

Healthy Classroom Toolkit

presented by SNAP-Ed NY

**This program will help you navigate
expanding efforts to be considered
a Healthy Classroom!**



Healthy Classroom Initiative

Welcome! We are so excited you have decided to help create an environment that supports healthy habits around food and physical activity. It's our hope that the various materials in the School Wellness toolkit will provide you with simple healthy tips & tricks you may need to get started on your healthy classroom journey!

Toolkit overview: The toolkit is divided into easy-to-use sections so you can explore, choose, and implement what works best for your classroom.

Family Letter: Page 4

Kickstart your healthy classroom year with a letter to send home.

Move More: Pages 5 - 7

Boost energy and focus with fun activity breaks!

Healthy Snacks: Pages 8 - 10

Promote simple, nutritious snack choices.

Healthy Celebrations: Pages 11 - 14

Make birthdays and holidays healthy.

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Create a wellness focused atmosphere.

- Announcement Example: Page 17

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Teachers and staff set the tone!

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Thank you for your participation in creating an environment that promotes movement and healthy eating for you and your students! This toolkit was made possible by SNAP-Ed NY, funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) through FY2025.

Food Resources - Quick Reference

What is available for your students? Create a quick reference sheet below.

Summer Meals Resources & Contact Information:

- Food Bank of the Southern Tier: call (607) 796-6061 or visit <https://www.foodbankst.org/about-us/our-programs/summerfood/> for more information.

Backpack Program Resources & Contact Information:

- Food Bank of the Southern Tier: call (607) 796-6061 or visit <https://www.foodbankst.org/about-us/our-programs/backpack-school-contacts/> for more information.

Food Pantry Resources & Contact Information:

- Food Bank of the Southern Tier: call (607) 796-6061 or visit <https://www.foodbankst.org/find-food/> for more information.

Healthy Classroom Initiative

Dear families,

Our classroom is working on being a Healthy Classroom!

What does that mean?

It means that we are committed to creating an environment that will help children learn how to grow into the healthiest version of themselves by:

- Creating time and space for your children to move their bodies during the school day
- Learning about healthy foods together with a series of fun and hands-on activities
- Sharing messages about healthy habits throughout the year

How will we do this together?

By being a role model and supporter. You can help us teach this and make your home a healthy place too. During the school year we will share easy tools, tips, and tricks to help you make small changes that will make a big difference for the whole family. We will also invite you to share all the wonderful things you do to keep yourself and your family healthy!

Where to start?



Get active as a family

Go out for a walk or to play in a park. Even 10 minutes makes a big difference! Find ways to move your body during TV commercial breaks or simply dance together in your home.



Make healthy food choices as often as possible

This can include adding fruits and vegetables to meals and snacks and drinking more water. Send children to school with healthy snacks, lunches, and treats for parties and celebrations.

Establishing and maintaining healthy eating habits has far-reaching benefits. School-aged children who eat healthy meals perform better on tests, have fewer attendance and behavior problems, and achieve more in school.

We have included some tips to get us started on this journey and will share more throughout the school year.

Feel free to reach out with any questions or concerns.

Together, let's build a healthy classroom!

Healthy Classroom Initiative

Move More

Let's get active!

Research shows it time and time again: Active kids learn and behave better! There are many fun and creative ways to incorporate movement into your daily schedule, and many resources are available to help you get started. Below are some examples of how these 3-5 minute physical activity ideas can be incorporated into any classroom.

Getting Started...

- **Set the stage** – Let the class know that you will be scheduling short breaks at different times during the day or week. Explain that this is an important part of helping them become the best learner they can be because it brings blood and oxygen to their brain to help it think better.
- **Keep safety in mind** – Make sure activities are appropriate for the space you have.
- **Start small and schedule it** – Choose 2-3 days a week or the time of day you will be adding physical activity breaks and gradually increase the frequency.
- **Engage the students** – Ask them to choose which activity they would like to do each day or week or to share and lead their own physical activity break ideas.
- **Lead by example** – Join in the planned physical activity break.



Grab & Move!

