

**Ballston Spa Central School District**  
70 Malta Avenue  
Ballston Spa, NY 12020

August 2009

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Over the past few years, the Board of Education, in collaboration with families, students, staff and the Ballston Spa community, has adopted the ***“Ballston Spa Central School District Wellness Policy”***. Our district policy aims to promote and protect the students’ well-being and ability to learn by supporting healthy habits of eating and exercise. The policy addresses eight areas of health and wellness for the school community. We have implemented several changes in the way that we provide snacks to students, raise funds and the options offered in the school cafeterias and at school celebrations.

Both the federal and state governments have been addressing the issue with mandates, which we must incorporate into the schools. The federal policy requires that each school district in the National School Lunch Program adopt a plan for health and wellness. Our state leaders also mandated comprehensive guidelines relating to food in the schools via a “Healthy Schools Act”. All of this has been in reaction to the increase in childhood obesity and unhealthy eating that have increased dramatically, while students continue to exercise less.

As part of that effort, the district has been encouraging the use of non-food items for classroom and school celebrations (e.g. stickers, pencils, cards, games, books, etc.). There are ideas and resources for how to make changes on the back of this letter. Additional efforts are underway to continue to modify the food offered in the cafeterias, available in vending machines and concession stands, and the food served at after school / evening events.

In addition, we are continuing to ask that food or drinks brought into the school for birthday or classroom parties, celebrations or snack times meet healthy guidelines (e.g. fruits and vegetables). We must ask that all foods be bought from a store and in packages with the label attached, in support of efforts to protect children who may be allergic to certain foods. School district staff members continue to develop more specific alternative plans within each building and parents will be asked to continue to assist with the transition to making our schools a healthy environment for our children.

Please help us move forward, showing our children how to make lifestyle changes, as well as not using food as a reward or a punishment. There are many ways to celebrate occasions with healthy food – or even no food at all. Together we can make a difference. Thank you for your support and please discuss any concerns or questions with the building principal or health care professionals.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Sharon D’Agostino  
Principal, Malta Avenue School

Joseph P. Dragone, PhD  
Superintendent of Schools

**Some ideas for non-food celebrations at elementary schools and home:**

- Stickers, pencils, erasers, water bottles, party hats, notepads, stamps, sports cards, shoe laces, key chains, flashlights, chalk, bean bags, jump ropes, bracelets, rings, cups, crazy straws, magnets, rubber balls, finger puppets, puzzles, playing cards, stretchy animals, bubbles, a plant or seeds and a pot for growing a plant.
- Books, bookmarks, child reads favorite book to classmates, donate a book to classroom/library in his/her honor, drawing or coloring activity.
- Show-n-tell, fun physical activity break, special party or activity game, crafts. Birthday child gets to wear a special birthday hat, sticker and sash for the day.

**Some ideas for healthy food celebrations at elementary school and home:**

- Drinks: low-fat milk, 100% juice, water, flavored water (no sugar) or 100% fruit juice bars
- Fruit: fresh or individual bowls, fruit salad, fruit smoothies, dried fruit (raisins, cranberries, apricots, banana chips)
- Vegetables: celery, carrot sticks, cherry tomatoes, salads, veggie platters
- Dips: fruit, low-fat salad dressing, low fat whipped topping, salsa, bean dip, hummus
- Cheeses: low-fat string cheese, cubed cheese, low-fat cream cheese
- Low-fat or light yogurts & puddings, squeezable yogurt, yogurt smoothies, yogurt parfaits, banana & yogurt splits
- Baked chips, popcorn without added butter, pretzels, low-fat tortilla chips
- Pizza with low-fat cheese or vegetable topping, English muffin pizza
- Rice cakes, bread sticks, bagels
- Angel food cake, applesauce cake
- Whole-grain crackers, graham crackers
- Granola bars & multigrain cereal bars (low-fat)
- Oatmeal raisin cookies, fig bars, animal cookies, vanilla wafers
- Fruit or grain muffins or breads, waffles or pancakes with fruit topping
- Ham, cheese or turkey sandwiches or wraps with low-fat spreads

Everyone should follow the nutritional requirements/standards outlined in the federal policies (available on our website at: [http://www.bsccd.org/district info/wellness policy and info.htm](http://www.bsccd.org/district%20info/wellness%20policy%20and%20info.htm) when food is brought into school).

**Some resources for more information:**

Action for Healthy Kids [www.actionforhealthykids.org](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org)

Alternatives to Using Food as a Reward, Michigan State University Extension  
[www.tn.fcs.msue.msu.edu/foodrewards.pdf](http://www.tn.fcs.msue.msu.edu/foodrewards.pdf)

Center for Disease Control [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

USDA/Team Nutrition <http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn/>

Complete information and additional references are available in the district policy, online at:  
[http://www.bsccd.org/pdf\\_files/bs\\_wellness\\_policy.pdf](http://www.bsccd.org/pdf_files/bs_wellness_policy.pdf)