

VUSD TIPS FOR  
SUCCESS:  
HEALTHY SCHOOL  
CELEBRATIONS

## Healthy School Celebrations

**Let's party! From birthday parties to holiday celebrations, there are many celebrations at school. Along with the fun, usually comes food. Just one school party can include pizza, sugary juice drinks, chips, cake, and ice cream, plus a goody bag with candy.**

**Offering treats frequently can contribute to unhealthy eating habits. However, with a few easy changes, parents, teachers, and school administrators can shift the focus of school parties from unhealthy food to healthy fun.**

### VUSD Wellness Policy

Federal law requires every school district to have a local wellness policy. These policies must address nutrition education, physical activity, school meals, and all other foods and beverages available at school.

**Healthy students are successful students!** According to the VUSD Wellness Policy, "the Superintendent or designee strongly encourages parents/guardians or other volunteers to use **healthy options for occasional class parties**. Class parties or celebrations shall be held after the lunch period when possible. **Teachers are encouraged to find alternatives to the use of foods as a reward or incentive for students.**" Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) supports healthy school celebrations and rewards.

**Experts recommend limiting celebrations that involve food to no more than one party per class per month.**

### Ideas for Healthier Classroom Celebrations

- Choose 1 day each month to celebrate birthdays
- Facilitate a themed scavenger hunt. Have students search for items related to the party theme.
- Provide "free choice" activity time at the end of the day.
- Provide extra recess time.
- Celebrate creativity by setting up craft stations and playing music in the background. Ask parents to provide the supplies such as clay, craft paper, pencils, markers, paints, and stickers rather than food.
- Plan special party games
- Have a dance party
- Read a book related to the party theme.
- Allow children a trip to the treasure box (parents can supply it with small toys, books, note pads, paints, etc.)
- Allow students to pick a book of their choice and ask the principal or parent to come in and read it to the class.
- Conduct a cooking class. Prepare the Harvest of the Month recipe.

## Birthday Parties

Keep in mind that each student's birthday can mean multiple celebrations: one at home with family, a party with friends, and then another at school. Food need not be part of school parties. Instead, find ways to recognize the student, celebrate them, and make them feel special.

### Ways to celebrate a birthday and recognize a student on their special day:

- Make a sign, sash, crown, button, or badge for the birthday student
- Invite the birthday student to be the teacher's assistant for the day; he or she can do special tasks like make deliveries to the office or be the line leader
- Let the birthday student choose a special activity or game
- Allow the student to pick a book and ask the principal or a parent to come and read it
- Play an indoor game of the student's choice

#### Healthy Party Snacks

Serve snacks with fun plates, napkins, cups, or straws or have a tasting party where students can vote for their favorite healthy snack.

Use cookie cutters to make sandwiches or fruit more interesting!

- Fruit smoothies
- Trail mix
- Fruit kabobs
- Yogurt parfaits with non or low fat yogurt, granola, and fruit
- Popcorn
- Applesauce or other fruit cups
- Raw veggies served with low-fat dressing or hummus
- Berries
- Graham crackers with jam or apple butter
- Bananas, strawberries, apple slices
- Have each parent bring in one type of fruit and kids can make their own fruit salad
- Raisins or dried fruit such as bananas, apples, peaches, apricots, plums, etc.
- Whole grain tortilla chips and salsa
- Whole grain crackers with reduced-fat cheese
- Harvest of the Month recipes—conduct a cooking class and taste the recipe

#### Recipe:

##### Fruit Muffins

\*Preheat oven to 400 degrees

In a small bowl sift together:

1  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup whole wheat flour

$\frac{3}{4}$  tsp salt

$\frac{1}{4}$  cup sugar

2 tsp. baking powder

In a large bowl:

Beat 2 eggs

Add 2 Tbsp vegetable oil

Add  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup skim milk

Combine liquid and dry ingredients together with a few swift strokes (do no overmix.)

Add  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup mashed ripe banana or  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup chopped apple. Spray muffin tin with cooking spray oil and fill muffin cups  $\frac{3}{4}$  way full.

Bake at 400 degrees for 20-25 minutes.

Yield: 1 dozen muffins

# Non-Food Alternatives for Holiday Parties and Birthday Celebrations

“Party Favors” instead of food:

Stickers	Jump ropes
Trading Cards	Jacks
Coloring Books	Puzzles
Yo-yo’s	Notepads
Pens	Toothbrush
Pencils	Hair accessories
Erasers	Costume jewelry
Crayons	Temporary tattoos
Key chains	

## Healthy Party Activities:

- Invite a parent (or teacher) to visit the class, read the student’s favorite book, and gift the book to the classroom.
- Have a student bring their favorite music and have “dance time”
- Play a game outside – ring toss, relay race
- Lead an edible food art class. Prepare banana snowman with fruit and pretzels & taste!
- Get the class physically active with Dr. Tony Yancey’s 10-minute Instant Recess—DVD’s available to check-out at the Food and Nutrition Services office located in the Education Service Center



