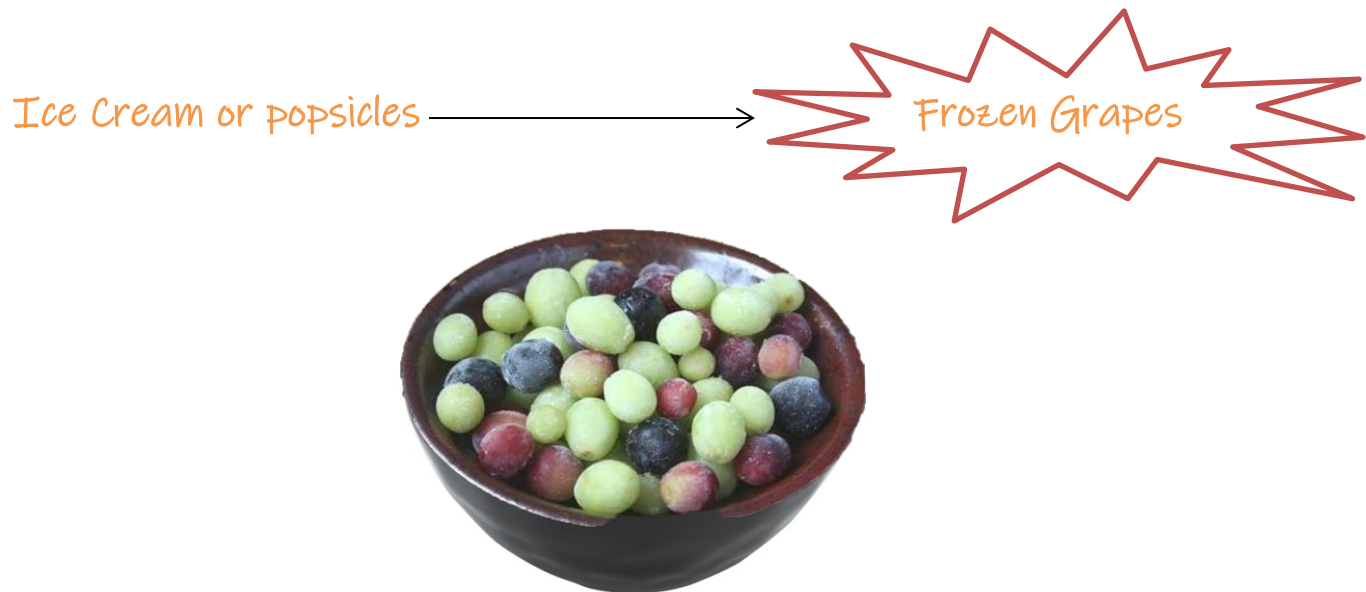
In the mood for a pizza party? Fill your craving for a cheesy, delicious, communal meal with personalized pizzas! Heat them in a skillet, toaster oven, or microwave.



If you've got the urge for something rich and sweet, sunflower seed balls are the perfect treat! Mix together sunflower seed butter, honey, oats, and raisins, then roll them in seeds.



We all love to enjoy a sweet, cool, fizzy drink from time to time. Healthy soda is easy and delicious! Add frozen berries for a little extra fun!



These delightful snacks are so sweet and refreshing; you will feel like you are eating a rare delicacy. Frozen grapes are the perfect substitute for ice cream or popsicles on a hot day!

Celebration Ideas: Birthday parties

How do you like to help a student feel special on their birthday? Here are some ideas we've come up with:



Birthday crown

Crowns are easy to make and fun to wear. Keep a special birthday crown on hand to celebrate students on their special day.

Party Hats



Give the whole class an opportunity to celebrate their classmate's big day!

Birthday ribbon

Another easy DIY, or you could purchase these for cheap at the dollar store.



