



- Healthy Celebrations Guide -

There are many great reasons to celebrate throughout the school year from birthdays to holidays to good behavior. While food and drinks are usually the center of attention, there are many easy ways to move away from unhealthy treats and towards healthy fun!

We want our children to grow up healthy, fit, and able to make wise food choices. By supporting healthy celebrations, we can help students learn better (good nutrition is linked to better behavior/academic performance), provide consistent messages, promote a healthy school environment, create excitement about nutrition, and protect children with food allergies (by doing a non-food activity).

A cupcake every once in a while is harmless; however, having unhealthy treats as part of celebrations that occur multiple times a month (as well as other school functions) can add up.

This guide provides recommendations for celebrating in healthy ways that benefit students and align with district wellness policies (JLJ-R E1 & E3). The first section provides ideas for how to celebrate with students without food. Refer to the second section if wanting guidance on healthy snack choices.

NON-FOOD

1) Active Party Kits

Play outside or inside with the equipment included in the active party kits funded by the district's SNAP-Ed grant. Currently 14 elementary schools in the district have kits. Please contact the SNAP-Ed Program Manager if interested in getting one for your school at 575-527-6651.

Below are some ideas for using an active party kit:

- Freestyle – let students pick what they would like to do
- Organize tournaments for individuals or team games
- Set-up relay races using jump ropes, balls, etc.
- Design contests to see who can do a skill the longest/most
- Play team games (e.g. how long class can keep a ball in the air)
- Create obstacle courses for individuals or teams
- Consult your school's PE coach too!



2) Other Activities

There are many ways to have fun without needing special equipment. See below:

- Play musical chairs
- Set-up relay races
- Hold a scavenger hunt
- Play Hide & Seek
- Design craft stations
- Allow extra recess
- Dance along to a video on YouTube
- Give free choice activity time

3) Holiday Party Ideas (Non-Food)

Halloween/Fall Harvest

- Decorate baby pumpkins
- Plan and make costumes
- Write a spooky story
- Design a craft using fallen leaves

St. Patrick's Day

- Make green slime or goop
- Teach an Irish step dance
- Read about St. Patrick or another Irish story

Thanksgiving

- Make paper turkeys by tracing students' hands
- Do a service project or food/clothing drive as a class
- Make a paper chain with things students are grateful for

Earth Day/Spring

- Take a nature walk outside
- Have a scavenger hunt outside
- Plant herbs or vegetables into pots indoors or outside in school garden
- Learn about the Three Sisters (corn, beans, & squash) and how they grow

Winter Holiday

- Make cards for nursing home residents
- Make snow globes
- Go caroling to other classrooms

End of Year

- Students can bring in a blank t-shirt and have classmates sign it
- Make scrapbooks with memories and drawings

Valentine's Day

- Make homemade valentines
- Exercise their hearts with fun aerobic activities

FOOD

If wanting to include food as part of your celebration, please serve healthy items that meet Smart Snacks criteria, as defined by the USDA, for reasons discussed at the beginning of this guide. These criteria are defined on the next page. You'll find fun (and healthy) food ideas below. Also, consider having only one party per month to celebrate birthdays, holidays, etc. to reduce not only the number of treats eaten, but also the time taken away from instruction for parties.

1) Holiday Food Ideas

Halloween/Fall Harvest

- Roasted pumpkin seeds
- Apple tasting with 3 varieties
- Orange fruits and vegetables
 - Carrots, peppers, oranges, cantaloupe, peaches
- Pumpkin dip and graham crackers

Thanksgiving

- Warm apple cider
- Baked spiced apples
- Veggie trays that look like a big turkey
- Turkey- and cornucopia-shaped snacks made with fruits, veggies, whole wheat crackers, and/or cheese sticks
- Turkey roll-ups with veggies on a whole wheat wrap

Winter Holiday

- Naturally green and red foods served with dip or made into kabobs:
 - Red and green peppers
 - Tomatoes and sugar snap peas
 - Red and green grapes, apples
- Berries with “snow” (yogurt)

