

healthy alternatives to food rewards

Why should schools be interested in healthy alternatives to food rewards?

School activities should strive to support healthy lifestyles. Food rewards are easy and inexpensive. However, they teach students to eat when they're not hungry and that success should be rewarded with food. They also tend to encourage overconsumption of foods high in added sugar and fat, while undermining nutrition education being taught at school. Students' lifelong eating habits are greatly influenced by the types of foods and beverages available to them. By avoiding food rewards, a school demonstrates its commitment to promoting healthy behaviors.

Food for thought:

"Rewards can be abused and overused. Too often, students learn to expect something in return for behavior or good grades when ideally, they should do the behavior for its intrinsic value."

~ Middle School Teacher

Where can I find more information?

<www.cspinet.org/schoolfood>

<www.actionforhealthykids.org>

Healthy reward options

Social Rewards and Recognition

Attention, praise, or thanks are often more highly valued by children than a toy or food. Social rewards affirm a child's worth as a person. Verbal praise (including in front of others) or written praise ("caught in the act...") can mean a lot. Certificates, stickers, or a note from a teacher can be powerful, as are phone calls, e-mails, or letters sent home to parents or guardians! School recognition in the form of a photo recognition board or mentioning achievements as part of morning building announcements can help to reward and set positive examples.



Elementary School Students

- Getting to go first
- Helping with deliveries to the office
- Sitting by friends
- Eating lunch with a teacher
- Playing a favorite game
- Getting stickers
- Watching a fun video
- Getting extra recess
- Receiving school supplies
- Selecting an item in a treasure box filled with nonfood items
- Getting a paperback book
- Presenting something for show-and-tell
- Having the teacher read a special book in class
- Earning play money used for privileges through a bank system
- Enjoying a performance by a teacher with a special skill
- Helping out in another classroom
- Taking a walk with the principal or teacher
- Dancing to favorite music in the classroom

Middle School Students

- Being allowed to sit with friends
- Listening to music while working at his or her desk
- Getting a five-minute chat break at the end of class
- Giving less homework
- Providing extra credit
- Watching a fun video
- Getting extra computer time
- Being part of assemblies
- Going on field trips

High School Students

- Providing extra credit
- Watching a fun video
- Getting less homework
- Receiving coupons to video stores, music stores, or movies (donated)
- Conducting drawings for donated prizes among students who meet certain standards
- Getting a few minutes of “free choice” time at the end of class

Note: Resources for this fact sheet include Michigan State University Extension; the Fayette County Public Schools, Lexington, Kentucky; and the Center for Science in the Public Interest, Washington, D.C.

