

**Muraco Elementary School Parents Association  
Meeting Minutes  
March 21, 2012**

**Approvals**

- February meeting minutes were unanimously approved.

**Committee updates and Volunteer Opportunitites**

BJ's membership

As a fundraiser, the Muraco community is invited to join BJ's Wholesale Club (or renew their existing membership) now through the end of March. For every membership, BJ's will give Muraco \$5. Please contact Kim Cohen at [ivan.kim@verizon.net](mailto:ivan.kim@verizon.net) with any questions.

Publicity

The Winchester Star did a nice story on the Science Fair on page 6 of this week's paper.

Spirit Wear

The Spirit Committee would like to see if there's interest in doing another sales campaign.

Discussion: Hats and sweatshirts were suggested. Sweatshirts have been sold in the past and sell well as long as they are priced right. The suggestion was made to wait until the fall, then add hats and sweatshirts to the sale. There was also discussion about which logo to use for a new order. A suggestion was made to use a "Property of" logo. We could also use the old logo because the company would probably still have the screen and this would save us some money.

Science Fair

Last week's Science Fair was a huge success with about 130 children participating. Thanks to Lilian Busse for all her hard work in organizing this event. Beth Preston and Mike Acker have graciously agreed to lead the Science Fair in 2013.

Curriculum Enhancement

Curriculum Enhancement spending did not change from last month. Out of the total budget of \$5350.00, to date only \$2645.95 has been spent and \$2704.05 remains. Kristen will start contacting individuals and groups to encourage them to spend their money!

Facility enhancement

The grounds committee is trying to figure out when to have the spring clean-up. Should it be on a Saturday or on a Thursday/Friday after school? Should we tie

it in with Earth day or the fifth grade service project? The grounds are getting prepped for spreading bark mulch and for planting annuals. We are looking for help once the bark mulch arrives and also to help pick up litter around the school grounds. Anyone with suggestions should contact Maura Sullivan or Jannene Levesque.

Discussion: The dates that were suggested were May 4 and May 11. People thought it would be good to have it start Friday afternoon and finish Saturday morning. A Brownie troop will also help.

### Box Tops

The Box Tops for Education collections raised \$1500 this year. The next collection is in the fall. Keep saving Box Tops!

### Amazon Rewards

Use of the Amazon Rewards link has raised \$615 so far. Keep using the link at [muracoparents.com](http://muracoparents.com) to start your Amazon shopping.

### Math Club

The Muraco Math Club was started by parents and eventually became a MASP activity with WHS students planning and facilitating it. There won't be a Spring Math Club MASP because the high school students are too busy. I'm seeking feedback/input from participating students to see if they enjoyed Math Club and would sign up again. I'd also like input on 1.) the length of the Math Club sessions, 2.) the difficulty of the math problems, and 3.) the helpfulness of the WHS students.

Discussion: Should the parents take over the Math Club again? The high school program seems loose and disorganized, there's not really a contact person there. The suggestion was made to send out an email survey to the participants to get their opinions. MASP may be able to do this.

Another suggestion was made that maybe the high school students could contribute ideas about the curriculum and activities, and the parents could carry it out.

### WFEE

Time to pick out your shoes, book a babysitter, and get ready for the best event of the spring. The WFEE Prom 'n' Aid is set for May 12<sup>th</sup> under a tent at Chevalo Park. Help us celebrate 20 years of supporting Winchester teachers as we focus on education! Tickets are now available on line at [www.wfee.org](http://www.wfee.org) or after April 2 they will be available at Book Ends.

The WFEE Grants Committee is currently reviewing applications for next year's programs. Decisions should be announced in late April or May. Stay tuned!

## Discussion of School purchases

There are a couple funds with surplus money in this year's budget and we'd like to use some of that money for purchases for the school.

The Callahan fund was set up by a student's parents in the memory of Suzanne Callahan. Money from this fund is spent with the guidance of the Callahan family to benefit the school. Last year we used money from this fund to help buy the rock climbing wall and lady bug cameras. The Fund received \$2000 this year for a balance of \$8499.

The Muraco fund is usually spent with the guidance of the Muraco family and Laurie.

We would like to use some money from the Muraco fund to refurbish the Muraco sign. The sign is in bad shape. It needs to be stripped and repainted. The town will fix it for \$700. A vote was taken to refurbish the sign. The motion was unanimously approved.