- **Spelling Bee Break:** Using your index finger as an imaginary pencil, write spelling words in the air. Now repeat using different body parts as your pencil – elbow, knee, toe, belly button, head. Don't forget to make sure all your i's are dotted and t's are crossed!
- **The Classroom Workout Circuit:** Have students do the following in place for 1 minute each (feel free to mix up the order): jog in place, high knees, jumping jacks, hop on one foot, hop on the other foot, hop on both feet.
- **Play a game of Simon Says:** Ask a different student to be the leader each time.
- **Use videos**
 - Gonoodle.com for some quick brain breaks.
 - Alliance for Healthier Generation Fitness Break Videos
 - (www.healthiergeneration.org/fitness-breaks)

Notes:

Additional Resources for Moving More:

WeTeachNYC

- **Move-to-Improve Program Materials Collection**
(www.weteachnyc.org/resources/collection/move-improve/)
 - Move-to-Improve. Classroom and physical education teachers can view and download activity guides, visual aid cards, and printable posters to get students moving during academic instruction.

Oregon State Extension Be Physically Active 2 Day

- **Activity video:** (extension.oregonstate.edu/bepa/activity-videos)

Action for Healthy Kids

- **Resource Library:**
(www.actionforhealthykids.org/game-on-activity-library/)
 - Browse videos, activities, tip sheets, and more to utilize at school.

Drexel

- **Movement Breaks:**
(sites.google.com/view/nutred4philly/movement-breaks)
 - These mini bursts of movement throughout the day allow students and teachers to re-energize and re-focus through physical activity.

Active Academics: (activeacademics.org)

- **North Carolina Healthy Schools: Kindergarten-5th Grade Energizers**
(www.eatsmartmovemorenc.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Energizers_K-5_2015.pdf)
 - Classroom based physical activity – integrate movement and academic concepts.

Subject-specific Movement Resources:

- **Math & Movement:** (mathandmovement.com/)
 - Exercise Body and Mind with Math & Movement's Play-Based Learning Techniques.
- **Alliance for a Healthier Generation:**
 - **The Walking Classroom:** (www.thewalkingclassroom.org/)
 - The evidence-based nonprofit program's "Walk, Listen, and Learn" methodology capitalizes on the favorable link between exercise and cognitive function.

Healthy Classroom Initiative

Healthy Snacks

Healthy Eating

Snacking isn't bad for kids, but what they snack on is important. Healthy snacks enhance children's academic and athletic performance and provide an opportunity to apply nutrition education principles learned in the classroom. To provide students with the healthiest environment possible, we are encouraging you to provide healthy snacks at snack time and during celebrations. We also encourage you to communicate with families about the snacks they send students to school with.

Getting Started...

- **Set the stage** - Discuss healthy snacks with your students. They will be familiar since they will have had nutrition education with the SNAP-Ed nutritionist.
- **Remind** - Let students know that while all foods fit, choosing food from the fruit, vegetables, whole grain, protein, and low-fat dairy groups will give them the energy they need to learn and grow.
- **Communicate** - Send a healthy snack tip sheet home with families and discuss it during open house or curriculum night.
(www.myplate.gov/tip-sheet/healthy-snacking-myplate)
- **Encourage** - Kids to bring water to school.
- **Reinforce** - The messages about healthy snacks and healthy eating throughout the school year. You can use the morning announcements from our healthy messaging section to do this.
- **Lead by example** - Use the following guidelines to bring a healthy snack for yourself as often as you can.



Grab & Snack!

Below is a list of healthy snack ideas you can suggest or discuss with students.



Fruits:

Low in
Calories!

Fresh, frozen,
dried, canned
in 100% juice,
or dried fruit
(no sugar
added)

Vegetables:

Low in Calories
& Sugar!

Fresh, frozen,
dried, &
canned
vegetables or
roasted beans
(chickpeas,
edamame)

Whole Grains:

High in Fiber!

Plain popcorn
(low salt & low-
fat),
whole grain
pretzels, or
whole grain
crackers

Protein:

Lean options are great!

Nut or seed butter
(check allergies),
trail mix (watch
sugar & salt
content or make
your own),
hummus, or bean
dip

Dgiry:

High in
Calcium!

Choose low sugar options.
Low-fat yogurt, or low-fat cheese sticks

Notes:

Additional Resources to help with Healthy Snacks:

- **Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics:**
 - <https://www.eatright.org/for-kids>
 - Enhance your nutrition knowledge with free resources and articles from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Including information on snacks for children.
- **Healthy Snacking with MyPlate**
 - **Tip Sheet:**
(www.myplate.gov/tip-sheet/healthy-snacking-myplate)
- **USDA Posters & Displays**
 - (www.fns.usda.gov/tn/posters)
 - Team Nutrition provides materials such as posters, print materials, and literature developed specifically for kids and their parents/caregivers. Materials available in print are on the Resource Order Form.

