Teachers, administrators, parents, and the community often offer children food as a reward for “good” behavior. Typically “food rewards” have little or no nutritional value, but are used because they are easy, inexpensive treats that are thought to bring about short-term behavior change. Teachers and staff are encouraged to reward students with non-food items.

Disadvantages of Using Food as a Reward:
- It sends a mixed message that highlights the conflict between nutrition education taught in the classroom and the school environment
- It encourages over-consumption of foods high in added sugar and fat that can lead to overweight
- It may displace more nutritious foods offered in the school meal program
- It teaches kids to eat to reward themselves with food, even when they are not hungry

Zero-Cost Alternatives
- Game day
- Listen to a book on tape
- Extra computer time
- Teacher performs special skill (i.e. sing, dance)
- Teacher reads a special book to the class
- Free choice time
- Watch a video
- Class walking break
- Listen/dance to music
- Extra recess time
- Read outside
- “No homework pass”
- Be the classroom helper
- Make a delivery to the office
- Eat lunch with the teacher/principal
- Sit by friends
- Sit at the teacher’s desk

Low-Cost Alternatives
- Physical activity equipment
- Gift certificates to school store
- Art supplies
- Coloring books
- Trip to the treasure box
- Stamps
- Trading cards
- Movie/video coupons
- School supplies
- Enter drawing for donated prizes
- Stickers
- Books