

Muraco Elementary School Parents Association
Meeting Minutes
April 5, 2011

Approvals

February 2011 Minutes unanimously approved..

MESPA 2010-2011 Budget update unanimously approved.

Guest Speaker: Parent to Parent Co-Chair Margen Kelsey

Parent to Parent Co-chair, Margen Kelsey, spoke to MESPA about the mission and activities of the group. Parent to Parent is a community-based organization that has been in existence for 28 years. It organizes speakers, book groups, and activities for parents in Winchester. The Parent to Parent Book Group meets in the Winchester Public Library, from 7-8:30pm, a few times each year. The last program of this year will be on Monday May 2nd, discussing Pressured Parents, Stressed-Out Kids by Wendy Grolnick and Kathy Seal. Everyone is invited to the book group, even if they have not read the book. Copies of the book are available at the Winchester Public Library and Book Ends.

Parent to Parent is seeking a Muraco representative for the board. If interested, please contact Maura Sullivan at mdsullivan@comcast.net or Laura Colella at colelladickison@gmail.com. The time commitment includes: 5 board meetings a year (some morning, some evening) and helping organize and run the Book Groups and/or community events.

Committee Updates

Grants Committee

The Grants committee submitted three grants to WFEE and one to Target for an all-school assembly. If any committee anticipates the need for funding for an event, program, or equipment next year, please contact Jodi Cranston at cranston@bu.edu.

Discussions and Announcements

2011-2012 Calendar

The next (2011-2012) school year will start on Tuesday, August 30th. Both Tuesday, August 30th and Wednesday, August 31st will be early release days. Thursday, September 1st will be a full school day. There will be no school on Friday, September 2nd or Monday, September, 5th (Labor Day). School will resume on Tuesday, September 6th.

Staff Appreciation Breakfast-Volunteers Needed

The Staff Appreciation Breakfast takes place on the first Thursday of each month.

We are looking for volunteers to provide breakfast treats for our great teachers. We especially need volunteers for the last two breakfasts on May 5th and June 2nd. If you are interested, please contact Suzanne Leslie at s.leslie@comcast.net.

Enrichment at Muraco

Each year MESPA provides every grade level with Enrichment funds to be used to enhance the curriculum and learning experience for the students. There was discussion about whether there is a need to have a strict policy on how Enrichment funds are used. The current bylaws do not provide specific guidelines regarding what type of activities Enrichment dollars should fund. Given the challenges of our increased enrollment and lack of common space, it has been harder hold traditional Enrichment activities during the past few years and alternative uses of Enrichments dollars have been pursued. As a result, there have been more field trips (due to lack of space at Muraco) and some teachers have decided to use the funds towards classroom supplies such as games or technology that can be used in the classroom to enrich the curriculum. The discussion centered around what, if any, guidelines regarding the use of Enrichment dollars should be added to the bylaws and whether MESPA should combine the Field Trip and Enrichment funds in its annual budget.

Currently, Field Trip funds cover the cost of transportation for one field trip per grade for each school year. Enrichment funds cover the cost of the actual Enrichment activities, which traditionally were in-school presentations such as the Japanese Tea Ceremony that enhances the Second Grade unit on Japan. Each grade's Enrichment activities are coordinated by the Enrichment Committee members, who work closely with the teachers to select activities, with the teachers selecting programs and the Enrichment Committee members taking care of booking the programs and activities. In the past few years, more of the Enrichment activities have taken place outside of the school, including field trips to museums and theater performances. On occasion, the Enrichment dollars have funded the full cost of some of these field trips, including the transportation. There was a suggestion that if some of the grades were using Enrichment dollars to fund field trips, than perhaps it made sense to combine the two funds and not separate out a specific Field Trip fund.

Additional discussion explored whether it is appropriate to limit the use of Enrichment funds to only traditional Enrichment activities such as classroom presentations by artists, musicians, scientists, etc. or whether Enrichment should be more broadly defined, with MESPA permitting the allocation of Enrichment dollars for the purchase of classroom materials that the teachers believe will enhance the curriculum. Possible approaches include: 1) giving the teachers full discretion to choose how Enrichment dollars will be used; 2) restricting the funds to traditional Enrichment activities; 3) considering requests on a case by case basis; 4) giving discretion to the Enrichment Committee; 5) requiring a discussion at a PTO meeting. The input of the entire MESPA community is important to this discussion. The topic will be revisited at next month's MESPA meeting, currently

scheduled for Tuesday, May 17th, in the evening. In the meantime, comments and suggestions may be directed to Laura Colella or Maura Sullivan.

