



GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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December 11, 2009

Dear District Parents:

The holiday season is upon us and it is my understanding that parents are considering giving gifts to their respective teachers. Let this letter serve as a reminder that the state ethics conflict-of-interest law forbids public servants, including teachers, from receiving gifts with value in excess of \$50. When the legislature recently made changes to the ethics law it kept the \$50 rule, which has been in effect since 1976, but made the penalties for violators more severe including larger fines and prison time.

I therefore recommend parents should avoid putting teachers in the awkward position of turning down a gift because of their inability to accept it. This law particularly applies to parents "pooling" their money to provide a collective gift to a teacher with a value greater than \$50. Note that individual gifts under \$50 are permissible.

There is one way parents can help teachers. If they wish to give a collective sum of money in excess of \$50 to a teacher, it can be done by asking the School Committee to accept a gift to the District with its purpose to go to a particular classroom for instructional materials. The School Committee would then have this as an item on their agenda, and if they so desire, they would vote to accept the gift for its intended purpose. It must be understood that the items purchased are the property of the District, not the teacher.

Other than this method, teachers would be placed in a compromising situation by accepting gifts valued above \$50. I am therefore asking parents to support our efforts to follow the ethics law. The penalties for violating it are now quite severe and it would be the teacher, not the parent that would be subject to these penalties.

If room parents wish to collectively purchase a gift for a teacher's classroom, they should write a letter addressed to the School Committee, sent care of the Superintendent's Office, indicating a wish to give \$(*amount*) to the District to support the educational needs in (*teacher's name*) classroom. The next School Committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 16th. I would need letters in the Superintendent's Office no later than 3:00pm on December 16th.

I wish you all a happy and joyful holiday season!

Sincerely,

Dr. Alan D. Genovese
Superintendent of Schools