

HAMILTON-WENHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



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MARINEL D. MCGRATH, ED.D.
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

Dear Families of Hamilton-Wenham Students,

At this time of year, some families have made it a tradition to give gifts to staff members to show their appreciation. For those of you who have considered giving a gift, I need to inform you about laws and regulations affecting gift giving to school staff members.

School staff members are public employees, and as such are subject to the State's Conflict of Interest Law (Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 268A) and MA Ethics Committee Rules. The statute and Ethics Committee regulations state that "school employees may not accept any gift that is of "substantial" value", that is, no more than \$50. This includes meals, tickets to events, services, airline tickets, or holiday gifts, among other things. This \$50 limit applies to groups of people with a common interest (for example, members of the same class, team, program, etc.). Therefore, families in the same class may not combine resources to purchase a gift valued at \$50 or more. This statute was enacted to ensure that members of the public are treated equally and that no one has or might be perceived to have special advantages or influence. This applies even if the purpose of the gift is seen as a token of gratitude for a well-done job.

Besides the state law, there is sometimes discomfort about the appropriateness of gifts within the school context or the feeling that gifts might be expected. The School Committee and I believe that the best gifts are your kind words of appreciation. If you do wish to give a gift, please consider making a contribution to the many groups which support the HWRSD in the staff member's name. Each of these groups will ensure that the teacher will receive notification of the gift made in his or her name. Remember that donations to a school program, the Friends' organizations, Pro Musica, the Hamilton-Wenham Alliance for Athletics and Extracurricular Activities, and the Hamilton-Wenham Edfund benefit our teachers and programs in the HWRSD.

We in HW are very fortunate to have such generous families who support us in so many ways, such as formal recognition programs, lunches, volunteering, participating in school activities, and sharing words of gratitude. The School Committee and I would appreciate your assistance on this matter. If you have any additional questions about this law and regulation, please feel free to contact your building principal, or me.

Sincerely,

Marinel D. McGrath

Marinel D. McGrath, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools