

**SUBJECT: HEALTHY CELEBRATIONS****Policy Statement**

Celebrations in the classroom usually consist of unhealthy items such as cakes, cookies, sweets, and soda. In this day-in-age, when the obesity rate among children is at an all time high, simple steps such as placing guidelines on the types of foods and beverages served at celebrations can make a lasting impact on children's lifestyles. Anything special a child gets to do as a celebration for good grades or a holiday is enough, and it doesn't have to involve any type of unhealthy food, or any food for that matter. The special event could even be more physical activity.

**Rationale**

Healthy Celebrations sets guidelines for the types of foods and beverages parents and other caregivers can send to school for consumption during recess or snack time and at class parties or other special school events and celebrations. Healthy Celebrations may also include extra recess for a celebration where the honoree may choose his/her favorite activity.

**Definitions**

**Celebrations:** For the purposes of this policy, celebrations are anything extraordinary that does not usually happen on a day to day basis. Celebrations may occur as a result of a class fundraiser, holiday, good grades, community service, etc. Some examples of Healthy Celebrations are:

- a) Serving healthy food and/or beverages at a celebration;
- b) Providing extra time for recess for the celebration;
- c) Letting the honored Boy/Girl choose a game or activity to play.

**Unhealthy:** For the purposes of this policy, unhealthy is any item containing empty calories or an excess in calories and fat content that provides no nutritional value to the child (e.g., pastries, cookies, candy, chewing gum). Accumulating points for a party (e.g., pizza, cake, ice cream, etc.) should be considered unhealthy.

**Policy**

Healthy Celebration policies help parents and other caregivers identify healthful snack foods for children. While most parents have good intentions when it comes to choosing snack foods for their children's school celebrations, many do not realize that many items that sound healthy really only provide empty calories and few essential nutrients.

(Continued)

**SUBJECT: HEALTHY CELEBRATIONS (Cont'd.)**

There are many benefits of healthy celebration policies, including helping children gain a greater understanding of healthful eating habits, exposing children to a variety of healthful foods they may otherwise not eat, and improving children's as well as staff members' diets by including more nutrient-rich foods. Healthy Celebrations may also help increase the time spent being physically active, thus having fun and feeling special while exercising.

**What Types of Foods and Beverages Can Be Counted for "Healthy Celebrations"?**

The following foods and beverages are nutrient-rich foods that contain essential nutrients often lacking in children's diets. These healthy snacks contain little or no added sugar, fat or salt. Eating these types of snack foods more often can significantly improve a child's diet. Some examples of healthy foods and beverages are:

- a) Any fresh fruit or vegetable (with or without low fat dip);
- b) 100% fruit or vegetable juice;
- c) Canned and packaged fruit products packaged in natural juices (not syrup);
- d) Dried fruit;
- e) Nuts (almonds or cashews);
- f) Low or non-fat milk;
- g) Low or non-fat yogurt;
- h) Low or non-fat cheeses.

Healthy snacks and beverages must meet the following Nutritional Standards:

Snacks (per serving):

- a) Fat - 7 grams or less;
- b) Trans Fat - 0 grams;
- c) Saturated Fat - 2 grams or less;
- d) Sodium - 360 milligrams or less;
- e) Sugar - 15 grams or less.

(Continued)

**SUBJECT: HEALTHY CELEBRATIONS (Cont'd.)****Beverages:**

- a) Low fat milk and low fat flavored milk;
- b) Juice with 25% or more fruit juice;
- c) Water or flavored water without added sugar, artificial sweeteners or caffeine;
- d) Beverages with 10 milligrams or less caffeine per serving.

Getting student buy-in before announcing the new policy is the best way to ensure that both parents and students will accept the new policy for your classroom or entire school. A simple student survey can be conducted to assess students' reactions to a healthy celebration policy. Each classroom may have their own type of celebration with their choice of either a healthy food party, extra recess, a game chosen by the honored student, etc. Teachers can adapt and combine different elements of the Healthy Celebration Policy to best fit the class. The Healthy Celebration policy aims to reduce the unhealthy items used as positive reinforcement for a behavior, grades or holiday. Rewarding children in the classroom need not involve candy and other foods that can undermine children's diets and health and reinforce unhealthy eating habits.