Spring Clean-up

A big thank you to Jannene Levesque and family for cleaning up the courtyard at Muraco! A spring clean-up day will be scheduled in May. Details to follow!

Staff Appreciation Week

Staff Appreciation Week begins on Monday May 2nd! MESPA will host a Staff Appreciation luncheon for the teachers that Monday, which is an early release day. MESPA's Staff Appreciation Breakfast will be that Thursday, May 5th. Show your appreciation for our staff by bringing in a tasty breakfast dish. Students may also show appreciation by writing a note or drawing a picture of thanks and appreciation for the classroom teachers, staff members, specialists, aides, custodians that week. MESPA will send out a reminder message after April vacation. Other ideas of how we can show our appreciation for our wonderful staff are very much welcome. Please contact either Laura Colella or Maura Sullivan.

Science Fair

The Muraco Science Fair will be held on Wednesday, April 27th and Thursday, April 28th. Approximately 80 students have signed up to participate. Science experiment books are currently available in the library. Anyone interested in volunteering at the event should contact Lilian Busse at lilianbusse@verizon.net.

Staff Announcement

Perrin Tellock will be leaving at the end of the school year to pursue his doctorate. A new psychologist will be hired for next year. We will greatly miss Mr. Tellock. We thank him for his years of service to Muraco families and wish him the very best!

Impact of Override Failure on Muraco, other schools and town

The town-wide override on March 29th did not pass and this will have an impact on the school budget for the next several years. For the 2011-2012 school year, the impact at the elementary school level will include a .5 FTE (full time employee) reduction in specialists across the five elementary schools, which will result in a small adjustment in specialist class time. In addition, the supplies budget will be cut by 9% at each elementary school. The supplies cut will impact the elementary schools and the schools may ask the PTOs and parents for additional help with basics, including paper.

In the next three years, the impact of the override failure is more significant, with a loss of 15 to 29 teachers and staff members throughout the school district.

Enrollment Update

As of now, there will be 4 sections for each grade next year. Kindergarten enrollment is at 61 now but it is expected to increase. Therefore, there will be 4

Kindergarten classes next year. Mrs. Kirby is also monitoring the current 2nd grade to see if a 5th section will be needed.

Update on MESPA and Suzanne Russo Callahan fund gifts

The new playground equipment is here and the climbing wall has been installed in the gym. Thank you to the Muraco families who donated to the Annual Appeal and to the family of Suzanne Russo Callahan fund for its ongoing generosity!

Laurie Kirby expressed thank you to MESPA and the community for purchasing the ladibug cameras. Teachers have found them an invaluable educational tool and they are now in nearly every classroom.

Winchester Special Education PAC: Request for increased dues

The Winchester Special Education Parents Advisory Council is a state-mandated group. Annually, it provides education for parents through engaging speakers and other events. For the past several years, the group has been underfunded due to an oversight in collecting annual fees from the PTOs. This year, SPED PAC has requested that its annual dues be adjusted from \$100.00 to \$300.00. Whether to increase the annual SPED PAC dues to \$300.00 will be part of next year's MESPA budget discussion. A motion was made and seconded to increase the SPEDPAC dues of \$100.00 to \$300.00 for the current year's budget. A vote was held and was unanimous in favor of increasing this year's dues to \$300.00.

Winchester Public School's Shopping Day at Mahoney's

Shop at Mahoney's on Wednesday, April 13th and 10% percentage of the proceeds will go towards the Winchester Public Schools. Thank you to Mahoney's for its continuous support of our schools.

2011-2012 Board and Committee Positions

There are many volunteer opportunities, including several Board positions, available for next year. For details about the available positions and how you can get involved, contact: Laura Colella at colelladickison@gmail.com or Maura Sullivan at mdsullivan@comcast.net.

There was discussion about creating a separate position for Annual Appeal Chair. This role was previously included as part of the Assistant Treasurer's responsibilities. However, the Assistant Treasurer and the Annual Appeal roles are two distinct roles. An amendment to the bylaws will be considered and possibly proposed at the next MESPA meeting.

In addition, there was a discussion of how two Co-Chairs may not be necessary and that ideally, MESPA will have a Chair next year, with a Vice-Chair who plans to become Chair the following year. This would allow the Vice Chair to have a year "in training" by working with the current Chair before assuming the role of Chair and would provide for a smooth transition. This goal will be considered in soliciting next year's Board.

Upcoming Events

- o Mon-Fri April 18-22
 - o Wed-Thurs April 27-28
 - o May 2-6
 - o Monday May 2
- School Vacation
Science Fair
Staff Appreciation Week
Early Release Day