



## Non-Food Classroom Reward and Celebration Ideas

Iowa Department of Education

Rewards are a way to recognize achievement and celebrate success, progress, and events in students' lives. The rewards should fit with the goals and mission of the school, promote healthy living, and support nutrition and physical activity education messages throughout the school. Non-material, non-food rewards are powerful ways to recognize and celebrate students' success.

### Elementary Ideas

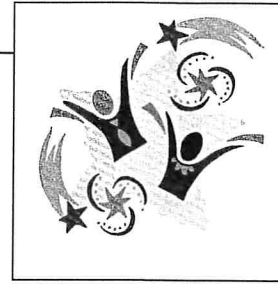
- Pajama Day
- Crazy Hat Day (or hair, pants, shirt)
- Super Hero Day
- Costume Day (Dress up day in the middle of winter!)
- Beach Party in January
- Have class outside
- Have lunch outside
- Game of quiet ball
- Word games on the board
- Sit in the teacher's chair/desk/podium for half a day
- Desk Buddy: move desk to sit by a friend x half a day, an hour, etc.
- Nature hike outside
- Indoor Scavenger Hunt
- Choose a book for the class (or game, music, physical activity break)
- Read with a friend in a special area in the classroom
- Sit on desks to read
- Call, text or email the parent about the student's success
- Announce student's success over the morning announcements
- Post a certificate on the wall noting the student's success
- Group game
- Make deliveries to the office
- Walk and Talk with the principal

### Middle School Ideas

- Talk Time: chat with friends x 5 minutes
- Listen to music
- Free Time Choice: read, do homework, draw
- Free Pass: skip 3 questions on a certain homework assignment
- Late assignment pass
- Listen to i-pod
- Have class outside
- Take lunch outside
- Word games on the board
- Sit in the teacher's chair/desk/podium for half a day
- Desk Buddy: move desk to sit by a friend x half a day, an hour, etc.
- Nature hike outside
- Indoor Scavenger Hunt
- Choose a book for the class (or game, music, physical activity break)
- Read with a friend in a special area in the classroom
- Drop in PE (if the gym is free)
- Homework buddy: work with classmate on an assignment x 15 minutes
- Call, text or email the parent about the student's success
- Post a certificate on the wall noting student's success
- Computer time
- Group game
- Read the morning announcements

### High School Ideas:

- Recognition in morning announcements
- Late assignment pass
- Reduced homework
- Extra credit
- Post certificate on the wall noting student's success
- Homework buddy: work with classmate on an assignment for allotted amount of time
- Call, text or email the parent about the student's success
- Send a written note in the mail
- Have class outside
- Have lunch outside
- Music choice
- Listen to i-pod in class
- Chat break last 5 minutes of class
- Pep Rally
- Assemblies



### Benefits of Non-Food, Healthy Celebrations

- Healthy kids learn better
- Promotes a healthy school environment
- Promotes consistent health messages
- Promotes focus on person and event rather than on food
- Keeps kids with food allergies/special diets safe

Check out these resources:

[Action for Healthy Kids: Healthy Non-Food Rewards](#)

[Iowa State University: Non-Food Alternatives](#)

Center for Science in the Public Interest: [Healthy Classroom Celebrations](#)

Clemson Cooperative Extension: [Non-Food Rewards for Kids](#)

Choose My Plate 10 Tips: [Make Celebrations Fun, Healthy and Active](#)

[Iowa Team Nutrition](#)

[Alliance for a Healthier Generation](#)

[Let's Move! Active Schools](#)



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raising  
**healthy  
kids**

**How NOT to use food  
in your school**

**1 Incentives, rewards  
or celebrations**

Presenting food (both sweet and non-sweet) as a reward significantly enhances the desire for that food. Holiday celebrations, for example, could focus on traditional activities or games.

**2 Punishment**

Withholding food (usually candy or other low-nutritive value foods) as a punishment reinforces the desire for that food—just as if it were used as a reward.

**3 Fundraising to  
support school  
programs**

Food fundraisers may help the financial health of school activities—but at the expense of children's physical health.

**→ Students learn from  
ALL their school  
experiences.**

The goal is to create an environment that supports the healthy nutrition messages being taught in the classroom. Giving some groups (school staff or seniors) food options that aren't available to the whole student body sets up a double standard.

# Non-food Alternatives

## for School Rewards and Fundraising

**S**chool food choices are not limited to lunches and vending machines.

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) Nutrition Standards for Food in Schools are suggested as voluntary guidelines and primarily affect school a la carte and vending choices. But those are not the only school food practices that contribute to childhood obesity. The IOM also recommends applying the nutrition standards to classroom parties and celebrations plus fundraising, rewards, and incentives for students. In addition, non-food alternatives may provide double benefits by limiting high calorie snacks AND increasing physical activity.

