



American Heart Association®

Teaching Gardens®

# Tips for healthy school snacks

What's a party without food? But the menu often includes cupcakes, cookies, candy and punch. With childhood obesity a critical concern, it's time to consider healthier alternatives. Celebrate the various cultures within your classroom and encourage families to bring in nutritious family recipes to share with the class. Here are some suggestions for encouraging healthy options among families:

- Your classroom is teaching students important lessons about health. Serving healthy alternatives at school celebrations provides a consistent message.
- School parties that serve fruits, vegetables and whole-grain snacks serve as models that party food can be healthy and delicious.
- Promote your school's message, e.g., "At [name of school/program], students can practice what they learn about making healthy decisions."
- It's fine to include an occasional treat in a healthy diet. In fact, the American Heart Association recommends achieving a healthy dietary pattern. So if every child celebrates their birthday with a treat, it may be difficult to achieve this recommendation. But if every child celebrates their birthday with a class cake, your students will have 20-30 slices of cake just during class time each year.
- Invite students/parents/families to class to talk about a family food tradition. Celebrate with healthy snacks.

## 5 Tips for Healthy School Snacks



Develop a healthy parties idea book, inviting parents to contribute. Shift the focus of celebrations from food to fun activities.

Bring in a blender and make fruit and veggie smoothies.



Provide vegetable trays with hummus or low-fat salad dressing on the side.

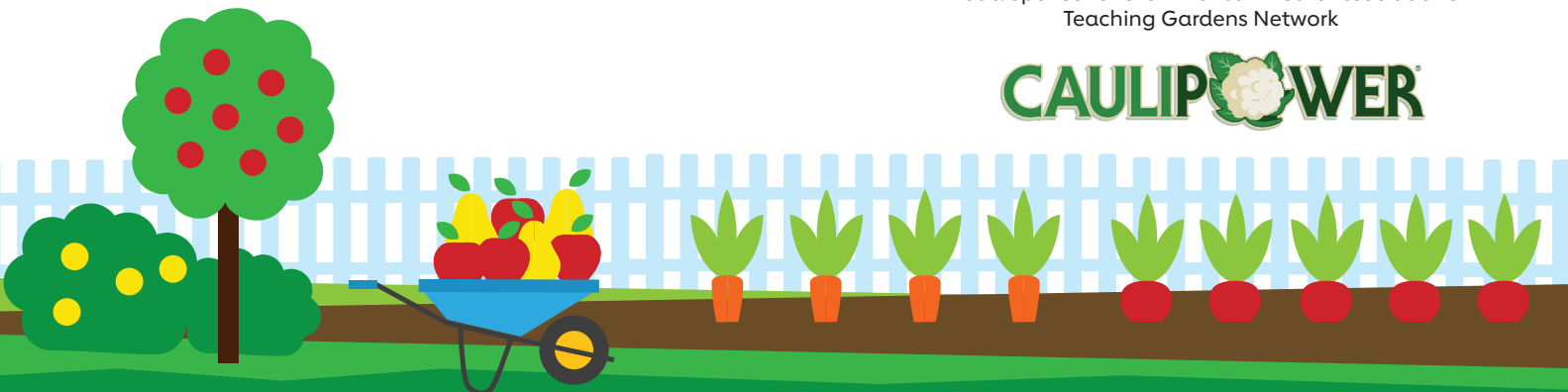
Serve air-popped or light microwave popcorn.



Provide seasonal fresh fruit or fruit salads

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## Ideas for healthy, fun celebrations

- Send a list home asking for parents to sign up to bring vegetable platters, fruit trays, whole-grain pretzels or crackers. This lets parents know providing healthier options is important even during celebrations.
- Let your students plan a healthy menu and prepare the food. Encourage them to use produce from their school garden. Look at the parent Newsletter Inserts and the Teaching Gardens lesson plans for recipe ideas.
- Make a class goody bag with items for the garden or for cooking. Include packets of seeds, starting pots, starting soil, measuring spoons and cups, wooden spoons, etc.
- Plan a thematic activity for the party that uses garden produce. For example, paint or carve pumpkins for a fall celebration. Celebrate carrots by serving cut-up carrots or shredded carrot salad.
- Hold garden scavenger hunts. Look at the Tops and Bottoms Scavenger Hunt lesson for ideas.
- Invite a parent or another class to your classroom to watch a skit or have students read a book aloud. Consult the Teaching Gardens lesson plans for ideas.



## Healthy Student Rewards

Rewards support student health when they involve a non-food item or activities to recognize students for their achievement or good behavior. Try these instead of giving out candy or food:



Play a favorite game or read a favorite book.



Show and tell.



Eat lunch or take a walk with the teacher.



Enjoy extra time in the garden.



**Have a treasure box in the classroom filled with nonfood items**

(jump ropes, puzzles, bubbles, stickers, etc.). Many large retailers have a \$1 section of grab bins, or visit your local dollar store for inexpensive prizes. Reward kids with a trip to the treasure box.

