Educating a Whole Community About Food Allergies
One District’s Journey

Presented by
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and Ginny Hiltz
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Today’s Presenters

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Superintendent
Arlington Heights School District 25

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Principal
Greenbriar Elementary School

Eric Larson, M.S.Ed.
Principal
Patton Elementary School
Educating a Whole Community About Food Allergies

One District’s Journey
Who Are We?

Virginia Hiltz
- Assistant Principal & Student Services Coordinator
- Parent

Eric Larson
- Principal
- Parent

Lori Bein
- Superintendent
- Parent
Why Are We Here?

Where Were We?

- 5,500 EC-8th Grade in 9 Schools
- 200+ Emergency Care Plans for Food Allergies - ✓
- Policies and Procedures - ✓
  - Comprehensive committee work with staff, parents, & medical experts
- Required Staff Training - ✓
Where Were We?

• Activities and Communication
  – for Food Allergy Families - ✓
  – for Staff - ✓
  – for Everyone Else - ? ?
Introduction

A goal of District 25 is to provide a safe environment for all children. Students with life threatening allergies may require certain safeguards in order to be safe in school. This Guide establishes the District’s protocols to promote prevention and management of life threatening allergies. It addresses the identification of individual needs, staff awareness, necessary curricular and procedural modifications, and emergency plans.

Protecting students with life-threatening allergies is the shared responsibility of families, schools, and the community. Arlington Heights School District 25 cannot create or ensure an all allergen-free environment. That said, this Guide addresses the needs of students with life threatening allergies and when implemented will reduce the risks associated with exposure.
Why Did Our Journey Change?

• Student Allergic Reaction
• Family Reaction
• Community Reaction
• Press
  – Local
  – NPR
  – Online
  – Out of state radio
Lucca’s Story

• What happened
• How did school follow the rules
• Superintendent’s reaction
• Parents’ request to the Board
• Community’s response – The Good, The Bad, and the Ugly
Parents’ Reaction

- Professional . . . yet determined
- Articulate speech to School Board
- “Thankful for Olive staff, but this responsibility should not be put on their shoulders.”
- Committed to partnering . . . yet determined
The Press

- Local paper +
- Local editorial +
- Chicago-area TV/online +
- National Public Radio +
- Numerous out of state papers ???
- Wisconsin radio station ???
- Raw Story online !!!!!!
Community’s Reaction

- Great support from the family’s friends
- Additional speaker at Board meeting
- Incredibly positive voice from our NURSES!
- Dozens of letters/emails/calls from opposite view
- Handful of very hurtful, pointed letters and calls to Board and Superintendent
So, What Steps Did We Take?

- Formed District Allergy Committee
- “Be a PAL” flyers & bracelets
- Started the conversation with students
- Brainstorming with nurses
Allergy Committee

• Who Signed Up
• Who Showed Up
• What did we learn about each other?
  – Different beliefs
  – Different allergy needs – peanut vs. everything else
What Could We Agree On?

- Education
- A Caring Community
- Going Beyond Policy and Procedure
  - Safety first, but don’t put people second
What’s It Really About?

- Kids’ Safety
- Caring
- Educating
- Including
- Don’t Shy Away from It
- Don’t Hide Behind Policy or Past Practice
- Together, We Are Stronger
What Did We Learn?

- PTA’s voice--food as a central theme
- For children, this comes easier
- When people know more, they’re more willing to help
What Have We Done So Far?
**Key Champions: School Nurses**

- AHSD25 has full time nurse care in each school (CSN and RN may split the full day)
- Parents need (at least) one champion
- Communication is key--nurses can uniquely navigate medical world & school world
- Implementing doctor’s orders @ school
- Need for flexibility within school procedures
- The importance of a diagnosis (aversion vs. allergy vs. diet)
Advice from the School Nurses

• Have a plan/team before school starts
  – Start with the nurse or principal/AP
  – Ask who else needs to be on the team

• Keep track of expiration dates on meds

• Teach kids (early on) to recognize the signs

• Work within the research--don’t trust everything you hear

• Remember...School Nurses must abide by HIPPA & FERPA
Advice from the School Nurses

• Provide as much medical information as possible (in addition to the allergy action plan)
  – How significant is the allergy medically
  – How to treat for different scenarios

• If child also has asthma, make nurses aware of asthma treatment/plan in connection with allergies

• Share thoughts on what might work best in terms of lunch/snack

• Ask nurses for their thoughts and information to share with your doctors—sign consent to speak to doctors
Everyone had a hand in the next steps.

- What has the Patton staff done?
- What has the Patton PTA done?
- How have food allergic parents and the school worked to be inclusive?
- What is next for Patton?
The “Snack Rule”

• What it was…
• Why it changed…
• What it is now…
• Are there exceptions?
The “Snack Rule” - What it was...
The “Snack Rule” - Why it changed...
The “Snack Rule” - What it is now...
The Patton PTA

• Movie Night Snacks
• Mini Course Snacks
The "Food Allergy Table"

• A phone call in December
• Bringing the parents together
• Brainstorming ways to be more inclusive
• Implementing a plan
• Reevaluating the plan
Lunch at Patton

• Two 30 minute lunch shifts
• 13 non-food allergic tables
• 1 Allergy Aware Table
  – 4 students in the Shift 1
  – 2 students in Shift 2
The Journey to SAFELY blend food allergic and non-allergic students

- Gathering information from other schools
- An important player - the school nurse
- Gathering information from Food Services
- Provide a safe place for parent input
- Ensure all voices are heard
- Start small and simple
- Constantly re-evaluate and communicate
The Value of the Parent Partnership

Eric,

Thank you for another productive FA meeting this morning. Mike & I are grateful for the work you are doing & conversations you are starting around FA at Patton for our boys and all the others.

It's a good feeling knowing our principal is on our side, not to mention the district.

With gratitude,
What’s next for Patton & Food Allergies?

• Food allergy parents meeting with PTA
• Curriculum Night presentation from food allergy parents
• Transition meetings at the end of the year
• Christopher’s story & mine
• Balancing roles… AP/ Special Ed
• Windsor… a unique setting

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Windsor

- General ed K-5
- Programs within
- Medical & health is forefront @ Windsor
- Competing needs = flexibility
Allergies + Special Education = ?

• Special considerations for students with cognitive- or communication-related disabilities

• It’s about the circle of support (story of Jim, nonverbal child with ASD & allergies)

• Importance of peer education
Special Education: Other Voices

• Students with special dietary needs
  – Ketogenic diets (Allie’s story)
  – Sickle-cell Disease

• Autism and extreme food aversions

• Life skills & cooking in the classroom

• Teaching self-advocacy
Next Steps for District 25

- Allergy Awareness Week
- Village-wide Education
- Be Open to Changes
  - Lucca’s journey today
  - Still existing loopholes

- This Can’t Be An Ending Point!
  It Can ONLY Be The Beginning!
How can YOU help?

If you are a

• School Administrator
• School Staff Member
• Food Allergic Parent
• District Administrator
• State Employee
YOUR Next Steps!

• Step back from fighting
• Move forward by collaborating
• Get safety in place first, but then keep moving forward
• Educate your child’s friends and families
• Thank your School Nurse!
• Contact us!!! [www.sd25.org](http://www.sd25.org)
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Additional Back to School Safely Resources

- www.foodallergy.org/back-to-school
- www.foodallergy.org/education-network
- www.foodallergy.org/webinars
- www.foodallergy.org/be-a-pal
- www.foodallergy.org/cdc

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