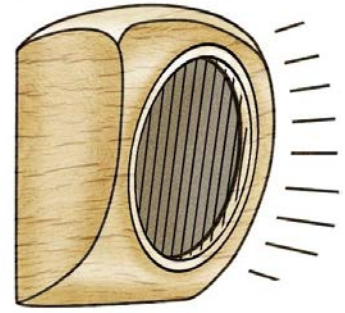
Assign Birthday kids a special job for the day

Give you students a chance to feel valued, and reap the benefits of an extra set of helping hands



Recognition during morning announcements

Include birthday recognitions during morning announcements each day.



Everyone shares a kind comment about birthday kid during class meeting

One of our favorite celebration ideas! During morning meeting, have every student say one kind thing about the birthday student. What a great opportunity for bonding and building self-confidence!

Seat of honor



Reserve an extra-comfy chair in the classroom for the birthday kid to sit in on their special day

Birthday Board:

At the beginning of the year, have each student fill out worksheet/poster/collage all about themselves. Keep a birthday board in the classroom to post “about me” creations on the week of a student’s birthday. Be sure to post summer birthdays to the board during the last week(s) of school!

A worksheet titled "All About Me" with a sun icon in the top right corner. It includes a large box for a picture, a section for personal information (age, grade, school), and a "Favorites" section with lines for color, subject, food, book, restaurant, place, and animal. There is also a section for words that describe the student.

Celebration Ideas: Holidays

Tiny Oranges:

Clementines, mandarins, and cuties are delicious and versatile way to celebrate almost any holiday. Pass them out plain as rewards and incentives, slice them into rounds and dry them to make a beautiful holiday garland, or decorate their peels with sharpie to make themed snacks:



Harvest



Valentines



Winter



March Madness

Harvest:

Assorted Creepiness: Halloween is all about imagination, so coming up with creative themed snacks for this holiday is a cinch. Just pour different snacks into bowls and label them with spooky names. Carrot sticks can be “witch fingers”, raisins or black olives can be “bat droppings”, pomegranate seeds can be “rat’s eyeballs”, and pretzels can be “spider legs”



Photo Source: *The Little Things Journal*. Easy Halloween Party Snacks by Little Things Mama. 2016.

<http://thelittlethingsjournal.com/2016/10/13/easy-halloween-party-snack/>

Make Your Own Banana Ghost Bar:

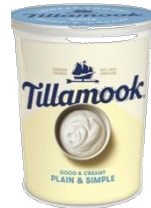
Students can get creative with these make-your-own spooky ghost pops! All you need is Bananas, popsicle sticks, plain or vanilla yogurt, and dried currants.



Bananas



Popsicle sticks



Plain or vanilla
yogurt



Dried currants

Valentine's Day:

Valentine's Day, above all, is about letting the people in your life know that you care about them. The joy of opening a personalized note from a classmate is a special experience regardless of whether it comes with candy. Many schools have had success asking students to cut the sweets from their Valentine offerings, and either pass out cards alone, or gift non-food prizes like **stickers , tattoos, buttons, or magnets**. But if you'd like to include food during your class party consider the following:

Clementines, mandarins, or cuties: Decorate your mini oranges with Valentines messages like, "Be my clementine", or "Cutie"!

Color themed healthy snack bar: Many fruits and vegetables are red! Have students bring in their favorite red fruits and vegetables and set up a red themed V- Day snack bar.

Valentines soda: Find the "healthy soda" recipe on page 4. Use white grape juice and add pink or red food dye to give it a Valentine's theme.



Thanksgiving:

Stone Soup: Ask students to bring in their favorite soup ingredient for this fun, interactive feast. All you need is a pot of water and a hot plate to heat it on. Mix veggies, beans, broth, seasoning, or whatever you have at hand see what you get! Stone soup is a perfect to experience sharing and community input in honor of the Thanksgiving holiday.



Turkey theme: You can make almost any snack Thanksgiving themed by arranging it into shape of a turkey!



