



Food Allergy Safe School Information for Celebrations

The Mount Mansfield Unified Union School District strives to ensure the health and safety of all our students. MMUUSD elementary and middle schools are “Food Allergy Aware/ Safe Schools” and have adopted the model of “food-free” birthday celebrations. This will allow us to work towards our goal of creating a safe and healthy environment for all of our students and in particular, our students with life-threatening allergies.

The CDC states that about 8%, or 1 in every 13 students, is affected by a life-threatening food allergy, and about 40% of those are allergic to multiple foods. CDC studies also indicate that the incidence of food allergies has been steadily increasing over the years. Strict avoidance of the allergen and reducing possible exposure are the best ways to prevent a life-threatening reaction.

In addition to the safety measures we are already using in our schools, such as allergen-free food options at snack and lunch, no food sharing, frequent handwashing, and table cleaning, the district is adopting a “food-free” birthday celebration model. Not only will this help keep our students with life-threatening allergies safe, but we also believe that this approach will help students develop healthy habits by understanding that there are many ways to celebrate special events, including birthdays, without food. **We are asking that families not send in food for birthday celebrations. We still want to celebrate birthdays but without food.** Some ideas might include sending in a craft for the whole class to do together, sending in fun napkins and party hats for the class to use during snack time, or sending in a favorite book for the teacher to read at storytime. Teachers can also provide ideas like having extra recess time, doing a fun activity your child loves, or having the class make a special card that all students sign.

Ask your child how they would like to celebrate their birthday at school (without food) and discuss it with their classroom teacher in advance. Be creative and come up with your own ideas, or ask your school nurse - we have lots of resources!

Classroom celebrations and whole school celebrations with food may occur during the school year. The classroom teacher, school administration, or the parent-teacher organization will provide the food for these celebrations. The provided food will be allergy-safe. Families will be notified in advance of any food being served for celebrations. **Please do not send in homemade baked goods for classroom celebrations.**

Thank you for sharing our commitment to a safe and healthy school environment for everyone.