Healthy Celebrations

Celebrate with Healthy Fun!

Let's Party! From birthday parties to holiday celebrations, there are many celebrations in elementary schools. Along with the fun, usually comes food. Parties can be a great opportunity for children to practice making healthy choices and to promote a healthy lifestyle message. With a few easy changes, parents, teachers, and school administrators can shift the focus of school parties from unhealthy food to healthy fun.

Getting Started...

- **Set the stage** - Discuss healthy celebrations at the beginning of the school year. Present students with the concept of having non-food related activities to celebrate birthdays. Ask them for ideas of what the class could do instead.
- **Communicate** - Share the healthy celebrations concept to parents by sharing the birthday celebration menu along with the parent letter and discussing during open house.
* You can customize the list by adding the ideas the class came up with!
- **Reinforce** - The messages about healthy celebrations throughout the school year.



Grab & Celebrate!

- Have a dance party
- Provide extra recess or activity time
- Bring in guest story readers
- Have a special show and tell
- Give a no homework golden ticket to birthday child
- Plant seeds or plant something together that the class can watch grow
- Have a themed scavenger hunt around the school or the classroom
- Eat lunch or snack outside
- Ask parents to send in small items for a class trading event, such as pencils, stickers, or erasers
- Set up an obstacle course

Notes:

Healthy Classroom Birthday Menu

Dear families,

Let's celebrate your student's birthday in our healthy classroom! We want to honor each student in a special way!



We are offering students an opportunity to choose an item from this menu as a way to celebrate their special day.

Please read through the choices in this menu and help your student decide which they would like to do for their birthday celebration! If there is something your child would like to do that is not listed here, please contact the teacher. Most activities that can be completed within a 15-minute time frame are fine. Please fill in and return the birthday celebration ticket at the bottom with your child's celebration choice **within three days**. Thank you!

Dance Party

The birthday child may bring a favorite song from home (**all song lyrics & topics MUST be appropriate**) or choose a classroom favorite to play while the class dances.

Game Time

During Game Time, the class will have 15 minutes to play some of our favorite class games. The birthday child is also welcome to bring a favorite board or card game from home to share.

Guest Read Aloud

The birthday child may choose a special guest and/or a special book to be read aloud to the class. This is a great time to share a favorite story! The guest reader could be a family member or a school staff member.

Additional Choice Time

The class will enjoy 15 minutes of extra choice time. This includes classroom toys, blocks, books, etc.

Lunch with the Teacher

The birthday child may spend lunchtime eating in the classroom with their teacher. This is an opportunity for some special teacher time!

Show-and-Tell

The entire class can have a special show-and-tell time. Each student may bring an item from home to share with friends.

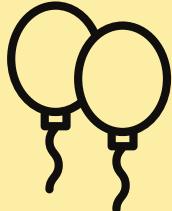
Teacher Helper

The birthday child may choose to be the "Teacher Helper" for the day. That means they are designated to help with tasks like passing out papers, carrying clipboards, erasing whiteboards, and can even sit in the teacher's chair!

No Homework Pass

The birthday child gets a free pass.

Golden Birthday Ticket



Happy Birthday to _____ . My birthday is on _____ .

I'd like to celebrate my birthday on (date): _____ .

For my special day, I am choosing: _____ .

Additional Resources to help with Healthy Celebrations:

Healthy Celebration Alternatives:

- **Action for Healthy Kids:**
 - **Party the Healthy Way:**
(www.actionforhealthykids.org/healthy-celebrations)
 - **Birthdays, Celebrations & Family Events:**
(www.actionforhealthykids.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/TS_Celebrations_v2.pdf)
- **Alliance for a Healthier Generation:**
 - **Healthy Snack & Beverage Ideas:**
(api.healthiergeneration.org/resource/459)

Get Support for Healthier Celebrations:

- **Alliance for a Healthier Generation:**
 - **5 Steps to Healthier Celebrations:**
(www.healthiergeneration.org/take-action/schools/wellness-topics/smart-snacks/celebrations)
 - **Celebrations that Support Child Health:**
(api.healthiergeneration.org/resource/155)

Inclusive Celebrations/Acknowledgements:

- **Inclusive Schools Network**
 - **Inclusive Schools Week:**
(inclusiveschools.org/inclusive-schools-week/)
 - The Inclusive Schools Network is a web-based educational resource for families, schools, and communities, providing information and resources that facilitate inclusive education practices.

