

# Classroom Celebrations

Celebrations and seasonal holidays are an important part of the kindergarten experience. The following ideas will help you incorporate healthier snacks and physical activity into these special events! We've included ways that these events can support the learning in the six **Discover MyPlate** lessons, but you can also use these ideas anytime.

## Back-to-School Friendship Celebration (try with Lesson 1)

To help students forge new friendships, set aside time to play games and enjoy a healthful snack.

### Foods:

Pair students together to make the **Friendship Pocket** (see **Look and Cook** recipe and teacher instructions on pp. 67-69).

### Activities/Games:

- Ask students different questions that require movements for the answers, such as: *Do you have a brother?* Jump like a frog for yes; do jumping jacks for no. *Do you like to play on the slide?* Hop like a rabbit for yes; crawl like a caterpillar for no.
- Pair students to ask each other questions about foods and activities they like (such as a favorite dinner, activity/sport, snack, or recess game), and then have them draw pictures showing their new friend's answer. After everyone is done, ask pairs of students to share what they learned about their new friends with the rest of the class.

## Halloween & Fall Harvest Celebration

(try with Lessons 3 & 4)

Turn this classic school celebration into one that highlights the fall harvest of fruits and vegetables.

### Snack:

For a fun but healthy treat, ask parents to provide roasted pumpkin seeds, fresh apple slices (pineapple or orange juice keeps them from browning), orange-colored fruits and vegetables (such as mandarin orange snack cups with jack-o'-lantern faces drawn on the sides or carrots with low-fat ranch dip), or whole-grain pumpkin muffins.

### Activities/Games:

- Conduct an apple tasting with at least three varieties of apples, such as Granny Smith, Fuji, and Yellow Delicious (a green, red, and yellow variety). Rinse apples under running water, and cut them into slices, allowing students to try each type. Have students write their names on paper apples, then color them to resemble their favorite. Create a class chart and bar graph using students' paper apples to show class favorites.
- You may also want to do a class tasting and vote of other fall fruits or vegetables such as pears, tangerines, baked butternut squash, or cooked sweet potatoes.
- As part of the seasonal celebration, have students create drawings of various Halloween-themed items like jack-o'-lanterns, bats, or pointed hats. Head out to the playground and place them around for a game of Halloween tag. Explain that, to be "safe," you must touch a Halloween drawing.

## Getting Parent Support

Communicate with parents about ways that they can support healthier celebrations.

Invite parents to participate and give ideas for healthier snacks they can contribute.

After celebrations, share with parents how much the class enjoyed these healthier options, and also learned skills that support a healthy lifestyle.



## Thanksgiving Celebration (try with Lessons 2 & 4)

Celebrate this national holiday with healthy favorites.

### Snack:

Coordinate with the school Nutrition Services Director and parent volunteers to offer students a **MyPlate** Thanksgiving. Allow students to taste a sampling of traditional Thanksgiving foods from each food group. For example: turkey (Protein Foods); beans, squash, potatoes (white and sweet), pumpkin, corn (Vegetables; beans can also be a Protein Food); cranberry sauce, apples (Fruit); stuffing, cornbread (Grains). Fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk (Dairy) is a refreshing beverage to enjoy with your Thanksgiving meal. You can also invite students to sample a “pumpkin pie smoothie” made with low-fat vanilla yogurt, frozen pumpkin purée, and a little ground cinnamon.

### Activities/Games:

- If your school is collecting food for local soup kitchens or food banks, make it a “**MyPlate** Food Drive” and encourage non-perishable donations from all food groups. Also, have your class create decorative “placemats” to donate along with the food to help make Thanksgiving dinner more festive for visitors.
- Add another traditional element to your school Thanksgiving celebration – American “touch” football! Coordinate with the physical education teacher and try to find time when your class can visit the gym or playground to learn how to throw, catch, and run the ball. Allow students to suggest their favorite physical activities in order to accommodate all of your students.

### ★TEACHER TIP★

January is National Oatmeal Month.



## Welcome Winter! Celebration (try with Lesson 5)

There are a lot of reasons to celebrate this time of year, aside from the holidays. The winter solstice offers a great opportunity to celebrate the season and the start of a new year!

### Snack:

Have a pajama day and enjoy a “cozy” warm breakfast at school. If your school participates in the School Breakfast Program, coordinate with your school Nutrition Services Director to plan this event. If not, ask parent volunteers to provide hot oatmeal in an insulated container or slow cooker. Serve it with fruit and low-fat milk.

