



## Birthday Celebrations

Everyone loves a birthday party! It's the time when each child should feel special and cherished. It is also a time for multiple celebrations filled with many treats. But since we are striving to provide a nourishing school environment that promotes healthy food choices, we are asking parents to consider alternatives to birthday celebration food. For example, come to school to read a favorite story or share a song or game. If you are unable to come, consider loaning for the day a children's book, game or music CD. *(Check the back for ideas of other ways to celebrate without food.)*

If you feel strongly about providing food for your child's birthday, please select from the "Healthy Food List" below or check with your child's teacher about providing ingredients for a special healthy cooking or tasting activity. Remember, all foods must be store bought.

### Healthy Foods Idea List for Parents

- Whole grain crackers with string cheese, hummus, peanut butter\*
- Bananas and low fat yogurt for dip
- Microwave low-fat popcorn
- Low-fat breakfast or granola bars
- Applesauce / fruit cups
- Banana chunks with low fat yogurt dip
- Store prepared vegetable / fruit trays / dip
- Frozen berries with low fat whipped topping
- Mini muffins (carrot, bran, raisin, banana, fruit)



### Healthy Celebration Snacks

A "Birthday Buffet" can be a fun way to celebrate your child's birthday. Parents can bring individually packaged items that can be served buffet style so children can build a special snack. For example:

- **Trail Mix** - Dried fruit, whole-grain low-sugar cereals and sunflower seeds
- **Yogurt Parfaits** - Low-fat yogurt, low -fat granola and frozen/canned fruit with no added sugar
- **Banana Splits** - Bananas, low-fat vanilla yogurt, frozen blueberries/raspberries/strawberries, low fat granola

### "Birthday Taste Surprise"

When children are involved in a tasting activity they are more likely to try new fruits or vegetables. The teacher or parent can describe and show a new fruit or vegetable to the class and prepare it for tasting. Bring a variety and let the students build kabobs. Here are some items that have been hits with kids:

- Fresh pineapple
- Snow peas
- Star fruit
- Kiwi
- Jicama
- Sweet red pepper

**Smart Choices** is a partnership of the Dakota County Public Health Department and nine school districts in Dakota County committed to making the healthy choice the easy choice.

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# Celebrating Birthdays – Without Food

## Suggestions for teachers to make birthday celebrations special:

- Make a crown, sign, banner, sash, or garland for the child
- Allow child to be the teacher’s assistant for the day
- Allow child to sit next to teacher at lunch/snack
- Allow child to pick a special game, song or book to play or read together
- Let the child invite a parent or other special adult to come and read a story to the class
- Have a birthday parade with streamers and musical instruments
- Allow child to dress in a favorite costume
- Include special art time and ask the other children to draw a picture for the birthday child
- Plan a walk outside/scavenger hunt
- Let the child share a favorite picture or game from home
- Play or sing a special song
- Have a dance party
- Have a special craft time
- Create a “Celebrate Me” book (print a digital picture of the birthday child, ask other children to draw pictures to add to the book)



## Suggestions for parents:

- Send your child’s favorite story book/music CD (all topics and lyrics must be appropriate) to school to share with classmates for the day
- Send a collage of baby pictures to share
- Make a small poster with pictures of the family for child to share
- Check with the teacher for suggestions for books, games, play equipment that can be donated in your child’s name
- Donate seeds, pot and soil to plant a birthday flower or vegetable

- adapted from Bloomington Public Health, 8/2010