

Advocate



ALLERGY ADVOCATE TOOLBOX

GRADE LEVEL RESOURCES FOR
ALLERGY ADVOCACY

INTRODUCTION

School is an opportunity to learn and grow. It is crucial that students with allergies feel empowered and able to speak up for themselves. To help out, we created a tool kit for students with food allergies to advocate for their inclusion. Advocacy is an everyday activity; this includes while at school. However, approaching these tricky situations can be challenging. This guide is a culmination of stories, advice, and strategies for how to create change in your school and increase your involvement over time.



WOW!



MEET YOUR ADVOCATES

Elise Buellesbach: Elise is a high school senior in California. She is allergic to eggs, chicken, and turkey. Additionally she has Celiac Disease. She is not limited by her food allergies, instead she is empowered, using her voice for change. Elise is a fierce advocate for inclusion, she is working with both Food Allergy Research and Education (FARE) and members of Congress to usher in more substantial food allergy legislation. Elise is a member of FARE's Teen Advisory Group (TAG). When she is not working for change, Elise is a passionate swimmer who loves to be in the water.

Gabriella DiGiovanni: Gabriella is a high school sophomore in Passaic County, New Jersey. She is allergic to peanuts, most tree nuts, and some raw fruits/vegetables. Gabriella is a new member of FARE's Teen Advisory Group and hopes to become more involved in advocating about food allergies in the upcoming years. She can usually be found on the soccer field or volunteering in her neighborhood.

GRADE LEVEL RESOURCES



K - 2ND GRADE

Class Reading and Media (with a parent):

Explanation: An easy way to create awareness at school surrounding food allergies is through stories and music. By working with parents and teachers, young food allergic kids can initiate conversation in the classroom through recommending a book or song about food allergies. These easy to understand books foster understanding and kindness through lovable characters. Teachers are usually thrilled to have these resources, and are eager to help keep students safe.



Resources/ Recommendations

Books: Use this fun list of books that are interesting and educational -- [The Ultimate List of Food Allergy Books](#)

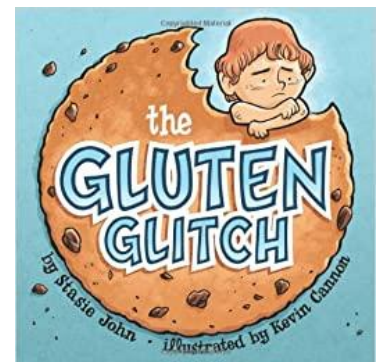
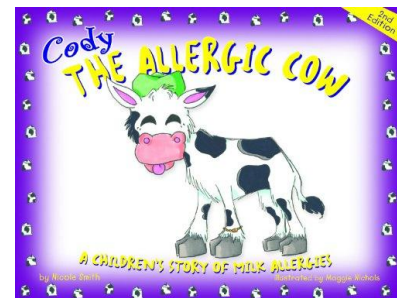
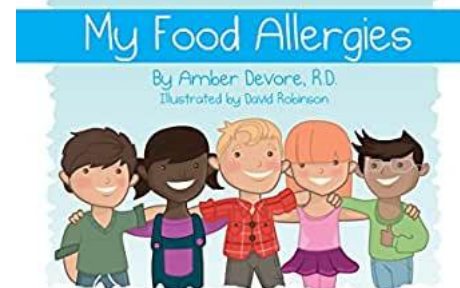
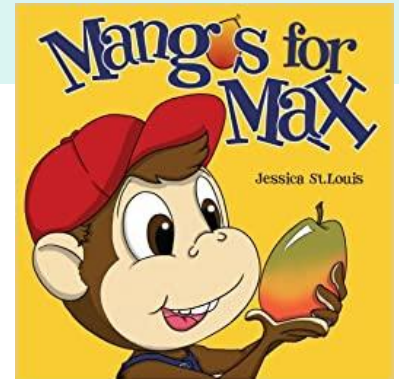
Music: Kyle Dine YouTube --with music that is catchy and inclusive.

Pictures/Images with Explanations:

Explanation: Colorful pictures and other images are fun to look at and can teach a good lesson to kids. They can help visual learners understand the topic of food allergies easier. Each picture can have a couple points next to it with important information that should be explained to the students while they examine the picture. Consider using as posters in the classroom.

