

Dear Normandale Parents and Students,

Many of you are likely aware that several national studies have recently reported significant concerns with childhood obesity and the development of poor health habits. Our Normandale physical education specialists consistently promote healthy lifestyles during their classes with students here at school. The Edina Public Schools Health Services Committee also takes an active role helping us to establish an environment that is favorable to educating and experiencing healthy living. In addition, our classroom teaching staff feels compelled to work with students, parents and each other to take further proactive action in support of healthy lifestyle choices. With all the emphasis being placed on not leaving any child behind intellectually, we believe it's also important to emphasize the physical and emotional well being of our children. We have no doubt that a healthy body and healthy mind go hand in hand.

One way to address this important aspect of our children's development is through the establishment of healthy guidelines for what typically has been referred to as "snack time" in our classrooms. At the same time we are hoping to promote the health of our staff as well. Our entire staff discussed the concept of snack time on multiple occasions in recent years and established these guidelines in 2005. We are proud of the fact that our foresight on the importance of this issue can now be seen in many recommendations and guidelines from national, state and local organizations and officials.

The first conclusion we arrived at was the need to change the name from *snack time* to *health break*, hoping to encourage, influence and educate everyone that the time devoted to this activity is important to everyone's welfare. Our staff agrees that this small amount of time is invaluable to the emotional and social development of individuals as well as the collective good of the classroom community. We also observed in previous years that the food items brought in did not always support good health. Hence, our second conclusion that school-wide guidelines for students and staff during the health break are not only advisable but necessary.

It is our hope that families will continue to emphasize the importance of eating both a balanced breakfast, lunch and dinner meal. We will likewise encourage our staff members to do so as well. **During the daily health break our guidelines will be that food items be selected from the fruit, vegetable and dairy product groups.** The choices available in the fruit, vegetable and dairy product groups should allow enough variety and selection that students and staff not feel too limited. We hope individuals will take advantage of the opportunity to enjoy familiar favorites, but also explore and experience new tastes from these food groups .

The guidelines of fruit, vegetables and dairy products are not meant to suggest that other food items are inherently bad or unhealthy. However, the food group items on our list of approved choices received consensus from our staff as items that are easily purchased, packed, eaten and have almost universal acceptance as nutritionally valued. It was decided after much discussion not to include crackers, granola bars, bagels, nuts, etc. in part because of the mess they often leave and the fact that students typically eat enough of these items at other times of the day. Less mess also contributes positively to a reduction in pest problems that periodically occur in our building. We trust that students and staff members will fulfill the recommended servings of other nutritional food items during mealtimes or at other times outside the school day. Consensus was also reached that the only beverage available during this time should be water.

We do understand that exceptions may need to be made for individual students who have an existing medical condition requiring a particular diet. Please contact your child's teacher if your child **must** bring something other than fruit, vegetables or dairy products to eat during the health break.

A list is attached providing you with some inspiration and ideas for what to bring if you feel unclear about what to send. It is likely that there are actually fruits, vegetables and dairy products that some of us aren't acquainted with that may actually taste good in addition to being good for us. Since instituting these guidelines, we've had children bringing pomegranates, passion fruit, mangoes, snap peas, kohlrabi and other interesting food items that were never brought in years gone by.

Normandale was the first school in Edina to formally institute these changes which are now also being put in place at other Edina schools. Staff members, parents and students have been enthusiastic and supportive of these guidelines. Thank you for supporting our efforts to encourage a healthy workplace for our staff and a healthy learning environment for our students.