

Food & Fun After School

~ 2nd Edition ~

Parent Communications Unit 10: What to drink? Water!

About Parent Engagement

Engaging with families in after school time is associated with increased family involvement in children's education and school, improved relationships between parents and children, and improved implementation and outcomes for afterschool programs*.

This Parent Communication packet contains Parent Engagement Activities, a Newsletter Article, and an Email Message for you to use with each Food & Fun unit. These tools are intended to help you connect with and educate parents on the key messages in Food & Fun.

It is important to engage parents on a regular basis in a variety of ways. Here are some ways that programs have engaged parents at after school:

- Have a conversation with parents at pick up
- Create a bulletin board with the key messages from each Food & Fun unit
- Involve parents in daily physical activities and snack time
- Hold regularly scheduled events each month

(*Focus on Families! How to Build and Support Family-Centered Practices in After School. A Joint Publication of: United Way of Massachusetts Bay, Harvard Family Research Project, and Build the Out-Of-School Time Network.)

Parent Engagement Activities

Experiment and be creative- come up with your own ideas or modify the activities below to engage parents at your after school program!

- **Offer parents fun water!** Put a pitcher of water and cups by the sign-out book. Add sliced oranges, cucumbers, lemons or a splash of 100% juice. Be creative! Try different "fun water" every day for a week. Ask parents and kids which ones they like best. Encourage parents to serve fun water at home, and to try new flavors!

Newsletter Article

Use this article in your organization's publications. Be sure to include the credit "Provided by Harvard Prevention Research Center on Nutrition and Physical Activity."

Hydrated Kids are Healthy Kids

What to drink? Water! Offer water at every snack and meal time. It is a great drink choice for kids because it is calorie-free and low cost from your nearest tap! Kids should drink plenty of water when they are playing and being active.

This month the (*insert program name*) will focus on the importance of drinking water.

The key messages for parents are:

- Water is the best drink to keep kids hydrated.
- Water is the best choice for kids when they are being active and playing sports.
- Serve water at every snack and meal. Make sure that water is available all day for your child.

The key messages for kids are:

- Water is the best thirst quencher.
- Drink water when you are thirsty.
- Drink water instead of juice or soda at every meal.

Here are some tips to keep your kids happy, healthy and hydrated:

- **Drink water often.** Serve water at every snack and meal time. When your kids are physically active, make sure they have a bottle of water to drink from during their activity. Our bodies are the best judge of how much water we need. Teach your kids to drink whenever they are thirsty.
- **Do not serve drinks with sugar!** This includes sodas, sports drinks, sweetened iced teas, fruit drinks, and energy drinks. Drinking too many sugar-sweetened drinks increases the risk for overweight in kids and adults and can also cause dental cavities.
- **Ask questions.** Make sure that after school programs or day-camps serve water at all meals and snack times, and that they allow for water breaks throughout the day.

Drink lots of water yourself throughout the day! Setting an example now can help your kids learn how to stay healthy and hydrated as they get older.

Optional Side Bar

Do Select:

- Water – as much as you want! For extra flavor and fun, add fruit or frozen 100% fruit juice ice cubes.
- Sodium free seltzer water
- Juice “spritzers”- Mix a splash of 100% juice with sodium-free seltzer water.

Avoid drinks with added sugars:

- Soda
- Sweetened iced teas
- Fruit punches and fruit-ades
- Sports drinks
- Energy drinks
- Fruit drinks

Avoid drinks with sugar substitutes:

- Diet sodas
- Diet iced teas
- Diet fruit drinks

Email Message

Use this sample message to communicate with parents by email.

Subject line: Healthy Habits Power Tips—Stay Cool

Dear *(insert program name)* Parents,

This month the *(insert program name)* will focus on the importance of drinking water.

The key messages for parents are:

- Water is the best drink to keep kids hydrated.
- Water is the best choice for kids when they are being active and playing sports.
- Serve water at every snack and meal. Make sure that water is available all day for your child.

The key messages for kids are:

- Water is the best thirst quencher.
- Drink water often when you play.
- Drink water instead of juice or soda at every meal.

Keep your children hydrated with these **Healthy Habits Power Tips**:

- **Drink water often.** Serve water at every snack and meal time. When your kids are physically active, make sure they have a bottle of water to drink from during their activity. Our bodies are the best judge of how much water we need. Teach your kids to drink whenever they are thirsty.
- **Do not serve drinks with sugar!** This includes sodas, sports drinks, sweetened iced teas, fruit drinks, and energy drinks. Drinking too many sugar-sweetened drinks increases the risk for overweight in kids and adults and can also cause dental cavities.
- **Make water even more FUN!** For extra flavor and fun, add sliced fruit or frozen 100% fruit juice ice cubes to water. Or, mix a splash of 100% juice to sodium-free seltzer water for a refreshing treat.

For more information on healthy drink options, check out <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/healthy-drinks/index.html>