

COMMACK UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Indian Hollow Primary School - North Ridge Primary School - Rolling Hills Primary School
Wood Park Primary School - Mandracchia/Sawmill Intermediate School - Burr Intermediate School

September 1, 2023

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Increasingly, we have been made aware of the number of children in our schools who have food allergies. Allergies occur when the body interprets a substance as being harmful and then releases a chemical called histamine to protect itself. This allergic reaction can be mild (gastro-intestinal discomfort; itchy eyes, nose, mouth, skin) to severe or life - threatening (respiratory, cardiac). The level of sensitivity to a substance also varies. Some people will only have a reaction if they ingest the food while others can have a serious reaction by touching or smelling/breathing in that food.

Foods that most commonly cause allergic symptoms in children are peanuts, tree nuts, milk, eggs, soy, fish/shellfish and wheat.

As you know, the Commack School District has made a strong commitment to ensuring the physical health and safety of all our students as well as to the emotional needs of our students. To that end, we have, as a district instituted procedures and guidelines relative to the presence of food in our classrooms. We have summarized below some of the most significant protocols in this area. **ALL** elementary schools in the Commack School District are adhering to these protocols throughout the 2023-2024 school year.

NOTE: The use of the term “severe allergy/allergies” is used throughout this letter. For purposes of this letter, severe is defined as any allergy that is life threatening - and for which the student has been prescribed Epinephrine.

Parent Responsibilities

- It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian of the student to notify the school nurse by the first day of school of any allergies that require accommodations within the school environment. *Parents are strongly encouraged to notify the district of such needs as far in advance (i.e. spring preceding start of new school year) as possible.*
 - Notification must include current (within one year) documentation from the treating physician clearly stating:
 - all food or other items to which the individual is allergic
 - allergy levels
 - whether Epinephrine is prescribed and the dates such treatment has been required in the past
 - **It is the parent’s responsibility to supply the school with the student’s Epinephrine (two separate injectors/doses are required for each student).**

School Responsibilities

- It is the responsibility of the school to notify the staff, by the first day of school * of any student who has severe allergies and the protocols and procedures to maintain a safe school environment for that student.

** In the event that the parent has not notified the school prior to the first day or that the student begins school after the first day, the school will notify the staff within twenty-four (24) hours of receiving such notification.*

- The school will provide appropriate training for staff members.
- Emergency kits will be provided for personnel.
- The school will provide educational programs for students.
- The school has instituted protocols to better ensure the safety of all students and staff members relative to allergies.
 - Any child who has been identified by the parent as having a **severe** food allergy will be assigned to a Safe Food location in the lunchroom.

Practices and Protocols

Food in Schools

- Food items and/or food containers are not to be used in any classrooms for instructional purposes. This includes the use of food items as manipulatives and/or rewards*. This also includes the making/baking/creating of food items as part of lessons and units of study unless in a FACS class or Functional Academics class. Teachers are to use other instructional materials and activities to help motivate students.

**This excludes specific cases in which food items as primary reinforcers are approved elements of a student's BIP.*

- If a special birthday snack is sent in from home, it is to be a prepackaged food item with the ingredients clearly labeled. This practice is to be followed in **ALL classrooms within the school district, whether or not a student with a food allergy is currently assigned to that class.**
 - Parents/Guardians of students with food allergies are responsible for providing the classroom teacher with a list of "safe" prepackaged food items for the student by the first day of school. *If the birthday prepackaged food is on the approved list provided by parents, the student may have that snack.*
 - Parents/Guardians are responsible to maintain a collection of "safe food snacks" in the event that the celebration snack is not something the student can eat.
 - A list of birthday celebration days is to be provided to all parents in the classroom within the first month of school. This will allow students with dietary issues to bring their own snack from home on the identified day.

Signage

- Posters relative to signs of anaphylaxis; first aid for anaphylaxis and use of Epinephrine will be posted throughout the schools.

- Any elementary classroom to which a student with a severe food allergy is assigned will be identified and no outside activities that include the use or making of food will be allowed in that classroom. A sign proclaiming that room as a “Safe Food Zone”* will be posted. Un-safe foods will be listed. The signs will be consistent throughout the district.

****The use of the Safe Food Zone signs is meant to serve as another means to limit the presence of food allergens in specific areas in the schools. It should in no way be interpreted as assurance that there are no such allergens present. The Commack School District cannot provide a guarantee that they are not or have never been present.***

Lunch Rooms/Cafeterias

- A Safe Food Location will be provided for each lunch period.
 - Any child who has been identified by the parent as having a **severe** food allergy will be assigned to the Safe Food Location.
- Specific cleaning protocols will be followed for the location.
- A lunch monitor will supervise that location.

A full report (***“Recommendations for Managing Students’ and Staff Members’ Environmental Needs Relative to Allergies Within the Commack School District Learning Environments”***) is available on the Commack Website. If you wish to learn more about this subject, please refer to that document which is detailed and specific.

Questions about your school’s procedures should be directed to the building principal.

Concerns about your own child’s environmental needs should be directed to your school nurse.

It is our goal to ensure that each student is able to participate fully in our educational programs in the safest possible environment. We appreciate the efforts of all of our families to support us in this endeavor.

Regards,

*Mr. Brian Simpson
Ms. Katherine Rihm
Ms. Jessica Santarpia*

*Ms. Michelle Collison
Ms. Michelle Tancredi-Zott
Mr. Daniel Ciccone*

Mr. Timothy Russo, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment