

Non-food Incentives and Rewards in the Classroom

**Fun and creative ideas for classroom incentives
from elementary and middle school
Benton County Healthy Weight & Lifestyle Coalition**

This guide was made possible through a grant from the Oregon Department of Human Services-Health Services, Office of Family Health. Based on the Utah Department of Health, Gold Medal School Initiative –Easy Ideas for Classroom Incentives.

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Benton County Healthy Weight & Lifestyles Coalition

“Improve the health and reduce chronic disease through the promotion of healthy eating and increasing physical activity of all Benton County residents.”

The Benton County Healthy Weight & Lifestyle Coalition was called into action in December of 2001. The coalition is working to reduce the burden of chronic disease and obesity in Benton County. This project is based on the Surgeon General’s Call to Action To Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity 2001 and the Institute of Medicines Report Preventing Childhood Obesity-Health in the Balance.

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What we are Trying to Accomplish

- Provide creative ideas for alternatives to food incentives in the classroom
- Ensure food rewards do not “compete” with healthy food choices at lunch.
- Reduce dependence on Foods of Minimal Nutrition Value (FMNV) for classroom motivation, recognition and encouragement.
- Promote a consistent nutritional message and a healthy environment in schools.
- Increase awareness of the obesity epidemic among children.

What the experts say

It is important that students are not given unhealthy foods for rewards because it can interfere with natural hunger cues and teach them a preference for sweets. Schools should model appropriate behavior and seek alternatives to food given as a reward.

- Rewards and bribes focused around food ultimately do not help children develop healthy attitudes towards food.
- When children are rewarded with food, they unfortunately associate “junk” food with being good or feeling happy
- Associating food with good or bad behavior may have long-lasting effects on students’ food preferences and eating style.



Kids Survey

Fifty- three 4th-6th grade students were survey with an open ended question asking them what they wanted as a reward for a job well done. Here are the results:

30% Small toys and stuffed animals

19% Free time for computer, board games, reading and recess

13% Outside time for lunch and play

11% Books as prizes, 10% Sit at desk/table of choice

additional comments included: school and art supplies; rubber "cause" bracelets; pass for "no" or "late" homework

Kids like prizes!

Kids like privileges!



Contest Winners

We would like to thank all of those who participated in the creative ideas listed in this book!

And the winners are...

- Tim Pearson of Alsea School
- Linda Cohoon of Adams Elementary School
- Heather Jager/Connie Ash of Adams Elementary School
- Chad Matthews of Philomath Middle School
- Susan Klinkhammer of Linus Pauling Middle School
- Jean Marr of Linus Pauling Middle School
- Krystal Rutledge of Philomath Middle School
- Kristin Sibernagel of Jefferson Elementary School
- Debbie Wray of Adams Elementary

And again THANK YOU for helping us make this happen!!!



Easy Ideas for Classroom Incentives

Winner

Tim Pearson

List of Materials Needed:

- "Caught Being Good Tickets"
OR
- "Caught Being _____" use whatever goal you are working toward...it can be specific or general

**YOU WERE CAUGHT
BEING RESPONSIBLE**

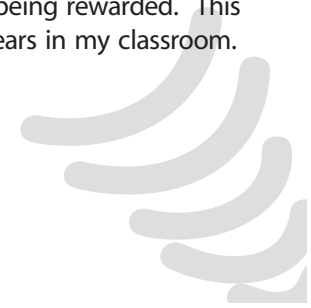
Student _____
Date _____
Teacher _____
Reason _____

Caught Being Good

Directions:

Students are rewarded a ticket when "caught" doing it right. (i.e. following directions, helping a younger child at recess, staying on task, completing a task, etc. Tickets are then completed or filled out by the student and dropped into a box/hat/bag...then...each Friday a certain number of tickets are drawn and winners choose their prize. Prizes include reading rug for SSR, homework pass, word find books, tablets, fancy pencils, etc.

Good habits are reinforced on Friday when the teacher reads out loud WHY each student is being rewarded. This has worked successfully for several years in my classroom.



Winner

Tim Pearson

List of Materials Needed:

- Chalkboard
- Game Ideas
 - Ball games
 - “Silent ball”
 - Hide the Critter
 - Thumbs Up 7-up

Game Day

Directions:

Students can earn a fun group game by entering the classroom quietly, lining up in an orderly fashion, a good report from recess duty or librarian, etc. “Blanks” are written in the board...the students all know what they’re working toward and when they’ve earned a letter, they are that much closer to the game!

One of our favorite games is “hide the fox.” A small plastic fox sits on my desk and when the game is earned, he goes into hiding!! He always hides in plain sight. One student leaves the room and a hiding spot is chosen by the class. When the student comes back, they try to find the fox. Students rub their hands together V-E-R-Y slow until the finder gets close/“hot” and then they rub their hands furiously fast. The only noise is a few giggles and giant hoorahs and clapping when the fox is found.