### Non-food Rewards for Elementary Students

- Trips to a treasure box filled with nonfood items, such as stickers, play tattoos, bubbles, jump ropes, puzzles, key chains, yo-yos, spider rings, charms, trading cards, pencil toppers, extra credit opportunities
- Play favorite non-electronic game
- Extra recess
- Make deliveries to the office
- Sit by friends
- Help teach class
- Eat lunch with the teacher
- School supplies
- Show and tell
- Paperback book
- Free choice time at end of the day
- Listen to classroom music while working
- Teacher reads a book to the class
- Read or have class outdoors
- "No homework" pass
- Listen to an audio book/watch a video
- Have a teacher perform (sing or play an instrument)
- Choose one student from each class to walk with the principal at lunch

### Non-food Rewards for Middle School Students

- Sit by friends
- Listen to classroom music while working
- "No homework" pass
- Eat lunch outside or have class outside
- Computer time
- Chat break
- Field trips
- Assemblies
- Extra reading time
- Free time at end of class

### Non-food Rewards for High School Students

- Extra credit opportunities
- "No homework" pass
- Extra reading time
- Eat lunch outside or have class outside
- Computer time
- Coupons to video stores, music stores, movies (donated)
- Drawing for donated prizes among students who meet certain grade standards
- Free time at end of class
- Free passes to school events and games

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## Fundraising Ideas

### To Do

- Invite chefs from local restaurants to donate healthy hors d'œuvres and desserts for a "Taste of (insert your town)" event
- Ask local businesses to donate a portion of sales on a given date or time to the school
- Organize events, such as a bike-a-thon, sled-a-thon, walk-a-thon, dance-a-thon, rock-a-thon or read-a-thon, for which sponsors pledge money by the mile, hour, or number of books/pages
- Organize a car or pet wash
- Sell tickets to a parent-teacher talent show or basketball game
- Invite community members and businesses to donate items (e.g., weekends at vacation homes, pool or lawn care, baby sitting, lunch with a local celebrity) for a silent auction/ raffle
- Charge for gift wrapping services during holidays
- Organize a fun run
- Rent-a-teen helper (rake leaves, water gardens, mow lawns, wash dogs)
- Singing telegrams (good for chorus or band)
- Hold a talent show/magic show
- Carnivals
- Dances (kids, father/daughter, family, Sadie Hawkins)
- Recycling cans/bottles/paper
- Organize a golf tournament
- Bowling/skate night
- Treasure hunt/scavenger hunt
- Penny wars (pennies - 1 point, nickels + 5 points, quarter + 25 points, team with the most points wins)
- Spaghetti dinner (use food donated from local businesses)
- Book fair
- Sport clinic
- Cheerleading clinic
- 3-on-3 basketball tournament
- Lip-sync contest
- Silent auctions
- Recycle cell phones



- Flamingo fundraiser (donation for lawn ornaments to be removed from your lawn)
- Rent out special parking spaces
- Trash to treasure sale: community members bring items to donate for a school yard sale
- Pay for a chance to soak your teacher in a dunk tank
- Non-bake sale: pay NOT to bake
- School job fair

### To Sell

- Magazines
- Discount cards/coupon books for local businesses
- Holiday ornaments/wreaths/flowers
- Plants/flowers/bulbs
- Gift wrap/greeting cards/note cards
- Brick/tile/stone memorials to be placed on school property
- Mother's Day hanging baskets
- Valentine's Day carnation sale
- Cookbooks with recipes from teachers/students/community members
- Temporary tattoos
- Emergency/first-aid kits
- Picture frames
- Gift baskets
- Music CDs, videos, DVDs
- Pedometers
- Balloon bouquets
- Healthy foods:
  - Gift baskets with fruit/cheese
  - Low-fat, low-salt pretzels
  - Specialty-shaped pastas
  - Seasonal fruit/nut baskets
  - Popcorn, cheese, apples
- School spirit gear
- Calendars featuring school-specific functions and photos
- School art projects

For more information, visit the following Web sites:

Association of Fund-Raising Distributors and Suppliers  
[www.afrds.org](http://www.afrds.org)

Fundraising Bank  
[www.fundraising-ideas.com](http://www.fundraising-ideas.com)

Institute of Medicine Nutrition Standards  
[www.iom.edu/CMS/3788/30181/42502.aspx](http://www.iom.edu/CMS/3788/30181/42502.aspx)


Iowa State University Extension Nutrition Resources  
[www.extension.iastate.edu/healthnutrition/](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/healthnutrition/)

Iowa State University Extension Publications  
[www.extension.iastate.edu/store](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/store)

PTO Today  
[www.ptotoday.com](http://www.ptotoday.com)

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