

Muraco Elementary School Parents Association Meeting Minutes September 22, 2010

Upcoming Events:

- Tuesday October 5 Welcome Coffee 8:45AM (host:
Sharon Moore)
- Thursday October 7 Staff Appreciation Breakfast
- Thursday October 7 School Council Meeting 4PM
- Monday October 11 No School - Columbus Day
- Fri-Sat October 15-16 Muraco Clean-Up and Painting Days
- Wed-Fri October 20-22 Early Release Days/Teacher
Conferences
- Friday October 29 Halloween Pizza Party 5-7PM
- Tuesday November 2 No school - Professional
Development Day

Update from Laurie Kirby

- **Facility/Technology Enhancements:**
 - A new heating system was being installed throughout the summer and is expected to be operational by October 15th.
 - "White board paint" was applied in most of the classrooms over the summer. The white boards can be used as a screen with LCD projectors and ELMO document readers. In addition, teachers have been trained on the ELMO document readers. The ELMO document readers were purchased last spring with funds from the Suzanne Russo Callahan fund.
 - All 5th grades across the district have interactive white boards and the goal is to eventually have them across all grade levels.
- **Arrival Procedure:**
 - One of the goals of the new school year has been to get students in their classrooms by 8:30am so that classes can begin promptly. The

focus has been on trying to make the morning routine more conducive for learning while also being safe and comfortable for students.

- There are several benefits to the new arrival procedure. Having the entire school line-up behind the building makes it easier for families with multiple children, whereas in the past siblings may have been separated. It also helps with supervision for the 3rd-5th grades; last year students were lined up on the side of the building, with class lines wrapping around the portable, which was difficult to supervise.
- The arrival procedure is getting smoother every day. At the first community meeting, Principal Kirby reviewed the procedures with students to make sure they were all well aware of the new routine.
- Specifics of the arrival procedure are as follows:
 - The first bell rings at 8:25am, at which time students will go to their classrooms. The second bell rings at 8:30am, when classroom teaching will begin. Students arriving to school later than 8:30am will be marked as late.
 - As part of the new arrival procedure, all bus students will come directly in the front door since they typically arrive at 8:25am when the first bell rings. Kindergarten students on the bus will wait for a supervisor and then walk to the front door.
 - When the 8:25am bell rings, students can enter the building from wherever they may be. For example, if students were dropped off at 8:25am, they may proceed directly into the front of the building. If students are walking around to the back while the bell rings, they may enter in one of the side doors. After 8:30am the side door will be locked.
 - On green (good weather) flag days, students will line-up by class on the hardtop in the back of the building. On red (rainy/snowy) flag days, the 3rd-5th grades plus Mrs. Phelan and Mrs. Webber's classes line-up in the gym. All other classes line-up in the lobby/front hall.
- Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Vaccari will be out back until 8:40am to ensure students get to their classes. In addition, 5th grade students are "monitors" to help escort students to the back of the building. There will also be teachers at the foot of the hill and in front of the building to

assist in supervising.

- Principal Kirby is asking the town for a hard surface on each side of the building to make it safe for students in all weather conditions.

Whenever feasible, students will continue to line-up at the back of the school throughout the winter and the paths will be plowed. If snow or ice does not permit outdoor line-up, students will line up indoors.

- As mentioned above, the goal of the arrival procedure is to be safe and comfortable for all students. If you have any questions regarding the new procedures, please contact Principal Kirby directly.

As a reminder, if your child is late or will be absent from school, parents need to leave a message at the main Muraco phone number at 781-721-7030 (then dial 110). If your child is absent but the school has not received a phone call, the school will call to verify the child is absent that day. It is important to call if your child will be absent. Calling helps the administration be as efficient as possible in knowing who is absent on a given day. More about this procedure, and all Muraco policies, can be found in the [Muraco School Handbook](#).

Greeters are in the lobby helping to direct students to their classrooms and sign-in visitors from 8:30am until 11:30am. Visitors need to wear badges in the building at all times.

