

August 24, 2007

Dear Dixie Elementary Parents,

You may or may not know that there are some children at Dixie School who have severe food allergies to peanuts and nuts. There have been some questions about how our Dixie Learning Community addresses this issue. I have a strong philosophy that we embrace all of our diversity at Dixie Elementary as a supportive and nurturing COMMUNITY. I know that all of you would agree that this inclusive approach is the appropriate and ideal model for our children as we continue to learn and grow together. At the beginning of the school year, we will be spending time educating our children about food allergies and the associated risks.

Our focus is on raising awareness and reducing risk. We must do all we can to provide students with unique needs a safe learning environment. For some children with a severe food allergy, strict avoidance is the only way to prevent a severe allergic reaction that can be life threatening. In an effort to allow those students to participate fully in all class and school activities, we ask that you and your students are fully aware of the serious health implications and help us to adhere to our plan for addressing the concerns. We are asking that all families and students are aware of the content of the food that they bring to school each day. Every time you choose NOT to send in nut containing products, you are contributing to keeping the allergic children safe. We have some young students in the primary grades that have severe nut allergies and these students are at an age and developmental stage where they need additional adult support, supervision and awareness in regard to keeping them in a safe and healthy environment.

We will work together to keep our school environment clean and healthy for ALL students. We will be providing a nut-free snack/lunch table for all K-5 students in their lunch area. Children will be able to sit at the nut-free table providing they do not have any nut containing food in their snack/lunches. All of our staff and supervision people will be trained to monitor snack/lunches of children sitting at the nut-free table. We will also continue the practice of washing all snack/lunch tables with soap and warm water by the custodian each morning.

In addition to a nut-free table, we will be reducing the potential exposure to nut containing foods even further by requiring hand-washing. All students will be washing hands with soap and water upon entering the classroom each day; and after eating snacks and lunch, student will use moist hand wipes (provided by the school) to clean their hands.

Foods that are brought in for special events, birthday or celebration treats should be nut-free, and contain a complete ingredient declaration. Foods sent in without labels may not be consumed in the classroom. We will be providing a more extensive list of acceptable food treats for all parents the first week of school. A regular reminder will be made from the school to all families who wish to bring a shared food item; please check in with your teacher to coordinate any of these types of celebrations.

Our school nurse and teachers will work together with all families and students to create a nurturing, supportive and safe learning environment at Dixie Elementary School. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions, concerns or comments. Looking forward to a wonderful year of learning, playing and growing together!

-Patty

Patricia L. Flynn
Principal