Photo sources, Clockwise:

Cheryl Spangenberg. *That's What Che Said*. Thanksgiving Turkey Snack Bags. 2016. <https://www.thatswhatchesaid.net/thanksgiving-turkey-snack-bags/>

Heather Dalton. *The Chickabug Blog*. Free printable turkey snack- make fun treat cups for Thanksgiving! 2012. <http://blog.chickabug.com/2012/11/printable-turkey-snack.html>

Jodi Durr. *Meaningful Mama*. Turkey Treats. 2013. <https://meaningfulmama.com/turkey-treats.html>

Winter Holidays:

String cheese snow men: These string cheese snowmen are easy, affordable, and oh-so-cute! All you need is string cheese, ribbon, black paper, and sharpies.



Decorate cookie cutter apple slices: To make these fun treats, you'll need large apples, small Christmas themed cookie cutters, and some fun decorations. It's just like decorating a sugar cookie, but easier!



To make these cookie cutter apples, you'll need to start with sliced apple rounds, about ½ inch thick. Be sure to slice in the same direction as the core, not through it. Use cookie cutters to cut apple rounds into Christmas shapes, or if you're working with older students, let them cut the shapes themselves. Coat apples with yogurt, peanut butter, or whatever other fun, nutrient dense toppings you can think off. Top off with crushed pretzels or graham crackers, coconut shavings, seeds, or sprinkles.

Christmas tree Theme: You can assemble any mix of healthy snacks into the shape of a Christmas tree to for some extra festive holiday munching!



Photo sources:

String cheese: Cindy312. *Fun Family Crafts*. String Cheese Snowmen. 2013 <https://funfamilycrafts.com/string-cheese-snowman/>

Christmas tree platter: Diana Johnson. *She Knows*. 4Kid-friends Christmas snacks that moms will love too. 2014. <https://www.sheknows.com/food-and-recipes/articles/1059007/healthy-edible-christmas-tree-snack-recipes/>

Celebration Ideas: Physical Activities

Relay race: To put together a relay race, all you need is:

- Painters tape to establish start, stop, and finish points
- Some everyday classroom objects, like a chair, yardstick, or desk, to climb under, jump over, and run around.

Charades: Encourage students to get creative as they act out their favorite animals, activities, and TV shows. This game takes little to no prep. You can choose to let students come up with their own actions, or come with them on your own and write them out on slips of paper for students to choose at random.



Juggling or hula hoop contest: Do you have three small balls or a hula hoop lying around? See who can put them to use with the best skills!

Paper airplane flying contest: Give everyone 10 minutes to create their best paper flying contraption and then take them outside to see which one flies the farthest.



Limbo: You'll just need a long stick or broom to find out how low your students can go!

Dance party: No prep required! Just tune into your favorite radio station and get your boogie on!

Blind fold veggie taste test: What better way to get kids tasting vegetables than to challenge them to a taste test! Offer a prize or award to the student or team of students to recognize the most veggie flavors.



Parachute: Kids love parachute games! Check around to see if anyone has a parachute you can borrow for a special day. A quick google search will give you some fun parachute activity ideas



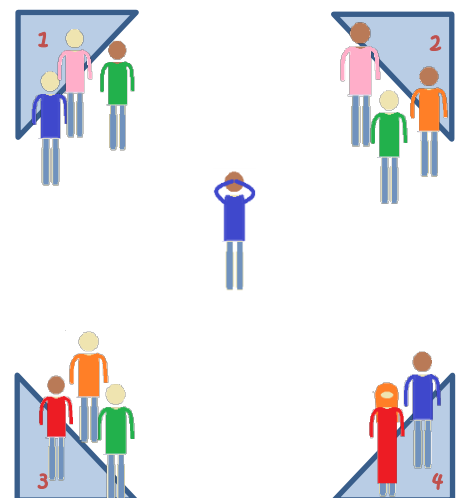
Twister: Twister is a classic example of a fun way to get kids up, moving, and working together.

White board bullseye with suction cup ball: For this activity, you'll need a suction cup ball, painters tape, a white board, and some dry erase markers. Draw a bullseye on the whiteboard, and mark a line on the ground with painters tape. Have students take turns standing behind the line and seeing who can score the most points.



