



BIRTHDAYS, CELEBRATIONS AND FAMILY EVENTS

Birthdays, celebrations and family events are great opportunities to promote a healthy lifestyle, provide consistent messages and create excitement around nutritious choices at school. Plan events that emphasize healthy foods and align with classroom lessons or shift the focus and plan non-food events centered on physical activity, music, art and games. Host events that make it easy for children to practice making healthy choices.

The Birthday Child Can:

- Be the teacher's helper
- Wear a special crown, sash, button or badge all day
- Donate and/or read a favorite book to the class
- Choose the class music for writing or independent study time
- Receive a personalized birthday card from the teacher via email or snail mail
- Choose a game or activity the class does for the last few minutes of the school day
- Have special time for a walk, game or activity with the teacher, principal or another adult
- Receive a "Celebrate Me" book from classmates with written stories, poems or drawings about the birthday child

Family Events

Plan family events that get parents engaged and on board with healthy living, as this will create more buy-in and support for a healthy school culture. It also makes it more likely that healthy habits will be reinforced at home.

- Health fairs
- School garden work days
- Cooking lessons or "Iron Chef" competitions
- Physical activity events with healthy snacks or prizes (dance contests, fun runs, obstacle courses, bike-a-thons, sock hops)
- Screenings of movies that promote healthy living
- Nutrition classes for the family from community partners like your cooperative university extension service
- Fall festival with active fall-themed games and a farmers market
- Walk-to-school month with parent participation
- Creation of school teams for local runs or walks
- Parents and teachers vs. kids sports competitions
- 30-day challenges — pick a healthy habit and organize a competition around it, starting with a kick-off event and ending with a celebration



ACTION FOR
HEALTHY
KIDS

Active Celebration Ideas

- Give children **extra recess time** instead of a party.
- **Have a dance party.** Let students select the music. Invite the principal and other school staff.
- **Get the students involved in planning and preparing for celebrations** — let them make decorations and favors and let them choose the games.
- **Create a book honoring what is being celebrated that day.** Have students draw pictures showing what the day means to them.
- **Organize a special community service project instead of a party.** Invite senior citizens in for lunch, collect goods and make cards for sheltered families, or organize a project outside for Earth Day.
- **Have students vote on a special class art project or craft.** Invite a local artist to come in and do a demonstration.
- **Arrange a treasure hunt around the classroom.** Provide a special non-food treat at the end. Use a theme that ties into what the kids are learning in class.
- **Ask students to come up with healthy party ideas,** and ask parents to send in healthy recipes and ideas for activities, games and crafts. Create a “healthy classroom party guide” to distribute to parents.
- **Plan around holiday themes.** Students can make cards for winter holidays, decorate the classroom with hearts for Valentine’s Day and learn an Irish step-dance for St. Patrick’s Day. Search education websites for ideas.

WHEN FOOD IS OFFERED

- Make good nutrition the expectation and the easy choice — offer fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat/fat-free dairy products and water.
- Check your school’s wellness policy or school improvement plan to see if they contain any guidelines or goals about food for birthdays, celebrations and family events. If they don’t, find out what it would take to address this issue.



Resources

Action for Healthy Kids Game On Activities

Healthy and Active Classroom Parties, Ten Tips for Making the Switch to Healthy Celebrations, Family Fitness Night, Health and Wellness Fair

actionforhealthykids.org/game-on-activity-library

Game On for Healthy Schools

actionforhealthykids.org/game-on-program



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