

## **ALLERGY AWARENESS IN THE GREENWICH PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

September 2023

Dear Parents and Guardians of Greenwich Public School Students:

Greenwich Public Schools continue to reflect the increasing diversity in our community, which includes differences in language, cultural backgrounds, socio-economic status, race, religion, ability and disability. Our mission is to prepare and graduate students who are academically competent as well as compassionate and open to engage and respect others. We must ensure a welcoming and safe environment, not just because this is the right thing to do, but also because a diverse classroom creates the most powerful and effective learning environment. This message highlights a particular group of students who have life threatening food allergies. It is our expectation that these students receive the same consideration given to any individual even though their disability poses challenges in school.

Health and safety have always been top priorities for the Greenwich Public Schools and we take food allergies very seriously. In any of our schools there may be several students who have severe allergies to specific foods, which are potentially life threatening. These students cannot eat, and sometimes not even touch, foods or food products containing the allergen that causes them to react.

The purpose of this letter is to reiterate the 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.

Below are some 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 teach your children not to share food with other children in school and please reinforce the district “no eating on the school bus” rule.
- 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.
- 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 and in classrooms (when students are required to eat in their classrooms) 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 and sanitizer in the cafeteria and classroom. 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 school.
- For preschool and elementary school students: in keeping with the goals of our Wellness and Food Allergy policies, outside foods (cupcakes, candy, etc.) are **NOT** permitted for classroom birthday celebrations. The birthday celebration procedures will be shared with you by your school and PTA class parent.

The current Procedures are available for you to review on the [GPS District Website](#) and can be found under Board of Education Policies and Procedures [5141.25](#).

Finally, the Office of Food Services is an active and concerned partner in making our lunchrooms safe. A more “user-friendly” web site has been developed where all food labels are found as well as any substitutions that may be made should a food item normally served on a particular day not be available.

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>. See also [www.snacksafely.com](http://www.snacksafely.com) for a list of safe snacks.