

# Limit or Eliminate Unhealthy Foods; Provide Healthy Choices



## WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

- Children need a healthy, balanced diet in order to grow properly, learn, and stay healthy. Recent evidence shows many children and adolescents eat too much added sugar, unhealthy fat, and sodium while not getting enough essential vitamins, minerals, or fiber.<sup>1</sup> The best foods for young diets are fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and dairy.<sup>2</sup>
- Limiting unhealthy choices and providing healthy ones can improve students' behavior, focus, academic achievement, and attendance. Too much junk food and an unhealthy diet can slow down child learning.<sup>3-6</sup>
- Snacks can be good or bad for kids' diets depending on the choices we offer. Limiting unhealthy choices and providing healthy snacks can improve students' behavior, focus, academic achievement, and attendance. Too much junk food and an unhealthy diet can slow down child learning.<sup>3-6</sup>
- Snacks are a bigger part of kids' diets than in the past,<sup>7</sup> and more snacking on unhealthy foods like potato chips, cookies, and candy is one factor connected with childhood obesity.<sup>8</sup> When healthier choices are offered alongside less-healthy ones, children will eat fewer unhealthy snacks.<sup>9</sup>
- Classroom celebrations can happen many times during the year and tend to include foods high in sugar, fat, and calories.<sup>10</sup> Limiting unhealthy choices and having healthy celebrations will support what kids are learning in the classroom about healthy behaviors. Sticking to non-food-based celebrations may also help prevent weight gain in certain students.<sup>11</sup>
- Serving healthy foods to kids:
  - Provides good nutrition.
  - Supports lifelong healthy eating habits.
  - Helps reduce the risk of developing long-lasting health conditions.<sup>12,13</sup>

### References

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