

TEACHER SUGGESTED ALTERNATIVES FOR FOOD REWARDS

Teachers who use food as an inexpensive, easy reward for good behavior and academic performance may be inadvertently teaching children to prefer unhealthy foods.¹ Schools are institutions designed to model appropriate behaviors to children. Classroom nutrition education becomes strictly theoretical when schools regularly model unhealthy behaviors. Below are healthier alternatives to offer as student rewards.

Elementary School Students

- Make deliveries to office
- Teach class
- Sit by friends
- Eat lunch with teacher
- Teacher reads special book to class
- Stickers
- Bank system: (earn play money used for privileges)
- Teacher performs special skill: cartwheel, guitar playing
- Trip to treasure box filled with non-food items
- School supplies
- Extra recess
- Paperback book
- Show-and-tell
- Play favorite game
- Fun video

Middle School Students

- Sit with friends
- Listen to music while working at desk
- 5 minute chat break at end of class
- Reduced homework
- Extra credit
- Fun video
- Computer time
- Eat lunch or have class outside

High School Students

- Extra credit
- Fun video
- Reduced homework
- Coupons to video or music stores
- Donated movie coupons
- Drawings for donated prizes for students meeting a grade standard
- “Free Choice” time at end of class

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



Adapted by New England Dairy & Food Council from a Lexington-Fayette County, KY Health Department flyer.

¹ Birch and Fisher 1994
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