**Additional Information****"It's Just a Little Treat": The Harm in Using Food to Reward Children**

Schools should not only teach children how to make healthy choices and to eat to fulfill nutritional needs, but also should provide an environment that fosters healthy eating. Providing food based on performance or behavior connects food to mood. This practice can encourage children to eat treats even when they are not hungry and can instill lifetime habits of rewarding or comforting themselves with food behaviors associated with unhealthy eating or obesity. Awarding children food during class also reinforces eating outside of meal or snack times. Since few studies have been conducted on the effect of using food rewards on children's long-term eating habits, the best policy is not to use food to reward children for good behavior or academic performance. At minimum, children should not be rewarded using foods of poor nutritional quality. (Note: classroom parties are covered by this policy.)

**The Value of Rewarding Children (with Non-Food Rewards)**

As teachers know, classroom rewards can be an effective way to encourage positive behavior. Children, like everyone, alter their actions based on short term anticipated consequences. When trying to foster a new behavior, it is important to reward a child consistently each time he/she does the desired behavior. Once the behavior has become an established habit, rewards can be given every now and then to encourage the child to maintain the preferred behavior. The ultimate goal of rewarding

(Continued)



**SUBJECT: HEALTHY CELEBRATIONS (Cont'd.)**

children is to help them internalize positive behaviors so that they will not need a reward. Eventually, self-motivation will be sufficient to induce them to perform the desired behavior, and outside reinforcement will no longer be necessary.

**Physical Activity and Food Should Not be Linked to Punishment**

Punishing children by taking away recess or physical education classes reduces their already-scarce opportunities for physical activity. Another counter-productive punishment is forcing children to do physical activity such as running laps or pushups. Children often learn to dislike things that are used as punishments. Thus, penalizing children with physical activity might lead them to avoid activities that are important for maintaining wellness and a healthy body weight. In addition, food should not be withheld as a means of punishing children. The U.S. Department of Agriculture prohibits withholding meals as a punishment for any child enrolled in a school participating in the school meal programs.

**Procedures**

The Superintendent, Principal, teachers, and food service providers should collaborate to make sure all teachers are following policy. These simple changes can cause a big change in the end when it comes to dealing with the obesity and inactivity epidemic going on in America today.

Teachers, faculty, staff, parents, community and outside businesses can work together to make this change an easy but important one. Kids can compete for appropriate celebrations among classmates, classrooms as a whole, or even the entire grade.

In addition to the change in food choices or extra games or recess, explanation and education of benefits should also be provided with all participating individuals including, but not limited to students, faculty, staff, parents and guardians.

**Social Rewards**

"Social rewards" which involve attention, praise, or thanks are often more highly valued by children than a toy or food. Simple gestures like pats on the shoulder, verbal praise (including in front of others), nods, or smiles can mean a lot. These types of social rewards affirm a child's worth as a person.

**Rewards for a Class**

- a) Extra recess;
- b) Eating lunch outdoors;
- c) Going to the lunchroom first;
- d) Reading outdoors;

(Continued)

**SUBJECT: HEALTHY CELEBRATIONS (Cont'd.)**

- e) Holding class outdoors;
- f) Extra art, music, PE, or reading time;
- g) Listening to music while working;
- h) Dancing to music;
- i) Playing a game or doing a puzzle together;
- j) "Free choice" time at the end of the day;
- k) A song, dance or performance by the teacher or students;
- l) A book read aloud to the class by the teacher;
- m) A field trip.

**Recognition for Special Accomplishment**

- a) Trophy, plaque, ribbon, or certificate in recognition of achievement or a sticker with an affirming message (e.g., "Great job");
- b) Recognizing a child's achievement on the School-wide morning announcements and/or the School's website;
- c) A photo recognition board in a prominent location in the School;
- d) A phone call, e-mail or letter sent home to parents or guardians commending a child's accomplishment;
- e) A note from the teacher to the student commending his/her achievement.