Personal Experience:

As someone with Celiac Disease, I grew up reading the *Gluten Glitch*. Reading about others who cannot eat gluten fostered a sense of belonging. Not only are these books educational to others, they serve as a good reminder that you are not alone.



3RD - 5TH GRADE

SPEAK UP

Talk to Your Teachers (with a parent)

Explanation: It is always a good idea to inform your teachers before the school year begins about your allergies and the challenges that come with them. Approaching teachers at a young age with such a serious topic can be difficult, having a parent to help you out is always a good idea. Talking to the teacher at the beginning of the year establishes a relationship between the student and the teacher, thus allowing you, the student, to easily discuss your allergies with the teacher during the school year. It is important to practice using your own voice, while supported by your parent.

Share Important Information via Infographics

Explanation: No need to reinvent the wheel while spreading valuable information about allergies! When it comes to sharing life saving advice, infographics provide clear and conscious information. Providing classrooms, teachers, and even the school office with these infographics is simple and effective. Here are some of our favorites, available for download and use.



Recognize and Respond to Anaphylaxis

For a suspected or active food allergy reaction

FOR ANY OF THE FOLLOWING SEVERE SYMPTOMS

- LUNG:** Short of breath, wheezing, repetitive cough
- HEART:** Pale or bluish skin, faintness, weak pulse, dizziness
- THROAT:** Tight or hoarse throat, trouble breathing or swallowing
- MOUTH:** Significant swelling of the tongue or lips
- SKIN:** Many hives over body, widespread redness
- GUT:** Repetitive vomiting, severe diarrhea
- OTHER:** Feeling something bad is about to happen, anxiety, confusion

OR MORE THAN ONE MILD SYMPTOM

- NOSE:** Itchy or runny nose, sneezing
- MOUTH:** Itchy mouth
- SKIN:** A few hives, mild itch
- GUT:** Mild nausea or discomfort

1 INJECT EPINEPHRINE IMMEDIATELY

2 Call 911
Request ambulance with epinephrine.

Consider Additional Meds

- (After epinephrine):
- » Antihistamine
 - » Inhaler (bronchodilator) if asthma

Positioning

Lay the person flat and raise legs. If breathing is difficult or they are vomiting, let them sit up or lie on their side.

Next Steps

- » If symptoms do not improve, or symptoms return, more doses of epinephrine can be given about 5 minutes or more after the last dose.
- » Transport to and remain in ER for at least 4 hours because symptoms may return.

Do not depend on antihistamines. When in doubt, give epinephrine and call 911.



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3RD - 5TH GRADE



FOOD ALLERGIES
React with Respect

Some kids can get very sick when they eat certain foods. This is called a food allergy. If someone tells you they have a food allergy, you should react with respect.

How do you respect food allergies?

Know that food allergies are very serious	Wash your hands after eating	Don't share your food with friends who have allergies	Get help right away if a friend gets sick	Show kindness
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LEARN WITH DESSERT
FOOD ALLERGY AWARENESS WEEK

FARE
FOOD ALLERGY RESEARCH & EDUCATION

Learn more at foodallergy.org

Personal Experience:

In elementary school, we had shared snacks where one family brought food for the entire class's snack times. This was a recipe for disaster as a kid with food allergies; I chose to bring my own food and sit alone.

Eventually, I worked with my mom to prepare a list of snack recommendations. These were presented to the parents, asking them to promote inclusivity and bring snacks free of the top 8 allergens. The best part is that it helped! Others began to bring in safe brands of pre-packaged food for the shared snack. Being able to read the labels of known safe foods helped me to relax and enjoy snacks with my friends.

Teal Pumpkin Project:

Growing up, Halloween was always a difficult holiday. I only ate candy that my mom purchased ahead of the time while I watched friends eat their favorite candies with abandon. However the Teal Pumpkin Project is a fun way to make Halloween more inclusive for all. Every year my house has more teal pumpkins out than orange pumpkins. The most important part of the Teal Pumpkin Project is talking about the difficulties of Halloween. When people ask why I am sporting colorful pumpkins, I explain that the teal pumpkin means that there are non-food treats at the house. I then invite my friends to participate by putting out a teal pumpkin by their own front door on Halloween. Through spreading the word about the Teal Pumpkin Project, you are increasing awareness and inclusion.

