

Grade Level Meeting Guidelines

1. The grade level chairs are the representative voice for the parents of their grade. They notify their class representatives of the upcoming grade level meetings so they may communicate in a timely fashion to the parents of their class for any agenda items. If a parent brings up a concern or idea that the grade level chair does not feel is valid, it is the chair's obligation to address the issue at the meeting.
2. The format of the grade level meetings is informal and conversational.
3. The Grade Level Meeting is not the venue to discuss individual teachers and/or students. Parents with those concerns should be directed either back to the individual teacher, Ms. Monaco or Ms. Soler.
4. In the interest of covering all grades in a timely fashion, it may be necessary to limit the amount of time used to discuss a particular topic.

Grade Level Meeting November 18, 2009

Summary

I. Kindergarten

- Supervision during recess time: The current ratio of children being supervised by adults is good: On Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, there are 11 or 12 children per adult. On Wednesdays a couple of classes are taken to the 1st grade playground to avoid having too many children in the K playground. Further increasing the number of adults supervising the playground is unrealistic as it is costly. Ms. Monaco took the opportunity to encourage parents to attend the first District Budget public session on Nov. 30th at 7:30 pm at the Hommocks Library to learn about the financial challenges that lie ahead.
- Slippery hallways during inclement weather: Murray's custodians put out mats at wintertime because it is more slippery. Also, they mop more often.

II. 1st Grade

No issues/questions raised.

III. 2nd Grade

- Grade policy on independent reading: The District uses the balanced literacy approach to teach reading. This methodology integrates a variety of literacy instructional

practices, one of which is guided reading, where there is focused instruction, and another is independent reading. It is good practice to break into groups according to students' needs and the skill or strategy being taught. There is a more detailed description of balanced literacy in the District's website at www.mamkschools.org, under "Curriculum and Instruction".

- Possibility of instituting a policy to have teachers send home weekly newsletters: Ms. Monaco strongly encourages teachers to write periodic informational letters. Each teacher implements this in a different way. If teachers are not sending home information, parents should speak to the teacher. In *Paws for News*, there is an update from K, 1st, and 2nd grades every other week, and from 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades on the alternate weeks.
- Uniformity across grade levels in writing down homework assignments: The way in which homework is conveyed is teacher specific. Sometimes it is not the same for all kids in the classroom. However the homework is conveyed, it should be clear. If it is not, Ms. Monaco encourages parents to talk directly to the teacher.

IV. 3rd Grade

- Supervision during recess time: Please see summary under Kindergarten.
- Slippery hallways during inclement weather: Please see summary under Kindergarten.
- Reinforcing script after 3rd grade: Teachers in 4th and 5th grade can give students a choice as to what handwriting they can use. It is important for the children to become proficient in script so they can read it. When kids have fine motor skills issues, some times it is easier to write in script. Ms. Monaco will raise this parent concern with the teachers.
- Teaching of foundational writing skills: Teachers encourage children to write and brainstorm in their notebooks. The mechanics and grammar are taught outside the notebook. Teachers have to hold the students accountable for incorporating the mechanics in their writing. The District has developed a scope/sequence and roadmap of writing skills that need to be acquired by each grade.
- Focus of building objectives at Murray vs. the other elementary schools: Ms. Monaco explained the goal setting process implemented by Dr. Fried three years ago, and how this year each building was asked to come up with one unique goal specific to that school, on top of the literacy goals and other goals provided by the District. Murray staff took the Americana theme, which originally started as a Mamaroneck Schools Foundation project, and enthusiastically embraced it as an opportunity to create an interdisciplinary curriculum (English/Social Studies/Art/Music) where lesson plans could be developed and shared. Murray therefore developed a unique goal that is fully embraced by the teachers because of the creativity, ownership, and community ties involved, while students are excited about integrating learning across different disciplines. For further detail, please refer to Ms. Monaco's description in the *Paws for News* issue of Dec. 4th.
- Dates for parent math meetings: The TERC workshop will be on 12/11. Additionally, there will be a 2nd grade Family Math Night on 12/3 with 50 slots, and a 1st grade Family Night Math some time in January.

V. *4th Grade*

- Cassiday quality of school photos: This is a PTA issue: Retake day is 12/3, and feedback has been very positive.
- Sending money with children to Circle Line field trip: Teachers recommend a limit to the amount of money to be brought on the trip. This is a good opportunity for parents to talk about money.
- Allowing use of scooters as alternative to driving: This issue was discussed at the last Grade Level Meeting. Here is the summary from that meeting: Scooters can be used if children are accompanied by an adult who makes sure they're using the scooter appropriately. The district policy is that there are no scooters or skate boards allowed on school ground, as indicated in signage around school. There is a safety issue of riding on the streets and keeping the scooters in the cubbies. Bikes are encouraged: a new bike rack will be placed soon.
- Focus of building objectives at Murray vs. the other elementary schools: Please see summary under 3rd grade.

VI. *5th Grade*

- Preparation for 6th grade math with TERC: The curriculum transition is easy for Murray students as the way TERC is taught at school fully prepares them for both Math and Enriched Math.
- Use of 4th grade ELAs, math tests, and ERBs to adapt instruction in 5th grade: Michael Kollmer, the District Director of Instructional Technology, has been helping Murray to look at the test results very closely for the past two years. He analyzes the data and provides detailed reports so teachers can understand the trends. There are grade level meetings looking at results from 3rd to 4th grade and from 4th to 5th grade. Teachers use the tests diagnostically to inform the instruction for the following school year.
- Existence of parent component to DARE: Officer Rui Sandies came to the 5th grade coffee on Oct. 5th to explain the DARE curriculum. If the parent has a specific question, he/she can email him directly.

VII. *Special Education*

- Primary "point person" when there is a question regarding Special Ed: If it is a classified student, the case manager is the special ed teacher or psychologist. If the student is not classified but had a report done externally, the parents should contact Ms. Monaco, who will speak to the school psychologist, who in turn will coordinate a meeting. If the student is not classified and has had no evaluation, the best thing is to contact the teacher.
- Receiving progress reports for building level services: Progress reports are given twice a year at the formal reporting period. Some times the building level providers join the parent/teacher conferences, but unfortunately, they cannot be at more than one meeting

at the same time. Parents should be able to meet with the service provider to talk about their child. The building level sessions are not in isolation; there is a lot of communication between the teacher and the service provider. This coordination ensures that skills are being transferred to the classroom. If parents have questions, they should contact the teacher, the service provider, the assistant principal, or the principal.