

# Healthy Non-Food Rewards

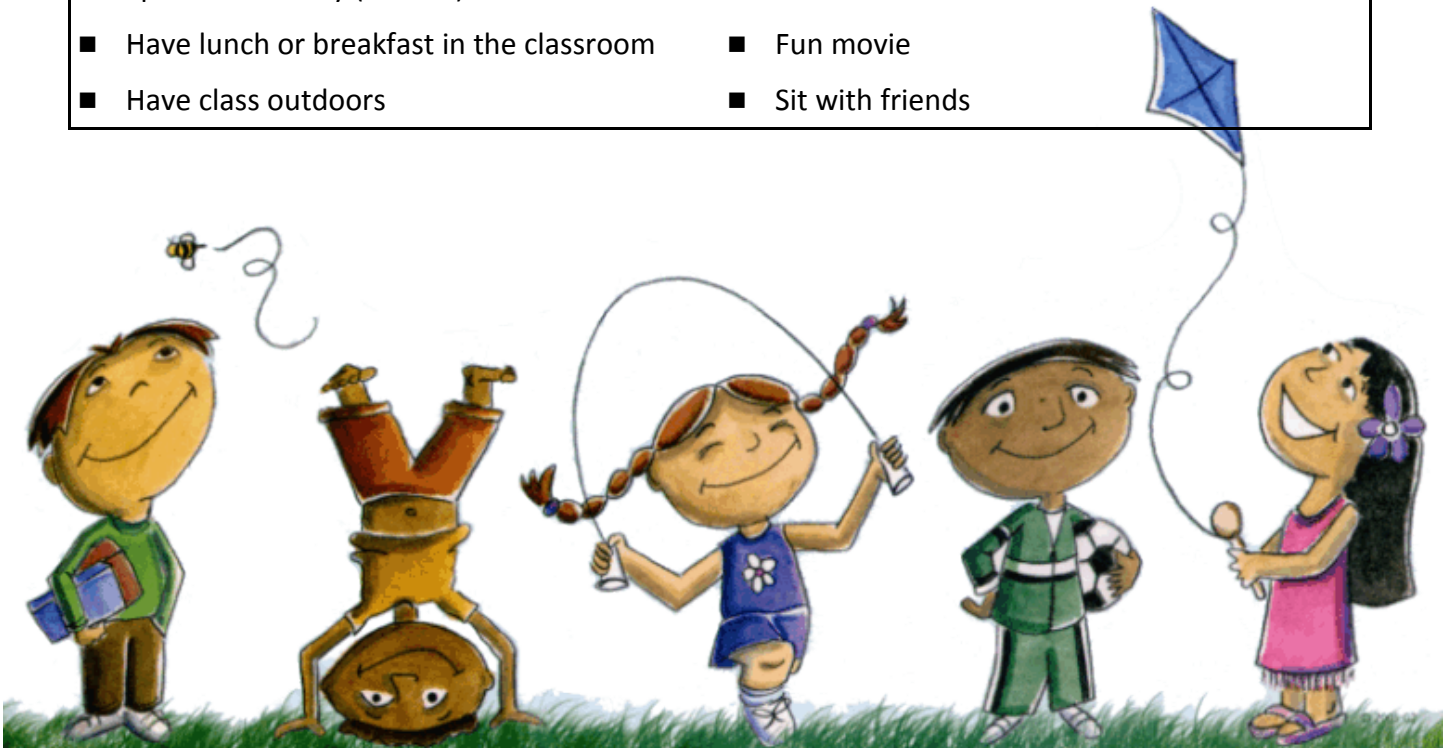


Food rewards contradict the efforts of nutrition education, add empty calories to kids' diets, and encourage kids to eat when they aren't hungry.<sup>2</sup> To help ensure healthier futures for students, it is important for schools to implement policies that discourage the use of food as a reward.

There are plenty of non-food rewards that schools can use to promote healthy habits. Some of these rewards include recognition, fun physical activities, and special privileges that are appropriate for each age-group. Review the non-food reward ideas listed below for elementary school students, middle school students, high school students, and PTA/PTO events.

## Elementary School Students

- Colorful pencils, erasers, stickers, toys
- Play dance video games in class
- Drawings or raffles for a prize
- Show and tell
- Extra free time
- Choice of special activity
- Special dress day (like PJs)
- Have lunch or breakfast in the classroom
- Have class outdoors
- Choice of music for study time
- Certificates or ribbons
- Student of the month
- Special section in the announcements
- Special event
- Extra recess time or special physical activity
- Photo board
- Fun movie
- Sit with friends



## Middle School Students

- Fun movie
- Sit with friends
- Listen to music while working at desk
- “No homework” pass
- Extra credit
- Earn points for privileges or non-food items
- Computer time
- Chat time at the end of class
- Field trips
- Eat lunch outside or have class outside



***“Rewarding children with unhealthy foods in school undermines our efforts to teach them about good nutrition. It’s like teaching children a lesson on the importance of not smoking, and then handing out ashtrays and lighters to the kids who did the best job listening.”<sup>2</sup>***

– Marlene Schwartz, PhD, Co-Director Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity, Yale University

## High School Students

- Pep rally
- Recognition on morning announcements
- Tickets to school events
- Drawings for donated prizes
- Extra credit
- Fun movie
- Reduced homework
- Late homework pass

## PTO/PTA

- Water bottles
- School-branded apparel
- Movie passes
- Special time with a teacher
- Hike or group trip to a kids’ fun place
- Raffle for bigger prizes, such as a bike
- Pool party
- Bingo party with non-food prizes

1. Adapted from “Healthy Non-Food Rewards,” Action for Healthy Kids, November 2011 (Revised September 2015).
2. Baylis, M.S. et al. “School Wellness Policies Addressing Use of Food as a Reward.” Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, 2007, vol. 107, Iss. 8, A21.
3. “Alternatives to Food Rewards,” Connecticut State Department of Education, May 2005.