Food Allergy Research & Education

TEAL PUMPKIN PROJECT

TEALPUMPKINPROJECT.ORG

#TEALPUMPKINPROJECT

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6TH - 8TH GRADE



Find a Buddy

Explanation: Having a friend or two at school that you have explained your allergies to helps to decrease the loneliness of having allergies at school. If there is an event that involves food, it is easier to step out with a friend for company and support. Ideally, this friend is not bringing your allergen in their lunch and they understand how you want to handle difficult food situations.

Personal Experience: In 8th grade I got to go on the school NY/DC trip. Having food allergies, this was entirely terrifying--not only was I away from home for a week, all meals were to be eaten in restaurants. Luckily, I have a good friend who understands my concerns with my allergies. During meals, I always sat next to her, knowing that she would be careful to keep her food away from me. At the various security check points on the trip, I had friends who supported me through explaining why I had food and needed to bring it with me. Having this level of support is a comfort that can ease the frustration of having allergies.



Talk About and Demonstrate Epi-pens

Explanation: Every set of epi-pens comes with a trainer in the set. Bringing the trainer into class and teaching your peers how to use an epi-pen is potentially life saving. According to FARE, "Approximately 20-25 percent of epinephrine administrations in schools involve individuals whose allergy was unknown at the time of the reaction". Educating your teachers and peers about how to properly administer an epi-pen is crucial and it helps inform others of the severity of allergies.

Personal Experience: Talking about Epi-Pens can seem taboo and often scary to others. However, the risks associated with avoiding the topic are astronomical. In middle school, my friend who is allergic to peanuts, and I were presenting a current event about epi-pens to the class. We brought in trainers and demonstrated how to use them and explained the importance of epinephrine. However, our teacher was afraid of needles and was unable to watch us demonstrate the trainer (which does not have a needle). This level of fear about epi-pens is potentially fatal. As a society we must discuss and demo epi-pens to reduce the fear of using epi-pens when needed.

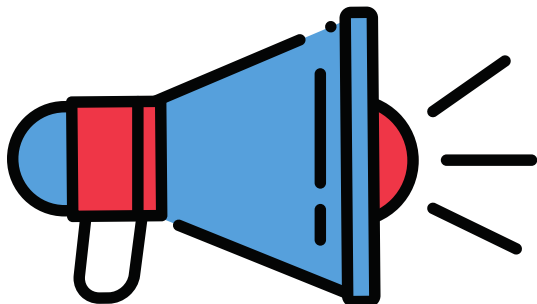
9TH - 12TH GRADE

Talk to the Administration/ Teachers BEFORE school starts

Explanation: It is easier to act preemptively and make the school administration and/or teachers aware of your allergies before the year starts. Make sure that school policy and what you need to be safe align. It is simpler to explain your safety needs before school starts, allowing teachers to ensure their lesson plans do not involve food. Additionally, teachers and administrators can ensure that food is not central to community events.

Be persistent

Explanation: Changing habits and policy in high school is not an easy task, thus repetition is often needed. Note the times where the classroom was unsafe, and say something. Nothing will change if no one understands the safety concern. Talking to teachers and students alike about the risks that people with food allergies face is critical to increasing understanding and creating change. Don't be afraid to involve school administrators as well as teachers.



Talk About Allergies in School Projects

Explanation: Throughout high school there are open-ended prompts, opportunities to tell personal stories, and story driven projects. These are all opportunities to teach your peers and teachers about allergies, whether in a generic sense or your specific experiences. While it can be nerve-racking to talk about your allergies, this simple action allows you to share critical knowledge and experience with others. Other students will learn from your stories. Class projects give you a willing audience and a platform to share your experiences.

