



# SAMPLE SCHOOL WELLNESS POLICY LANGUAGE: NO FOOD AS A REWARD OR PUNISHMENT

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## Introduction

Children are commonly provided food as a reward for “good” behavior. Often, the food has little to no nutritional value. Using food as a reward can undermine other school nutrition education, encourage overconsumption of food with high sugar and fat, and teach children to eat when they are not hungry. Research shows that healthy children learn better. The Minnesota School Boards Association (“MSBA”) has a model school wellness policy that many school districts use as a guide when developing their individual school wellness policy. While the MSBA model policy has language prohibiting the use of food as a reward or punishment, the Public Health Law Center developed the following, more detailed language to insert into a school wellness policy.

### No Food as Reward or Punishment Sample Language

*Schools will not use food or beverages as rewards for academic performance or good behavior, and will not withhold food or beverages (including food served through school meals) as a punishment. If an individual student’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP) recommends the use of food for behavior modification, a teacher may use food as a reward for that student. But, food shall be used as a last alternative for behavioral modification as part of an IEP, and teachers should minimize classroom use and provide healthy food when available. Teachers shall use physical activity as a reward for academic performance or good behavior, as appropriate.*

## Other Policy Options

In the majority of the school districts around Minnesota, the superintendent has the power to implement and enforce existing school board policy. Therefore, a superintendent can issue protocols/procedures/guidelines to implement the school wellness policy. The above language can be used by the superintendent to implement the overall goals of most school wellness policies. For an example, please refer to our School Health Council Policy Reference Guide, located at [www.publichealthlawcenter.org](http://www.publichealthlawcenter.org).



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