



Healthy Events and Classroom Celebrations

How Can You Help?

Some students are provided with foods and beverages during special events and classroom celebrations during the school day.¹ These items are not sold to students, but rather offered to students by school staff or parents. Ensuring that healthy options, such as fruits, vegetables, low-fat or fat-free dairy, and whole grain rich foods, are available at school events (e.g., field day, musicals), parties, and celebrations (e.g., classroom winners for number of books read) helps create consistent messages about healthy eating.

What's Happening at School?

Knowing the answers to the following questions can help you support healthy events and classroom celebrations in your child's school. If you don't know the answers to these questions, check out the school handbook or school website, attend a school wellness meeting or Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meeting, or simply ask your child's teacher.

1. Does the school district or school set nutrition standards for foods and beverages offered at school day events and celebrations?
2. Does the school have additional guidance for parents about the types of foods and beverages available at events and celebrations during the school day?
3. Do all school-based events and celebrations include food and beverages?
4. How often are birthdays celebrated in the classroom? Do they occur periodically (e.g., one time per month) or is each child's birthday celebrated individually?
5. Does the school provide parents with a list of healthy options to bring to events and celebrations where food and beverages are offered?
6. Does the school provide guidance on how to have celebrations that are safe for students with food allergies?





Ideas for Parents

You can be involved in your child's school by **attending** meetings, workshops, or training events offered by the school; **communicating** with school staff and other parents; **volunteering** for school events or in your child's classroom; **reinforcing** healthy messages and practices your child learns at school; **helping** make decisions about health in the school; and **being part** of community activities supported by the school. Here are some specific ideas for how you can support your child's school in providing healthy events and classroom celebrations.

- Suggest non-food alternatives for classroom celebrations to your child's teacher. For example, give extra recess, have a dance party, or go on a special field trip.
- Bring in healthy snacks (e.g., fruits, vegetables, whole grains, water) when responsible for contributing items to events and celebrations at school. The **USDA Smart Snacks in School standards** help define healthy snacks.
- Check snack ingredients to make sure foods don't contain **allergens** that may be harmful to students with food allergies.
- Share healthy and creative **recipes for school events and celebrations** with other parents.
- Make healthy snacks together with your child. This is an opportunity to learn about healthy food choices.
- E-mail or discuss with other parents the importance of having healthy foods and beverages offered during events and celebrations.
- Join the school or district committee (e.g., wellness committee) that sets the policies for health and wellness, and work to include language about healthy events and classroom celebrations.³



Check out additional resources for parents related to the school nutrition environment and services, physical education and physical activity, and managing chronic health conditions at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/P4HS.htm>.

REFERENCES

1. Institute of Medicine. *Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools: Leading the Way Toward Healthier Youth*. Washington, DC: Institute of Medicine of the National Academies; 2007.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. School health guidelines to promote healthy eating and physical activity. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep*. 2011;60(RR05):1-76.
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Parent Engagement: Strategies for Involving Parents in School Health*. Atlanta: US Dept of Health and Human Services; 2012.

