

**Wellness Principle: Healthy Food at School**

**Promising Practice: Alternatives to Food Rewards**

**Aim:** To promote alternative rewards (rather than food) to provide positive reinforcement for positive behavior and academic performance.

**Alternatives to Food Rewards** Classroom rewards and incentives can be an effective way to encourage positive behavior; however, it is important that students not be given foods for rewards because this can interfere with natural hunger cues. Many foods used for rewards counteract healthful eating messages.

**Getting Started How To's:** Below are some alternatives for students to enjoy instead of being offered food as a reward at school:

**1. Zero –Cost Alternatives for All Ages (Social rewards, recognition and privileges)**

Sit by friends	Listen to music while working
Watch a video	Play a favorite game or puzzle
Read outdoors	Earn play money for privileges
Have extra art time	Walk with a teacher during lunch
Enjoy class outdoors	Eat lunch outdoors with the class
Have an extra recess	Be a helper in another classroom
Play a computer game	Eat lunch with a teacher or principal
Read to a younger class	Dance to favorite music in the class
Get a no homework pass	Get “free choice” time at end of day
Make deliveries to the office	Listen with a headset to a book on tape

**2. Low-Cost Alternatives for All Ages**

A token or point system, whereby students earn points that accumulate toward a bigger prize. Possible prizes include:	
Gift certificate to a bookstore or sporting goods store	Book
Movie pass or rental gift certificate	Magazine subscription
Ticket to sporting event	Sports equipment: soccer ball, tennis racket
Puzzle	Step counter

### 3. Grade Level Reward Suggestions

Elementary	Middle School	High School
Taking care of class pet	Sitting with friends	Sitting with friends
Leading class to lunch, recess or library	Music concert at school	Prime parking spot
Stars and smiley faces	Magazine subscription	Recognition with morning announcements

**Keys to Success:** Join forces with other teachers and administration and implement on a school-wide basis. It's easier to get started and remain consistent if everyone is on board together.

**More Information:** [Eat Smart, Move More North Carolina](#)  
[North Carolina Tools for Schools](#)

**Reference:** Healthy Rewards and Incentives Policy, NC Department of Public Instruction, NC Cooperative Extension and NC Action for Healthy Kids (2005).