

## Non-Food Rewards

Food is very effective at motivating students and therefore is commonly used as an incentive in the classroom. Unfortunately, some food rewards undermine nutrition education and can encourage over consumption of foods high in fat or sugar.

An estimated 16 percent of children (age 16-19) in the U.S. are overweight. Adults need to be more conscience than ever of the foods and rewards offered to children. Unhealthy food rewards can send mixed messages when healthy eating habits are taught in the classroom but not followed. As teachers and parents, we need to be mindful of our position as role models to students. We need to set positive examples for our children and students. This can be accomplished through advocating healthy party celebrations in the classroom and not rewarding students with items that contribute to unhealthy lifestyles.

### ALTERNATIVES TO FOOD AS A REWARD

#### Rewards for All Ages

- Listen to music while doing school work
- Chat at the end of class
- Movie day or class period
- Games or game time
- Homework coupon
- Gift certificate to local non-food merchants
- Free pass to sporting events or play
- Walk break from class
- Sitting with friends
- Group activities\*
- Paperback books
- Magazine subscription
- Pedometers
- Recognition over morning announcements or in class
- Small physical activity equipment
- Eat lunch outside, have class outside
- Read outside
- Teach the class

#### Elementary Students

- Taking things to the office
- Taking care of the class pet
- Prizes from a treasure box
- Pencil toppers

- Stickers
- Pencils
- Stars or smiley faces
- Extra recess
- Leading the class to lunch, recess, library, etc.
- Walk with the principal, teacher, or school nurse
- Physical activity break
- School supplies
- Temporary tattoos
- Show-and-Tell
- Bank System- Earn play money for privileges
- Teacher or volunteer reads to class
- Teacher performs special skill (singing, cart wheel, plays the guitar)
- Extra art time
- "Free choice" at the end of the day or class period
- Teacher's assistant for the day
- Eat lunch with a teacher or principal
- Receive a "mystery pack" (notebook, pencils, sports cards, etc.)

### **Middle School Students**

- Taking things to the office
- Music Concert at School
- Pencils
- T-shirt/hat/etc.
- Coupons to video store, music store, movies, or a local gym day pass
- Extra credit
- Fun brain teasers
- Be a helper in another class
- Receive a "mystery pack" (notebook, pencils, sports cards, etc.)

### **High School Students**

- Music concert at school
- T-shirt/hat/etc.
- Prime Parking spot
- Extra credit
- Coupons to video store, music store, movies, or a local gym day pass
- Drawings for donated prizes for students with certain grade standards

\*Adapted from:

Alternatives to Food as Reward, Connecticut State Department of Education, Bureau of Health and Nutrition Services and Child/Family/School Partnerships, September 2004:  
[www.state.ct.us/sde/deps/Student/NutritionEd/index.htm](http://www.state.ct.us/sde/deps/Student/NutritionEd/index.htm)

Rewards and Incentives, NC Division of Public Health, NC Department of Public Instruction, NC Cooperative Extension, and NC Action for Healthy Kids.  
[www.actionforhealthykids.org/filelib/toolsforteam/recom/NC\\_NC%20-rewardsincentives.pdf](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/filelib/toolsforteam/recom/NC_NC%20-rewardsincentives.pdf)

Alternatives To Using Food As A Reward, Michigan State University Extension.  
[www.tn.fcs.msue.msu.edu/foodrewards.pdf](http://www.tn.fcs.msue.msu.edu/foodrewards.pdf)