

Creating Healthy Schools



Implementation for success

To support a policy of not using food as a reward, the district/schools will follow these guidelines:

- Work with the school wellness council and administrators to identify non-food rewards already being used to reward students. Share results and success with the other members of the school and district community.
- Work with the school wellness council and administrators to issue guidelines that provide alternative practices for reward and reinforcement. Train all staff on the school's new policy and include examples of alternative practices.
- Promote the new "reward and reinforcement program" via the school's website, in newsletters, and on bulletin boards.
- Share success stories at staff meetings.
- Communicate and enforce the policy with PTO/PTA or other parent groups.

Staff can eliminate use of food as a reward in a variety of ways, including, but not limited to:

- Replace food rewards with non-food rewards such as social rewards, recognition, privileges, entire class rewards, school supplies, sports equipment and athletic gear, toy/trinkets, fashion wear, a token or point system, and other miscellaneous rewards.

Model Policy:

Our school district cares about the health and well-being of students and understands the impact food provided at school can have on student health behaviors. Given the significant influence schools can have on the development of healthy habits, staff will not use food or beverages as rewards for academic performance or good behavior. If an individual student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) recommends the use of food for behavior modification, a teacher may use food as a reward for that student. However, food shall be used as a last alternative for behavioral modification as part of an IEP, and teachers should minimize classroom use and provide healthy food when available. Teachers may use physical activity as a reward for academic performance or good behavior, as appropriate.

Evaluation:

In order to meet the requirements of the Healthy Hunger Free Act of 2010, the district wellness council and school administrators will be jointly accountable for implementing, enforcing, and evaluating this policy. Evaluation will consist of reviewing policies regarding not using food as a reward and surveying faculty and staff on how they are incorporating non-food rewards. Evaluation will include classroom observations and review of the current policy. Each school will report annually to the district wellness council on the progress of policy implementation and will include recommendations where further district support may be beneficial. The district wellness council may also request that selected schools conduct student, family, and/or staff surveys as part of their evaluation process. At the end of each school year, the district wellness council will submit an annual report to the superintendent/board of education on the implementation and evaluation of this policy. This report shall be posted on the Internet for easy public access.

Rationale:

Today about 1 in 3 children is overweight or obese and studies show that overweight children are likely to become overweight and obese adults.¹ If obesity among children continues to increase at this rate, our current generation could become the first in American history to live shorter and sicker lives than their parents. Rewarding students with unhealthy food reinforces the unhealthy link between food of poor nutritional value and positive feedback. Using food as a reward can undermine other school nutrition education, encourage overconsumption of food with high sugar and fat, teach children to eat when they are not hungry and lead to obesity.

Avoiding food as a reward can benefit the students and the school. It helps support healthy eating habits among students, breaks the linkage between food and achievement or performance, and helps aid in internalizing positive behaviors. Additionally, avoiding food as a reward fosters a healthy environment and reinforces nutrition education taught in school. With healthy eating habits, students may have improved attention, improved test scores, a healthier weight, and increased confidence or self-motivation.



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Two other versions of this policy item are available for both staff and family to assist with implementation and communication.

Resources:

- National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity Wellness Policies:
www.schoolwellnesspolicies.org
- Action Guide for School Nutrition and Physical Activity Policies, Connecticut State Department of Education, 2009, pg 51:
http://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Nutrition/SWP/Action_Guide.pdf
- National Association of State Boards of Education: Chapter E: Policies to Promote Healthy Eating, 2nd Ed. 2012:
<http://www.nasbe.org/project/center-for-safe-and-healthy-schools/>
- Constructive Classroom Rewards: Promoting Good Habits While Protecting Children's Health, Center for Science in the Public Interest:
http://cspinet.org/new/pdf/constructive_classroom_rewards.pdf
- School Wellness Resource Kit, Action for Healthy Kids:
www.actionforhealthykids.org/storage/documents/parent-toolkit/partner-resource-pdfs/ResourceKit-CanDo.pdf
- Making It Happen! School Nutrition Success Stories, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/mih/pdf/background.pdf>

¹ CDC Childhood Obesity Facts:
<http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/obesity/facts.htm>