

**Muraco Elementary School Parents Association
Meeting Minutes
November 16, 2011**

Approvals October 2011 Minutes unanimously approved.

Committee Updates

Grants Committee

Jodi Cranston is waiting to hear about a Winchester Cultural Council grant for an all-school assembly. She is also willing to help with any funding needs, especially for enrichment.

Staff Appreciation Breakfasts

Suzanne Leslie wanted to share that there was a hand written thank you note addressed to MESPA from "the staff" saying how much they appreciate the Staff Appreciation Breakfasts. It was very sweet. We have had a great spread the past few months but still have many opportunities available.

Stop & Shop A+ Rewards:

We now have 49 cards registered and we have raised over \$115 for Muraco already this year. There will be another update in December, as the account is updated monthly. Please contact Maura Sullivan if you are having trouble registering your card or if you would like more information about the program.

School Recycling

Maura Sullivan and Amy Rindskopf are working with Lynch parents to coordinate efforts to increase school recycling across the district. We

are looking forward to working with our new Town Manager who is a strong recycling supporter and with the Board of Selectmen and other organizations in town.

Winchester Coalition For A Safer Community

The Coalition sponsored Winchester's second showing of the film "Race To Nowhere" and hosted Dr. Robert Brooks, who spoke about ways to reduce stress in kids. His website contains a wealth of information on this topic: <http://www.drrobertbrooks.com/>.

Spirit Wear

Muraco Spirit Wear items are selling well. Lots of orders are coming in. Last day to order is Tuesday November 22. Water bottles should be arriving soon!

Curriculum Enhancement

As was reported last meeting, the first letter to the teachers/staff informing them about their available enhancement money and the reimbursement process was sent out week of September 19th. Kristin is planning to send a follow-up letter in December.

According to the budget spreadsheet, to date eight staff members have already used all or some of their funds. \$1,156.01 of the total budget has been spent with \$4,193.99 remaining.

Annual Appeal

The annual appeal is at \$16,055 received, plus \$2,725 which will be coming in matching gifts as of 11/9, so we're at \$18,780 total. We feel confident that we will reach our goal, but certainly would encourage continued emails from enrichment coordinators through the end of the year as these help -- Bettina and the coordinators have done a great job with this. Also, we should plan on one more broad Constant Contact email to encourage those who usually give at year-end.

Math Club

The last Math Club meeting for this session will be November 29th. A new and improved Math Club is in the works for January. The club will meet after school and will be run by WHS Math Team students! The WHS Math Team won the New England Regional Title in spring 2011, so those students clearly know their math!

Kristen Bellaire reported that Math Club was very successful, with 38 students enrolled and in regular attendance and 19 students entering the contest. The fall session recently ended with a party. In January, Tom Haver, the Chair of the Math Department at the High School and Middle School, will be taking over the running of the Math Club, with WHS students assisting. Additional details will be announced shortly.

WFEE

Two Muraco reading specialists, Sue Borges and Pat DiFranco are just back from the International Dyslexia Conference. The Conference focused on techniques for teaching reading and writing to children with a variety of learning styles. Pat and Sue will be sharing what they learned with entire district as they serve on a town wide advisory committee for new reading initiatives.

Sue was pretty excited about the conference. Here is an email she sent me yesterday: "Just back from Chicago and the international IDA meeting! What an amazing experience.....we absolutely loved every minute of it! We learned lots of new, innovative, and research-based info and we rubbed shoulders with many of the outstanding leaders in the field! Thank you for giving us this incredible opportunity through the WFEE grant. We can't wait to share our experiences with you, our colleagues, parents, and the children we teach! Many, many thanks for making this wonderful experience possible for us! With sincere gratitude, Susan Borges and Pat DiFranco."

Thank you also to everyone who attended the "20th Annual Putnam

County Spelling Bee" in support of Laurie Kirby and WFEE. Laurie was an exemplary guest speller and wonderful sport! The NextDoor Theater will be donating \$1500 to WFEE thanks to the success of the two-night fundraiser.

Discussions & Announcements

Winchester League of Women Voters Town Government Event

Susan Verdicchio, appearing on behalf of the Winchester League of Women Voters, announced an event that the League was hosting at Town Hall the following Sunday, called "Town Government 101." The event was designed to educate Winchester residents about how the various departments and boards in Town operate. She also encouraged Muraco parents to consider becoming members of the League, stating that there were many ways to be involved, with varying degrees of time commitment (helping with the Day at the Races event that takes place before the Town Election in March or helping register WHS seniors to vote). If anyone is interested in finding out more about the League, please contact Susan Verdicchio at s.verdicchio@gmail.com.

Muraco Science Fair

The Muraco Science Fair will take place this year on March 7 (Grades K-2) and March 8 (Grades 3-5). The format will be the same as last year, with children choosing and conducting their own experiments (with the help of a grown-up) and then presenting their findings or conducting their experiments again in the gym. Parents are encouraged to help their children choose experiments that would be appropriate in the gym (nothing too loud or too messy!). The Muraco Library has some great books with ideas for science experiments and these books will be made available to children well in advance of the Fair. Parents will be asked to donate food for snacks in order to keep costs down. The faculty contacts will be Andrea Phelan (Grades K-2) and Virginia McDonough (Grades 3-5). If parents have any questions about the Science Fair, please contact Lilian Busse at lilianbusse@verizon.net. Note: **This is Lilian's last year at Muraco, so we will be needing someone to run the Science Fair**

next year!

Enrichment Update

Bettina Parks, Enrichment Co-Chair, initiated a discussion regarding Enrichment funding. It has been the general practice for MESPA to pay for programming and the parents to pay for bus transportation for field trips. An issue had arisen in connection with the 5th grade program in particular, where 5th grade parents are also asked to fund separately an end-of-the-year enrichment activity, such as Project Adventure. The discussion focused on how much it was reasonable for parents to pay and whether to set a cap on parent contributions. A consensus was reached that no cap was necessary at this time, but that the 5th grade parents would be notified of the parent contribution amount and advised that financial support would be available where needed.

School Committee Update

Chris Nixon provided an overview of the Town's budgetary process, including the presentations to the School Committee by the elementary school principals on December 6th, the presentations of the elementary school improvement plans on December 12th, the Superintendent's recommended school department budget on December 20th and a public hearing on the proposed school department budget on January 11th (snow date of January 13th). The proposed school department budget will then be submitted to the Town Manager on January 17th and the Town Manager will submit his recommended budget to the Finance Committee on February 15th. In late February/early March, the Finance Committee will meet to discuss the proposed budgets and the public is welcome to attend.

Chris Nixon also discussed MCAS results at Lynch and the school choice that has been offered to Lynch parents because Lynch is a "Title 1" school, thereby triggering certain aspects of the "No Child Left Behind" law that are not applicable to Ambrose (which currently has the same improvement status as Lynch). In November, Superintendent McAlduff sent Lynch parents a letter, giving them the choice to send

their children to Muraco, Vinson-Owen at Parkhurst or Lincoln. It is unclear how many, if any, Lynch parents will exercise school choice. The Superintendent's Office and the School Committee have met with Lynch parents a number of times regarding this issue and will continue to be in contact during this process.

Upcoming Events

Thursday, December 1

Tuesday, December 6

Wednesday, December 14

December 26-January 2

Wednesday, January 4

Thursday, January 12

Wednesday, January 18

Staff Appreciation Breakfast

School Committee Meeting
(Elementary Principal Budget
Presentations)

Early Release Day

School Vacation

Muraco School Advisory
Council Meeting

Muraco Math Morning

MESPA Meeting (7 pm)