Healthy Messaging

Share the Health!

Language shapes lifelong attitudes towards eating and movement behavior. What we say about food and eating significantly impacts kids' eating habits. Positive messages about food and eating will help children develop healthy habits. Sharing positive messages about food and movement is an important part of building a healthy classroom culture.

Getting Started...

- **Set the stage** - Let your students know that all the great information they learned with the SNAP-Ed nutritionist will continue through a series of morning announcements even after the series is over. Let them know that these will include some fun facts and tips around food, nutrition, and drinking water so that they can continue to grow their knowledge.
- **Communicate** - Read the information to the class during the Monday, Wednesday, and Friday class announcements.
- **Engage** - If the reading level is appropriate for your class, allow a student to read the announcement.
- **Discuss** - If time allows, let them share a reaction to what they heard.



Grab & Say!

- Find out about national food holidays and share a fun fact with the class.
 - (nationaltoday.com/food-beverage-holidays/)
- Ask students to share a fun fact they would like to share about a food.
- Integrate books about fruits and vegetables for reading/ELA time.
- Consider the visuals such as posters, displays, and books you have in your classroom for the food and movement message they may contain.

Notes:

Below are examples of what our weekly announcement messages would include and look like. Take a moment as you start the day for a healthy message and/or short activity.

Move More Monday

Message 1

Start the message with...

Good morning, this is your Wellness Wakeup Call for this Move More Monday!

Today's message:

Put on music and dance around your living room. Dancing is exercise!

End the message with...

Enjoy your day, the healthy way!

Water & Wellness Wednesday

Message 1

Start the message with...

Good morning, this is your Wellness Wakeup Call for this Wellness Wednesday!

Today's message:

Do your best to follow the "5-2-1 Almost None" rule everyday: Five or more fruits & vegetables. Two hours or less of screen time. One hour of physical activity. Almost none of soft drinks, sports drinks, & fruit drinks that are not 100% fruit juice.

End the message with...

Enjoy your day, the healthy way!

Food Friday

Message 1

Start the message with...

Good morning, this is your Wellness Wakeup Call for this Food Friday!

Today's message:

GO foods are foods are lowest in fat and sugar, low in calories and great to eat anytime. During our announcements, we will be sharing about different GO foods and how they help our bodies. What is your favorite GO food?

End the message with...

Enjoy your day, the healthy way!

Additional Resources to help with Healthy Messaging

- **Action for Healthy Kids**

- Daily Announcements: (www.actionforhealthykids.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/TS_Daily_Announcements_v2reduced.pdf)
 - Help your students eat better and move more with these daily announcements.

- **American Heart Association**

- For ideas on topics to share: (<https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating>)

- **Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics:**

- For ideas on topics to share: <https://www.eatright.org/for-kids>

Modeling Healthy Behavior

Celebrate with Healthy Fun!

Helping shape children's behavior is a key part of a healthy classroom. It can be challenging at times but also rewarding and can contribute to maintaining and improving your overall health. Model healthy eating habits by personally choosing food options from the fruits and vegetables, low-fat dairy, whole grain, and lean protein groups in front of students and by taking part alongside students during physical activities and brain breaks.

Getting Started...

- **Set the stage** - Tell students what your role is in making the classroom a healthy environment and how you will be participating alongside them.
- **Engage** - Be an active participant during nutrition education sessions.
- **Model** - Participate actively in the physical activity and brain breaks.
- **Promote** - Use language and images that promote healthy behavior.



Grab and Lead by Example!

- Keep a water bottle on your desk and drink from it throughout the day.
- Bring healthy snacks and lunches for yourself.
- Add physical activity to your breaks.
- Take a 10-minute walk with a coworker.
- Encourage your fellow staff to engage in physical activity and healthy eating.

