

# CHELMSFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Dr. Frank A. Tiano, Superintendent

To: Parents, All Staff  
From: Dr. Frank Tiano, Superintendent  
RE: Revision in State Ethics Law

Massachusetts General Law Chapter 268A prohibits Municipal employees, which includes our public school employees, from accepting any gift valued at \$50 or more. Recent amendments to the regulations under the state's conflict of interest law apply to public employees and became effective on December 10, 2010. The key change is that the amended regulations now require a disclosure for gifts that are under the \$50 threshold. A gift is defined as anything of value that is given without something of equivalent fair market value being given in return. The purpose of this law is to prevent conflicts between private interests and public duties, to foster integrity in public service, and to promote the public's trust and confidence in that service by placing restrictions on what Municipal employees may do as part of their jobs.

As the holidays approach, this serves as an important reminder that we must comply with the ethics law and avoid compromising our employees in spite of the best of intentions.

The Massachusetts State Ethics Commission recently revised the regulations that apply to giving of gifts to employees in public schools. The regulations apply not only to gifts to teachers, but also to gifts to all employees.

The following are highlighted revisions to the regulations that you should be aware of:

- Gifts where the combined value is \$50 or more may not be accepted.
- Gifts which have a value of under \$50 are permitted under the law, but may be subject to reporting to the State Ethics Commission on a disclosure form (on Intranet for employees).
- "Class gifts" which have a combined value of up to \$150 are permitted under the law if certain circumstances exist. These gifts are not subject to disclosure. (A teacher may accept a group gift or *gifts* of up to \$150 (per year) from his or her class or *classes* as long as the gift is identified as being from the entire class or group, and the identity of any individual student or parent contributing, and the amounts given by each, are *not identified* to the teacher).
- A teacher may accept a gift to the classroom that is to be used for the class and it will become the property of the school district and not the property of the teacher.
- Co-workers may give and receive holiday gifts and gifts for other occasions of any value. However, gifts may not be given to or received from supervisors, except under certain circumstances.
- A public school employee may accept gifts of substantial value upon retirement as long as the gift is to recognize the employee's services generally and are not intended as a reward for any specific, past, official action.

Thank you for your understanding in this matter and for complying with the law. Please contact your building principal if you have any questions regarding your intentions or you may contact my office directly.