



2016-17 School Year Change in School Birthday Celebrations

Beginning with the 2016-17 school year, we will no longer be accepting food items at school to celebrate a child's birthday. This decision has been reached after much discussion among staff, administration, parents, and school nurses. At School, teachers will continue to recognize students' birthdays in their own special ways and parents can feel free to send in non-edible items to share with classmates in recognition of their child's birthday. This change holds many benefits. The first of which is reducing the number of sporadic interruptions to our children's school days throughout the year. It's not always easy to accommodate parents' schedules and when they may be available to bring a birthday treat into the class. At times, parents may decide last minute to bring in a birthday treat or, bring in a treat that isn't really conducive to handing out quickly or eating quickly and these occurrences also disrupt the school day for our students. Beginning next year, if parents choose to send in a non-food item such as stickers, pencils, bubbles, etc. for their child to share with classmates in recognition of their birthday, it can simply be sent in a backpack and the teacher can use a set time during the day to have the child share it. The second benefit we anticipate is establishing a more inclusive feeling in classrooms. We are experiencing an increase in food related disabilities such as allergies, diabetes, Celiac, and gluten intolerance, making it very difficult to plan for these students in a way that feels inclusive. Teachers love to give each child special attention on their birthday and that will certainly continue – we believe that special attention is the most important part of the experience for each child and the change in treat will not impact that experience. Most students have their true birthday celebration take place outside of school and that is the most appropriate time for you to plan your child's favorite food items to share.

Related to this change in non-food items only for birthdays at school, we have worked with PTO to better plan for our class holiday parties to have menus that are inclusive of all students without needing to plan alternative items. Teachers will facilitate contact between the class PTO representatives responsible for planning the holiday celebrations and the parents of students in the class who have any known food allergy, intolerance or other related medical condition. Those parents will be invited to participate in the planning of the menu for the class party.

We hope that all families are able to see that the spirit of these changes is to both preserve student recognition on their special day, their birthday, and preserve our inclusive environment and academic schedule. We appreciate everyone's support and cooperation in making this change at our school for next year.