

Fun and Healthy Celebrations

Encouraging Healthy Living in Anne Arundel County



From birthdays to holiday parties, students and teachers have numerous reasons to celebrate. Celebrations are a great way to applaud achievements, recognize milestones, and have fun with your school community. When the learning environment is made festive, students, teachers and parents can come together to enjoy a break from the routine.

Students love the excitement of a party and an opportunity to celebrate during the school day. While food may be a part of party planning, it does not need to be the focal point of the celebration. Traditional party foods, such as cupcakes and candy, can have a place at the table, but more and more students, teachers, and schools are looking for healthier ways to celebrate. When school parties include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins – even if cupcakes are offered – students learn that party food can be delicious and nutritious. Follow these steps to ensure your next celebration is a healthy one!



Steps to a Fun and Healthy Celebration:

Gather input from staff, students, and families to discover your communities' favorite foods and activities, including and food allergies

Create school-specific tips, guidelines, and recommendations for healthy celebrations

Promote your healthy celebration resources through your school's website, social media accounts, newsletters, bulletin boards, and at parent and community events

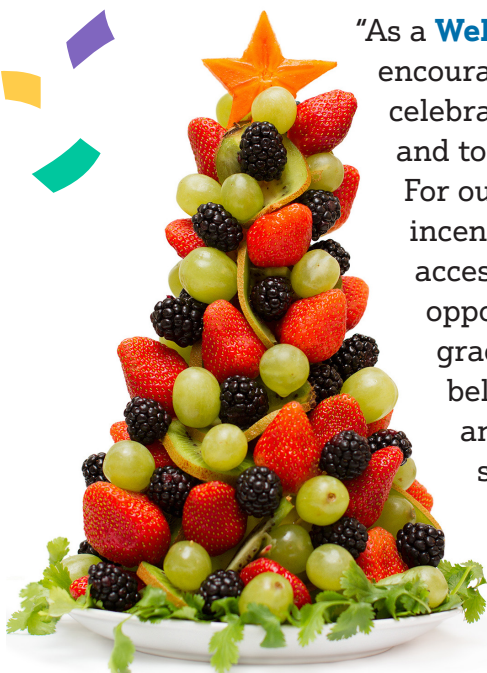
Share healthy celebration ideas with staff at meetings or through regular communications

Engage students, parents, and families in healthy party planning

Celebrate classrooms who host healthy celebrations!

"As a **Wellness School of Distinction**, we encourage a variety of healthy ways to celebrate accomplishments as a school and to gather together as a staff. For our students, we offer non-food incentives including give-a-ways and access to additional physical fitness opportunities for maintaining high grades in coursework. We truly believe that good health – physical and social-emotional – for all of our stakeholders contributes to the overall wellbeings of our school and the greater community."

*Wellness School of Distinction
– Crofton High School Principal*



Healthier School Celebrations: Students, Teachers, & Parents Working Together

The Anne Arundel County Public Schools' Wellness Council encourages teachers to serve as healthy role models and to help students develop lifelong habits of eating well and being active. School parties provide an excellent opportunity for students, teachers, and parents to work together to achieve these goals. Engage students and families to incorporate healthy party ideas into your next celebration. And don't forget to reach out to your cafeteria manager to see what healthy food options they can provide.

Non-Food Celebration Ideas:

- **Celebrate Outside** – The best decoration is nature! Students, teachers, and families will enjoy the sunshine, fresh air, and open space to move more freely.
- **Get Active** – Incorporate activity into your party theme. Elementary school students love marching in parades and discovering treasures on scavenger hunts, while secondary students can challenge each other to dance-a-thons or compete in races and athletic events.
- **Be Creative** – Plan a thematic craft for the party. Paint pumpkins for Halloween, build mailboxes for Valentine's Day, or construct planters for Spring celebrations.
- **Award Success** – Provide non-food rewards and prizes, such as pencils, stickers, small toys, books, homework passes, a special parking pass for high schoolers, or even bonus points on an upcoming test.

Healthy Snack and Beverage Ideas:

Beverages

- Water or fruit-infused water
- 100% fruit juice
- Fat-free or low-fat milk
- Fruit smoothies

Fruits and Vegetables

- Fruit and/or Vegetable trays, salads, or kabobs
- Fruit cups packed in water or 100% juice
- Frozen fruit packed in water or 100% juice
- Dried fruit with no added sugar

Proteins

- Low-fat cheese served with whole grains
- Fat-free or low-fat yogurt served with fruit
- Seed butters, such as sunflower or pumpkin seed, served with vegetables or whole grains
- Trail mix made with dried fruit and whole grain cereal
- Hummus served with vegetables or whole grains

Whole Grains

- Whole grain crackers, pretzels, muffins, bagels, or granola bars
- Baked whole grain chips
- Low-fat or air-popped popcorn

Interested in more **Wellness Initiatives** and how to **Cultivate Communities of Wellness** go to <https://www.aacps.org/wellnesstoolkit>.