### Activities/Games:

- To extend the celebration and have some indoor fun, set up an obstacle course in the gym with a winter theme. Stations could include:
  - “The Snowman” – with students jumping in and around three Hula-Hoops on the floor
  - “The Snowball Toss” – where students throw beanbags into buckets
  - “The Sleigh Pull” – with students using jump ropes to move basketballs from one area to another

Work with other teachers and the physical education instructor to develop the course. Alter the obstacles to fit local traditions or climate, such as a “beach volleyball” station for warmer cities, or a mock rodeo obstacle for schools in the West (for example, kids can lasso a bag of potatoes and ride bikes instead of horses around cones). Then, make it an annual celebration the whole school can enjoy.

- In honor of the shortest day of the year, have students draw pictures showing how they might take advantage of the day of the year with the fewest daylight hours.



## Valentine's Day Celebration (try with Lesson 3)

Make the theme of this celebration “I’m Sweet on You,” and focus on trying sweet but healthy fruits.

### Snack:

Make the **Fruit-a-licious Breakfast Cups** (see pp. 73-75 for **Look and Cook Recipe**) using red strawberries as the fruit. Other red fruits and vegetables are also great offerings for Valentine’s Day. (See sidebar on p. 33 for examples.)

### Activities/Games:

- Similar to the apple tasting for Halloween, conduct a berry tasting where students try strawberries, blueberries, and raspberries separately. Have students write their names on heart-shaped cutouts. Then, make a graph on chart paper where students can tape or glue their hearts under pictures of their favorite berry.
- Valentine’s Day is all about the heart, and there is no better way to help your heart get stronger than to get moving. Celebrate Valentine’s Day with heart-thumping relay races, jump rope, or jogging.



## 100th-Day-of-School Celebration (try with Lesson 6)

Use these ideas to celebrate this exciting time for kindergarteners.

### Snack:

Have each student create a 100-item snack mix using 10 of each type of ingredient, such as whole-grain cereals in different shapes (e.g., O’s, squares), light popcorn, dried fruits (e.g., raisins, chopped dried apricots, or dried apple pieces), and small whole-grain crackers. See if students can guess the number of items on their plate before actually counting them. Then, have them count to see how close they were.

### Activities/Games:

- Create artwork to celebrate the 100th Day of School by having each student make two handprints on a piece of paper. Use the handprints to reinforce counting by fives and 10s. Hang the handprint papers in groups of 10 with sayings such as “10 Friends, 100 Fingers.”
- Create a “100” art piece by counting and using 100 dried beans, macaroni, or pictures of physical activity. Or, find 20 pictures of each food group and make a 100-foods **MyPlate** collage!
- Take counting to a new level! Work with your physical education teacher and have students go to the gym or outside and rotate through 10 stations where they do: 10 jumping jacks, 10 Hula-Hoops, 10 high jumps, catch a ball 10 times, etc. At the end of the circuit, give each child a sticker or a badge that says, “I did 100 physical activities today!”
- As a quick classroom activity break, challenge students to see how many times they can touch their toes in 100 seconds.



## St. Patrick's Day Celebration & Dr. Seuss' Birthday (try with Lesson 3)

A green holiday deserves a green celebration! Since March is also Dr. Seuss’ birthday, read **Green Eggs and Ham** to set the mood and begin a discussion about being open to trying new things.





**Snacks:** (Continued from p. 63, St. Patrick's Day Celebration and Dr. Seuss' Birthday) Promote a “be seen eating green” healthy challenge and tasting celebration. Provide green fruits such as green grapes, apples, kiwi, honeydew melon, and pears; and vegetables like fresh spinach, broccoli, green beans, green bell peppers, cucumbers, and peas. Encourage students to try something new and then vote on their favorites. You can even serve green eggs – scrambled eggs made with frozen chopped spinach.

### Activities/Games:

To celebrate Dr. Seuss' birthday:

- For a science tie-in, read *Bartholomew and the Oobleck* by Dr. Seuss and make the gooey green “oobleck” in class.
- To further honor Dr. Seuss, play outside or in the gym, but play “backwards” games (e.g., run the bases backward in kickball, start at the top of the hopscotch board, roll the soccer balls into the nets). Students can also try balancing red beanbags, a lá *Ten Apples Up On Top* by Dr. Seuss, on their heads as part of a class relay.
- Read *The Foot Book* and have students act out each movement as it is being read to them. Coordinate with the physical education teacher to come up with additional fun activity ideas.

