

Healthy Rewards for Elementary Students



Why Healthy Rewards?

Food is often used to reinforce “good behavior;” however, doing so may be ineffective and undermine your school’s commitment to wellness. Using food as a reward teaches students to eat, even when they are not hungry. It may add unnecessary calories, sugar, and fat to the student’s diet, which may contribute to weight gain and an unhealthy lifestyle. Food rewards are quick praises, resulting in short-term behavior change. A robust positive reinforcement plan that includes a variety of rewards, actions, acknowledgements, and praise will be more effective at strengthening long-term behavior change.

Steps to... Healthy Rewards

Gather input from staff, students, and families to discover your communities' favorite activities and non-food rewards.

Create school-specific tips, guidelines, and recommendations that promote non-food rewards and positive reinforcement strategies.

Promote healthy rewards and successful positive reinforcement strategies through your school's website, social media accounts, newsletters, bulletin boards, & at parent and community events.

Apply Some Peer Pressure!

Setup a system where students can praise and reward each other. Peer-to-peer recognition can encourage positive behavior changes, such as making academic improvements, encouraging health behaviors, or getting more involved in school.

Our school recognizes the importance of emphasizing healthy food choices for our students. We encourage our staff to use healthy food as incentives such as fruits and low sugar options.

*Wellness School of Distinction
– Marley Middle School Principal*

Anne Arundel County Public Schools' Wellness Policy: A Rewarding Opportunity

The Anne Arundel County Public Schools' Wellness Council encourages teachers to manage classrooms with a variety of healthy rewards and positive reinforcement strategies. Teachers, parents, and community members have an incredible opportunity to work together to improve the physical and emotional health of children by consistently offering healthy rewards, plentiful opportunities for physical activity, and quality time together. Relationship- and activity-based rewards encourage children to continue making healthy choices, while strengthening the connection between teachers and students. The following examples prove that unhealthy foods do not have to be a reward for academic success and good behavior.

These non-food prizes are a big hit with elementary students:



Non-Food Rewards and Praises

Award Success

- Pencils or erasers
- Stickers
- Small Toys
- Vouchers or tokens that may be collected and exchanged for a bigger prize

Get Active

- Walk or run with the teacher
- Student-led activity breaks
- Special events, such as dance parties or hula-hoop classes
- Extra recess, PE, or free time

Be Creative

- Listen to music in the classroom
- Select a favorite book to read to the class
- Be teacher for the day or use the teacher's desk
- Enjoy lunch with a teacher or principal
- Host a special dress day, such as pajama or crazy hat day

Recognize

- Distribute ribbons, buttons, or certificates
- Display achievement posters around the classroom or school
- Shout-out success in morning announcements
- Notify parents or guardians of good behavior

Interested in more **Wellness Initiatives** and how to **Cultivate Communities of Wellness** go to <https://www.aacps.org/wellnesstoolkit>.