



## NEWTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS GIFT POLICY



*Newton Public Schools allows a group gift to an individual staff member only if the gift is identified as being from the entire class, the identity of the givers and the individual amounts are not disclosed to the recipient, and the gift does not exceed \$150 per school year. This differs from a gift for the classroom.*

*Individual gifts of appreciation in the form of sentimental tokens are allowed. Gifts of commercial value are not permitted.*

*Newton Public Schools allows and encourages giving to charitable organizations such as school PTOs or the Newton Schools Foundation's Honor Thy Teacher Program which honors staff while supporting our schools.*

<https://www.newton.k12.ma.us/cms/lib/MA01907692/Centricity/Domain/69/Gift%20Policy%20draft%20-%204-28-15.pdf>

### **Clarification and Guidance on "a gift for the classroom."**

We reached out to the School Committee and have some guidance to pass along. We will be continuing to work on this loophole, however, as the policy exists now, we hope the below provides some clarification.

- ● **Furniture is not allowed to be purchased by classes or PTOs**
  - ○ *Things like furniture and fans should be obtained through the district as these are items over which our facility manager should have control. The purchase of these items is a purchase for the district and becomes the property of the district and not the classroom. These are capital/equipment purchases, not classroom gifts.*
  - ○ *As a municipality, expensive durable items have to be purchased through the city purchasing department and go through the municipal purchasing rules and regulations. Furniture used in schools must meet fire codes and other safety measures.*
  - ○ *NPS maintains a large furniture storage area where almost anything can be found.*
- ● **Small consumable items are considered appropriate "gifts for the classroom."**
  - ○ *A teacher asking room parent dues to pay for small consumable items such as a few books, craft supplies, playground balls, board games, wipes, etc. is within the spirit of the current equity policy and staff gift policy and we encourage you to continue with that practice in moderation.*
  - ○ *We hear contributing these small consumable items make families happy and that all schools in our district are able to fill these classroom requests.*



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### Class Gifts FAQ document:

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#### **Class Gifts are \$150 per Staff Member per School Year**

The Newton Public Schools (NPS) Staff Gift Policy allows teachers or staff to accept a gift or gifts of up to \$150 total value per school year as long as the gift(s) is identified as being from the **class as a whole** and does not identify individual names of the givers and/or individual amounts from the givers.

The [NPS Staff Gift and Solicitation Policy](#) is based on the [MA State Ethics Commission guidance on gift giving to public teachers and staff](#). State law prohibits public school teachers and staff from accepting gifts from a classroom in excess of \$150 per school year and it places them in uncomfortable situations to have to say no.

#### **EXAMPLES**

- If the classroom gives the teacher or staff member a \$150 gift card at the holidays, this class cannot give an additional gift of any value at year-end.
- If the classroom gives the teacher or staff member a \$150 gift card in the fall of 2021, they may not give another gift of any value in the spring of 2022. The policy is \$150 total for the school year, not the calendar year.
- Gifts to teachers or staff by individual families and students must not have a commercial value. If an individual family or student wishes to give something to a teacher or staff member, it is recommended to have the student(s) make a card or small art work with a personal message. It is also recommended to make a donation in the teacher's name to Newton Schools Foundation's Honor Thy Teacher Program.
- It is appropriate and encouraged for room parents to organize class projects such as art projects where each student contributes a thank you note or artwork.

#### **NOTE**

- Communicating the NPS Gift Policy clearly with your parents and room parents is important. ● In order to address inequities among staff gifts (teachers vs. aides vs. specialists) we are asking PTOs to help monitor classroom gifting in your individual schools so that all teachers, aides, specialists and staff members are appreciated in meaningful and allowable ways.