Four Corners: To play this game, assign a number, 1-4, for each of the four corners of your classroom. Choose one student to stand in the middle of the room with a blindfold, or simply covering their eyes. While their eyes are covered, have all of the other students silently select a corner of the room to stand in.

Once each student has chosen their corner, have the student in the center (still with eyes covered), choose one corner. All students standing in that corner are “out” and can return to their seats. Have the student in the center continue to eliminate corners until there is only one left: the winning team. Choose a new student and repeat!



Celebration Ideas: Non-Food Rewards

& Incentives

Use these ideas to show appreciation to individual students or an entire class for completing a special task, showing an act of kindness, getting homework assignments in on time, or any other outstanding behavior:

- Special hat or crown
- Leading a class meeting
- Homework pass
- Lunch with teacher
- Gum chewing pass
- Hour with the principal
- Everyone pay a complement to the student being acknowledged
- Classroom free time
- Pajama day
- Hat day



Of course, receiving some kind of physical object is always exciting for children as well, and there are plenty of inexpensive ways to indulge this with non-food prizes.

- Stickers
- Temporary tattoos
- Bookmarks
- Pencils
- Pencil grips
- Erasers
- Reusable straws
- Funky sunglasses
- Inflatable beach balls
- Glow sticks



School-Wide Guidelines

Creating a Culture:

Remember, kids just want to have a good time. They will appreciate a celebration in any form. But change can be confusing at first. Make sure that all school staff are on the same page about using healthy celebrations at school. Find ways to discuss healthy celebrations with students throughout the year. And focus on the positives! There are so many exciting ways to celebrate that also help us to build strong bodies and minds.



The more that students are actively involved in the change, the more positively they will feel about it, and the more likely they are to play out these learned behaviors at home. Consider making a class project out of it! Kids could share favorite party food recipes and pictures. Feature books that discuss fruits, vegetables, and healthy food choices. And ask students to submit their favorite classroom physical activities to help find fresh ideas.

Engaging Parents:

Make sure that parents are informed about guidelines before they are enforced. Send home information, explaining why you are making the change, and how you plan to encourage celebration and special acknowledgments at school. Consider planning an information session or inviting SNAP-Ed to attend a family night to explain the changes, offer celebration ideas, and collect parent feedback. Provide specific examples of what types of food and prizes parents may send to school as well as clear explanation of what they may not send. Keep it positive! You are likely to find that the majority of parents support the initiative.



Designing guidelines:

There is no one way to design healthy celebrations guidelines. It is up to each interested community to create their own set of rules that work with their unique assets and needs. Generally, healthy celebration guidelines encourage the use of physical activities, non-food incentives, and healthy snacks in place of sweets, highly processed foods and sedentary behaviors. Here are a few specific suggestions:

Encourage: Non-food treats and prizes like stickers, pencils, and erasers

Encourage: whole fruits and vegetables, whole grain breads, and lean proteins, and milk

Discourage: packaged baked goods, soda, drinks with added sugar, candy, and chips.

Encourage: Physical group activities

Discourage: movies, shows, and computer time



Tips:

Creating and enforcing a school-wide set of guidelines may seem like a daunting task, but most schools that choose to put together guidelines report that it's actually not that difficult. Here are a few tips for making the transition as smooth as possible:

- Begin implementing Healthy Celebrations at a transition time like the beginning of a new school year, after a break, or with a new school quarter.
- Post guidelines somewhere visible at the point of entry to the school
- Send home a letter to parents, informing them of the change
- Include them in school newsletters, social media, and any other avenues you have for parent communication
- Ask front office staff to discuss guidelines with parents, and to respectfully intercept and decline any sweets that enter the front doors.
- Discuss the changes with students in a positive manner. Instead of focusing on what's being taken away, highlight what exciting activities they may now look forward to.

Example Guidelines:

Below is an example of Healthy Living Guidelines, currently in place at Crestline Elementary.

At Crestline we encourage a healthy living lifestyle! What does that mean? It means we celebrate birthdays, holidays, and special events a little bit different.

