

Reinforce the healthy eating messages being taught in the classroom when celebrating birthdays and special events.



Schools and families commonly provide traditional ‘party’ options such as cakes, pastry foods and soft drinks to celebrate student birthdays and special events. However, these options don’t support healthy eating messages, as they are most often low in nutritional value and high in energy, saturated fat, sugar and/or salt.

Try these ideas to help make classroom birthday parties and other school celebrations enjoyable for children, while reinforcing the healthy eating messages being taught in the classroom.

Party tips for schools

- Focus on activities, rather than food.
- Discuss reasons for healthier parties with students.
- Ask students to remind parents to provide healthy party options.
- Provide healthy ‘party ideas’ to families through school newsletters, notices and websites.
- Involve students in electing healthy party options they will enjoy.
- Provide smaller portion sizes of party food.

Food Ideas

Packaged food items

Ingredients listed to prevent allergic reactions:

- Chips or Cold foods:
 - Baked
 - Whole Grain
 - Popcorn
 - Pretzels
 - Icy pops
 - Individual ice cream cups



Sweet (packaged)

These options can be offered as a healthier alternative to birthday cakes:

- sliced fruit platter (serve alone or with yogurt)
- fruit (fresh or frozen), fruit salad, fruit platters, canned fruit (in natural juice)
- watermelon slices
- dried fruit without added sugars or coatings
- yogurt parfaits (recyclable disposable plastic cups and fruit and/or whole grain cereal as a topping)
- snack mixes (dried fruits, nuts or popcorn). Check your school's allergy/anaphylaxis policy regarding the provision of nuts and products containing nuts, and

Drinks

- Water.
- 100% fruit juice without added sugar (serve size 250ml or less). Get the students involved in making fresh juices.
- Capri Sun juice boxes or 100% Juice boxes
- Fruit smoothies packaged
- 100% fruit juice slushes with no added sugar. Serving size of 200ml or less.

Non-Food Ideas

Here are some fun ideas to celebrate at school, without focussing solely on foods and drinks. This may also help to reduce the amount of less healthy options that are consumed by students.

Combine

- Celebrate combined birthdays once per month.
- Parents provide small trinkets for a treasure chest that is shared with the class each month.

Focus birthday celebrations towards marking a special national event such as:

- Multicultural Day
- Black History Month
- Easter
- Chinese New Year
- Día De Los Muertos
- Thanksgiving
- Christmas.



Create

- Create a healthy party ideas book (e.g. healthy recipes, activities, games and crafts).
- Ask parents to provide a large card for the class to write birthday wishes.
- Create a 'Celebrate Me' book with stories, poems and pictures to celebrate the birthday child.
- Get students involved in preparing for celebrations (e.g. making decorations).

Play

- Plan special party games.
- Give children extra recess time instead of a class party.
- Let the birthday child choose and lead an active game for everyone.
- Arrange a treasure hunt around the classroom or playground.
- Birthday student takes home a class toy, or special item for the night.

Shine

- Birthday student leads a special 'show and tell' activity.
- Celebrate a child's cultural heritage with traditional crafts, games, fancy dress and stories.
- Allow the birthday student to help with special tasks for the day (e.g. leading activities, games and sport teams, announcing school notices, make deliveries to the office etc.).
- Have a birthday celebration photo board on the wall.

Share

- Parents bring small items to share with class members (e.g. pencils, stickers or erasers).
- Parents donate a book to the classroom or library in the child's name.
- Parents contribute items to a 'class Christmas hamper' which is given to a charity of choice.

Dress up

- Birthday student wears a special sash, crown, cape, or carries a special item for the day.
- Invite all students to celebrate the special day by wearing a selected color or special item (e.g. badge, funny hat, a red colored piece of clothing, etc.).

Dance

- Have a classroom dance party or 'dance-off' competition. Let the birthday student choose their favorite song to play from a list of classroom favorites (approved by teacher first).

Watch

- Birthday student chooses favorite online video clip for class to watch (teacher to approve first).

