

Non-Food Rewards for Students

Compiled by the Jefferson County Public Schools' Wellness Committee

Today students are bombarded with unhealthy food choices, which increase their chances of becoming obese and a future of serious health problems.

In many situations students are offered food as a reward for “good” behavior. Typically, these food rewards are “empty calorie” foods, with little or no nutritive value.

Why is it a bad idea to use food to reward “good” behavior?

Here are a few reasons:

- It teaches students to eat when they aren't hungry
- It contributes to the development of life-long habits of rewarding or comforting oneself with unhealthy foods
- It teaches them to tie food to emotions, such as feelings of accomplishment – i.e. “I did a good job, so I deserve a chocolate sundae.”
- It can influence students to associate “junk foods” with being good or feeling happy
- It can lead to eating disorders
- It reinforces the poor habit of eating outside of meal or snack times
- It can lead to obesity, Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, dental problems, and other health concerns
- It negates classroom nutrition education

What are the most effective rewards?

- ✓ *Intrinsic* – the behavior itself results in good feelings
- ✓ *Extrinsic* – if:
 - They are related to the behavior
 - Fit naturally into the context and mission of the classroom
 - Are given promptly after the positive behavior occurs
 - Are awarded consistently

Non-Food Rewards for Students

Trips to a treasure box filled with non-food items such as stickers, play tattoos, bubbles, jump ropes, puzzles, key chains, yo-yos, toy rings, charms, trading cards, pencil toppers

Play favorite game

Make deliveries to the office

Help teach class

School supplies

Paperback book

Listen to classroom music while working

Read or have class outdoors

Listen or an audio book/watch a video

Have teacher perform

Verbal praise

Care for class animal

Read morning announcements

Be recognized during announcements

Be featured on a photo recognition board

Earn play money to purchase prizes

Extra reading time

Extra credit opportunities

T-shirt

Movie, zoo, museum coupons

Extra recess time

Sit by friends

Eat lunch with teacher/principal

Note/email to parents

Free time at end of day

Teacher reads a book

"No homework" pass

Extra art time

Walk with principal at lunch

Read to a younger class

Go to library

Computer time

Eat lunch outside

Chat break

Field trips

Assemblies

Drawings for donated prizes

Coupons for video/music stores

Free passes to school events

What are your students' favorite rewards?

Why not ask them?

For older students, do a short written survey at the beginning of the year;

For younger students, verbally ask them – "What do you think is a good reward?"

For rewards to be effective, they have to be something the student desires.

Rewards and performance accomplishments reinforce desirable behavior and encourage its repetition. The goal of rewarding is to help students internalize desirable behaviors so external rewards are not needed.