

Healthy Celebrations

In Early Care and Education Settings

Holidays, birthday parties, and special events provide a wonderful opportunity to celebrate, and to incorporate healthy eating, activity and play. Providing healthy snacks and physical activity options can positively influence children's habits while they are away from home. Benefits of healthy celebrations are that they:



- Provide consistent messages about positive lifestyle changes.
- Promote a healthy school environment.
- Create excitement about healthy eating and physical activity.
- Protect children with food allergies.

Here are some ideas for hosting healthy celebrations with young children.

Incorporating Fruits and Vegetables During Celebrations

One approach to healthier celebrations is making sure a fruit or vegetable is offered alongside treats.

- Buy in-season produce to accompany sweet treats. In-season produce is cheaper and tastier.
- Add fresh fruits as a topping for cakes and cupcakes
- Serve fruit-infused water instead of fruit punch or juice.



Focusing on Healthy Foods

If your school wants to encourage only healthy snacks for celebrations, here are some ideas for you:

- Make fruit smoothies for your celebration.
- Layer yogurt and fruit for a colorful parfait.
- Prepare fun, bright fruit kabobs or a fruit salad.
- Offer vegetable or fruit trays.



Celebrating Doesn't Have to Revolve Entirely Around Food



- Do a special event-related art project.
- Allow the birthday child special privileges like:
 - ◊ Wearing a birthday sash or crown
 - ◊ Bringing show and tell
 - ◊ Being the teacher's special helper
 - ◊ Choosing a book to be read that day
- Provide fun party favors, instead of food, that encourage play like bubbles, balls, or flying disks.
- Encourage parents to donate a book to the classroom, instead of bringing treats.

Making Activity a Part of the Event

To encourage children to get moving, here are some active games to play during events:

- Have a dance party
- Set up an obstacle course
- Learn a holiday-themed song with fun dance moves
- Provide extra play time
- Arrange a themed scavenger hunt for the children



Communicating About Your Program's Healthy Celebrations

You may share any of these statements with staff and parents.

- Our program is committed to hosting healthy celebrations in order to promote wellness.
- We offer fruits or vegetables for any celebrations that include food.
- We host a monthly birthday celebration for several children and recognize individuals on their birthday by allowing them special privileges.
- We celebrate events with activities that involve learning and physical activity, instead of with food.