



**Allergy Aware, Allergy Prepared Committee**  
**Niskayuna Board of Education Update**  
February 14, 2023

**Committee Members:**

Tim Fowler, Assistant Superintendent, Pupil Personnel Services  
Tim Murphy, Health and Safety Coordinator  
Christine Gravelle, Holly Britton, Katrina Cutting, School Nurses  
Bill Anders, Principal, Craig Elementary  
Megan Bates, Food Service Director

**Committee Timeline:**

**October 2022 - December 2022** (*Committee Meetings/Ongoing Feedback*)  
**January 18, 2023** (*Review of Recommendations- District-wide School Safety team*)

**Summary of Committee Work and Findings**

At the request of the Superintendent, a committee was convened to review the District's current practices around nuts in schools, and to provide a summary of the review along with recommendations for consideration. The initial committee meeting took place on October 24, 2022.

Why we met- The District currently has a nut-free practice. The essential questions before the committee: "Is it realistic to say that we are nut-free? And, how can we better address the issue of severe allergies in the school district?" After discussion, the committee suggested rather than calling the District nut-free, the group favored the expression *allergy aware*, which later evolved into *Allergy Aware, Allergy Prepared*. The committee also reviewed:

- the process for identifying children who have severe allergies, approaches to management of Emergency Care Plans (ECP),
- emergency planning and training/education,
- managing food allergies in schools and food handling protocols.

**Committee Recommendations**

After a thorough review of current district practices on nut allergy practices and protocols as well as considering the Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidance on managing food allergies in schools ([Voluntary Guidelines for Managing Food Allergies In Schools and Early Care and Education Programs](#)), and considering neighboring districts practices around nut allergies, the committee offers the following recommendations for consideration:

1. Rather than calling our practice nut-free, we recommend calling it Allergy Aware/Allergy Prepared. This shift in name and practice accounts for the need to be aware and prepared for a variety of allergies, not just nut allergies
2. The committee understands the District cannot guarantee we are completely nut free, but we should continue **to recommend** nut free foods for school for snacks, lunches and party items.
  - a. The committee feels that if the District uses language such as recommend in place of require, most families would likely comply with the District's recommendations. **This practice would assist in mitigating risk of anaphylactic reactions.**
  - b. There could also be consideration of putting signage in school main entrances/lobbies with language like, "We are an allergy aware school."
3. The BOCES Safety Specialist will work with school nurses to draft an Allergic Reaction hazard-specific annex to be added to the Building Level Emergency Response Plans.
4. We recommend that all District employees take the Safeschools' online Health Emergencies Life Threatening Allergies course (15 minutes) as part of next year's required training.
5. The District should identify faculty and staff who work directly with students who have severe allergies and provide them with additional training to include their student's specific allergy information and how to inject an epi-pen.
6. The District should provide basic information about severe allergies to families. We will also let families know that we are an allergy aware school district, but we do not guarantee a nut free environment.
7. The District should provide basic information about severe allergies to all students, including how to recognize the symptoms of severe allergic reactions, to report concerns to faculty/staff and to never criticize other students about their allergies.
8. Currently, no cafeterias at any level serve nut products. We recommend continuing that practice.
9. Currently, only pre-packaged or healthy snacks are allowed to be brought in for parties. We also do not allow homemade snacks (baked goods, etc.) to be brought in.

- a. We would like to recommend continuing those protocols. In the past, sometimes school nurses were tasked with screening party snacks for nut product contents.
- b. We will no longer be screening party snacks. We want to encourage schools to share the following resources for parents to refer to when choosing pre-packaged party snacks:

**Potential Nut-Free Snack Resources**

[The Best Shelf-Stable Nut-Free Snacks for Kids - We Are Teachers](#)

[PEANUT FREE/NUT FREE SNACK LIST](#)

10. It is also recommended that rather than having broad brush labels of classrooms and separate tables, students who have been identified as having severe allergies will have emergency care plans (ECP) that will be developed in conjunction with the principal, school nurse, parents/guardians and physician, where appropriate. The ECPs would govern the particulars of what is needed in the management of each student's care plan.

**Recommended Implementation**

It is recommended that the updated Allergy Aware, Allergy Prepared practice begin plans for training and identify additional logistics for implementation readiness late Spring/Early Summer, with an anticipated rollout for implementation September 2023.