



**Whitman-Hanson  
Regional School District**

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT



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Dear Parent or Guardian:

The *Act Relative to School Nutrition*, signed into law on July 30, 2010, requires the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to establish standards for competitive foods and beverages sold or provided in public schools during the school day. Beginning with this school year, school districts are required to comply with these standards.

As part of the effort to improve children's health in Massachusetts, the State Legislature asked the Massachusetts Departments of Public Health and Elementary and Secondary Education to develop nutrition standards for our public schools. We would like to tell you about how these standards will be applied in your child's school beginning in the 2012-2013 school year. The nutrition standards support our goals for student health and academic achievement by concentrating on serving nutrient-rich, minimally processed foods, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein and low-fat dairy products. The new standards were developed by health and education experts using the Institute of Medicine's *Nutrition Standards for Food in School and the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010* and are focused on what are called "competitive" foods and drinks sold or provided in public schools during the school day. The standards do not apply to school meals programs, which follow USDA national guidelines. Competitive foods and drinks are those provided in:

- School cafeteria à la carte items (sold separately from school meals)
- Vending machines
- School stores and snack bars

The standards apply to items sold or provided from 30 minutes before the beginning of the school day until 30 minutes after the school day ends. However, foods and drinks sold in vending machines must meet the standards at all times. Attached please find an "At-a-Glance" summary of the standards.

These standards are part of a collaborative initiative to reduce childhood obesity and to prevent its complications in childhood and later adulthood. Additionally, the increasing number of students presenting with food allergies is also a concern. According to the Food Allergy Network, it is estimated that 8% of all children suffer from food allergies. This means that 1 in 13 children are affected. About 90% of all food allergies in children are caused by peanuts, milk, wheat, eggs, soy, almonds, pecans, walnuts, fish and shellfish. Peanuts are responsible for 50% of the total food allergies that children have and produce the most severe reactions. Highly allergic individuals can experience a reaction to even trace amounts of the known food allergen. In a severe reaction, the body's immune system responds abnormally to the protein in a particular food. This is known as anaphylactic shock. This type of response is a life threatening condition that requires immediate emergency medical intervention.

In compliance with state and federal guidelines, the District's Wellness Policy, and the increased number of students with food allergies, the decision has been made not to have any food (i.e. cupcakes, cookies, candy) brought into the school from home for the purpose of celebrating birthdays, holidays, or special

events. This decision relates to the sharing of food in groups or classrooms and does not apply to individual snacks or lunches brought from home. For nutritional and safety reasons, we cannot make exceptions to this decision. While this decision impacts birthday and holiday celebrations at the elementary level, the nutrition standards and allergy concerns affect all of our students in the district.

We invite you to join us in working with other parents, teachers, nutrition services, school staff and the community through our Wellness Advisory Committee to put the new standards in place in our schools. We welcome your ideas and support in creating a healthier school environment for our students.

The Whitman-Hanson Regional School District wants to provide a healthy school environment for all students. That means offering nourishing food and drink choices that will promote students' growth and development, learning, and healthy life-long eating habits.

Please feel free to call your child's principal with any questions and ideas you may have. More information about children's wellness and nutrition is available at [www.mass.gov/massinmotion](http://www.mass.gov/massinmotion).

Sincerely,



Ruth C. Gilbert-Whitner, Ed.D.

Superintendent of Schools

Enc. Massachusetts Competitive Foods & Beverages Nutrition Standards "At a Glance"

Cc: Principals  
School Nurses  
Deborah Seger, Director of Food Services

## Massachusetts Competitive Foods and Beverages Nutrition Standards “At-a-Glance”

Category	Standards	Category	Standards
<b>Juice</b>	100% fruit and vegetable juice, with no added sugar.	<b>Saturated Fat</b>	Foods should have 10% or less of their total calories from saturated fat.
<b>Juice – Portion Size</b>	4-ounce servings or less.	<b>Trans Fat</b>	All foods should be trans fat-free.
<b>Milk*</b>	Low-fat (1% or less) and fat-free milk.	<b>Fat Exemptions</b>	1-ounce servings of nuts, nut butters, seeds, and reduced-fat cheese are exempt from the fat standards.
<b>Milk – Portion Size*</b>	8-ounce servings or less.	<b>Sugar</b>	Foods should have 35% or less of their total calories from sugar.
<b>Milk – Added Sugar*</b>	Flavored milk with no more than 22 grams total sugar per 8 ounces.	<b>Sugar Exemptions</b>	100% fruit with no added sugar, and low-fat or non-fat yogurt (including drinkable yogurt) with no more than 30 grams of sugar per 8-ounce serving, are exempt from the sugar standard.
<b>Water</b>	May contain natural flavorings and/or carbonation.  Should not contain added sugars, sweeteners or artificial sweeteners.	<b>Sodium</b>	Foods should have 200mg sodium or less per item.  À la carte entrées should have a maximum of 480 mg of sodium per item.
<b>Beverages with Added Sugar or Sweeteners</b>	Any beverages with added sugar or sweeteners not already addressed will be phased out by <b>August 1, 2013</b> . Flavored milk or milk substitutes that have the same amount or less sugar than plain, fat-free or low-fat milk are allowed.	<b>Grains</b>	All breads or grain-based products should be whole grain (whole grain should be listed first in the ingredient statement). These include crackers, granola bars, chips, bakery items, pasta, rice, etc.
<b>Other Beverages</b> (Soda, sports drinks, teas, waters, etc.)	Only juice, milk, milk substitutes and water should be sold or provided.	<b>Caffeine</b>	Trace amounts of naturally occurring caffeine (such as that found in chocolate) are allowed as long as the item complies with the rest of the nutrition standards.
<b>Calories</b>	Foods should be 200 calories or less per item.  À la carte entrées should not exceed the calorie count of entrée items of the equivalent portion size offered as a part of the National School Lunch Program.	<b>Artificial Sweeteners</b>	Artificial sweeteners are not permitted.
<b>Fat</b>	Foods should have 35% or less of their total calories from fat.	*(Including alternative milk beverages such as lactose-free and soy)	