



# Indiana's Alternatives to Food Rewards

## Rewarding Good Behavior

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 undermines nutrition education being taught in the school environment.
- It encourages over-consumption of foods high in added sugar and fat.
- It teaches kids to eat when they are not hungry as a reward to themselves.

Kids learn preferences for foods made available to them, including those that are unhealthy.<sup>1</sup> Poor food choices and inadequate physical activity contribute to overweight and obesity. Currently, obesity among kids is at epidemic levels and can often lead to serious health problems.<sup>2</sup>

1. Birch, LL. Development of Food Preferences. *Annu. Rev. Nutr.*, 1999, 19:41-62.
2. Ogden, CL, Flegal, KM, Carroll, MD, and Johnson, CL. Prevalence and Trends of Overweight Among US Children and Adolescents, 1999-2000, *JAMA*, October 2, 2002, Vol. 288, No. 14.

## Zero-Cost Alternatives

- Sit by friends
- Watch a video
- Read outdoors
- Teach the class
- Have extra art time
- Enjoy class outdoors
- **Have an extra recess**
- Get a pat on the back
- Play a computer game
- Read to a younger class
- Be "Student of the Day"
- **Dance to favorite music**
- Get extra computer time
- Get a "No Homework" pass
- **Make deliveries to the office**
- Listen to music while working
- Play a favorite game or puzzle
- Earn play money for privileges
- Read a favorite book to the class
- Eat lunch outdoors with the class
- Be a helper in another classroom
- Take home the classroom mascot
- Have a teacher perform, i.e., sing
- **Walk with a teacher during lunch**
- Eat lunch with the teacher or principal
- Get "free choice" time at the end of the day
- Listen with a headset to a book on audiotape



**Bold indicates activities that include physical activity**

## Students Learn What They Live

Kids naturally enjoy eating healthy and being physically active. Schools and communities need to provide them with an environment that supports these healthy behaviors. Listed on the right are some alternatives for students to enjoy instead of being offered food as a reward at school.



## Low-Cost Alternatives

- Select a paperback book
- Enter a drawing for donated prizes
- Take a trip to the treasure box (non-food items)
- Get stickers, pencils, and other school supplies
- Receive a video store or movie theater coupon
- Get a set of flash cards printed from the computer
- Receive a "mystery pack" (notebook, folder, sports cards, etc.)