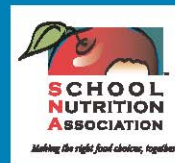


We Can Work Together to Improve Classroom Parties and Academic Incentives



Growing Healthy Children in OUR School

1. The Challenge

In the last decade, food and beverage choices have proliferated in schools—and research shows they have become contributing factors in America’s child obesity epidemic. Typically low in nutritive value, these items can be found throughout the school. They provide compelling temptations for students and can hinder a school’s efforts to promote nutrition education and healthy school meals.

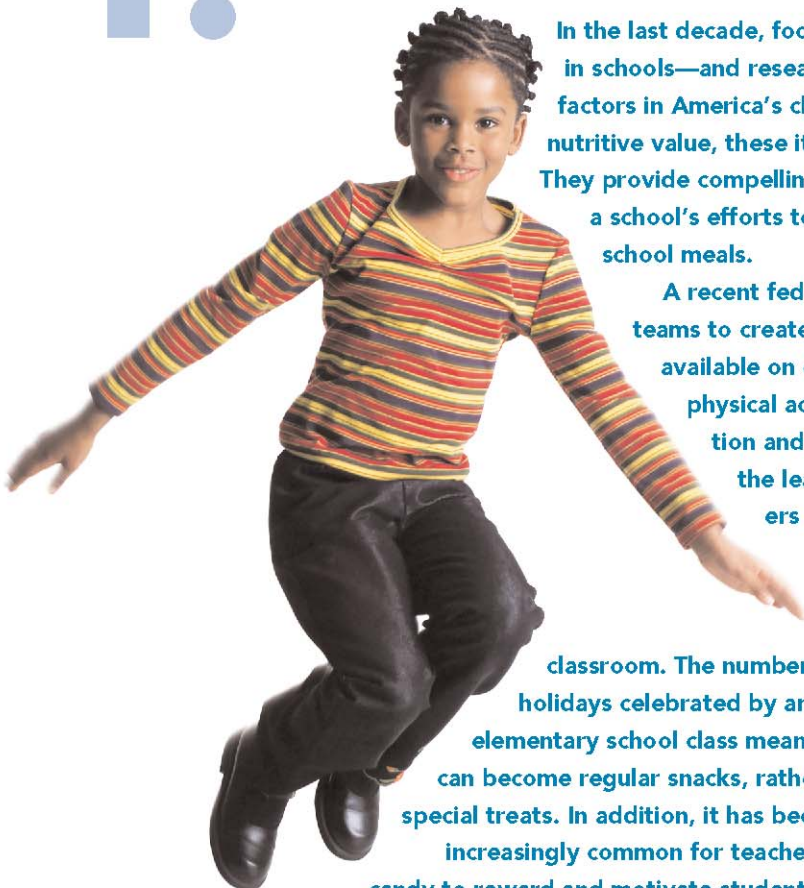
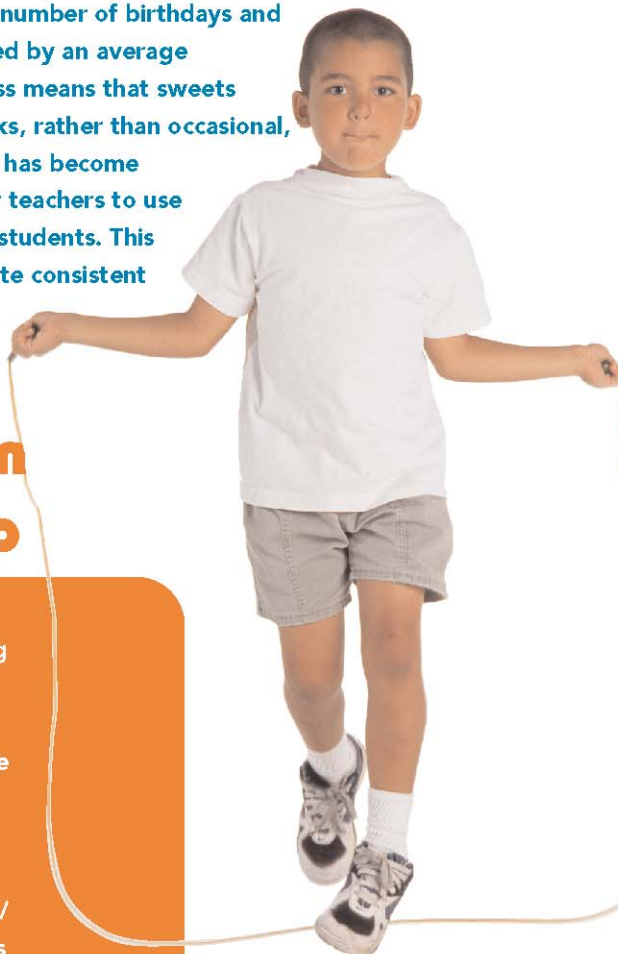
A recent federal law requires schools to establish teams to create wellness policies that address all foods available on campus, as well as nutrition education and physical activity. But the development, implementation and enforcement of such policies will rely on the leadership and dedication of parents, teachers and administrators working together with school nutrition directors and managers.

