

Food & Fun After School

~ 2nd Edition ~

Parent Communications Unit 6: Super Snacks

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!

- **Make a recipe book for snacks.** Ask kids to bring in a healthy super snack recipe. Encourage them to ask their parents for ideas of healthy snacks they ate when growing up. Put all of the snack recipes into a book for families. You can even make some of the recipes for an after school snack at your program!
- **Make extra snacks for parents.** Make extra snacks for parents to try when they pick up their child at after school.

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."

Snacking the healthy way!

For children, snack time is not only enjoyable, but necessary. It is important for kids eat snacks during the day so they don't get hungry or low on energy. It is also important to make sure that snack foods are not just fun and tasty, but nutritious too! This can be tricky when children ask for foods that are tasty to eat, but low on nutrition.

This month your child will learn about healthy snacks.

The key messages for parents are:

- Children need healthy snacks between meals to give them energy and nutrients.
- A healthy snack includes healthy foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat milk/dairy, and protein (eggs, lean meats, nuts, beans).
- Limit snacks that have trans fats, a lot of sugar, and salt like soda, candy, cookies, and chips.
- Be a healthy role model for your child by eating healthy snacks.

The key messages for kids are:

- Our bodies need healthy snacks to stay energized between meals.
- Choose healthy snack foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy foods, and lean meats or proteins.
- Snacks that have a lot of sugar, unhealthy fat, and salt like candy, cookies, and chips are "slow" snacks.

What makes a healthy snack? Instead of the chips, soda, and cookies that food companies advertise as snack foods, serve fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and protein. Here are some ideas for putting together a healthy snack!

Include a fruit or vegetable. Serve a fruit or vegetable AND a protein or whole grain at every snack. For example: apples and peanut butter, or whole wheat crackers and cheese.

Limit sugar. Read food labels and choose foods and drinks without sugar as one of the first three ingredients. Sugar comes in different forms: corn syrup, glucose, sucrose, and fructose are a few examples. They are all just sugar!

Avoid foods with *trans* fat. Trans fat are often in packaged foods (like cookies, cakes, muffins, and crackers), and fast foods. Only serve foods with 0g of trans fat on the nutrition label. Read the ingredient list and don't buy foods with

“partially hydrogenated oils”.

Serve water as a drink. Water is the best drink to serve with a snack- it is calorie-free and low-cost from your nearest tap! Encourage them to try it with lemon slices, cucumber slices or other natural flavors!

Optional side bar:

Try these super snack ideas!

- Celery, peanut butter, and raisins
- Cucumber slices and cheese
- Applesauce and whole wheat crackers
- Hard boiled eggs and whole wheat bread
- Guacamole and corn tortillas
- Baby carrots and hummus

Email Message

Use this sample message to communicate with parents by email.

Subject line: Healthy Habits Power Tips—Super Snacks

Dear (*your program*) Parents,

This month the (*your program*) will focus on super snacks.

The key messages for parents are:

- Children need healthy snacks between meals to give them energy and nutrients.
- A healthy snack includes healthy foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat milk/dairy, and protein (eggs, lean meats, nuts, beans).
- Limit snacks that have trans fats, a lot of sugar, and salt like soda, candy, cookies, and chips.
- Be a healthy role model for your child by eating healthy snacks.

The key messages for kids are:

- Our bodies need healthy snacks to stay energized between meals.
- Choose healthy snack foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy foods, and lean meats or proteins.
- Snacks that have a lot of sugar, unhealthy fat, and salt like candy, cookies, and chips are “sometimes” snacks.

Children need energy between meals so snacking is important! It is also important to make sure that snack foods are not just fun and tasty, but nutritious too! This month your child will learn what makes a healthy snack.

You can and should limit serving snack foods and drinks with little nutrition like soda, candy, cookies, and chips. It's easier to do if you don't keep those foods in the house!

To boost the nutrition in your children's snacks, follow these **Healthy Habits Power Tips**:

Include a fruit or vegetable. Serve a fruit or vegetable AND a protein or whole grain at every snack. For example: apples and peanut butter, or whole wheat crackers and cheese.

Limit sugar. Read food labels and choose foods and drinks without sugar as one of the first three ingredients. Sugar comes in different forms: corn syrup, glucose, sucrose and fructose are a few examples. They are all just sugar!

Avoid foods with *trans* fat. Trans fat are often in packaged foods (like cookies, cakes, muffins, and crackers), and fast foods. Only serve foods with 0g of trans fat on the nutrition label. Read the ingredient list and don't buy foods with "partially hydrogenated oils".

Serve water as a drink. Water is the best drink to serve with a snack- it is calorie-free and low-cost from your nearest tap! Encourage them to try it with lemon slices, cucumber slices or other natural flavors!