

The following is proposed to go under the "Food Services and Nutrition" section of the Meridian handbook:

PROPOSED SCHOOL POLICY REGARDING FOOD: IN THE CAFETERIA ... AND BEYOND – February 9, 2011

At Meridian School, we recognize that wellness and proper nutrition are related to students' physical well-being and readiness to learn. The Board is committed to providing a school environment that promotes student wellness, proper nutrition, nutrition education and regular physical activity as part of the total learning experience. In a healthy school environment, students will learn about and participate in positive dietary and lifestyle practices that promote student achievement and overall quality of life.

Meridian's intention is to promote this Food Policy to all school faculty and staff, parents and students. Why is it important to have all constituents involved with the policy? Because successful implementation of this policy requires cooperation from everyone in the school. The goal is to provide a healthy, consistent message to students throughout the school environment, not just in the cafeteria.

FOOD PROVIDED TO STUDENTS BY THE SCHOOL

FOOD SERVED IN SCHOOL CAFETERIA

In addition to following the guidelines set forth by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Texas Department of Agriculture's Child Nutrition Program, Meridian is actively working to ensure that meals served in the school cafeteria meet or exceed health guidelines for all students.

FMNV	FMNV are Foods of Minimal Nutritional Value as defined by the US Department of Agriculture and Texas Department of Agriculture. These type foods will not be served to students in the cafeteria. Food items served and sold in the school cafeteria shall to the extent possible be prepared from fresh ingredients.
FRIED FOOD	Foods that have been deep fat fried, pre-fried, flash-fried or par-fried will not be served to students.
FRUIT/VEGETABLES	Must be offered daily on all points of service and be fresh whenever possible. Frozen or canned fruits <u>will</u> be packaged in natural juice or water whenever possible.
BEVERAGES	Meridian School will serve only unflavored white milk, <u>unflavored water</u> or 100% juice. Please note, however, that although 100% juices may be a source of vitamins, current research recommends limiting juice consumption due to its <u>high sugar</u> content. Electrolyte replacement beverages (sports drinks) or carbonated sugary beverages will not be served or sold to students.
NON-FOOD INGREDIENTS	<u>In the school cafeteria</u> , Meridian students will not be served foods containing any non-food ingredients. These ingredients include but are not limited to: artificial food colorings, artificial flavors, and artificial fats (trans-fats).
FOODS USED FOR INSTRUCTIONAL PURPOSES	Lesson plans for instructional use of foods shall be submitted to the campus administrator for permission in advance of all food preparation. In the event that a learning opportunity in the classroom involves food or the preparation of food, school staff will appropriately accommodate the needs of students with specific allergies so that all may fully participate.
TRIPLE A PROGRAM FOODS	Food will be served in accordance with this policy. No FMNV are allowed.

Note: Meridian School will maintain a closed campus at lunch for all grade levels.

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COMPETITIVE FOODS

Competitive Foods are defined as any foods and beverages sold or made available to students that are not provided through the National School Lunch and Breakfast programs. They are called competitive foods because they “compete” with the nutritionally regulated school meal program. Parents and children don’t think of them as competitive foods; to them these foods are “snacks and drinks” consumed outside of the regular meals provided by the school.

This definition includes, but is not limited to, food and beverages provided during after-school programs, field trips, school events, in the classroom, school stores or as part of fundraisers. This also includes foods provided by parents from home for student lunches and snacks. School fundraisers include food sold by school administrators or staff (principals, coaches, teachers, etc.), students or student groups, parents or parent groups, or any other person, company or organization.

The school will allow alternative meals to be sold to students in competition with meals made available by the school food service department (i.e. food sold for fundraising purposes) up to three times per year as allowed by the State.

FOOD PROVIDED TO STUDENTS BY PARENTS

LUNCHES AND SNACKS BROUGHT FROM HOME

LUNCHES BROUGHT FROM HOME	It is strongly recommended that lunches brought from home not contain “junk foods” or high sugar “dessert” items. If these items must be sent in a student’s lunch, these types of items should be limited to very small portions so as not to detract from the child eating the healthier portions of the meal.
SNACKS BROUGHT FROM HOME	It is strongly recommended that these be healthy snacks. They should be in single-size servings and not include items with high sugar content. Also, because students often continue working on classroom assignments while having their daily snack, it is requested that “messy” snacks be avoided.
FAST FOOD	Parents and relatives are strongly discouraged from bringing “fast food” products in for students during school hours, especially those that contain foods of minimal nutritional value. Meridian understands, however, that there may be extenuating circumstances. In these cases , fast food brought to school will be removed from the original packaging and placed into a brown lunch bag at the school office before being delivered to the student.

