



## Healthy Student Rewards How Can You Help?

Teachers, school staff, and parent groups may provide students with incentives or rewards for academic achievement or positive classroom behavior. Although the purpose of rewarding students is meant to create an internal motivation for learning, rewarding students with foods or beverages is not recommended because it may create an emotional connection between achievement and eating and encourage kids to eat when they are not hungry.<sup>1,2</sup> Schools can provide healthy student rewards, such as giving students opportunities for physical activities (e.g., extra recess, a dance party), or providing them with special classroom privileges.

### What's Happening at School?

Knowing the answers to the following questions can help you support healthy student rewards in your child's school. If you don't know the answers to these questions, check out the school handbook or school website, attend a school wellness meeting or Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meeting, or simply ask your child's teacher.

1. Does the school district or school have a policy in place about how students are rewarded for good grades, high test scores, or good classroom behavior?
2. Does the school district or school prohibit using food or beverages to reward students for good grades, high test scores, or good classroom behavior?
3. How are classroom teachers or subject-specific teachers rewarding students in their classrooms?





## Ideas for Parents

You can be involved in your child's school by **attending** meetings, workshops, or training events offered by the school; **communicating** with school staff and other parents; **volunteering** for school events or in your child's classroom; **reinforcing** healthy messages and practices your child learns at school; **helping** make decisions about health in the school; and **being part** of community activities supported by the school. Here are some specific ideas for how you can support your child's school in providing healthy student rewards.

- Suggest alternatives for rewarding students for good grades, high test scores, or good classroom behavior.<sup>1</sup> For example, give opportunities for physical activities (e.g., extra recess, a dance party), or provide special classroom privileges (e.g., choosing a class activity or book to read).
- Offer to bring in non-food rewards (e.g., books, school supplies) to your child's teacher or the school.
- E-mail or discuss with other parents the importance of having healthy student rewards, and come up with new ways to recognize students.
- Join the school or district committee (e.g., wellness committee) that sets the policies for health and wellness, and work to include language about healthy student rewards.<sup>1,3</sup>
- Reach out to local businesses and organizations, and ask them to help recognize students in their local school (e.g., coupons to stores, free tickets to community events or activities, or free service, such as a haircut or dance class). It is important to make sure that rewards and incentives align with district or school policies about advertising in schools.



Check out additional resources for parents related to the school nutrition environment and services, physical education and physical activity, and managing chronic health conditions at <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/P4HS.htm>.

## REFERENCES

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. School health guidelines to promote healthy eating and physical activity. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep.* 2011;60(RR05):1-76.
2. Institute of Medicine. *Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools: Leading the Way Toward Healthier Youth.* Washington, DC: Institute of Medicine of the National Academies; 2007.
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Parent Engagement: Strategies for Involving Parents in School Health.* Atlanta: US Dept of Health and Human Services; 2012.

