

Muraco Elementary School Parents Association

33 Bates Road Winchester MA 01890 781-721-7030

December 2, 2008

Dear Members of the School Committee:

We are writing on behalf of the parents at Muraco Elementary School to express our concerns for the 2009-2010 school year budget. In the midst of your decision making process, we urge you to consider our requests. As you are aware, this has been a difficult year for Muraco with significant and unexpected enrollment increases.

As of November, our current enrollment is at 430 students. The current projection for next year is an additional 6%, or 456, the largest projected enrollment increase among all the elementary schools. Current projections warrant an additional classroom, for which we do not have space. Muraco already has specialists meeting with students in hallways and in the library even with the November addition of the modular classrooms. A classroom designated to be our first technology lab this year, has been converted to another classroom to accommodate the ever-growing student population. The teachers and students have been very patient and work tirelessly to make a difficult situation manageable.

We are concerned that the current enrollment projection does not take into account the anomaly we have seen at Muraco over the past few years, namely the sharp increase in enrollment over the summer that exceeds each year's estimates. Given statements made at School Committee meetings this past summer acknowledging these ongoing discrepancies, we believe strong growth will continue to exceed existing census methodologies.

We strongly urge the School Committee to consider not only adding an additional teacher (so we do not encounter the same problem as we did in the 1st grade this year), and also request additional modular classroom space. Since "supporting the maintenance of our current class size guidelines" is an important FY10 Budget priority, we need the additional teacher and space. The approximate 800 square foot classroom size falls short of the district's ideal of over 900 sq. feet. Removing a teacher from another grade to compensate for larger enrollment in another area is not an adequate solution. Rather than dealing with difficulties after the school year begins it is prudent to enact proactive solutions to our enrollment and space concerns. We understand that longer term solutions may be considered, but for the next several years Muraco faces a painful situation.

We also request serious consideration for Muraco's technology needs. Muraco still does not have a technology lab with sufficient wiring and equipment throughout the building. Many of our 5th grade students entering McCall are not equipped with the same level of exposure to technology as their peers. Bringing Muraco to a comparable level of technology would be consistent with the District's goals to "expand the availability and innovative use of technology for teaching, learning and administration."

We appreciate the difficulties you face in determining the budget and thank you in advance for your consideration. Please know that we are grateful for your support of all the Winchester students and schools.

Sincerely,

Sue Kim and Christa Russo, *Co-Chairs, Muraco Elementary School Parents Association*