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BIRTHDAYS AND CLASSROOM PARTIES

STUDENT BIRTHDAYS --- THINKING “OUTSIDE OF THE CUPCAKE”

Birthday parties ~~are not allowed~~ [will not be held](#) at Meridian. Teachers will recognize/celebrate student birthdays as they see fit for their individual classrooms. NO FOOD, ‘sweet treats’, candy or beverage items, of any kind, should be brought into the school as part of student birthday celebrations. Foods sent from home for this purpose will not be distributed and will be returned. This is done in consideration of all children, including those that have food sensitivities. Meridian greatly appreciates parent/guardian cooperation in our efforts to protect all students’ well-being.

- Instead, let’s be IB innovators and think outside of the box! Here are some alternatives to consider:
- [Understanding that children enjoy having birthday recognition, and in accordance with the IB profiles of respect and caring, we ask that our parents consider alternatives such as the following:](#)
- Let your child choose a book to donate to the school library or to his/her classroom; dress it nicely in a fun birthday gift bag and have your child carry it proudly to school on his/her special day.
 - Hand out non-food and non-candy treats, such as pencils, fun erasers, stickers, little games, etc.
 - Donate needed “wish list” items to [your classroom \(ask your teacher what is needed\)](#) or to one of the specials classrooms (like a new soccer ball for wellness, watercolors sets for art class or a Spanish book for Spanish class, etc.).
 - Donate recess equipment (ask your teacher in advance if there is a need for this).
 - Make a financial donation to the school

BLANKET POLICY STATEMENT ON FOOD PROVIDED TO STUDENTS BY PARENTS

In addition to the no food policy for student birthdays, NO FOOD of any kind should be sent to school to be handed out to students in the classroom AT ANY TIME. This includes any kind of miscellaneous celebration or holidays not being celebrated as a school-wide event. Foods sent from home for this purpose will not be distributed and will be returned.

PRIMARY SCHOOL-SPONSORED CLASSROOM PARTIES

Parents are encouraged to participate in parties for students on pre-designated school holidays or specific events in pre-arrangement with the teachers and school staff. Meridian has approved the three (3) following classroom parties: Winter Holiday Party, Valentine’s Party, and End-of-School Party.

Classroom parties should primarily focus on activities and camaraderie, rather than food. With this philosophy in mind, parents are asked to only bring food items that are specifically requested by the teacher. Foods will be coordinated through the Homeroom Parent in advance of the party and all “extra” food will be returned. In addition, we strongly suggest limiting food choices to only 1 ‘dessert’ or ‘sweet treat’ item. Other foods that can be brought to the classroom upon teacher approval can include fruits and vegetables, low sugar snacks, baked vs. fried items, and overall healthy foods.

No candy is allowed in the classroom; this includes Valentines Day. No candy should be attached to [Valentine cards](#) exchanged [by the students](#).

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Secondary School does not have classroom parties in the same sense as Primary. Secondary School will follow healthy choices for after-hour socials and events.

FOOD ALLERGY GUIDELINES

The health and safety of Meridian students is a top priority. Meridian will not only work diligently to accommodate food allergies, but will also teach students how to advocate for themselves and function in a communal eating environment. Students without food allergies will also receive the education and opportunities necessary to help facilitate the safety of their classmates and community.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Learning opportunities that include the preparation of food will accommodate the specific allergies of those children in the classroom so that all may fully participate.
- In accordance with Texas state policy, parents may not distribute food to other people’s children at any time.
- Sharing of food among the primary students is prohibited.
- Secondary students should know that sharing of food is at their own discretion and they are responsible for being aware of their personal dietary limitations.
- Meridian School will work with individual students with food allergies and their parents to create individual allergy management plans. However, the cafeteria will NOT be a nut free zone.

PEANUT/NUT PRODUCTS

~~Why doesn’t Meridian ban peanut/nut products altogether? It is our opinion that banning peanut/nut products altogether may cause a financial hardship for some families, as alternative protein sources can be significantly more expensive. So, while foods served by the school in the cafeteria WILL BE peanut and nut ingredient FREE, lunches coming from home MAY INCLUDE peanut/nut products. Some classrooms will be designated as ‘Peanut Free’, which every parent/guardian and student will be informed about so that they can avoid sending peanut products for snack.~~

[Meridian recognizes the vulnerability of children with anaphylactic food allergies and will comply with State Policy Guidelines when released in the summer of 2012. In advance of these policies, all foods served in the Meridian breakfast and lunch program are peanut- and nut- free. Lunches coming from home may include peanut/nut ingredients. Some classrooms may be designated as ‘Peanut Free’, in which case parents, guardians, and students will be informed so that they can avoid sending peanut products as snacks.](#)

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WATER POLICY

Meridian recognizes that water intake is important to health, especially in the Texas heat. For this reason, students will have regular access to fresh drinking water throughout the day. If they desire, students may bring a capped container of drinking water from home for consumption in the classroom and on the playground (please label with their first and last name!).

Because Meridian has a commitment to responsible environmental practices, we will promote a Bottle-Free Campus where students are encouraged to use only *reusable* water containers rather than disposable plastic water bottles.