HEALTHY LIVING AT CRESTLINE



Birthdays

Birthdays will be celebrated and recognized by teachers through a song, dance, special crown, playing a game, drawing from a prize box or reading or donating a special book to the classroom. We no longer allow cupcakes, cookies or other high sugar treats or drinks at lunch or in classrooms. If you would like to have your child recognized for their birthday, you will have to provide a healthy snack. Please make sure to check with your child's teacher ahead of time if you plan to bring in a snack. Each teacher may celebrate birthdays a little differently so check their newsletter for their policy.

Special Events/Holidays

We will limit the amount of sugary and salty treats when celebrating special events or holidays.

Soda-Pop

Soda and large bags of chips are not allowed at school. We encourage students to make healthy food choices and to drink milk, water, or low sugar 100% fruit juice.

Healthy Snack Options or Non-Food Options (just a few ideas)

- Whole grain crackers or pretzels
- Fruit (apples, pears, oranges)
- Baby carrots and hummus
- Fruit or yogurt cups
- Trail Mix (nuts, dried fruits, cereals)
- Bagged, low-fat popcorn
- Graham Crackers
- Banana/Pumpkin bread
- 100% fruit juice
- Cheese sticks or slices
- Pencils, erasers, or stickers

We appreciate your support as we continue our healthy living program at Crestline. Please feel free to contact me or your classroom teacher if you have questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Bobbi Hite

Principal, Crestline Elementary School

Nick Hanson

Associate Principal, Crestline Elementary School

Example Parent Letter:

The following is a sample of a parent letter which may be sent home when your school/classroom decides to implement healthy celebration practices.



CREATING HEALTHY SCHOOLS AND CLASSROOMS

FAMILIES – (Enter school/class name) is striving to create a healthier school environment that encourages nutrition and physical activity for all students!

In (enter school/class name) we will encourage lifelong healthy habits by celebrating and rewarding (include any of the following that pertain to your school/classroom):

- Offering healthy snacks
- using non-food rewards,
- incorporating physical activity in class, and
- keeping student wellness in mind

WHY? While students are at school, they are learning life-long habits about food, physical activity, and what it means to have a good time. By practicing healthy celebrations, we can support student wellness and make special days feel extra fun!

HOW YOU CAN HELP?

- Help teachers coordinate activities that incorporate movement and creativity in the classroom.
- If food is planned for school parties, help by providing nutritious options such as yogurt parfaits, fruit kabobs, kid-assembled snack mix, or veggie sticks and whole grain chips with a variety of dips. The best celebration beverage is water- try infused or flavored!
- Work with your teachers to celebrate a child's birthday at school without sweets. Here are just a few ideas to make the birthday child feel special!
 - allow child to bring in or select favorite book for the teacher to read
 - create a birthday crown or sash
 - let the child choose a special activity or be teacher's helper
 - compile compliments from classmates
 - sing/dance to the birthday song



THANK YOU FOR HELPING US CREATE HEALTHY SCHOOLS AND CLASSROOMS!



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Additional Resources



Make a copy of this ribbon and tape it to the shirt of a birthday kiddo.

The following page contains cards that you can print off, laminate, and hand out as prizes for standout behavior or other special achievements.

~~~~~  
Stinky Feet



Cozy Chair



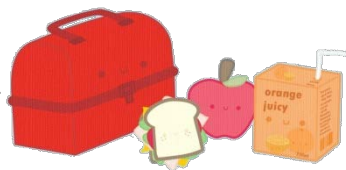
Bring a fuzzy  
friend to school



Show and Tell



Lunch with  
Teacher



Hat Day



Homework Pass



Wear your PJs to  
school



Thank you!

Thank you for using SNAP-Ed's Healthy Celebrations Toolkit! This booklet was assembled by Clark County WSU Extension's SNAP-Ed program.



**Washington State University**

**Clark County Extension SNAP-Ed**

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This material was funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program SNAP. SNAP provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, contact WSU Clark County Extension, or call 360-397-6060. This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.