

St. Johns County School District

Protocol and Guidelines for Allergy-Aware Celebrations, Rewards, and Food Activities

Purpose

The St. Johns County School District is committed to providing a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students, including those with food allergies and medically documented dietary restrictions. To reduce the risk of allergic reactions and promote student wellness, schools shall limit the use of food for rewards, incentives, and celebrations while encouraging non-food alternatives.

Guidelines for Non-Food Rewards and Recognition

Schools and staff members are encouraged to use non-food rewards and incentives whenever possible. Examples include:

- Extra recess or activity time
- Positive notes
- Certificates or recognition awards
- Classroom privileges
- Stickers, pencils, bookmarks, and school supplies
- Leadership opportunities
- Special seating or "student of the day" recognition
- Participation in special activities

Food or candy shall not be routinely used as a reward for academic performance, behavior, attendance, or participation.

Guidelines and Protocols for Student Birthdays and Classroom Celebrations

To support the health and safety of all students:

1. Non-food celebrations are strongly encouraged for birthdays, holidays, and special events.
2. Examples of acceptable non-food birthday recognition include:
 - Birthday books donated to the classroom
 - Stickers, pencils, or other small trinkets
 - Special recognition during morning announcements
 - Classroom activities or games

- Certificates or birthday crowns
- 3. When food is proposed for a classroom celebration, all applicable requirements outlined in these protocols and guidelines must be followed.

Protocols for Classroom Food Activities, Parent Notification, and Permission

Prior to any classroom event, celebration, curriculum activity, or reward involving food:

1. Teachers must provide parents/guardians with at least 2 weeks advance notice through ParentSquare or another district-approved communication platform.
2. The notice must identify the exact food items to be offered, including:
 - Exact Food being provided
 - Brand name (when applicable)
 - Date and reason for the activity
3. All food provided in the classroom must be commercially prepared and store-bought. Homemade foods, foods prepared in private residences, and foods without original packaging are not permitted.
4. All food items must remain in their original packaging and include a nutrition facts label and ingredient list.
5. Parents/guardians must complete the district-approved permission form indicating whether their child is authorized to participate in the food activity.
6. Only students with a signed parent/guardian permission response authorizing participation in the specific food activity may consume the foods provided.
7. Permission granted for one activity does not constitute permission for future activities. Separate notification and permission shall be required whenever different food items are offered.
8. Parents must provide an approved alternate food item for their child if they do not give their child permission to participate in the planned classroom food activity.

Protection of Students with Food Allergies: Protocols and Guidelines

1. Staff shall follow all student health plans, Section 504 plans, Individualized Healthcare Plans (IHPs), and emergency action plans related to food allergies.
2. Classroom teachers shall review allergy information and collaborate with the school nurse to ensure student safety during classroom events.

3. The district reserves the right to prohibit food activities in classrooms where student safety could be compromised.

Staff Responsibilities: Protocols and Guidelines

- Principals shall ensure that all appropriate staff members are informed of and adhere to these protocols and guidelines.
- All classroom parties, celebrations, and special events must receive prior approval from the Principal before any plans are finalized or communicated to students and families.
- Teachers are responsible for obtaining required parent permission at least 2 weeks prior to serving food/treats in the classroom.
- School nurses shall provide guidance regarding student allergy management and food safety concerns.
- Parents are encouraged to notify the school of any food allergies or dietary restrictions and keep emergency medical information current.

Statement of Purpose

The St. Johns County School District encourages schools, staff, and families to create celebrations and recognition activities that do not rely on food. When food is included in classroom celebrations or activities, parent/guardian notification, disclosure of the specific foods to be served, and documented parent/guardian permission are required to promote student health, support informed family decision-making, and help protect students with food allergies and other medically necessary dietary restrictions. These protocols and guidelines are intended to foster safe, inclusive classroom environments while minimizing the risk of food-related adverse reactions.