

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' 8<sup>th</sup> 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:

*Friedman, R. (2005) “Community Action to Change School Food Policy: An Organizing Kit.” Boston, MA: Massachusetts Public Health Association. pp. 59-64*