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Dear Parents and Friends of Wellesley Public Schools,

We are approaching a time of the year when many parents want to show their appreciation to the school staff and we begin to receive questions about the policy on gifts to staff. A couple of years ago I worked with members of the Central Council of PTOs to confirm and clarify the State Ethics Commission rules with regard to teacher/staff gifts - in particular the statement on the first line that reads "a public employee may not accept any gift worth \$50 or more that is given because of the position he or she holds." The specific question was "over what period do we measure gifts less than \$50?" The Ethics Commission provided a very clear response (see below) that should dispel any questions about the requirements. In addition, all staff have an obligation to report a gift that is received, whether from an individual or a group, to our Human Resources Director, Gayle McCracken. Reporting forms are available on the HR web page or from the HR Office.

We wanted to make sure this information was available to all of you.

Under the regulation governing the determination of "substantial value", 930 CMR 5.05, all gifts given by a person to a public employee *within any 365 day period* may be aggregated, and so must remain below \$50 in total value. Thus, taking your example, a teacher accepting a "welcoming gift" of \$49.99 in September from a particular student and/or his parents (from whom the teacher had **not** previously accepted a gift) would be barred from accepting any additional gift from that student and/or his parents for the next 365 days. Note, however, that if the teacher had previously accepted a "end of school year" gift from the same student/parents in June, the value of the June gift would be aggregated with that of the September gift. (A \$20 gift in June and a \$25 gift in September would be okay, but not a \$40 gift in June and a \$20 gift in September.) Thus, the teacher may not within any 365 period accept gifts from an individual student/parents exceeding \$49.99 in total value. (All such gifts from individual student/parents must be disclosed.) As to participation in a group class gift to a teacher under 930 CMR 5.08(14), a teacher may not accept during the school year any individual gift from any student and/or his parents who participated in or will participate in that school year's class gift to the teacher. As a result, in any given school year, the student/parents must choose between participating in the class gift (total value per school year of \$150) or giving an individual gift or gifts (with a total value of less than \$50 in any 365 day period) and cannot do both. I hope this general information concerning gifts to teachers answers your questions.

Have a wonderful, restful Thanksgiving holiday.