9TH - 12TH GRADE



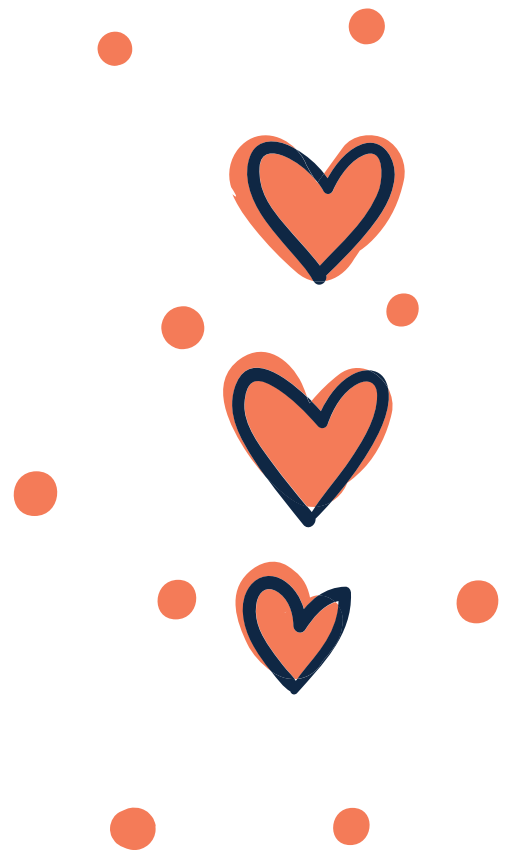
Personal Experience: School policy had always been that no food was allowed in the classrooms, yet this was not the reality. At the end of my sophomore year in high school, I was in Chemistry and the girl next to me pulled out her egg breakfast burrito in the middle of the second period. I was overwhelmed by the scent and got a huge headache. However, the content of the class was important and would be on the test next class. I sat in the doorway of the classroom until the end of class. The teacher said nothing; she watched and chose to allow the eating in class, which is against handbook policy, without thinking about my safety. The incident was the catalyst for me to go to the administration and ask for them to better enforce handbook policies, prohibiting food in the classroom during instruction. The administration struggled to hear me the first time I met with them. However, after a few more rounds of conversation we found a better solution. The administration, as well as my family, sends out an email at the beginning of each semester to all of my teachers reminding them about my food allergies and the importance of maintaining a food-free environment. Through emailing and eventually meeting with the administration, I was able to be safe in class. The administration now enforces the no food in class policy and sends quarterly reminders to the teachers about the importance of this policy.

Personal Experience: Not all requests will be met with willingness by the school administration. However, it is crucial that you inform teachers and school administrators about your allergies. I am a member of multiple school clubs, one in particular has baked goods provided at all of their lunch meetings. I have a severe egg allergy, and find being surrounded by baked goods makes me feel unsafe. I reached out to the club moderators to explain the issue, while they were supportive and wanted to increase inclusivity, they were unwilling to change their policy. After multiple conversations, they relented, stating that all food must be pre-packaged, labeled with ingredients. Not a complete win, however they are now creating a safer environment for all of us. Working to change school policy and practice regarding food is not always easy, however change is entirely possible and completely rewarding!



Personal Experience: Often poor policy is a result of ignorance rather than malice, thus offering to explain allergies and the safety risks helps to improve the situation. One of my favorite classes my junior year was Engineering and Design. We got the opportunity to have many hands-on learning experiences. One day we were experimenting with bridge design and we were challenged to create a spaghetti bridge that could hold weight. I immediately realized that I could not participate in this activity due to the gluten pasta. It was evident the moment my teacher realized the same thing, as she was horrified that she had forgotten. We were able to solve the problem by allowing my group to use popsicle sticks instead of pasta. This mistake was never meant to be exclusionary, we were able to remedy the problem quickly through communication and patience.

Personal Experience: My high school is deeply rooted in tradition, and in that vein every year the school has a celebration known as Feast. At this event, donuts are served to the entire school between the school liturgy and the teacher's talent show. Again, being surrounded by baked goods makes me nervous. This year, I reached out to the administrators over the summer to request that they make changes to the food at Feast specifically. I met with the administration over the summer to discuss these changes and was told that the donuts are a part of tradition at the school and that they would continue to be served. I was frustrated, but chose to continue to push the school to make this change. My parents and I sent the administration emails about the importance of my safety and inclusion during this day. I met with both the principal and president of the school to discuss these potential changes. After months of communication back and forth, the school informed me that all snacks provided would be gluten free and egg free. I was pleasantly surprised that the entire school's snack was pre-packaged, and properly labeled popcorn! This was the first time that I got to participate in and feel safe at this school event.



Final Advice

Ultimately the most valuable skill you can ever wield in your food allergy advocacy is your voice, your story. Your experience and expression is paramount to creating change in the world around you. Even difficult situations can be learning moments if only you allow yourself to grow from the moment and share your learning. Speak up and speak out for a more inclusive future because your individual voice can make a tangible difference. You already hold the power needed to make the world a better place, so share your story.

You Got This!