Notes:

Additional Resources to help with Modeling Healthy Behavior:

- **Teach.com**
 - **50 Resources to Support the Mental Health of Teachers and School Staff:** (teach.com/resources/mental-health-resources-teachers-school-staff/)
 - To support the mental health of teachers and school staff, Teach.com has researched and collected helpful apps recommended by support organizations for teachers, articles focusing on their mental wellbeing and other resources written, created and produced by educators or mental health experts, agencies and organizations for educators and school staff.
- **Resilient Educator**
 - **For Teachers: Maintaining Balance in Time of Uncertainty:** (resilienteducator.com/classroom-resources/maintain-balance-through-uncertainty/)
 - This is a virtual space that understands the needs of teachers and the importance of resilient educators. You'll find everything from how to arrange your classroom for maximum creativity, how to find professional development resources, how to de-stress and maintain your sanity during the school year, and more! You'll find articles that warm your heart, and others that hopefully make you laugh. You'll explore topics like inclusive education, instructional design, STEM and STEAM, trauma and resilience, early childhood education, and other teaching concepts. You'll learn about career options, teaching degrees and certificates, education conferences, etc.
- **Webinar on Burnout**
 - **Figuring Out Your Burnout Archetypes and Creating Balance:** (https://vod.video.cornell.edu/media/Staff+WellnessA+Burnout+happens+to+us+all,+even+the+best+educators++/1_zuyf030t)
 - No one could have prepared you for the past few years. Emotions, exhaustion, and the balance of it all have stressed us out! Join in on an engaging discussion that will guide you in figuring out your archetype and how you can make small changes to create balance in your world.
- **Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics**
 - <https://www.eatright.org/for-kids>

ITEMS FOR PURCHASE

The items below can be purchased to help support your classroom efforts.

Materials to support MOVE MORE:

Move & Memorize Game

freshbaby.com/product/move-memorize-game/



Move More Bingo

getvisualz.com/products/move-bingo-for-kids



Roll Some Fun Cards

yourtherapysource.com/product/roll-some-fun/



Materials to support HEALTHY SNACKS:

ReThink Your Drink Bulletin Board

getvisualz.com/products/think-about-your-drink-bulletin-board-kit



Fruit & Veggie Bingo

getvisualz.com/products/fruit-and-veggies-bingo



Orange Peeler & Apple Cutter

Orange: walmart.com

Apple: walmart.com



Materials to support HEALTHY CELEBRATIONS:

Healthy Choices Prize Box

getvisualz.com/products/healthy-choices-prize-box



Food Play Productions

foodplay.com/our-programs/to-be-fit-the-juggling-nutrition-magician-show/



Materials to support HEALTHY MESSAGING:

MyPlate & Physical Activity Poster

getvisualz.com/products/active-kids-myplate-poster



MyPlate Bulletin Board

getvisualz.com/products/usda-myplate-bulletin-board-kit



GRANTS TO SUPPORT SCHOOLS

Consider applying for one of the grants below to help support your school's efforts.

A grant can help fund some of the tools or activities.

Find local supporters:

Many businesses and corporations have funds to help support the community. Think about approaching these local businesses and organizations to fund a project.

- Community banks
- National chains with a community presence (Walmart, grocery, convenience stores)
- Create an Amazon Wish List where supporters can directly help

Grant Opportunities:

- Walking Classroom; Apply for a donated classroom kit:
www.thewalkingclassroom.org/apply
- Walmart Grant Guidelines: www.walmart.org/how-we-give/program-guidelines/spark-good-local-grants-guidelines

Need help getting started? Use this as template to start your request:

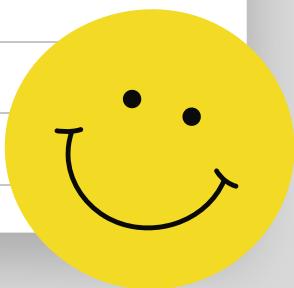
Project description: This project will promote student wellness through increased physical activity and improved nutrition awareness. Students will participate in daily movement breaks and hands-on nutrition activities designed to build lifelong healthy habits.

Goals: We are committed to creating an environment that will help children learn how to grow into the healthiest version of themselves by:

- Creating time and space for children to move their bodies during the school day
- Learning about healthy foods together with a series of fun and hands-on activities
- Sharing messages about healthy habits throughout the year



Thank you
for committing
to being a
healthy
classroom!



This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

SNAP-Ed is funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP.
Cornell Cooperative Extension provides equal employment and program opportunities.