# Healthy Holiday Ideas

## September

- Celebrate without food: shift the focus from food to fun.
- Create a healthy snack list and have parents sign up to bring in an item from the list: see [http://cspinet.org/new/pdf/school\\_snacks.pdf](http://cspinet.org/new/pdf/school_snacks.pdf) or ideas in each month below

## October

- Halloween – Kids will get plenty of candy trick-or-treating. Try to keep the focus on fun at school.
- Focus on the costumes. Have a parade or costume contest.
- Instead of candy, try small toys like temporary tattoos, stickers, small plastic spiders or ghosts, spooky plastic rings or false teeth.
- Decorate pillowcases or bags for trick-or-treating.
- Healthy Party Snacks:
  - Apples with yogurt dip
  - Pumpkin dip and graham crackers
  - Roasted pumpkin seeds
  - Snack cups of fresh or canned fruit
  - Carrots with low-fat dressing
  - Use Halloween cookie cutters to make sandwiches or fruit look frightfully delicious!

## November

- Thanksgiving – Have students write or draw a picture about what they are thankful for and share it with the class
- Create a garland of gratitude. Cut leaf shapes out of construction paper and then crinkle them up to create the lines in a leaf. Flatten them out and have children write what they are grateful for. Use a piece of string and tape the stem of the leaf over the string. Display garland in class.
- Do a service project as a class field trip.
- Healthy Party Snacks:
  - Turkey roll ups
  - Spread apple butter on whole grain English muffins or graham crackers
  - Pumpkin dip

Combine the following and serve with graham crackers and apple slices:

- 3 Tbsp canned pumpkin
- 1 cup low-fat vanilla yogurt
- 1 Tbsp 100% orange juice
- ½ tsp cinnamon



## December/January

- Have students make holiday cards for nursing home residents or decorate pillow cases to give to a homeless shelter.
- Go caroling and sing for other classes or at a senior center.
- Decorate the classroom with a winter theme (snowflakes, snowmen, etc.)
- Collect personal care products and prepare kits for a homeless shelter or take a service project field trip to visit a nursing home, homeless shelter, or a food bank.
- Make snow globes out of baby food jars and white glitter or plastic snow flakes. Fill with water until a half inch is left at the top (use a hot glue gun to seal the lid.)
- Healthy Party Snacks:
  - Serve seasonal fruits like kiwi & oranges
  - Serve seasonal vegetables with a low-fat salad dip, hummus, or guacamole
  - Make green smoothies as a class (cooking in the classroom)

## February

### Valentine's Day:

- Have students write down one positive comment about each classmate, e.g. you're a good friend, you have a nice smile, or you are fun, and pass them out.
- Create a Valentine's Day card holder.
- Healthy Party Snacks:
  - Serve local seasonal carrots, radishes & celery with hummus or ranch dressing
  - Serve local, seasonal fruits such as tangerines & oranges
  - Very-Berry pink smoothies

#### Ingredients:

1 cup fresh or frozen strawberries

1 cup plain non-fat yogurt

½ cup fruit juice

Ice (if using fresh fruit)

Combine all ingredients in a blender and process on high until ice is crushed and the mixture is smooth and creamy





## March

### St. Patrick's Day

- Teach an Irish step dance
- Decorate the room with shamrocks made from construction paper
- Plan a St. Paddy's day scavenger hunt that leads to a pot of gold filled with treasures, such as markers, pens, pencils, erasers, etc.
- Read about Irish history or a story about St. Patrick.
- Healthy Party Snacks: Make it a "Green" Day
  - Serve kiwi (cut in half and serve with a spoon)
  - Serve celery sticks, broccoli, sugar snap peas, or green beans with hummus or a low-fat dressing
  - Serve whole grain tortilla chips with guacamole
  - Try edamame (pronounced "eh-dah-MAH-may.") It is fun to eat and easy to serve.

## April/May

### Spring Party

- Plan a nature walk to see plants re-awakening in the spring weather
- Decorate flower pots for parents and plant a flower or seed.
- Have parents donate plants or seeds that children can plant in the school garden.
- Healthy Party Snacks:
  - Carrot muffins

- Carrots with hummus or low-fat ranch dressing
- Berries
- Fruit Smoothies

## June

Many celebrations tend to occur at the end of the school year. Keep the focus away from food and plan activities to highlight the end of the school year and the coming of summer.

- Talk about fruits from around the world and discuss where they originated. Have a tasting party with fruit.
- Visit a local farm, garden or orchard to learn about fruits and vegetables that grow in your area.
- Have children make a collage or write a story about what the plan to do over the summer.
- Have students write stories or put together items that remind them of the past school year and take them home.
- Plan an outdoor game/activity to enjoy the warmer weather.
- Healthy Party Snacks:
  - Tasty trail mix: Combine dried fruit, whole grain cereal, and pretzel sticks. Serve in individual containers or let students scoop their own from a bowl.
  - Fruit dip: Combine ½ cup low-fat vanilla yogurt, 1 tsp honey, ¼ tsp cinnamon, and ¼ tsp nutmeg. Serve with your favorite, seasonal fruits.