Celebrate St. Patrick's Day in new ways:

- Build off the holiday's rainbow theme by making the *Crunchy Rainbow Wrap* (see the **Look and Cook** recipe **and instructions** on pp. 70-73)
- Teach students to do an Irish jig.
- Go on a “gold hunt” on the playground, where students look for plastic gold coins.

## Swing Into Spring Celebration (try with Lessons 2 & 6)

Just before or after spring break, hold a celebration for the start of the growing season.

### Snack:

Serve healthy refreshments from each food group. Include beverages such as water steeped with cucumbers, lemon, and mint as a refreshing twist. Or, try water with slices of apples, strawberries, or oranges for a hint of sweetness. Make “ants on a log” – thinly spread sunflower seed butter on narrow celery sticks and top with raisins in a row. Create butterfly snacks using a banana, cheese stick, or whole-grain pretzel rod as the center, and create wings using sliced cheese, bread, and/or fruit. Make flower-shaped snacks using sliced vegetables or fruits.

### Activities/Games:

- Invite other kindergarten classes to join you in the gym for a special dance celebration! Bring in different types of music (salsa, hip-hop, country, rock, etc.), then have students vote on their favorite music/dance. Let students move and groove to the music as they choose. You may want to invite parents to join, or even hold the celebration at night so families can take part together.
- Take a nature walk and look for plants and budding trees or flowers as temperatures get warmer.
- Hunt for colorful envelopes or plastic eggs filled with small physical activity cards (for example, bunny hop, horse gallop, duckwalk, or a caterpillar crawl). Have children perform each activity.

### ★TEACHER TIP★

June 2nd is *MyPlate's* birthday. Celebrate with this coloring sheet:

<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/downloads/>



- Did you know that baskets used for carrying harvested peaches were once used as the “basket” in basketball? Commemorate such inventiveness by setting up a beanbag toss. Position baskets at various lengths away from starting lines (use jump ropes to mark where students should stand) and leave beanbags at each station. Have students start at one location and try to throw the beanbags into the baskets before running to the next station.

## Earth Day Celebration (try with Lesson 4)

To underscore how fruits and vegetables are grown, and to show our respect and gratitude to the planet for these healthy and delicious foods, try the following snack and activity ideas.

### Snack:

Sample foods grown in your area. Or serve earth colors of blue and green fruits and vegetables: blueberries, green grapes, green bell peppers, and peas.

### Activities/Games:

- Invite local farmers to visit the school for a day (or visit a farmers market). Students can learn about the fruits, vegetables, and herbs grown by farmers and taste the offerings. Invite parents as well.
- Decorate small pots and plant basil seeds to take home and grow in a sunny window.
- Use your celebration to work on, or begin planning, a school gardening project. There are many ways to grow a garden at school: indoors or outdoors, in small containers, seedlings in a cup, or raised beds. If space is limited, look into hydroponic gardening (growing plants in water instead of soil). Contact the local Cooperative Extension for ideas on how to get started. (Visit <http://www.nifa.usda.gov/Extension/index.html> to locate a contact in your area.)



### ★TEACHER TIP★

Earth Day is on  
April 22nd.

## End-of-School-Year Celebration (try with Lesson 6)

Celebrate this joyous occasion by reinforcing what students have accomplished throughout their kindergarten year and what they have learned about **MyPlate**.

### Snack:

Host an outdoor picnic and invite children and their families. Talk to your school Nutrition Services Director about providing bagged lunches. Or encourage families to bring healthy foods to share, including fruits and vegetables that are in season.

### Games/Activities:

- Hold a “roll into first grade” event on the school playground where students play kickball, bowling, or Hula-Hoop games to celebrate moving on to the next grade.
- Have students create a “Best Parts of K” scrapbook and include hand-drawn pictures from their friends, as well as pictures of their favorite memories from the year. Ask them to include moments when they tried a new food, spent time in the cafeteria or with the school nutrition services staff, and were active and playing games. Share information with parents about any summer food programs in your area.



### ★TEACHER TIP★

Use with graduation or  
“moving up” celebrations  
for your students.

