



November 23, 2009

Dear Parents/Guardians,

RE: Food rules for classroom parties and fundraising

Per federal law the Lompoc Unified School District has a wellness policy in place. Its purpose is to promote and support a culture of health and fitness in the district. All districts that have a National School Meal Program must have a wellness policy in place. This policy is administered by the California Department of Education to make sure that their regulations regarding competitive food sales and Senate Bills 12 and 965 are being followed.

Although the Wellness Policy has been in place since June 2006, we have discovered that guidelines written into the policy are not entirely being followed. In addition, the County Health Department has guidelines based on Senate Bill 241 which prevent us from serving and/or selling foods to students for health safety reasons. In an effort to help safeguard the health and wellness of the district's students, the district has decided to make a concerted effort to uphold the district Wellness Policy and comply with County Health Department guidelines.

The following is from the Wellness Policy regarding foods served at classroom parties:

School Staff shall encourage parents/guardians or other volunteers to support the district nutrition education program by considering nutritional quality when selecting any snacks...for occasional class parties and by limiting foods or beverages that do not meet nutritional standards to no more than one food or beverage per party. Class parties or celebrations shall be held after the lunch period when possible. (BP5030, page 3, paragraph 4)

The following is from the County Health Department regulation regarding temporary food events:

Any food that is sold or given away to the public (which includes schools) needs to go through the County Health Department permitting process. The only items that are allowed are nonpotentially hazardous beverages and baked goods such as: packaged chips, candy, bottled water or other beverages, juice and whole fruits (as per Mike Schmaeling, Senior Environmental Health Specialist).

These rules may seem strict but the food sanitation rules that every Santa Barbara County food establishment must follow are strict. There is a course that every food handler must take and pass in order for a food establishment to be permitted to provide food to the public. The general public does not know the food sanitation rules that are required to keep food safe. Serving potentially hazardous foods brought from home or restaurants and served by non certified food handlers can place our students at risk for a foodborne illness.

Following is a guideline that will help you decide what food items are appropriate to send to a classroom party:

- Provide a variety of foods for school parties or events, and offer no more than ONE of these items which are not considered to be very healthy because they are high in calories but have little nutritional value: desserts, cookies, candy, pastries, ice cream, regular chips
- Healthier Grain Choices *(whole grains recommended): baked chips, pretzels, animal crackers, graham crackers, reduced-fat Chex Mix, whole wheat bagels, whole grain muffins, Nestle 100 Calorie Snack Packs
- Healthier Dairy Products: Yogurt (individually packaged), low-fat string cheese
- Fresh Produce: Baby carrots (individually wrapped), fresh whole fruit (not cut up), cut up apples (individually wrapped)
- Beverages: bottled water (with no added sweeteners), 100% fruit juices and milk
- Other Ideas: Astro Pops, Fudge Pops, Twin Pops, canned fruit (individually packaged), corn nuts or sunflower seeds

**Whole grains can play an important role in reducing the risk of chronic disease. Whole grains contain health-promoting substances including vitamins, minerals, phytonutrients and fiber. Yet, with all of their benefits, 9 out of 10 Americans do not get the recommended 3 servings of whole grains every day.*

Safety Tips: Do not bring cooked items from home or restaurants; do not prepare foods on site; refrigerate foods that need to be cold; wash hands and food contact surfaces; do not serve any nuts or foods that contain nuts as many children are highly allergic to them; beware of choking hazards when children are very young.

Note: You may obtain the following resources on the district's web page under Wellness Committee (at www.lusd.org):

- *Board Policy #5030*
- *Administrative Regulation #5030*
- *Healthy Food Guide for School Activities and Other Special Occasions*
- *Creative & Fun Fundraising, Alternatives to Selling Candy for Schools, Sports and Clubs*

We thank you for your understanding and for your help to help us stay on track with our mission to promote lifelong healthy eating behaviors for children in our district. For years in our schools and at home we have participated in behaviors, such as using food to celebrate EVERYTHING and using food as a reward. These behaviors have contributed to the obesity problem in children. If you would like to learn more about how to be part of the solution rather than the problem, we invite you to read the booklet mentioned above "*Healthy Food Guide for School Activities and Other Special Occasions*".

Sincerely,

Kathy Bertelsen, RD
Chair, Lompoc USD Wellness Committee