Winner

Linda Cohoon

List of Materials Needed:

- Pig Stamp
- Green Stamp Pad
- Pig Stamp Card for each student

Pig Stamp

Directions:

Students can earn a pig stamp in a variety of ways-

- Bringing homework back on time
- Displaying initiative, extra effort, integrity, etc.
- The whole class may earn a pig stamp (each student) based on their positive action, such as walking down the hall quietly, treating substitutes with respect, etc.
- When a student has 30 pig stamps on their card, they can go to the Pig Stamp Box and choose one item (book, poster, book marks, marbles, jacks etc.). Students get a new card to keep collecting Pig Stamps.

Winner

Heather Jager & Connie Ash

List of Materials Needed:

- Paperback books ordered through elementary book clubs

Reading Passports

Directions:

- Students earn a free book for reading books from as many categories (genres) as they can.
- Students list completed books/authors on an individual chart, or in a teacher-created “reading passport” booklet.
- When the completed chart or booklet receives a stamp of approval, the student has earned the reward of a new book.



Winner

Chad Matthews

List of Materials Needed:

- Fun and funky looking ties of all vintages
- Classroom produced title cards giving each tie a name or title that represents your subject. Post these titles above the appropriate ties in your wall. For example, I use these ties for Geography and Social Studies so I name them appropriately. We have a blue crushed velvet tie titled "Wide Open Oceans."

It's a Tie!

Directions:

During each week in class there are opportunities for students to win a tie for the week. We usually play certain games and the winner gets to choose a tie from the wall as a reward. The whole class plays a drum roll as the winner chooses a tie from the wall. The winner is expected to keep the tie for the week and then return it, still tied, at the end of the week. If they want to wear the tie to class (which most of them do) they receive privileges and rewards. Sometimes they leave early for break or lunch, get an extra hall pass, or be president of the class. Perhaps the greatest reward is seeing their name posted up on the wall for the week as the winner. The rewards that accompany the tie always relate and correspond to what we are studying in class thereby reinforcing the current topic and the value of knowledge and learning.

Winner

Susan Klinkhammer

List of Materials Needed:

- Sheets of label stickers for the computer
- Printshop (or similar program)

Perfect Week

Directions:

- When kids complete a week with ALL work turned in, I give them a "PERFECT WEEK" sticker to put in their planner!
- Sometimes this sticker also gives them a 20-minute free choice time while those without one use the time to complete work. The stickers have graphics that match the current content, season, or special event.
- **If the NFL players are motivated by stickers on their helmets, why not kids too?! It works!



Winner

Jean Marr

List of Materials Needed:

- Raffle-type tickets
- Objects to auction-Frisbees, Yu-Gi-Oh cards, playing cards, necklaces, CD's, t-shirts, art supplies etc. (usually bought at garage sales or second hand shops)
- Services, privileges to auction (read with teacher during silent reading, sit in the teacher chair, erase the board)

Incentive Auction

Directions:

Students earn tickets for completed and corrected schoolwork.

Early in the week, display items to be auctioned.

On Fridays, offer several items for auction. Students bid on items just like at a real auction.



Winner

Krystal Rutledge

List of Materials Needed:

- “High Five” slips
- Small incentives from oriental trading company
- Clipboard/ Sign-in
- Poster with non-food incentives attached

High Five

Directions:

To increase positive behavior, students are awarded, by any staff member at Philomath Middle School, with a “High Five” slip. Students take the award to the front office for a non-food incentive. It’s simple. They sign-in, trade their slip in for a small prize, and get congratulated by the office staff for a job well done



Winner

Kristin Silbernagel

List of Materials Needed:

- Books
 - various levels
 - variety of topics
- Plain paper cut into strips

Super Student

Directions:

During work time, students can get “super student” slips (the plain paper strips) for on-task behavior. Students put their names on the slips and put them in the tub. On Fridays, 1-2 names are drawn and the winner chooses a book of his/her choice.

****Books are displayed in a basket all week. Students can look through them and get excited about winning!****



Winner

Debbie Wray

List of Materials Needed:

- 3 types of medals (i.e. gold, silver, bronze)
- Baseball printed pencils, cups, stickers, erasers, t-shirts, etc. (An OSU visit was a highlight!)

Olympic Baseball Reading Program

Directions:

- Children earn a point for every minute read. They move runners they've colored around the track, reaching stations where they earn a bronze, silver, or gold medal.
- The class is divided into two teams. Each student colors a baseball player to look like them. As minutes read are turned in, they move their players around a bulletin board baseball field, and earn runs for their team. Each run earns a reward.



