

R 8505 NUTRITIONAL GUIDELINES

Schools can play a major role in helping students become fit, healthy and ready to learn. One way to accomplish this is for foods offered in schools to support lessons learned in the classroom regarding nutrition and physical activity. What better venue than schools – which have a great impact on children – to support the message that proper nutrition and physical activity are a key part of a healthy lifestyle? Positive examples of making healthy eating choices and encouraging physical activity should be visible throughout the school. Parties as well as cafeterias, school stores, vending machines, and after-school events offer opportunities for schools to reinforce the message that making healthy food choices and being physically active means a healthier body and a sharper mind.

SNACK IDEAS FOR SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM PARTIES

Of course, the foods offered at school parties should add to the fun, but try to avoid making them the main focus. Remember, schools are responsible for helping students learn lessons about good nutrition and healthy lifestyles and students should practice these lessons during school parties. For example, consider combining student birthday parties into one monthly event that incorporates physical activities as well as healthy snacks. Also, be sure to consider ethnic and medical food restrictions and allergies when providing classroom snacks.

Below is a list of healthy snack choices to consider for classroom events. Serving all healthy foods and incorporating physical activities make a powerful statement. Actions speak louder than words: Lead by example.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fresh fruits and vegetables• Yogurt• Bagels with lowfat cream cheese• Baby carrots and other vegetables with lowfat dip• Trail mix• Nuts and seeds (ensure no students have allergies)• Fig cookies• Animal crackers• Baked chips• Cereal bar	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lowfat popcorn• Granola bars• Soft pretzel and mustard• Pizza (no extra cheese and no more than one meat)• Pudding• String cheese• Single-serve lowfat or fat-free milk (regular or flavored)• 100% fruit juice (single serve)• Bottled water (including flavored water)
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THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN HAVING A SCHOOL PARTY

Common Food Allergies

Eight foods account for 90% of all food-allergic reactions: peanuts, tree nuts (walnuts, cashews, etc.), milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, soy, and wheat. The most common food allergens that cause problems in children are eggs, milk, and peanuts. It is important to prevent allergic reactions to food because they can cause devastating illness and, in some cases, be fatal. Avoidance is the only way to prevent an allergic reaction. When planning school parties be sure you are aware of any food allergies of students and staff.

Incorporate Physical Activity

Today's children are at an increased risk of developing diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, depression, and anxiety as a result of the lack of physical activity and poor nutrition habits. Teachers are encouraged to incorporate physical activities into class parties as well as classroom learning. Celebrate special events without food or limit the quantity of food and encourage physical activity (active games, dancing, walking, etc.).

Food Safety

Preparing and serving food that will not cause food borne illness is as important as preparing and serving healthy choices for school parties! Remember the four steps to safe food:

1. Clean. Wash hands and surfaces often.
2. Chill. Refrigerate promptly.
3. Cook to proper temperatures.
4. Separate. Don't cross contaminate.

ALTERNATIVES TO USING FOOD AS A REWARD

At school, home, and throughout the community children are offered food as a reward for "good" behavior. Often these foods have little or no nutritional value but are easy, inexpensive, and can bring about short-term behavior change.

There are many disadvantages to using food as a reward:

- It undermines nutrition education being taught in the school environment.
- It encourages over-consumption of foods high in added sugar and fat.
- It teaches children to eat when they're not hungry as a reward to themselves.

Children learn preferences for foods made available to them, including those that are unhealthy. Poor food choices and inadequate physical activity contribute to overweight and obesity. Currently, obesity among children is at epidemic levels and can often lead to serious health problems.



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STUDENTS LEARN WHAT THEY LIVE

Children naturally enjoy eating healthy and being physically active. Schools and communities need to provide them with an environment that supports healthy behaviors. Below are some alternatives for students to enjoy instead of being offered food as a reward a school.

ZERO COST ALTERNATIVES

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sit by friends• Read outdoors• Have extra art time• Have an extra recess• Read to a younger class• Make deliveries to the office• Play a favorite game or puzzle• Earn play money for privileges• Walk with a teacher during lunch• Eat lunch outdoors with the class• Be a helper in another classroom• Eat lunch with a teacher or principal• Dance to favorite music in classroom	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Watch a video• Teach the class• Enjoy class outdoors• Play a computer game• Get a no homework pass• Listen to music while working• Get free choice time at end of day• Have a teacher form special skills (i.e. sing)• Have a teacher read a special book to the class• Give a 5-minute break at the end of the day
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LOW COST ALTERNATIVES

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Select a paperback book• Take a trip to the treasure box (non-food items)• Get stickers, pencils, and other school supplies• Receive a video store or music theater coupon	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enter a drawing for donated prizes• Get a set of flash cards printed from a computer• Receive a "mystery pack" (notepad, folder, sports cards, etc.)
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