

# School Celebrations

The number of overweight children has reached epidemic proportions both nationally and in North Carolina. Between 1995 and 2000, the number of overweight North Carolina children aged 5 to 11 years old increased 40 percent. More than one in five of 5 to 11 year-olds are overweight and one

in four of 12 to 18 year-olds are overweight (NC-NPASS 2003). Schools are places of extraordinary influence on the development of life-long eating patterns. Schools have an opportunity to provide classroom health and nutrition education supplemented by learning laboratories in the many venues where food is offered or served.

## In support of Eat Smart: North Carolina's Recommended Standards for All Foods Available in School

School celebrations are fun and provide a chance to reinforce the message that nutritious food choices lead to healthier bodies and sharper minds. Individual schools and local education agencies should decide if and how often food will be part of group celebrations, and should encourage celebrations featuring activities other than eating. If school celebrations do involve food, work with the Child Nutrition Program to provide healthy options, support school meals, and ensure that food will be safe, wholesome and served in appropriate portion sizes.

### Non-Food Ways to Celebrate | Healthful Food Celebrations

#### Ways for families to celebrate special events

- Donate a book to the school library or classroom in honor of a child's birthday with his/her name inside
- Donate funds for playground or physical education/activity equipment such as jump ropes or balls

#### School or classroom celebrations

- Play indoor games of the students' choosing
- Engage children in a special art project
- Take the children on a field trip
- Turn on some music and have a dance party
- Take a fun walk around the school with the principal or teacher
- Play games outside or host a field day - allow extra recess time

#### Ideas for classroom celebrations

- Make your own pizza party using chopped vegetables, fruits and low-fat cheeses
- Make your own fruit sundae bar with fresh fruit and low-fat yogurt or sorbet
- Host a culture club - ask students to find and prepare healthy recipes from different cultures
- Host an agriculture day - ask a local farmer to bring in produce and have a tasting party

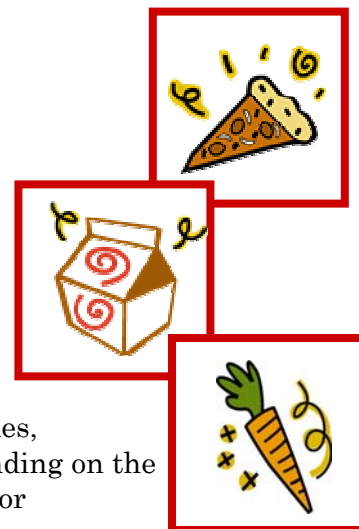
#### Snack ideas

- Snack cake
- Baked chips and reduced-fat dip
- Squares without icing or topped with fruit and reduced-fat whipped topping
- Fresh apple wedges and caramel dip
- Lowfat yogurt with fruit and granola topping
- Reduced-fat popcorn
- Oatmeal raisin cookies and lowfat milk
- Whole grain crackers and cheese cubes
- Fig bars
- Fresh-cut vegetables and reduced-fat ranch dip or salsa
- Trail mix
- Small 100% juice
- Lowfat milk
- Sugar-free pudding
- Water



# Healthy School Celebrations Policy

Schools play a powerful role in influencing students' food choices. There are several ways that schools can ensure that students' eating habits contribute to their learning achievement and lifelong good health. The **Eat Smart: North Carolina's Recommended Standards for All Foods Available in School** encourage the development of policies to support healthful choices for a la carte, vending, after-school programs and school events such as classroom events, celebrations, class snacks, meetings, parties, concessions, intramural events, fundraisers, extracurricular events. Depending on the topic, it may be appropriate for the policy to be made at the district, school or classroom level.



## What is policy?

Policies are official statements of vision and judgment that address the needs of a school system, school or classroom. Values, convictions and beliefs usually form the basis for a policy statement. Policies can provide the following:

- Leadership
- Commitment
- Support
- Direction
- Guidance
- Institutionalization
- Public Engagement
- Accountability
- Legal Protection

Policies generally address *what* should be done, *why* it should be done and *who* should do it. Procedures outline the details of *how* to accomplish a policy's goal. Policies can be formal or informal and written or unwritten.

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## How is policy developed?

Common tasks needed to develop a policy:

- Lay the groundwork
- Build awareness and support
- Draft the policy
- Adopt the policy
- Administer the policy

## Getting support for policy

Groups that can support policy change:

- PTA/PTO
- School Improvement Teams
- School Health Advisory Councils
- Public Health Partners
- Cooperative Extension Partners

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## Sample District Policy for School Celebrations

- It is the intent of ABC School System that school celebrations be limited to no more than four times per year (K-5 grades) or two times per year (6-8 grades). When possible, it is recommended that celebrations feature activities other than eating. If food is involved, it should include healthy choices.

## Sample School Policy for School Celebrations

- It is the intent of Good Learning Elementary School that celebrations be limited to one per nine-week quarter per classroom. The celebration should take place during the last hour of the school day so it will not interfere with school meal. Teachers are encouraged to choose non-food ways to celebrate for two out of the four celebrations. If food is involved in the celebrations, parents can consult the student handbook for possible snack choices.

## Sample Classroom Policy for School Celebrations

- It is the intent of Mrs. Parsley to set the dates for classroom celebrations within the first month of school. Parents are encouraged to assist with the celebrations by volunteering to prepare healthy snacks when requested. A list of dates and options are sent home with students. Parents can consult the student handbook for possible snack choices.