

Class Snack Program

Choosing healthy foods provides nutritional components necessary for energy, growth and development. Healthy eating also helps children think more clearly and improves their attention span. Students will choose healthful snacks and distinguish the difference between healthy and unhealthy snacks.

This is a whole class activity that involves a commitment from the teacher, students and parents.

Overview of the Snack Plan:

1. Each child/family signs up for one school day a month to contribute a healthy class snack. There are approximately 14-20 school days in a month, so it should work out that each child has one turn a month.
2. Make a calendar to keep track of the snack days. Post the calendar in the classroom and send a copy home. The calendars can also be used as a tool to share the past month's favorite snacks, snack ideas, and healthful tips.
3. The result is that all children are exposed to a variety of healthy snacks in a comfortable, relaxed eating atmosphere in the classroom.

Procedure: Getting Started

1. Communicate the idea to parents and students. Use surveys, parent letters, and/or hold a meeting. (One teacher's perspective: "You need most parents to be in favor of the idea to work. I had two parents that could not live with the idea in September and they chose to send in a personal snack for their child daily. By November, both parents changed their minds. One parent said that she made a complete 180-degree change of mind and in the end, she was the biggest snack advocate.")
2. Work in the classroom to discover the fruits and vegetables that ALL students like, those that MOST students like, and ones they are willing to try. (You will be surprised at how many fruits and veggies they have never tried. Record this information for future student/parent reference.)
3. As a class, research and brainstorm a list of whole grains, dairy, and proteins that would make nutritious snacks. You will find that many families will only select snacks from this list, however some parents do get nutritionally creative. Remember, there will always be parents that will lose the list or never read it.

(continued on other side)

Materials:

- Monthly calendars with snack ideas
- Utensils, napkins, and paper plates
- Extra snacks

Notes from a Successful Teacher:

- Ask parents to put snacks in individual baggies, if appropriate (grapes, crackers, trail mix, etc.).
- Have students that brought in the snack be involved in passing it out.
- Make it a habit to thank and compliment the child/family that shared.
- Have an emergency snack available in the room in the event that a child/family forgets it's their turn.

POSITIVES:

- Positive #1: All children enjoying eating a similar, healthy snack together.
- Positive #2: The snack plan benefits families because they only need to think about snack once a month verses daily.
- Positive #3: It can be very cost effective for families.
- Positive #4: Children will be exposed to a variety of healthy snacks.
- Positive #5: Children develop a sense of community as they share snacks with their peers and choose snacks that they feel will be healthy for all.

CHALLENGES:

- Challenge #1: There will be days that families forget, so it's important to have emergency snacks on hand.
- Challenge #2: You may have to work around food allergies.

Comments from parent surveys after one year trial of the snack program:

What did you like best about the community snack idea?

- "...only needing snack once a month."
- "My child tried new things that he now asks for when we go shopping."
- "The excitement and feeling of responsibility my child felt when it was her turn was great."
- "It was easier for me to buy a snack for the whole classroom once a month, instead of buying several different snacks for my child to bring for the month."

Contributed by Karen MacKenzie, 2nd Grade Teacher at Gov. John Fairfield School, Saco, ME

Healthy Kids' Snacks

Snacks are a bigger part of kids' diets than in the past. Snacks can make positive or negative contributions to kids' diets — depending on the choices we offer. Next time your children say, "I'm hungry," or if you need to get them through to the next meal, reach for one of these healthy snacks.



Vegetables

Most of the snacks served to children should be fruits and vegetables, since most kids do not eat the recommended five to thirteen servings of fruits and vegetables each day. Popular vegetables that can be served raw with dip or salad dressing include:

- Broccoli
- Baby carrots
- Celery sticks
- Cucumber
- Peppers
- Snap peas
- Snow peas
- String beans
- Grape or cherry tomatoes
- Yellow summer squash
- Zucchini slices

Low Fat Dairy Foods

Dairy foods are a great source of calcium, which can help to build strong bones. However, dairy products also are the biggest sources of artery-clogging saturated fat in kids' diets. To protect children's bones and hearts, make sure all dairy foods are low fat or nonfat.

- Yogurt
- Lower fat cheese
- Low fat pudding and frozen yogurt – Serve only as occasional treats because they are high in added sugars.

For dips: Try salad dressings such as nonfat ranch or Thousand Island, store-bought light dips, bean dips, guacamole, hummus (which comes in dozens of flavors), salsa, or peanut butter.

Fruit

Fruit is naturally sweet, so most kids love it. Fruit can be served whole, sliced, cut in half, cubed, or in wedges. Canned, frozen, and dried fruits often need little preparation.

- Apples
- Apricots
- Bananas
- Blackberries
- Blueberries
- Cantaloupe
- Cherries
- Grapefruit
- Grapes (red, green, or purple)
- Honeydew melon
- Kiwifruit
- Mandarin oranges
- Mangoes
- Nectarines
- Oranges
- Peaches
- Pears

(continued on other side)

Healthy Kids' Snacks *(continued)*

- Pineapple
- Plums
- Raspberries
- Strawberries
- Tangerines
- Watermelon

Other popular fruit forms:

- Applesauce (unsweetened), fruit cups, and canned fruit
- Dried fruit – Try raisins, apricots, apples, cranberries, and fruit leathers with little or no added sugars.
- Frozen fruit
- Fruit salad – Get kids to help make a fruit salad.
- Popsicles – Look for popsicles made from 100% fruit juice with no added caloric sweeteners.

Healthy Grains

Try to serve mostly whole grains, which provide more fiber, vitamins, and minerals than refined grains.

- Whole wheat English muffins, pita, or tortillas
- Breakfast cereal – Either dry or with low fat milk, whole grain cereals like Cheerios, Grape-Nuts, Raisin Bran, Frosted Mini-Wheats, and Wheaties make good snacks. Look for cereals with no more than about 8 grams of sugar per serving.
- Whole grain crackers like Triscuits
- Rice cakes
- Popcorn
- Baked tortilla chips
- Granola and cereal bars – Look for whole grain granola bars that are low in fat and sugars.
- Pretzels, breadsticks, and flatbreads – These low fat items can be offered as snacks now and then. However, most of these snacks are not whole grain and most pretzels are high in salt.

Important!

Water should be the main drink served to kids at snack times. Water satisfies thirst and does not have sugar or calories. (Plus, it is low cost!) If kids are used to getting sweetened beverages at snack times, it may take a little time for them to get used to drinking water.



For more tips, go to www.cspinet.org/nutritionpolicy

