




Guidelines for Celebrations in Schools

There are many kinds of celebrations in our schools which help us build a positive and loving community. This document provides guidance for celebrating individual birthdays, holidays, and classroom parties that is in keeping with the district's Wellness Policy and the Bellingham Good Food Promise.

When classroom celebrations involve food, this is an opportunity to use the [Bellingham Good Food Promise](#) values to teach and model healthy food choices that are good for our bodies, hearts, and minds.

These simple **food values** guide us to make healthy choices in our schools:



- EAT PLENTY** of minimally processed "whole" foods, especially fruits and vegetables.
- LIMIT** salt and sugar. **CHOOSE** healthy fats.
- AVOID** artificial colors, flavors, and additives.

Healthy Food Choices

- Raw veggies served with dips
- Yogurt parfaits (yogurt, fruit, and granola)
- Air-popped popcorn
- Whole grain tortilla chips with salsa or bean dip
- Pizza party using whole grain crust, vegetables, and cheeses
- Fig bars, granola bars, muffins
- Fresh fruit assortments (fruit kabobs, fruit salads)
- Trail mix (pretzels, dried fruit, whole grain low-sugar cereals, sunflower seeds)
- Low-sugar beverages such as "fancy water" with fruits and/or herbs added (avoid corn syrup and artificial colors/flavors)

While food is often considered part of celebrations, it can also create challenges for students due to different dietary restrictions, so we strongly encourage parents, teachers, and administrators to **center celebrations around special activities, rather than food.** Some examples are:

Fun Things to Do:

- Create a special “Celebrate Me” book
- Facilitate a sharing circle where each student shares something he/she appreciates about the individual
- Extra Recess or Free-Choice time
- Flashlight Friday/Pajama Day
- “Be a Teacher” for the day
- Lunch with the principal/special guest
- Other ideas: scavenger hunts, dance party, special craft/art project

Fun Things to Share:

- Points and “bonus bucks”
- Books
- Bookmarks
- Stickers
- No-homework passes
- Physical activities
- Compliment cards
- Games
- Bubbles
- Seeds
- Crowns

Resources:

The Bellingham Public Schools [Wellness Policy 3440](#) and [Procedures 3440P](#) establish the foundation for how we serve and teach about food in school. If a celebration includes food, the Wellness Policy states:

When classroom celebrations involve food, we approach this as an opportunity to teach and model healthy food choices, using our food values to prioritize food offered. We do not celebrate individual birthdays with food.

In addition, the Wellness Policy offers this guidance for food served in classrooms:

Food should not routinely be used as a reward, and is only an acceptable reward when offered as an instructional device as a result of careful thought in collaboration with a school administrator.

More information about healthy celebrations:

[Celebrations that Support Child Health: https://www.healthiergeneration.org/asset/nvgd8g/13-6162_HSPHealthyCelebration.pdf](https://www.healthiergeneration.org/asset/nvgd8g/13-6162_HSPHealthyCelebration.pdf)

[Healthy School Celebrations: http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/storage/documents/parent-toolkit/partner-resource-pdfs/healthypartyguide-cando.pdf](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/storage/documents/parent-toolkit/partner-resource-pdfs/healthypartyguide-cando.pdf)

[Healthy & Active Classroom Parties: http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/tools-for-schools/1249-healthy-and-active-classroom-parties](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/tools-for-schools/1249-healthy-and-active-classroom-parties)

[Healthy Classroom Celebrations: http://articles.extension.org/pages/73399/feature-series:-healthy-classroom-celebrations](http://articles.extension.org/pages/73399/feature-series:-healthy-classroom-celebrations)

[Non-Food Birthdays and Rewards:](http://www.conejousd.org/Portals/61/ChildNutrition/Docs/NonFoodCelebrations.pdf)

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