There was a suggestion that next year families be permitted to visit the school before the school year begins so that students could see their classrooms.

There is an additional lunch supervisor this year. Students are remembering their pin numbers and lunch is going well. Tables have been added this year to alleviate crowding in the lunchroom.

Approvals

- The June 4, 2010 meeting minutes and the 2010-2011 budget were unanimously approved.

- MESPA Budget updates:
 - The total budget for the 2010-2011 school year is \$35,766.
 - MESPA budgeted \$19,000 for Annual Appeal (formerly known as Direct Appeal) this year. Last year \$22,000 was raised through direct appeal but it was not clear if that was a one-time occurrence or if it will be a repeated pattern.
 - MESPA is looking into trying online banking and online budgeting this year. More to come!
 - Last year, discretionary funds were available due to a surplus left over from previous budget years, as well as funds remaining from a fundraiser held a few years ago. MESPA used these funds to purchase non-fiction guided reading books, new playground equipment, LCD projectors and white board paint. MESPA also set aside money for art and music supplies. MESPA will consider additional one-time purchases this year with any such discretionary funds outside of its operating budget.
- The Scholastic Breakfast Fund (listed on the Balance Sheet) was created to hold funds received by 5th grade teacher, Brenda Turney, through a grant Ms. Turney was awarded last spring. Ms. Turney was the winner of the [Scholastic Back to Breakfast Challenge](#) and will be starting a program at Muraco where students can cook breakfast and research recipes and healthy ingredients.
- There was a suggestion to place a bulletin board in front of the school that is similar to the one Vinson-Owen uses. Michelle Blumsack will research the costs.

Annual Appeal

- Annual Appeal is Muraco's primary fundraising event for the year. October is officially Annual Appeal Month and a letter will be sent soon to all parents/guardians.
- There will be a table at the Open House so that parents can donate that night. A reminder will also be made about the importance of corporate matching.
- Last year the percentage of families that donated was about 46%.

The goal is to have 100% participation.

- Using Paypal was helpful last year and will be available as an option this year as well. MESPA is researching whether it is possible to set up recurring payments through Paypal and this could be an option for Muraco families in the future.
- There will also be a box to drop off donations in the Main Office. The box is marked "Annual Appeal."
- Most of the Annual Appeal funds go directly to enrichment activities. The Annual Appeal letter provides examples of how the money is spent.

Committee Updates

Staff Appreciation Breakfasts

SAB is still looking for volunteers to bring breakfast items throughout the year and/or set-up on first Thursday of each month. Please sign up [HERE](#) to help once, or throughout the year!

Room Parents

Thank you to all parents who have volunteered to be Room Parents.

We are finalizing the assignments and expect to distribute information to the group in the next week. We still have a need for volunteers in the following classrooms:

3rd - Souris

5th - Turney

5th Grade Committee

The 5th Grade Committee held a meeting on Sunday September 19th, and they are in a good position to launch their efforts. They aim to raise almost \$10,000 this year and could still use additional help! If you know you think you would like to be involved, please contact Catherine Curtis at ceacurtis@gmail.com or Karin Sangster at k.sangster@verizon.net.

Grant Writing

If you have a background or interest in grant writing, we need you! There are many grants available that would be beneficial to Muraco. Muraco can submit as many grants as it wants. If you are interested, please contact Jenny Nordan at jennynordan@gmail.com.

Community Events

Fun community events on early release days can be potential revenue generators for MESPA. Two years ago a swim party was held and we are hoping to do something similar again this year. If you are interested in helping to organize an event, please contact jennynordan@gmail.com.

Enrichment Coordinators

Enrichment coordinators are needed for 5th grade. The role entails meeting with teachers at the beginning of the year to understand what type of activities they may be interested in, researching the costs of events/trips, and scheduling the events/trips.