Additional ideas from teachers in Utah

List of Materials Needed:

- Award certificate
- Bear cut-outs
- Honey pot cut-outs

“Beary” Awesome Awards

Directions:

- On the board, each child has a bear shaped cut-out with their name on it.
- During the week, students can earn honey pots for their bear by following classroom rules: raising their hand to answer questions, sharing, encouraging their classmates, etc.
- On Monday, give the student a “Beary Awesome” award certificate stating what that student did to earn their reward.
- They can bring these awards home to the family so that the parents can see the positive things their child is doing (rather than only hearing when something is wrong).

List of Materials Needed:

- Star stickers
- Chart or 3x5 card
- Prize items
- Stuffed animals
- Small toys
- Small cars

Shining Stars

Directions:

- Kids earn one shining star (sticker) per day when they follow classroom rules and do not receive a time-out.
- Keep track of the student's progress on an individual chart, or classroom chart, or individual 3x5 cards.
- For every 25 stars collected, the student can turn them in to "buy" a treasure from the teacher's prize drawer.



List of Materials Needed:

- Poster board with picture of pencil sharpener
- Pencils

The Challenge

Directions:

- Hang a giant poster board (picture of a pencil sharpener) on the wall for three weeks.
- The class earns pencil shaped cut-outs to put in the pencil sharpener
- When 10 items have been collected, everyone gets to pick out a cool pencil to keep.



List of Materials Needed:

- Shape cut-outs (i.e. heart, triangle, football, etc.) for each student
- Prize items

Totally Terrific Tally marks

Directions:

- Have an auction in your classroom every eight weeks for children to spend their points and earn prizes.
- Prizes may include: books, pencils, jump ropes, etc.
- Each student has a shape cutout with their name on it.
- When you catch them “being good”, place a tally under their name.
- At the end of the eight-week period, add up all of the tally marks. Hold an auction!
- Use points to bid on auction items. This is a great way to reinforce math skills!



List of Materials Needed:

- Sack or bag to hang on the wall
- One piece of paper with a description of the reward written on it, placed in the sack
- Ideas for secret reward:
 - Skip a math assignment
 - Class is the teacher
 - Listen to music during work time
 - Play a game
 - Pick own carpet spot for the week

Secret Sack

Directions:

- At the first of the week, give the class ten points to start.
- Keep track of points on the chalkboard for all to see.
- Erase a point anytime a student interrupts another person.
- At the end of the week, if any points are remaining, then the class gets to have the reward from the secret sack (written on the piece of paper).
- If no points remain, then the class doesn't earn the reward, and they'll have to try again next week.

List of Materials Needed:

- “Mailbox” for each student
- Small white note-pad
- Cherry pink note-pad

Mini-Messages

Directions:

- Each student has a “mailbox.”
- When students have extra time, they can write mini-messages (on the white note-pad paper) to each other and put them in their mailboxes. They LOVE to get these from their peers
- When you see them doing good things, write them a mini-message on the cherry-pink paper with a specific praise. Students LOVE seeing the pink papers in their mailboxes.
- Students get very excited to take the messages home to share with their parents.



List of Materials Needed:

- One class “mascot” or pet

Mascots

Directions:

- Throughout the week, take note of one student who has shown outstanding work or citizenship.
- That one student is then allowed to take the class mascot home for the weekend!
- On Monday, they must report or show what they did with the mascot or pet.



List of Materials Needed:

- Screws
- Latches
- Hooks
- Eyes
- Nuts
- Bolts
- Other small appliances

Tinkering Center

Directions:

- Create a “Tinkering Center.”
- Let kids “tinker” around with the listed materials.
- Students love to see how things are put together.
- This activity encourages kids to be creative and think outside the proverbial box; it helps them to improve interpersonal skills and self-expression.



List of Materials Needed:

- Poster board chart with 121 squares –laminated
- 10 green Popsicle sticks
- 10 pink Popsicle sticks
- dry –erase markers

	A	B	C
1			
2			
3			

Jill	TJ
ani	Cory

Smart board

Directions:

Using a big poster board, make a table that has 121 squares; 11 total squares going across and 11 total squares going down.

Laminate for repeated use.

Label the top row with letter A-J and the far left column with numbers 1-10.

Using the green and pink Popsicle sticks, label the green ones with letters A-J. Label the pink ones with numbers 1-10.

Reward students by letting them write their own name in any square they choose using the dry-eraser markers.

When the chart is full, pull out one green Popsicle stick (letter) and one pink stick (number) at random. Whoever's name is in that square gets to pick a prize from the prize box.

Hint: The more a student's name is written on the chart, the higher the chance they have of getting their name chosen!

Quick List

- Give students raffle tickets and choose tickets at end of week.
- Give out activity coupons to pool, bowling, bounce parks.
- Make Coupons (for example: one free test answer, complete only half the homework assignment, guaranteed "A" on quiz).
- Use playtime only as a special rewards (for example: bubbles, play dough).
- Reward with privileges (for example pajama reading day).
- Walk break from class
- Music while doing homework
- Sitting with friends





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