



Alternatives to Food as a Reward

Rewarding Good Behavior

Food, beverages and candy are commonly used in schools to reward good behavior and academic performance. Often these foods have little or no nutritional value and are inconsistent with nutrition policies for foods sold on campus. Rewarding students with candy and sweets contradicts the teaching and modeling of behaviors and skills that promote student health.

Disadvantages to using food as a reward include:

- It undermines nutrition education taught in the classroom.
- It encourages overconsumption of foods high in sugar and fat.
- It teaches students to eat when they are not hungry as a reward to themselves.

Examples of Non-Food Rewards

Elementary School Students

- ❑ Make deliveries to the office
- ❑ Teach class
- ❑ Sit by friends
- ❑ Eat lunch with teacher or principal
- ❑ Eat lunch outdoors with the class
- ❑ Have lunch or breakfast in the classroom
- ❑ Be a helper in another classroom
- ❑ Play a favorite game or do puzzles
- ❑ Stickers, pencils, bookmarks
- ❑ Fun video
- ❑ Extra recess
- ❑ Walk with the principal or teacher
- ❑ Fun physical activity break (dance to music)
- ❑ School supplies
- ❑ Trip to treasure box filled with nonfood items (stickers, tattoos, pencils, erasers, bookmarks)
- ❑ Paperback book
- ❑ Show-and-tell
- ❑ Earn play money for privileges
- ❑ Teacher/volunteer read special book to class
- ❑ Teacher performs special skills (e.g., sing)
- ❑ Read outdoors or enjoy class outdoors
- ❑ Have extra art time
- ❑ Have "free choice" at end of the day or end of class period
- ❑ Listen with headset to an audio-book/music
- ❑ Items that can only be used on special occasions (special art supplies, toys)

Middle School Students

- ❑ Sit with friends
- ❑ Listen to music while working at desk
- ❑ Five-minute chat break at end of class
- ❑ Reduced homework or "no homework" pass
- ❑ Extra credit
- ❑ Fun video
- ❑ Fun brainteaser activities
- ❑ Computer time
- ❑ Assemblies
- ❑ Field trips

High School Students

- ❑ Extra credit
- ❑ Fun video
- ❑ Reduced homework
- ❑ Donated coupons to video stores, music stores or movies
- ❑ Drawings for donated prizes

Adapted from *Alternative to Food as Reward*, Connecticut Department of Education