

Dear Parents, teachers, staff, caregivers:

At school, home, and throughout the community, kids are offered food, beverages, and candy as rewards for “good” behavior. Often these foods have little or no nutritional value, but are easy, inexpensive, and can bring about short-term behavior change.

There are many disadvantages to using food as a reward:

- It teaches kids to eat as a reward, even when they are not hungry.
- It sends the message that achievements should be marked by eating.
- It may add unnecessary calories, sugar, and fat to the child’s diet, which can cause weight gain or an unhealthy weight.
- It can undermine healthy nutrition practices being taught at home or at school.
- It can establish poor dietary habits that may last a lifetime.

Kids learn preferences for food made available to them, including those that aren’t so healthy. Kids naturally enjoy eating healthy and being physically active. It is important for families, schools, and communities to provide kids ample opportunities to develop lifelong habits for better health. If you choose to reward children with foods, consider healthy options like an apple, banana, carrot sticks, string cheese, or even low-fat milk.

Together, teachers, parents and community members have an incredible opportunity to work together to improve the physical and emotional health of children by consistently offering healthy rewards, plentiful opportunities for physical activity, and quality time together.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create a treasure box for small items such as stickers, special pencils, small toys, craft kits, sidewalk chalk, fun erasers, plastic jewelry, plastic bugs/animals from which your child can choose.</li><li>• Sit by friends during lunch or in the classroom</li><li>• Watch a video</li><li>• Read outdoors</li><li>• Teach the class</li><li>• Have extra art time</li><li>• Enjoy class outdoors</li><li>• Have an extra recess</li><li>• Get a pat on the back</li><li>• Bring a pet to school</li><li>• Play a computer game</li><li>• Read to a younger class</li><li>• Be “Student of the Day”</li><li>• Dance to favorite music</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Get extra computer time</li><li>• Get a “No Homework” pass</li><li>• Make deliveries to the office.</li><li>• Listen to music while working</li><li>• Play a favorite game or puzzle</li><li>• Earn play money for privileges</li><li>• Read a favorite book to the class</li><li>• Eat lunch outdoors with the class</li><li>• Be a helper in another classroom</li><li>• Be able to use the teacher’s desk</li><li>• Take home the classroom mascot</li><li>• Have a teacher perform (i.e., sing)</li><li>• Walk with a teacher during lunch</li><li>• Eat lunch with the teacher or principal</li><li>• Get “free choice” time at the end of the day</li><li>• Listen with a headset to a book on audiotape</li></ul> |
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