Alternatives to Food as a Reward

Remember the positive power of praise and recognition.
Respect and words of appreciation can go a long way.

"Thanks for helping!"
"You did a great job!"

The options for non-food rewards are limited only by imagination, time, and resources.

Recognition
- Recognize the student’s achievement during school-wide announcements and/or the school’s website
- Create a photo recognition board
- Write a note to the student commending the achievement
- Phone, email, or write a letter to parents/guardians
- Give a certificate of recognition/achievement

Privileges
- Go first
- Choose a class activity
- Help the teacher
- Enjoy extra recess with a friend
- Make deliveries to the office
- Read outdoors
- Have a teacher read a special book to the class
- Do puzzles, word play, or brain teasers
- Take care of the class animal for the day
- Get “free choice” time at the end of the day
- Eat lunch with a teacher/principal
- Take a walk with the teacher/principal
- Select a book from the library
- Sit with a friend

Earn Play Money, Tokens, or Points for
- Gift certificate to a bookstore or sporting goods store
- Sports equipment
- Ticket to an event or movie
- Magazine subscription
- For older children, enter a drawing for donated prizes
- Other reward items (see next column)

Reward Items
- School supplies (Frisbee, hocky-sack, hula hoop, jump rope, ball)
- A plant, or seeds & a pot
- Paperback book
- Trophy, plaque, ribbon
- Sticker
- Magnet
- Stuffed animal
- Temporary tattoo
- Hair accessory
- Bracelet, necklace
- Shoe laces
- Sunglasses
- Cap
- T-shirt
- Cup
- Flashlight
- Trip to treasure box filled with toys/trinkets
- Various low-cost toy/trinkets
- Extra credit

Rewards for a Class
- Allow extra recess
- Provide extra PE, art, music, or reading time
- Dance to music
- Play a game (i.e., reading or phonics board game)
- Eat lunch in a special place
- Go to the lunchroom first
- Read outdoors
- Hold class outdoors
- Teacher reads aloud to the class
- Schedule a field trip
- Show a fun video

References
1. Puhl R and Schwartz MB (2003). If you are good you can have a cookie: The link between childhood food rules and adult eating behaviors. Eating Behaviors, 4:283-293.