**[Insert date here]**

Dear **[insert school name]** parents and community members,

As you might know, our school is part of a nationwide movement to create healthy school environments for our children. We are committed to making continual improvements **to [insert school name]’s** school culture and curriculum in areas of food and nutrition education, physical activity, and physical education to support each child’s health and achievement. To this end, we are implementing the following guidelines regarding food in classroom celebrations and rewards. At [**insert school name]**, we recognize that a child’s health and wellbeing is the result of a team effort between parents, teachers, and the community, and we greatly appreciate your support with these changes.

Classroom Celebrations and Rewards Guidelines

**[Insert school name]** asks that all classroom celebrations for birthdays, holidays, and student achievement during the regular or extended school day involve activities that make a positive contribution to children’s diets and health with an emphasis on serving fruits and vegetables as the primary snack and water as the primary beverage. We also strongly encourage celebrations with non-food focused activities.

If a snack is to be served it must:

* Feature at least one of the following: fresh fruits and vegetables, a low-fat protein item, low-fat dairy item, or a 100 percent whole-grain food
* Have minimal or no added salt and sugar

If a beverage is to be served it can either be:

* Water
* Up to 8 ounces of 100 percent fruit or vegetable juice

Please see attached pages on ideas for healthy classroom celebrations and suggestions for snacks that meet these guidelines. Do not hesitate to contact **[insert contact name]** at **[email or phone number]** should you have any questions or concerns regarding the new school guidelines. Again, we appreciate your support in making **[insert school name]** a healthy, successful school.

Sincerely,

**[insert school principal or classroom teacher name]**

**Healthy Classroom Celebrations**

Alternatives to Food

* For a holiday or theme celebration, host a scavenger hunt for items or information related to the theme in the classroom or around the school.
* For birthdays, children can select a favorite activity or invite a special guest to read a book.
* Celebrate creatively with different craft stations and music playing in the background.

Healthy Food and Beverage Options

* Try a new kind of birthday cake: Take a watermelon, cut it in half, and stick candles inside. Fruit kabobs (chunks of fresh fruit on bamboo skewers) are another fun way to celebrate.
* Serve chopped vegetables or fruit with different dips. Healthy examples include yogurt-based dips and hummus.
* Have a healthy popcorn party using light, air-popped popcorn with low salt and little oil.

**Snacks that meet Criteria for Classroom Celebrations and Rewards**

*Before bringing food for a celebration, please contact the classroom teacher for food allergy information.*

**Fruit** can be served whole, cut into pieces, or cut in wedges. While fresh fruit is preferred when available, frozen, canned, or dried fruit without added sugars can be served. The recommended daily intake of fruit for children ages 4-13 is 1 to 1.5 cups. Suggestions include:

* Fruit salads with grapes, apples, berries and melon
* Dried fruit trail mixes
* Applesauce
* Party idea: make-your-own fresh fruit kabobs or smoothies with fruit, milk/soy milk and ice

**Vegetables** are commonly served cut into sticks or bite-sized pieces. The recommended daily intake of vegetables for children ages 4-13 is 1.5 to 2.5 cups. Suggestions include:

* Fresh vegetables with dip (Examples: Carrots, sugar snap peas, and bell peppers with yogurt-based dips, guacamole, and hummus)
* Veggie Pockets (Example: whole-wheat pita pocket or tortilla, vegetables, and hummus)
* Party idea: make-your-own salad bar

**Whole Grains** with healthy spreads and dips can be great snacks. The recommended daily intake of grains for children ages 4-13 is 2.5 to 3 ounces. Suggestions include:

* Whole grain crackers with toppings such as low-fat cheese
* Rice cakes made from brown rice
* Popcorn with little or no added salt or butter
* Baked whole grain tortilla chips with salsa or guacamole

**Protein** like nuts and seeds and peas and beans are healthy sources of protein and can make easy classroom snacks. The recommended daily intake of protein foods for children ages 4-13 is 4 to 5 ounces. Suggestions include:

* Bean dips with vegetables or whole-grain crackers
* Trail mix with assorted nuts and seeds

**Low-Fat Dairy** products can be switched out for calcium-fortified alternatives like soy milk if children are lactose intolerant. The recommended daily intake of dairy for children ages 4-13 is 2.5 to 3 cups, depending on age, sex and physical activity level. Suggestions include:

* Low-fat cheese stick
* Yogurt: Individual servings of low-fat yogurt with moderate or no added sugars (no more than 30 grams of sugar per 8 -ounce serving)
* Party idea: build-your-own parfaits with fruit, yogurt, and granola