



Five Reasons Auburn Celebrates Birthdays *Without Food*


We Promote Healthy Minds and Healthy Bodies at Auburn

 We are working to promote healthy minds and healthy bodies at Auburn. The research is clear - healthy kids learn better. To provide the best possible learning environment for children, schools must provide an environment that supports healthy behaviors. According to the Auburn Enlarged City School District Wellness Policy, students are to receive nutrition education that teaches the skills and attitudes they need to adopt healthy eating behaviors. The policy also states that the school district encourages parents, teachers, school administrators, support staff, and community members to serve as role models in practicing healthy eating and being physically active, both in school and at home. Decreasing the availability of "empty calorie" foods, foods that are high in fat, sugar and salt with little nutritional value (the type typically brought in for birthday celebrations), is just one strategy schools can use to promote wellness.


Instructional Time will be Preserved

 Less instructional time will be lost with this new policy. In the past, anywhere between 15 - 30 minutes of class time was used for each birthday party. At the conclusion of the party, very often the birthday child would then walk around the building offering the extra treats to teachers, usually accompanied by a friend or two. This resulted in several disruptions to other classes, and more instructional time lost for the birthday child and his/her friends. Auburn will still celebrate birthdays, however it will be done in a way that preserves as much instructional time as possible.


Every Child's Birthday will be Special

 Every child's birthday will be celebrated. There are a few children in each of our classrooms that do not celebrate their birthday in school with treats brought in from home. This happens for a variety of reasons, some of which are unknown to us. We do know that some parents cannot afford to send in treats, some do not have transportation, and some cannot afford to take time off from work. With this new policy, no student will be excluded.

Fewer Disruptions to the School as a Whole

 Several steps are currently taken when food is brought into the school. First of all, one of the secretaries checks the class list to see if there is an allergy or food-related health issue. If there is, the food is sent to the nurse's office. The nurse then needs to look up the allergies in the class, and carefully read the ingredient label to make sure it is safe. This is a lot of responsibility for one person. If the food is not safe, the family is called. This rarely has a positive outcome and frequently the principal must now be involved. If the food is safe, the food is returned to the office where the secretary calls the classroom teacher. Additional custodial time is also often needed after most classroom celebrations. With this new policy, the nurse will not be interrupted on a consistent basis to check food labels and can instead use her time to attend to more important issues.

All Students will be Safe

 Safety is a priority at Auburn. With this new policy, students with food allergies, diabetes, or other food-related health issues will be safer, and will stop feeling excluded as they have on several occasions in the past. Even though teachers and parents took care to provide a safe snack for these children, these children do not enjoy being singled out 15 - 20 times per year. In addition, it could not be guaranteed that treats were sanitary. We have witnessed cupcakes being dropped on the way into school and being placed back on the tray, fingerprints and hair on cupcakes, students sneezing on an open container of cookies, etc. When it comes to students with food allergies, it is not just a matter of breaking out with hives, sneezing, and having a runny nose. Lives may be endangered. Even in classrooms where there was a strict policy in place regarding the types of food that could be brought into the classroom, not everyone followed the policy. Research has shown that 1/3 of students who have an allergic reaction at school did not previously know they had a life-threatening allergy.

In Auburn learning is the goal. We strive to keep every child happy, healthy, and safe to help achieve that goal.