

# OFFICE OF FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES

## Healthy School Environment: Classroom Celebrations Non-Food Ideas

The mission of the Office of Food and Nutrition Services is to provide nutritious meals in a safe environment to all students by teaching them how to make healthy choices and to fulfill nutritional needs resulting in lifelong eating habits.

When food is given freely to students as a reward for good performance, achievement, or attendance, it connects food to mood. Encouraging students to eat when they are not hungry interferes with natural hunger cues and may reinforce behaviors associated with unhealthy eating. Furthermore, associating food with good or bad behavior during class also affects eating that occurs outside of regular meal times. In addition, withholding food as a means of punishment is prohibited by the United States Department of Agriculture for any child enrolled in a school participating in the Child Nutrition Program.

Superintendent's Rule 5470: *Wellness* states, "Foods and beverages should not be consumed for educational purpose except as defined in the general curriculum or when indicated in a student's IEP." As such, the school community needs to provide alternatives to food that supports healthy behaviors. Social rewards include attention, praise, or thanks which are often more highly valued by students than food or other non-food items.

A variety of alternatives to reward students in place of food are outlined below.

### Non-Food Reward Ideas

**Parent Ideas**—Please check with the classroom teacher in advance to ensure acceptability for the class and to provide advance notice for scheduling purposes.

- Give small favor bags (pencils, stickers, glow sticks, erasers, notepads, etc.)
- Donate a book to the class and schedule a time to read it to them
- Donate classroom supplies (books, games, musical items)
- Provide supplies and directions for a craft (bonus if parents come to class to help with the craft)
- Donate recess items (balls, hula hoops, etc.) to the class in the student's honor
- Coordinate a book swap – students bring in a book to "trade" with classmates
- Create a treasure box with donations of non-food items for students to choose from as a reward

### Class Reward Ideas

- Give extra recess/computer/reading time
- Allow time for music and dancing
- Film a short digital video as a class, then watch it together
- Hold class outdoors
- Schedule free time at the end of class
- Initiate a group activity
- Provide a homework coupon
- Bestow a certificate/trophy/ribbon/plaque in recognition of an achievement
- Allow students to eat lunch in the classroom or outdoors
- Take a class vote to hold a special dress up day

### **Sports-Related Give-A-Way Ideas**

- Paddleballs
- Frisbees
- Water bottles
- Nerf balls
- Hula hoops
- Head and wrist sweat bands
- Jump ropes
- Soccer balls

### **Toys/Trinkets Ideas**

- Finger puppets
- Stuffed animals
- Plastic or rubber figurines
- Puzzle games
- Magnifying glasses
- Playing cards
- Stretchy animals
- Inflatable toys
- Action figures

### **Fashion Wear Ideas**

- Hair accessories (barrettes, headbands, ribbons)
- Bracelets, necklaces
- Sunglasses
- Hats or caps
- T-shirts
- Shoe laces

### **General Ideas**

- Key chains
- Flashlights
- Cups
- Magnets
- Crazy straws

### **Middle and High School Student Ideas**

- Hold or host a music concert after school
- Solicit movie passes from local theaters or malls
- Give step counters to measure walking steps
- Give gift certificates to local non-food merchants (Walmart, gas stations, iTunes cards)
- Waive school club dues
- Give college gear give-a-ways
- Create a photo recognition board to be placed in a prominent location in the school
- Recognize a class achievement with a schoolwide morning announcement or post on the school Web site.
- Enter a drawing for donated prizes