Valentine’s Day

- Red fruits or vegetables served with dip or made into kabobs:
 - Berries, grapes, apples
 - Tomatoes, peppers, radishes
- Healthy sandwiches cut into hearts using a cookie cutter

St. Patrick’s Day

- Naturally green fruits or vegetables:
 - Kiwi, cucumbers, celery sticks, broccoli, green beans, snap peas, honeydew melon, spinach, pears
- Whole grain crackers, baked chips, or vegetables with guacamole
- Green smoothies (fruit and spinach)
- Steamed edamame

Spring

- Carrot muffins
- Carrots with hummus/low-fat dip
- Fruit smoothies
- Butterfly- and flower-shaped snacks made with cheese sticks and sliced veggies and/or fruit

Ideas for Smart Snacks

According to national and district student nutrition regulations, **50% of foods** served in the classroom need to meet Smart Snacks requirements. **All beverages** need to be compliant. Please use the following as guidance.

DRINKS: water, fruit-infused water, low-fat or fat-free milk, unflavored milk alternatives (soy, almond, etc.), fat-free flavored milks, and 100% fruit or vegetable juice

FOODS:

- Fresh and frozen fruits
- Fresh and frozen vegetables
- Dried fruits
- Fruit cups or canned fruit (packed in water, 100% juice, or light syrup)
- Applesauce cups
- Canned vegetables (e.g. tomatoes, beans, corn)
- Reduced fat cheese – string, cubes, wedges, slices
- Yogurt (low-fat) – cups, tubes, frozen
- Cottage cheese (reduced fat)
- Pudding cups (low-fat)
- Frozen fruit bars, yogurt bars
- Nuts, seeds, and nut/seed butters
- Lean meat, seafood, meat alternatives (e.g. canned tuna, beans)
- Hardboiled eggs
- Whole wheat/whole grain – crackers, bread, cereal, tortillas, pita chips
- Bars – granola, whole grain, fig
- Lightly buttered popcorn
- Baked chips
- Rice cakes
- 100 calorie packs

Think of snack foods that require building or making:

- Build-your-own fruit kabobs or salad
- Vegetable kabobs (cheese, tomato, olive)
- Mini veggie pizzas
- Trail mix
- Fruit smoothies
- Frozen banana “ice cream”
- Yogurt parfaits
- Ants on a log
- Peanut butter & banana sandwich triangles
- Popcorn bar – pick your own seasonings like chili powder or cinnamon
- Corn/wheat tortilla or lettuce wraps

Think of what you can pair with a dip:

- Hummus with vegetables or whole grain pita triangles
- Fruit with yogurt dip
- Vegetables with yogurt dip/low-fat dressing
- Baked whole grain chips with salsa or guacamole

USDA SMART SNACKS GUIDELINES

Wondering if something is allowable? Check the nutrition facts label & compare to list below:

- **Calories:** ≤ 200 calories per serving.
- **Fat:** ≤ 35% of calories from fat. No more than 10% saturated fat, and no trans fats.
- **Sugar:** ≤ 35% added sugar by weight. Compare grams of sugar to total weight. 28 grams = 1 oz.
- **Sodium:** ≤ 200 mg per serving
- “Whole grain” is the first ingredient in breads, crackers, cereals, pasta, tortillas, etc.
- For multi-ingredient foods, the first ingredient must be a fruit, vegetable, dairy product, or protein food (or contain ¼ c. fruit or vegetable).



Or use the Smart Snacks Product Calculator:
<https://foodplanner.healthiergeneration.org/calculator>



Food in the Classroom Planning Sheet

Please use this sheet to help plan what foods and drinks will be part of a classroom celebration. Remember that 50% of foods and 100% of beverages must meet Smart Snacks guidelines.

FOOD

Smart Snacks Approved

Doesn't Meet Smart Snacks

DRINKS

Smart Snacks Approved
