



Non-Food Classroom Reward and Celebration Ideas

Iowa Department of Education

Rewards are a way to recognize achievement and celebrate success, progress, and events in students' lives. The rewards should fit with the goals and mission of the school, promote healthy living, and support nutrition and physical activity education messages throughout the school. Non-material, non-food rewards are powerful ways to recognize and celebrate students' success.

Elementary Ideas

- Pajama Day
- Crazy Hat Day (or hair, pants, shirt)
- Super Hero Day
- Costume Day (Dress up day in the middle of winter!)
- Beach Party in January
- Have class outside
- Have lunch outside
- Game of quiet ball
- Word games on the board
- Sit in the teacher's chair/desk/podium for half a day
- Desk Buddy: move desk to sit by a friend x half a day, an hour, etc.
- Nature hike outside
- Indoor Scavenger Hunt
- Choose a book for the class (or game, music, physical activity break)
- Read with a friend in a special area in the classroom
- Sit on desks to read
- Call, text or email the parent about the student's success
- Announce student's success over the morning announcements
- Post a certificate on the wall noting the student's success
- Group game
- Make deliveries to the office
- Walk and Talk with the principal

Middle School Ideas

- Talk Time: chat with friends x 5 minutes
- Listen to music
- Free Time Choice: read, do homework, draw
- Free Pass: skip 3 questions on a certain homework assignment
- Late assignment pass
- Listen to i-pod
- Have class outside
- Take lunch outside
- Word games on the board
- Sit in the teacher's chair/desk/podium for half a day
- Desk Buddy: move desk to sit by a friend x half a day, an hour, etc.
- Nature hike outside
- Indoor Scavenger Hunt
- Choose a book for the class (or game, music, physical activity break)
- Read with a friend in a special area in the classroom
- Drop in PE (if the gym is free)
- Homework buddy: work with classmate on an assignment x 15 minutes
- Call, text or email the parent about the student's success
- Post a certificate on the wall noting student's success
- Computer time
- Group game
- Read the morning announcements

High School Ideas:

- Recognition in morning announcements
- Late assignment pass
- Reduced homework
- Extra credit
- Post certificate on the wall noting student's success
- Homework buddy: work with classmate on an assignment for allotted amount of time
- Call, text or email the parent about the student's success
- Send a written note in the mail
- Have class outside
- Have lunch outside
- Music choice
- Listen to i-pod in class
- Chat break last 5 minutes of class
- Pep Rally
- Assemblies



Benefits of Non-Food, Healthy Celebrations

- Healthy kids learn better
- Promotes a healthy school environment
- Promotes consistent health messages
- Promotes focus on person and event rather than on food
- Keeps kids with food allergies/special diets safe

Check out these resources:

[Action for Healthy Kids: Healthy Non-Food Rewards](#)

[Iowa State University: Non-Food Alternatives](#)

Center for Science in the Public Interest: [Healthy Classroom Celebrations](#)

Clemson Cooperative Extension: [Non-Food Rewards for Kids](#)

Choose My Plate 10 Tips: [Make Celebrations Fun, Healthy and Active](#)

[Iowa Team Nutrition](#)

[Alliance for a Healthier Generation](#)

[Let's Move! Active Schools](#)



This project is part of the CDC 1305 Grant Project for Iowa. Questions? Comments? Please contact Angela Mitchell, Consultant, at angela.mitchell@iowa.gov.