

ALLERGY AWARENESS IN THE GREENWICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

September 2016

Dear Parents and Guardians of Greenwich Public School Students:

Food allergies are a growing problem in this country. Researchers estimate that up to 15 million Americans have food allergies affecting 1 in 13 children (under the age of 18 years), roughly two students in every classroom. Food allergies cause over 200,000 emergency room visits each year, nationwide. It is also important to note that nation-wide, 25% of the severe and potentially life-threatening reactions reported in schools happened in cases in which children had no previous diagnosis of food allergies.

The purpose of this letter is to suggest ways in which we can all work together to reduce the risk to students with food allergies. Following these recommendations will make our schools safer for our students with allergies as well as those students who may have a reaction in the future.

First, please teach your children not to share food with other children in school, and please reinforce the district “no eating on the school bus” rule. Below are some additional steps that you can take to reduce exposure to food allergens for our affected students. While these precautions are not mandates, we ask your assistance by following these recommendations. We know that these may be inconvenient but we trust that you understand how serious this is.

- Please try to avoid sending your child to school or afterschool activities and programs with peanuts, tree nuts, peanut butter or foods made with nuts or prepackaged food with a printed warning label (“may contain peanuts/tree nuts”).
- If your child has eaten any nuts prior to going to school in the morning, please make sure that his/her hands are washed with soap and water. Water alone or hand sanitizers are not sufficient to remove nut residue. Also, please have your children brush their teeth after eating peanuts/tree nuts.
- If you do send these foods only as lunch or a snack, please write on the bag, “contains nuts.”
- Special tables in the elementary school cafeterias will be clearly marked as peanut/tree nut-free. Please make sure that your elementary school child knows if his/her lunch contains nuts of any kind so that he/she does not sit at the “peanut free” table.
- Each school will keep boxes of wipes in the cafeteria. While hand washing with soap and water is best, it is not always possible. Please ask your children to use a wipe after eating any nuts or nut products during lunch.
- We will not be doing any classroom projects that involve peanut butter or peanut shells (art projects). Please do not send any projects made with these materials into school with your child.
- Please keep in mind that there are children with other food allergies that can be life threatening as well, such as eggs, dairy, wheat and soy. While almost impossible to remove, if your child has a fellow student in his/her classroom with one of these allergies, please be mindful of this by reading labels carefully and communicating with the teacher about what snacks are brought into the classroom for celebrations, etc.

The complete Procedures are available for you to review on the Greenwich Public Schools district website and can be found under Board of Education Policies and Procedures E-051.8 and E-080.13.

Thank you very much for your understanding and consideration in helping us reduce the risk of allergic reactions occurring in school and keeping all students safe within our district. Additional information can be found on the website <http://www.foodallergy.org/>.

NEW PROCEDURE: SCHOOL BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

FOOD AT ELEMENARY BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS IN THE GREENWICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

September 2016

Dear Parents and Guardians of Greenwich Public School Students:

A child's birthday can be a very special day, at home and at school. Traditionally in elementary schools in Greenwich, parents have helped their children celebrate their birthdays by bringing in cupcakes or other food item for the class. However, given the increasing number of children whose access to food is limited by allergies, dietary restrictions, custom or religious affiliation, food at birthday celebrations has led to exclusion for some students rather than inclusion. In an effort to make a child's birthday an inclusive celebration for his/her classmates, beginning in the 2016-2017 school year, food will not be permitted at any classroom birthday celebrations.

Effective August 31, 2016, there will be no outside food permitted for classroom birthday celebrations. In keeping with the goals of our Wellness and Food Allergy policies, outside foods (cupcakes, candy, etc) are **NOT** permitted for classroom birthday celebrations. Each child's birthday may be recognized in school, but only with non-food items or activities. The school administrators have consulted with the representatives of the PTA, and determined how birthdays will be celebrated in the classroom. North Street School has chosen to have each child celebrate their birthday with the class signing of a birthday t-shirt. A plain white t-shirt will be purchased for each child through the classroom funds collected. On your child's birthday he/she will be given their t-shirt and all of their classmates will be provided time to sign it and sing Happy Birthday. Your child will be able to wear this special shirt for the remainder of the day and take it home as a small gift.

The goal of this decision is not to diminish the joy and excitement of a birthday, but to celebrate in a way that sends the message of inclusion, belonging and respect for all.

I am confident that we can work together to make all our birthday celebrations great fun and make your child's birthday very special.

Sincerely,

Jill Flood
Principal