Provide Non-Food Rewards

Benefits of Providing Non-Food Rewards:

- Provides an environment that fosters healthy eating and supports 5210 messages
- Allows the opportunity for more frequent rewards (if useful)
- Adds to fitness if physical activity used as a reward
- Kids *prefer* non-food rewards! Just ask them!

Classrooms that provide non-food rewards are healthy classrooms!

Consequences of Providing Food as a Reward:

- Contributes to poor health
- Encourages overconsumption of unhealthy foods
- Contributes to poor eating habits
- Increases preference for those foods (often sweets)

Reference:
Birch, L. L., Zimmerman, S. I., & Hind, H. (1980). The influence of social-affective context on the formation of children's food preferences. *Child Development, 51*(3), 856-861.

Consider:

- Developing guidelines that discourage the use of food as a reward
- Offering a monthly indoor or outdoor physical activity to celebrate students' accomplishments in lieu of food-based rewards
- Offering rewards that endorse physical activity
  - Extra recess, longer recess, outdoor activities, Take Time activity
- Offering rewards that endorse academics
  - Pens, pencils, notebooks, books, art time, activity sheets, etc

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The Use of Nonfood Rewards in School: Creating a Healthier Classroom

Why use nonfood rewards?

Nonfood rewards promote a healthier school environment by encouraging healthy eating habits. When students are given pop, candy, and other sweets as a reward for good behavior and academic achievement, food becomes a primary motivator in their lives. Because these foods have little nutritional value, using them as rewards contributes to poor eating habits.

Examples of Nonfood rewards for Elementary School Students

- Stickers
- Pencils, pens, and markers
- Erasers
- Bookmarks
- Books
- Rulers
- Trinkets (magnets, Frisbees, etc.)
- Paper
- Activity/game sheets
- Game time
- Reading time
- Class, homework time, or reading time in a special place (on the couch, outside, etc.)
- Extra recess
- Extra credit
- Extra art time
- Be the helper
- Teach class
- Sit by friends
- Eat lunch with the teacher or principal
- Eat lunch outdoors
- Have lunch or breakfast in the classroom
- Private lunch in the classroom with a friend
- Be a helper in another classroom
- Walk with the principal or teacher
- Take a fun physical activity break
- Dance to favorite music in the classroom
- Show-and-tell
- Bank System - earn tokens for privileges
- Teacher or volunteer reads a special book to class
- Teacher performs a special skill (singing, cartwheel, etc.)
- Have free choice time
- Listen to a book on tape
- Listen to music while working
- Field trip

...about Rewards, Incentives, and Consequences in the Classroom

Rewards and incentives should be given careful consideration as to the messages they send to the students receiving them. Food should not be used as a reward or incentive in the classroom, but other, more appropriate rewards can be used.

Teachers and other school personal should not…

- Withhold food from a student as a consequence for inappropriate behavior or poor academic performance.
- Prohibit or deny student participation in recess or other physical activity as a consequence for inappropriate behavior or poor academic performance.
- Cancel recess or other physical activity time for instructional make-up time.

For more information...

http://doe.sd.gov/oess/cans/index.asp
http://doe.sd.gov/oess/schoolhealth/index.asp
http://doe.sd.gov/oess/cans/nutrition/index.asp
http://www.healthysd.gov/

Adapted from "The Use of Nonfood Rewards in School: Creating a Healthier Classroom" by the Child and Adult Nutrition Services of South Dakota Department of Education in conjunction with the US Department of Agriculture.

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