

FOOD-FREE CELEBRATION IDEAS

from the Massachusetts Public Health Association

General activities to recognize children

- The key is to recognize their efforts.
- Celebrate with physical activity - allow them an extra recess or gym class. Have the children design, build, and run an obstacle course.
- Celebrate with art and music - have an art party. Divide the classroom into 4 stations and at each station have a craft activity. Play music in the background.
- Have a staged sleep-over - children bring in sleeping bags/pillows and lie on the floor telling ghost stories.

Birthday Parties

There are many ways of making the birthday child feel special:

- Single them out with a "V.I.P." button/badge or crown
- Have the birthday child be the first to do each classroom activity and/or be the line leader for the day.
- Book Donation - A great way to build up the classroom library and recognize the child. Have the child's family donate a book and inside label it "This book was donated to Mrs. Smith's classroom in honor of John Jones' 8th birthday"
- Sing the birthday song!

Christmas, Hanukah, Kwanzaa

These holidays provides the opportunity to focus on community outreach. Instead of throwing a party, have each class pool its efforts in honor of a worthy cause.

Examples include:

- decorating pillowcases to give to a homeless shelter,
- making holiday cards for a nursing home,
- collecting animal treats for the SPCA.

Easter

Decorate plastic or rubber eggs with paints, stickers and glitter. The Easter Bunny can hide small toys or coins inside plastic eggs for hunting. Easter baskets can be filled with books, legos, art supplies or washable stuffed animals, or other smaller trinkets available on line.

Halloween

- There's more to Halloween than just candy. Focus the students on wearing their costumes. Make Halloween into a drama day where kids get to make their own costumes or masks and write and act out their own plays.
- Explore the history and legends behind Halloween.

St. Patrick's

Teach an Irish step dance.

Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving is about giving thanks for what we have and for the people we have in our lives. Have students share what they are thankful for by writing a poem, drawing a picture, or telling a story.

Valentine's Day

- Have students write down one positive comment about each classmate, e.g., "you're a good friend, you have a nice smile, or you're smart" and pass them out for valentines.
- Have them write poems and read them aloud to the class. Vote on the best one and have a Valentine's Day assembly showcasing each classroom winner.

Adapted excerpt from:

Friedman, R. (2005). *Community Action to Change School Food Policy: An Organizing Kit*. Boston, MA: Massachusetts Public Health Association. (p. 63-64).