



What does it mean to use fundraising activities and rewards that support student health?

Fundraising supports student health when it involves selling nutritious foods and beverages (e.g., fruits, vegetables, 100% fruit juice, low-fat milk) or selling non-food items, such as wrapping paper, candles, or student artwork. Schools can also raise money and promote health at the same time through, for example, a walk-a-thon or jump rope contest.

Rewards support student health when they involve using non-food items or activities to recognize students for their achievements or good behavior, if an extrinsic reward system is used. These types of rewards include stickers, books, or extra time for recess.

Why use fundraising activities and rewards that support student health?

Fundraising supportive of student health becomes part of a school's consistent, positive health message. It is a public demonstration of the school's commitment to promoting healthy behaviors among students, families, and the community at large. By contrast, selling less nutritious food items contradicts nutrition messages taught in the classroom. The use of non-food rewards supports classroom nutrition education, does not tempt students to over-consume food, and provides no reason for students to reward themselves by eating when they are not hungry.^{66,67} Foods that are used as rewards are viewed as more desirable by children.⁶⁷ The practice of using foods as a reward may create the risk that children tie them to emotions, such as feelings of accomplishment.

Advocates of candy and bake sales note that these sales typically do not occur on a regular basis and they, therefore, cannot have an important impact on students' overall food intake. Those who reward students with candy argue that it is highly motivational and not harmful as an occasional treat.

What is the current situation with fundraising and rewards in schools?

No specific Federal regulations exist on fundraising or the use of food as a reward in schools, although CDC guidelines to promote healthy eating recommend that school staff be discouraged from using food rewards.³⁰

The CDC's School Health Policies and Programs Study (SHPPS), conducted in 2000, reported that 82 percent of schools used food and beverages for fundraising activities³⁶ In these schools, the following foods were sold:

- Chocolate candy (76 percent of the schools)
- Cookies, crackers, cakes, pastries, or other baked goods (67 percent)
- Candy other than chocolate candy (63 percent)
- Soft drinks, sports drinks, or fruit drinks (37 percent)
- Fruits or vegetables (28 percent)

The SHPPS found that 16 percent of States and 23 percent of school districts prohibited or discouraged schools from using food or food coupons as a reward for good behavior or academic performance. Twenty-five percent of schools reported that they prohibited or discouraged faculty and staff from using food or food coupons as rewards. A 2000 General Accounting Office report on commercial activities in schools found that elementary schools commonly rewarded students with free pizza for reading a required number of books.⁷

A 2002 survey of 339 Kentucky schools found that 81 percent used food as a reward for behavior, attendance, or academic achievement, and 90 percent used non-food rewards.⁶⁸ The rewards commonly used are listed in Table 9. Food rewards were most common in elementary and middle schools (almost 90 percent) and less common in high schools (57 percent). Table 9 also shows the types of food served at school parties. More than 90 percent of the schools had celebrations, but only 15 percent had policies on the types of food that could be served.

What are alternatives for school fundraising activities and rewards?

Fundraising

Many new school fundraising strategies are being developed with both school financial needs *and* concerns about student nutrition in mind. Schools are selling products other than candy:

- Fresh and exotic fruit
- High quality potatoes and onions
- Nuts
- Popcorn

Schools sell an expanding variety of non-food items such as the following:

- Gift wrap
- Magazine subscriptions
- Garden seeds
- Candles
- Discount coupon books
- Raffles of gift baskets
- Temporary tattoos
- Plants

Table 9. Types of rewards and foods served at parties in Kentucky schools⁶⁸

Type of food reward	Percent schools	Type of non-food reward	Percent schools	Food served at school parties	Percent serving
Pizza	83	Non-food prize	69	Pizza	96
Candy	67	Stickers	64	Soft drinks	87
Soft drinks	47	No homework pass	56	Chips	74
Ice Cream	44	Special task	55	Candy	66
Fruit	12	Meeting with principal	38	Ice Cream	63
		Eat lunch with teacher	36	Fruit	40

Schools use a wide variety of traditional and non-traditional fundraising events:

- Car washes
- Walk-a-thons, bike-a-thons, jog-a-thons, skate-a-thons, etc.
- Family bingo nights
- “Hire a student day” for odd jobs (with proceeds going to the school)
- 3-on-3 basketball tournaments
- Silent auctions
- Talent shows

The California Project LEAN developed a guide to healthful fundraising entitled "Creative Financing and Fun Fundraising" (www.opi.state.mt.us/pdf/MBI/fundraiser.pdf), or see pages 352-353.

Rewards

The options for non-food rewards are limited only by imagination, time, and resources. Matching the reward with the action is an appropriate place to start. For example:

- Children who complete reading assignments can be rewarded with a book, magazine, or word-play activity book;
- Students who complete a class project can receive a pencil or eraser; and
- Classes who behave well can be given extra time to play outside.

Several documents have been developed by States or others that provide easy and fun alternatives to non-food rewards. The Texas Department of Agriculture has published *Non-Food Ways to Raise Funds and Reward a Job Well Done, A Quick and Easy Idea List to Inspire Schools and Parents* as they face the challenges of fundraising and rewarding students in today's school environment (www.agr.state.tx.us/foodnutrition/newsletter/NonFoodRewards.pdf).

Michigan's Team Nutrition and Michigan State University Extension have *Alternatives to Using Food as a Reward* at www.msue.msu.edu/fnh/tn/foodrewards.pdf. In addition, the Lexington Fayette County Health Department in Kentucky published “Food for Thought – Healthy Food Guidelines for Schools” that includes fun alternatives to food rewards, as well as other topics that are covered in *Making It Happen!* (see pages 348 and 349).



How are schools making it happen with fundraising and rewards?

- The Louise Archer Elementary School in Vienna, Virginia, uses a walk with the principal to reward students who work hard.
- The McComb School District in Mississippi bans fundraising with candy or non-nutritious food items at the K-8 level.
- The student council at Williston Junior High School in Williston, North Dakota stopped selling high-sugar, high-fat foods as its primary fundraising activity. It now raises the same amount of money but sells only healthier options.
- Austin Independent School District in Texas has prohibited the sale of foods of minimal nutritional value for fundraisers on school campus during the school day.
- The Mercedes Independent School District in Texas adopted a policy that prohibits the sale of candy as a fundraiser; directs school staff to use food as a reward for student accomplishment sparingly and, at the elementary school level, only after 2 p.m.; prohibits the withholding of food as punishment for students; and provides a list of recommended foods and beverages for school functions.
- School Union #106 in Maine recommends the sale of only non-food items for fundraising activities. When schools decide to offer foods and beverages for celebrations or in support of school fundraising activities, they are encouraged to offer items from a list of nutritious choices.

—See Quick Reference Guide, page 179, for a complete listing of schools and schools districts that used fundraisers or rewards supportive of student health.

