Evergreen School District
Child Nutrition Services
Recommendations for School Celebrations, Rewards and Incentives

Schools play a powerful role in influencing student’s food choices and life-long eating habits. It is the intent of the Child Nutrition Services Department to not only provide nutritious meals at breakfast and lunch service but to act as a resource in nutrition education for teachers and parents.

CNS recommends that teachers and parents use celebrations, rewards and incentives that do not undermine the health of students and/or reinforce unhealthful eating habits. Non-food rewards and incentives should be used as the first choice to encourage positive behavior. If food is used as a reward or part of a celebration, healthy choices with appropriate portion sizes are required. Likewise classroom parties should also be limited during the school.

General Activities to Recognize Children:
• Celebrate with physical activity – allow them an extra recess or gym class. Have the children design, build, and run an obstacle course.
• Celebrate with art and music – have an art party. Divide the class into 4 stations and at

To assist teachers and principals with the challenge of providing a healthy environment during holidays, birthdays and rewards, CNS has created a list of food free celebration ideas.

• Each station has a craft activity. Play music in the background.
• Extra music, computer or reading time outside. Or consider time for music and dancing.
• Let them take things to the office or take care of the class pet.
• Eat lunch with the teacher
• Have a staged sleepover and lie on the floor telling ghost stories
• Prize from a treasure box including pencils, stickers, pencil toppers, etc.
• Leading the class to lunch, recess, library, etc.

Birthday Parties
• Single them out with a “V.I.P.” button, badge or crown and let them sit in a special chair. Or adorn their desk and chair with birthday decorations.
• Have the birthday child be the first to do each classroom activity and/or be the line leader for the day.
• Play indoor/outdoor games of the student’s choosing.
• Book donation – Have the child’s family donate a book and inside label it, “This book was donated to Mrs. Smith’s class in honor of John Jones’ 8th grade birthday.” Then read it to the class.
• Create a “Celebrate Me” book – Have classmates write stories or poems and draw pictures to describe what is special about the birthday child.
• Plan special party games and activities. Ask parents to provide game supplies, pencils, erasers, stickers and other small school supplies instead of food.

Christmas, Hanukah, Kwanzaa
These holidays provide the opportunity to focus on community outreach. Instead of throwing a party, have each class pool its efforts in honor of a worthy cause. Examples include:
• Decorate pillowcases to give to a homeless shelter.
• Make holiday cards for a nursing home.
• Collect animal treats for the SPCA.
• Make “CUREchiefs” for patients undergoing chemotherapy.

Halloween
• There’s more to Halloween than just candy. Focus the students on wearing their costumes.
• Make Halloween into a drama day where kids get to make their own costumes or masks and write/act their own plays.
• Explore the history and legends behind Halloween.

St. Patrick’s Day
• Teach an Irish Dance Step

Thanksgiving
• Thanksgiving is about giving thanks or what we have and for the people we have in our lives.
• Have student’s share what they are thankful for by writing a poem, drawing a picture or telling a story.

Valentine’s Day
• Have students write down one positive comment about each classmate – “You’re a good friend, you have a nice smile, or you’re smart!” and pass them out for valentines.
• Have them write poems and read them aloud to the class. Vote on the best one and have a Valentine’s Day assembly showcasing each classroom winner.

Non-Food Fundraising
• CNS has a list of ideas and companies available to raise money for your school without the use of unhealthy junk food. Please call CNS at 223-4500 for more information.

List adapted from: