

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Last year was an unusually busy year in regards to new school nutrition regulations, goals, deadlines and policies. The federal government mandated that all school districts participating in the school meals programs, (breakfast, lunch and after school snack) are required to create a district wellness policy, and establish a HACCP food safety program by the beginning of the 2006/2007. The State of Connecticut also passed legislation regarding beverages sold to students during school hours, and offered a new healthy foods initiative. Please allow me the opportunity to explain each of these regulations in more detail.

Stonington's wellness policy was adopted during the June Board of Education meeting. The policy was developed by a wellness team consisting of school nurses, administrators, health and physical fitness educators, parents and food service personnel. Essentially, the policy states Stonington is committed to providing students with outstanding health, physical education, and nutrition programs. The policy was recently amended to provide for our participation in the healthy foods initiative, which regulates all foods offered for sale to students during the school day. All food sold in school cafeterias, stores and vending machines must comply with strict nutrition regulations. No foods offered for sale to students can have more than 30% of calories from fat or 35% of calories from sugar. The policy also recommends adding nutritious foods to the selections offered for sale during school events.

In May of 2006, Governor Jodi Rell signed into law Public Act 06-63 which restricts the sale of beverages in all public schools in Connecticut. The law allows only 100% fruit and vegetable juice, bottled water, 100% fruit juice and water combinations, milk or soy milk products for sale to students from school cafeterias, stores and vending machines. Stonington's Board of Education took commendable action when it voted to "set a good example" by stipulating that products sold in faculty vending machines follow the states guidelines.

Lastly, we are charting refrigerator, freezer, dishwasher and food temperatures as part of the requirements of the HACCP food safety program. HACCP, which stands for Hazard Assessment Critical Control Points, was developed by NASA scientists to ensure the foods prepared for the astronauts are 100% safe. The space shuttle, space station or a school cafeteria is not a good place for food born illness. The HACCP program features Standard Operating Procedures for all areas of food service, from storage, preparation, serving, cooling, and reheating of foods to sanitizing equipment and work surfaces. Staff training is ongoing to meet with new challenges. Stonington's kitchens are very clean and frequently receive 100% on our posted health inspection reports.

Please call me at 599-0766 or e-mail at tpaquette@stoningtonschools.org with your questions, comments or suggestions. Thank you for your participation and support of our nutrition program.

Tim Paquette – Director of Nutrition Services