School Committee Update

Chris Nixon provided an update from the School Committee. Chris, currently a School Committee member and formerly the liaison between the School Committee and Muraco, provided some background on the School Committee for new parents. The School Committee is an elected committee with 5 members and is responsible for approving and maintaining district-wide school policies and the search, selection and employment of the Superintendent; it is not responsible for daily school operations. This year the School Committee has designated member liaisons with each of the 7 schools in order to increase communication with the schools. Chris is the Muraco and Lynch liaison.

School Committee Short, Medium, and Long-Term priorities are:

Short:

- 3-year agreement with WEA (teachers union)
- Wrapping up Capital Planning prioritization for school facilities with

Capital Planning Committee

Seeing the completion of schematic design for the new Vinson-Owen Elementary School and submission to MSBA in October

Medium:

Beginning the public redistricting discussion

V-O funding mechanism (override)

Development of new Talented & Gifted Program and implementation

Bringing V-O swing space plan into better focus (likely Parkhurst School)

Comprehensive WPS policy review

Winchester High School Feasibility Study with the MSBA (Mass School Building Authority)

Long:

Renovation/improvements of WHS physical plant

Long term capital planning discussions/prioritizations

Long-range/multi-year budget planning

Redistricting is expected to take place before September 2013. The redistricting process is time-consuming and will allow for many opportunities for public comment.

While VO is being remodeled, students are expected to go to the Parkhurst School. Parkhurst could potentially house the administration offices as well as free up space at Lynch, where administrative offices currently exist.

There is an interim principal at McCall Middle School this year.

Muraco parents have a vested interest in participating in the search for a new principal since it is likely that the new principal will be there when current Muraco students enter McCall.

A district-wide policy review is being done by the School Committee. Superintendent McAlduff will make the draft policies available for public review.

Christa Russo is currently the MESPA School Committee liaison. If

anyone is interested in joining her as the Liaison, please contact Jenny Nordan. School Committee meetings are held twice a month, usually on Tuesday evenings.

Announcements

- SpedPAC has several speaker events coming up: Harvard psychologist, Dr. Ross Greene will be speaking on how to communicate with your child on November 8th and Speech and Language Pathologist Sarah Ward will be speaking on executive functioning in February. These talks are geared to the general community, not just special needs. Contact Kim Lazarus if you are interested in learning more.
- Whitsons, the WPS food services vendor, has created a "virtual café" where parents can see the nutritional value of meals. [Click here](#) to see the virtual cafe. In response to parents' concerns last year about food allergies, Whitsons is planning to let parents know about potential substitutions to the menu as soon as possible. It is not yet clear how soon in advance Whitsons will know about any substitutions. For more information, please contact Kevin Silvia, Whitsons Food Service Director at 781-721-7033 or ksilvia@winchester.k12.ma.us.
- Massachusetts received \$250 million as part of the U.S. Department of Education's Race to the Top funding. Winchester could potentially receive \$34,000 (over 3 years) as part of that award.
- Superintendent Bill McAlduff is putting together a task force that will focus on bullying prevention. All staff will receive anti-bullying training over the next few months. Contact Superintendent McAlduff directly if you are interested in serving on the task force.
- There is retirement party on Nov. 12th for Dr. Guido Sabelli, former principal at VO, and the retiring VO secretary at the Jenks Center. Everyone is invited.
- MassRides Safe Routes to School, an organization run by the state Department of Transportation, partners with schools to educate the public regarding safe walking and biking practices. McCall will become a partner school this year and Lincoln may participate as well. Other Winchester schools, including Muraco, may also become partner

schools. As part of the program, the state reviews walking and biking routes and possibly provides funding for improvements to those routes. In addition to the Safe Routes program, the Town of Winchester is reviewing safety issues at all schools. Potential improvements for safer routes to Muraco could include adding a cross walk on Cross Street and a sign that says "School" on Washington Street. If you are interested in being a part of that review, contact Police Officer Tom Groux.

- Oct. 6th is International Walk to School Day and Muraco will be participating this year.