

# Alternatives to Using Food as a Reward

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