There are a couple options for the Callahan fund. The Callahan family likes both ideas:

Sound system: We'd like to get a new sound system for the gymnasium. We'd like a system with a looping system that accommodates kids that are hard of hearing. The old system we have is inadequate. We'll need to do some research. A quick glance at prices shows we could spend anywhere from \$300 - \$2000. Steve Curan's name was suggested to do the research.

iPads: Laurie would like to have an iPads in the classroom. She says we could get a 5-10 pack with 2 year warranty for \$5300. Laurie is hoping to have an ipad for every student but for now a cart wheeled into classroom for whole classroom

A couple other ideas were suggested for the money:

Sports equipment: [redacted] subsidizes all the equipment out of her trunk. She hasn't asked for money before, and says she'd only like a couple goal nets and wiffle bats. We'd like to give her a \$1000 budgeted for playground equipment.

Open Circle: Open Circle is a social pragmatics curriculum. It creates a common language for solving problems. They use this at Lynch. The program is very expensive because everybody has to be trained. There is no training the trainer and training costs \$600-\$700 per teacher.

Lunch table: It would be nice to have a new lunch table in the courtyard. Maybe the 5<sup>th</sup> grade could give that as a gift?

## Discussion:

Many schools in the area already use iPads in the classroom. Every student in Burlington has an iPad that's funded by the school department. In Manchester-By-The-Sea, kindergarteners all have them to use in the classroom. Vincent-Owen just got iPads. Laurie really likes iPads and hopes that at some point every student can have one.

Muraco classrooms currently have a minimum of 2 stationary desktop computers, and the students can also use the laptops. The laptops come to the classroom on a cart that holds 24 laptops. The teachers have to sign the cart out and the teachers end up fighting for them. The problem with this is that the use of the computer in the classroom is so contrived, you lose the teachable moments. Some people also think iPads are better than laptops because it has educational application that you can't use on a computer.

In Burlington, iPads are completely funded by the school department which entered into a lease agreement through Apple Value. Parents can purchase insurance for the iPads in case they are lost or broken. Teachers in Burlington claim this has really changed things at the school. They took away hall monitors and they've noticed a decrease things happening in the bathrooms like smoking and vandalism. There seems to be a general openness to technology there. Sometimes teachers use Skype to teach. The kids help the teachers with their websites.

What is Winchester's technology plan? Is there someone at the district level that oversees the big picture? There is a director of technology. Let's ask somebody from tech department to come to the next MESPA meeting to discuss this. Some people are worried that we don't have infrastructure to support iPads, there's not enough bandwidth and that needs to be addressed at the town level.

Other concerns: Will we supply the school with iPads on our own or with the district? Will we buy 10 a year? What's the plan? Don't iPads get outdated really fast. We'd always be chasing the new ones. Could we have access restrictions in place? Wouldn't there be problems with kids texting? In response to the texting question, teachers in Burlington say kids used to pass notes. If you have an engaging classroom, they won't. The world is moving forward and we need to keep up. We're waiting for the district to come up with their plan, but in the meantime our kids will have the benefit of a couple years of experience with iPads.

How would we use the iPads? Laurie would like to use them in 5<sup>th</sup> grade and in kindergarten. People like the idea of having one in each classroom.

WFEE has given a \$54,000 grant for one model 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade classroom at each school. The classrooms would have iPads or Kindle Fires. That's great for those kids. How would a parent whose child is not in that classroom feel?

A show of hands was taken to gauge interest in each suggested purchase. There seemed to be support for the sound system, the iPads, and the sports equipment. There wasn't much interest in Open Circle. The school psychologist is working on something similar now. Maybe Open Circle should be handled at the district level.

A motion made to spend up to \$6000 to lease/purchase 10 iPads from our surplus funds. The motion was approved.

A motion was made to approve up to \$2000 from Callahan fund for a new sound system for the gymnasium that has looping for the hearing impaired, and if any funds remain, to get more iPads and sporting equipment. The motion was approved.

### **Wellness program**

Maura Sullivan's discussion about the Wellness program will be moved to the next MESPA meeting.

### **New Food Guidelines**

Shawn quickly mentioned the new food guidelines that go into effect on August 1, 2012. There will be no sugar at classroom parties. The new guidelines will also govern fundraisers and things like the slushy snack on Field Day.

### **Sports in the Morning**

Some of the schools are doing sports in the morning, like a before school program. They meet twice a week at Ambrose and VO. Studies show that kids learn better if they do sports in the morning. Should we talk about doing something like this? Maybe we can roll this in to the Wellness discussion next meeting.

### **Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be May 16 at **AM or PM?**