A good place to start is looking at foods offered and consumed in the classroom. The number of birthdays and holidays celebrated by an average elementary school class means that sweets can become regular snacks, rather than occasional, special treats. In addition, it has become increasingly common for teachers to use candy to reward and motivate students. This flyer offers alternatives to help promote consistent messages about food and health.

2. How Your School Nutrition Program Can Help

Look to your cafeteria team to be a resource for

- recommendations of prepackaged snacks featuring lowfat product formulations (e.g. reduced-fat brownies, baked chips, string cheese, trail mix)
- specific recipe suggestions for healthy and creative snacks and treats
- healthy treats prepared and sold by the school nutrition program’s catering staff
- names of vendors that can supply low-cost reward/incentive items, such as stickers, pencils, small toys and more





3. The Role of Teachers & Parents

Students are more likely to adopt healthy eating and activity habits if they see them modeled by influential adults at home and at school. Children also respond to interactive and fun nutrition education efforts, as well as promotions of wellness activities. This means that parents and teachers have both the responsibility and opportunity to initiate and support school wellness policies and programs.



4. Classroom Parties

Healthy classroom parties demonstrate your commitment to promoting healthy behaviors. There are many creative ways to celebrate without undermining valuable nutrition messages, but check on the status of current school or district policies first.

- Establish group birthday celebrations that are held once a quarter or academic period, but no more than monthly, and recognize all the students who had birthdays during that period. When determining your party frequency, be sure to factor in holidays and other traditional events, such as end-of-year parties.
- At the beginning of the year, ask all classroom parents to contribute what they can to a refreshment fund and use this to purchase treats from the school nutrition program or a retailer. This gives you control to select healthy options and ensure a higher level of food safety!
- Your PTA can develop a resource guide of approved party treats and recipes and distribute these to all parents as guidelines or requirements.
- Use classroom parties as opportunities to coordinate activities to learn how to prepare healthy treats, such as yogurt parfaits or fruit/cheese kabobs.
- Shift celebrations away from food. For birthdays, suggest that parents celebrate by purchasing a book for the classroom or school library in the student's name. Read the selection in class. Or create a special birthday package. The birthday child can wear a crown or sash, sit in a special chair and earn a coveted privilege.

5. Academic Incentives

You can reward good behavior and academic excellence without offering candy and soda. Consider the following suggestions.

- Low-cost stickers, pens/pencils, pins, erasers, trading cards, balloons, puzzles, crayons/markers, coloring books, games and so on; make it fun by gift wrapping all of the items in advance and keeping them stocked as mystery prizes that students may select
- Movie tickets, coupons, gift certificates/cards and free music downloads
- Special privileges, such as additional recess time, free computer time, the opportunity to sit with friends, being exempt from a classroom duty or the opportunity to choose or lead an activity with the entire class
- Extra credit points and exemption from certain homework assignments

For More Information

- www.schoolnutrition.org/parents
- www.squaremeals.org
- www.pta.org
- www.cspinet.org
- www.actionforhealthykids.org
- www.state.ct.us/sde/deps/Student/NutritionEd/Healthy_Celebrations.pdf