

December 12, 2006

Dear Parents,

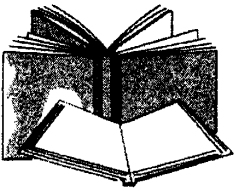
Previously, I have written to you regarding a School Committee policy and a Massachusetts state law that occasionally conflicts with the generosity of many Wayland families. With the holiday season approaching, it has been suggested that I remind parents again of these guidelines and why they are necessary.

Over the years, Wayland parents have proven to be unusually generous when it comes to thanking teachers and other staff for their work with their children. This is greatly appreciated, and for many staff makes working in this community highly desirable. Our instructors and other school employees know that parents respect their good work with students and that their efforts do not go unnoticed. Prospective teaching candidates are often told that this community repeatedly celebrates the good efforts of the schools' staff through a variety of public proclamations and special programs. Staff recognition activities take place throughout the year, and the sincerity of the words spoken in appreciation of a particular employee's efforts is always well received.

Unfortunately, a problem emerged a few years ago that this letter is intended to address. Some gifts and tokens of appreciation violate either the School Committee policy on gift giving or the state's ethics laws. State law provides that gifts in excess of \$50.00 per year per family to a public employee are improper and must be reported to the State Ethics Commission, and gifts of \$200.00 or more to either individual schools or classrooms must be presented to the School Committee for approval and acceptance. The State Ethics Commission takes the position that its rule applies equally when a group of parents combine resources for a single gift if the value is more than \$50.00. It is important to note that staff members who accept gifts in excess of the state's \$50.00 notification requirement or the School Committee's \$200.00 limit risk being cited by the state or disciplined by the administration for failure to comply with established policy and/or state law.

Rules and policy aside, it should be noted that the generosity of some individuals and groups has also raised questions as to the appropriateness of holiday and end-of-year gifts to staff. While saying thank you to a teacher or school employee who has had a profound influence on a child is commendable, I am concerned that there may be an expectation that staff gifts are required at certain times of the school year. That is certainly not the case, and I want to be very clear on this point. While I believe expressions of appreciation and letters thanking people are highly treasured by the staff, no family or individual should feel obligated to do anything more for a school employee.

With this in mind, I would like to remind parents of a long-standing School Committee recommendation that signs of gratitude for the work of staff be



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public schools

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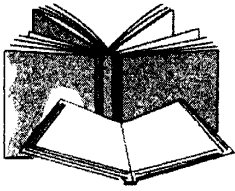
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acknowledged through donations in the name of a particular individual to any of the district's school-based groups (PTOs, CAPA, WPSF, WHSSC, Boosters, METCO, the Gossels Family Fund for Human Dignity and the Gossels Fund for Academic Excellence). These organizations have well-established procedures for the distribution of funds to schools and individual classrooms, and such donations are not affected by either School Committee policy or the State Ethics Commission rules.



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In summary, I am not attempting to discourage gift-giving or saying thank you to a special school employee. Rather, my purpose is to point out the state law and School Committee policy and enlist voluntary compliance with these requirements.

Parents with questions are encouraged to speak with any building administrator or call me directly. Your cooperation in this matter is greatly appreciated. In the spirit of the season, I wish you and your family a restful hiatus from school and best wishes for 2007.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary A. Burton".

Gary A. Burton
Superintendent of Schools

GAB/dmm

Cc: Building Principals
School Committee

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