



HINGHAM PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Margaret Adams, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Dear Families,

As the holidays approach, it is not uncommon for teachers and other members of our school staff to receive gifts from our students and their families. Giving gifts to show appreciation and thanks is a wonderful part of the holiday season and I know that our faculty and staff are always grateful for the kindness and generosity of our school community. However, I am providing a reminder that public school employees are subject to specific parameters for accepting such gifts. These parameters, which are designed to safeguard public employees from conflicts of interest and appearances of favoritism, were developed by the Massachusetts State Ethics Commission. The State Ethics Commission provides the following guidance for public employees, which can also be found at [this link](#) or <http://www.mass.gov/ethics/gifts-to-public-school-teachers-and-staff.html>. Hingham Public School Committee policies on this topic can also be found [here](#).

Personal Gifts: In general, public employees (including teachers, paraprofessionals, secretaries, etc.) may not accept any gift worth \$50.00 or more that is given because of the position that they hold. Public employees may accept gifts that are worth less than \$50.00, but they are required to disclose in writing that they have done so if, based on the specific circumstances, a reasonable person would think that the public employee might unduly show favor to the giver or the giver's child, or be influenced by the giver.

Gifts to the Classroom or School: The law regulates gifts to public employees, not gifts to public agencies. Therefore, parents and/or students may give gifts to a particular public schools, or a particular classroom, and the \$50.00 limit does not apply.

Class Gifts: The Ethics Commission recently created an exemption to permit "class gifts" to teachers. A teacher may accept a gift from public school students/and or their parents and guardians, with an aggregate value of up to \$150.00, if the gift is identified only as being from the class, and the identity of the givers and the individual amounts given are not identified to the recipient. Given that the donor(s) are unknown to the public employee, gifts received pursuant

to this exemption are not required to be disclosed. A teacher may accept a class gift and individual gifts from persons who did not contribute to the class gift. Unlike class gifts, which are not required to be disclosed, personal gifts must be declined or disclosed as described above.

These guidelines are meant to ensure that students and their families can continue giving gifts while protecting school employees from the appearance of undue favor or influence. Read more about the conflict of interest law and gift regulations at [this link](#) or <http://www.mass.gov/ethics/laws-andregulations/conflict-of-interest-information/info-section-3/930-cmr-500-gift-regulations.html>

Please do not hesitate to contact your school principal if you have any questions regarding this information. Please have a wonderful and safe holiday season!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Margaret Adams". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a decorative flourish at the end.

Margaret Adams
Superintendent of Schools