

For Parents: The Pennsylvania Department of Education Nutrition Standards for Classroom Parties & Holiday Celebrations

Your school has adopted The Pennsylvania Department of Education Nutrition Standards. The nutrition standards require that fewer (up to three) high-sugar foods be served at classroom parties (such as cupcakes). Also, parties must have fruits and vegetables and healthy drinks like water, milk or juice.

By following these standards, your school will receive extra money and help promote good nutrition. Here are some tips to follow if you are asked to bring food to your child's classroom party.



Safe Fruits and Vegetables for Classroom Parties. Your school food service may provide the fresh fruits and vegetables. However, if you are asked to bring them, be sure to wash your hands before handling fruits or vegetables, wash fruits and vegetables thoroughly (unless they are ready-to-serve) and use clean counters, utensils and cutting boards. Keep fruits and vegetables refrigerated until they are served.

Share the Load. Multiple parents may be asked to bring food items. For example: one parent can bring a bag of pre-sliced apples, one parent can bring a bag of broccoli florets. A third parent can bring a bottle of low-fat ranch dressing as a vegetable dip. Cost is distributed among several parents instead of one!

Best Values. Bananas, apples, carrots and grapes can usually be purchased at a low cost. Consider purchasing farm stand, weekly special or generic produce. Here is a partial list of in-season produce:

January: Mangos, Oranges, Peppers, Cucumbers
February: Apples, Potatoes, Bananas, Mushrooms
March: Cauliflower, Cabbage, Celery
April: Artichokes, Avocados, Pineapple, Grape Tomatoes
May: Asparagus, Spinach, Rhubarb, Strawberries
June: Green Beans, Peaches, Apricots, Lemons, Limes
July: Sweet Corn, Blueberries, Cantaloupe, Watermelon
August: Papaya, Honeydew, Nectarines, Raspberries
September: Radishes, Zucchini, Tomatoes, Plums
October: Carrots, Grapes, Jicama, Apples
November: Pumpkins, Pears, Sweet Potatoes, Cranberries
December: Broccoli, Tangerines, Kiwi, Grapefruit

100% canned juice or juice as frozen concentrate is less expensive than the carton variety. Children can drink tap water if it is drinkable. A few parents can each bring a gallon jug of a beverage and another parent can provide small cups.

Check into money rebate programs (such as General Mills' Box Tops for Education) or a local grocery store rebate program that can earn money to be used to buy items for your school parties.

How Much is Enough? Parties should provide the amount of fruit, vegetables and milk, juice or water for all students to select the healthier option if they so choose. If each student is served a 6-ounce beverage, three one-gallon jugs will be enough to supply 30 secondary school students; if each student is served a 4-ounce beverage, two one-gallon jugs will supply 30 elementary students.

Resources ... read the full-text Nutrition Standards at:

http://www.pde.state.pa.us/food_nutrition/site/default.asp click School Nutrition Incentive & download PDE's Nutrition Standards for Competitive Foods in Pennsylvania Schools ... need fruit and vegetable themes or ideas on how to prepare fruits and vegetables in clever ways? See PDE's [Nutrition Education Resources to Help Promote Healthier Foods](#) handout for a recently updated list of online resources at http://www.pde.state.pa.us/food_nutrition and follow the link to the School Nutrition Incentive Program.