



The Public Schools of Brookline
Brookline Town Hall
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Guidance for Parents or Guardians Regarding Gifts to Teachers/School Staff

As we approach the holiday season we realize that many families wish to express their gratitude to teachers and staff members. It is important that we remind you that gifts to teachers or other school staff are not required or expected. While appreciated, there is no expectation that a parent or guardian give a gift to a teacher or staff member. The guidance below has been developed to assist those who wish to make a gift, so that the gift is consistent with regulations set forth by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Ethics Commission.

*If you decide you would like to give a gift to a teacher or school staff member,
please carefully review the information below.*

The **Commonwealth of Massachusetts State Ethics Commission** provides the following parameters for gifts to public employees:

Personal Gifts

- In general, a public employee (teacher, paraprofessional and other staff) may not accept any gift worth \$50 or more that is given because of the position they hold.
- Public employees may accept gifts that are worth less than \$50, 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 school, or a particular classroom, and the \$50 limit does not apply.

Class Gifts

- The Ethics Commission created an exemption to permit "class gifts" to teachers. A teacher may accept a gift or gifts from public school students and/or their parents and guardians, with an aggregate value of up to \$150, 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 also individual gifts from persons who did not contribute to the class gift, but any individual, personal gift is still subject to disclosure requirements outlined above.
- No family is required to participate in a class gift; donations to a class gift are entirely voluntary.

We encourage you to review the Ethics Commission rules regarding "Gifts to Public School Teachers and Staff" available here: <http://www.mass.gov/ethics/gifts-to-public-school-teachers-and-staff.html>

We ask your cooperation in adhering to this policy. Teachers want to avoid accepting gifts that are contrary to Ethics Commission rules and certainly don't want to cause offense by refusing a gift offered by a child or parent. If you wish to express your gratitude to a teacher or staff member, cards or notes are greatly appreciated. Families who wish to acknowledge a teacher or other staff person with a gift should consider making a donation toward a class gift, making a gift to the PTO, or making a book donation to the school library in the name of the staff member(s).