

Healthy Rewards in the Classroom

Harmful vs. Helpful:

- Too many teachers are still rewarding students with candy and food.
- Rewarding children with food only reinforces poor eating habits in their life.¹
- The ultimate goal of rewarding a child is so that they can understand positive behaviors and realize that there are consequences for your actions.¹ This can take place even if food is not involved.
- It is a responsibility of the school to help teach children the good affects of eating healthy and living a healthy lifestyle. If the school is providing food based on the child's performance then this links food to mood in the children's mind.¹
- "Non-food classroom rewards can be an effective way to encourage positive behavior. Children, like everyone, alter their actions based on short-term anticipated consequences."¹

Instead of food or candy, try motivating students with these rewards:

Social:

- Praise, attention, simple gestures such as a pat on the back²

Recognition:

- Small trophies, plaques, stickers with "great job" written on them, praising the student in a phone call or email to parents, a note from teacher to student with praise for their accomplishment.²

Privileges:

- "No homework" pass, being line leader, teacher's helper for the day, going first during an activity, reading to a younger class, teaching a lesson alongside the teacher, eating lunch with the teacher or principal, helping out a younger class for an afternoon, allowing to write or draw on backboard.²

School Supplies:

- Pencils, markers, colorful erasers, box of crayons, notebooks, plastic scissors, stamps, bookmarks, glitter, rulers, coloring books.²

Sports Equipment:

- Jump rope, hula-hoop, water bottles, Frisbees, NERF balls, paddleballs.²

Fashion Wear:

- Wrist band, temporary tattoo, bracelets, rings, sunglasses, inexpensive watches, hat or baseball cap, t-shirt, bumper stickers, shoe laces.²

Point System:

- Children earn points for good deeds or accomplishments. As the points add up, the class and/or individual children become eligible for other awards like:
 - Puzzles, books, board games, stuffed animals, gift certificate to book store or movies
 - "No homework" pass, extra recess, five extra points on a test or quiz
 - Lesson given outdoors, extra music or art lesson, lunch eaten outdoors, in-class movie

1. Centers for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI). *Constructive Classroom Rewards: Promoting Good Habits While Protecting Children's Health*. Retrieved Dec 23, from http://cspinet.org/new/pdf/constructive_classroom_rewards.pdf

2. Some examples adapted from "Alternatives to Using Food as a Reward," Michigan Team Nutrition (a partnership between the Michigan Department of Education and Michigan State University Extension), 2004. Retrieved Nov 8, 2004 from <http://www.tn.fcs.msue.msu.edu/foodrewards.pdf>

3. U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). *Prohibition against Denying Meals and Milk to Children as a Disciplinary Action*. Alexandria, VA: USDA, 1988