

Healthy Reward Practices in the School Environment



The use of praise and rewards can be an effective strategy for behaviour management in children. Rewarding children can result in an increase in their internal motivation for positive behaviours.¹ When positive behaviours are exhibited regularly, external rewards may no longer be required.

Food is sometimes used as a way to reward children in both home and school settings, in an attempt to reinforce positive behaviour and achievements. It has been long established that rewarding children with unhealthy foods may be detrimental to their health as their preference for these foods can further increase.² Therefore, the provision of unhealthy treats as a way to reward children may be encouraging increased consumption of these foods.

Studies suggest that rewarding children with food does not contribute towards building a healthy relationship with food.

It has been found that using food as a reward may increase fussy eating, as well as an increased tendency to reject new foods.³

Food as a reward has also been linked to an increased response to food cues and emotional overeating in children.^{3,4} The concern is that children may learn to eat food as a reward or comfort even when they are not hungry, as it can become linked with mood and emotion rather than eating to fulfil nutritional needs.⁵

There is limited research on the long-term effects of using food as a reward on children's habits and preferences. This resource provides alternatives to using food as a reward that can be used to promote good behaviour. It also provides ideas for healthy food rewards as alternatives to common treats.

According to results from a recent survey answered by Nazareth Catholic Community staff, non-food rewards are more commonly used as a way to reward students. To provide further ideas for healthy rewards, student suggestions have been taken into account when developing this resource.

References

1. Bear, G., Slaughter, J., Mantz, L., & Farley-Ripple, E. (2017). Rewards, praise, and punitive consequences: Relations with intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. *Teaching And Teacher Education*, 65, 10-20.
2. Newman, J., & Taylor, A. (1992). Effect of a means-end contingency on young children's food preferences. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 53(2), 200-216.
3. Roberts, L., Marx, J., & Musher-Eizenman, D. (2018). Using food as a reward: An examination of parental reward practices. *Appetite*, 120, 318-326.
4. Blissett, J., Haycraft, E., & Farrow, C. (2010). Inducing preschool children's emotional eating: relations with parental feeding practices. *The American Journal Of Clinical Nutrition*, 92(2), 359-365.
5. Johnson, A. (2013). Eating beyond metabolic need: how environmental cues influence feeding behavior. *Trends In Neurosciences*, 36(2), 101-109.

Reward Suggestions

Here is a list of healthy rewards for children classified by theme. ¹ They can be used alone or in combination, depending on the situation.

<p><u>Social Rewards</u> Often have a higher value to children than tangible rewards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Thanking verbally -Attention -Verbal praise and feedback -Simple gestures e.g. Nods or smiles 	<p><u>Recognition of achievement</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Trophy, ribbon or certificate -A photo recognition board -A note from the teacher -Acknowledging parents about their children's accomplishment
<p><u>Privilege for children</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Choosing a class activity/ an extra recess activity -Designing a class bulletin board -Writing/drawing on the blackboard/whiteboard -Deciding different types of prizes 	<p><u>School supplies/any relevant tangible items</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Stationery (e.g. pens and erasers) -Notepads/notebooks -Positivity cards -Stamps -Stickers -Slime
<p><u>Sports Equipment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Paddleballs -Frisbees -Hula hoop -Skipping rope -Head and wrist sweatbands -Water bottles 	<p><u>Rewards for a class</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -iPad time -Extra play time (indoor/outdoor) -Extra free time -Extra fitness time -Drama games -Share positive moments through SeeSaw/email

This resource has been developed as part of implementing Nazareth's Healthy Food Supply and Nutrition Procedure.

The HFSNP discourages discretionary foods being used as rewards or encouragements in the school environment.

Healthy snack foods³

- Rice crackers
- Mini toasts
- Unsalted popcorn
- Wholegrain crackers with cheese
- Pretzels
- Bread sticks
- Dried fruit
- Frozen berries⁴

***Remember to ensure students do not have allergies or sensitivities to the foods provided.⁵**



Promotion of healthy eating in the school environment

Healthy catering options are encouraged for any school celebration events. Please refer to Nazareth's updated Healthy Local Fast Food Catering Options resource for further details.

1. Greater Victoria School District. (2009). Alternatives to Using Food as Reward. Safe and Caring Schools Program. <http://web1.nbed.nb.ca/sites/ASD-W/HealthyLearners/Documents/Healthy%20Eating/Alternatives%20To%20Using%20Food%20As%20A%20Reward.pdf>
 2. Doll, C., McLaughlin, T., & Barretto, A. (2013). The token Economy: A Recent Review and Evaluation. International Journal Of Basic And Applied Science, 2(1), 131-149.
 3. Northern Territory Government. (2017). School Nutrition and Healthy Eating Policy. <https://education.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/257819/tips-for-parents.pdf>
 4. National Health and Medical Research Council. 2015. Healthy meal and snack ideas. (2015). <<https://www.eatforhealth.gov.au/eating-well/tips-eating-well/healthy-meal-and-snack-ideas>>
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