**Privileges for Special Accomplishment**

- a) Going first;
- b) Choosing a class activity;
- c) Helping the teacher;
- d) Having an extra few minutes of recess with a friend;
- e) Sitting by friends or in a special seat next to or at the teacher's desk;
- f) "No homework" pass;
- g) Teaching the class;
- h) Playing an educational computer or other game;
- i) Reading to a younger class;
- j) Making deliveries to the office;
- k) Reading the School-wide morning announcements;
- l) Helping in another classroom;
- m) Eating lunch with a teacher or Principal;
- n) Listening with a headset to a book on tape or CD;
- o) Going to the library to select a book to read;

(Continued)

**SUBJECT: HEALTHY CELEBRATIONS (Cont'd.)**

- p) Working at the School store;
- q) Taking a walk with the Principal or teacher;
- r) Designing a class or hall bulletin board;
- s) Writing or drawing on the blackboard/whiteboard;
- t) Taking care of the class animal for a day;
- u) Choosing an extra recess activity for the class on his/her birthday.

**School Supplies for Special Accomplishment**

- a) Pencils: colored, with logos or other decorations;
- b) Pens;
- c) Eraser;
- d) Notepads/notebooks;
- e) Boxes of crayons;
- f) Stencils;
- g) Stamps;
- h) Plastic scissors;
- i) Bookmarks;
- j) Highlighters;
- k) Chalk (e.g., sidewalk chalk);
- l) Markers;
- m) Coloring books;
- n) Rulers;
- o) Glitter;
- p) Pencil sharpeners, grips or boxes;
- q) Gift certificate to the School store.

**Sports Equipment and Athletic Gear Special Accomplishment**

- a) Paddleballs;
- b) Frisbees;
- c) Water bottles;
- d) NERF balls;
- e) Hula hoop;
- f) Head and wrist sweat bands;
- g) Jump rope.

**Toys/trinkets Special Accomplishment**

- a) Stickers;
- b) Yo-yos;
- c) Rubber balls;

(Continued)

**SUBJECT: HEALTHY CELEBRATIONS (Cont'd.)**

- d) Finger puppets;
- e) Stuffed animals;
- f) Plastic or rubber figurines;
- g) Toy cars, trucks, helicopters, or airplanes;
- h) Plastic sliding puzzles or other puzzle games;
- i) Slinkies;
- j) Gliders;
- k) Magnifying glasses;
- l) Spinning tops;
- m) Marbles;
- n) Jacks;
- o) Playing cards;
- p) Stretchy animals;
- q) Silly putty;
- r) Bubble fluid with wand;
- s) Balloons;
- t) Capsules that become sponges/figures when placed in water;
- u) Inflatable toys (balls, animals);
- v) Small dolls or action figures.

**Fashion Wear Special Accomplishment**

- a) Temporary tattoos;
- b) Hair accessories (barrettes, elastics or ribbons);
- c) Bracelets, rings, necklaces;
- d) Sunglasses;
- e) Eyeglasses with nose disguise;
- f) Hat or cap;
- g) T-shirt;
- h) Sneaker bumper stickers;
- i) Shoe laces.

**Miscellaneous**

- a) Key chains;
- b) Flashlights;
- c) Cups;
- d) Magnets;
- e) Crazy straws;
- f) Backscratchers;
- g) A plant, or seeds and pot for growing a plant;
- h) Books.

(Continued)



**SUBJECT: HEALTHY CELEBRATIONS (Cont'd.)****Bigger Prizes**

At times, groups or individual children may earn ratings that accumulate toward a bigger prize. Possible prizes include those listed above and:

- a) Gift certificate to a bookstore or sporting goods store;
- b) Movie pass or rental gift certificate;
- c) Ticket to sporting event;
- d) Puzzle;
- e) Book;
- f) Stuffed animal;
- g) Magazine subscription;
- h) Board game;
- i) Step counter (pedometer);
- j) Sports equipment, such as tennis racket, baseball glove, soccer ball, or basketball;
- k) Children can be given fake money, tokens, stars, or a chart can be used to keep track of the points they have earned. Points can be exchanged for privileges or prizes when enough are accumulated;
- l) A point system also may be used for an entire class to earn a reward;
- m) Whenever individual children have done well, points can be added to the entire class's "account." When the class has earned a target number of points, they then receive a group reward.