

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

January 13, 2010

Summary

I. Kindergarten

- Effect of mid-year budget cuts in classroom: Mid-year cuts will not be happening at this point. Ms. Monaco encourages parents to access information about the school budget in the District website at www.mamkschools.org under “Budget Communications”. The site includes answers to more than 200 community questions surrounding the District budget under “Frequently Asked Questions”. Also, Ms. Monaco encourages parents to attend the two Board of Education Budget Working Sessions, which will be held on Feb. 2nd and Feb. 9th at 7:30 pm at the Mamaroneck High School (enter through main entrance on Boston Post Road).
- Possibility of adding Spanish to the Kindergarten curriculum: Although research shows that the best time to learn a second language is at a young age, it is a huge financial and programming commitment. Adding a program given the current budget constraints is highly unlikely. Also, you have to consider the program implications for each elementary school in the District so when the child gets to Hommocks, all the students are at the same level.

II. 1st Grade

- Possibility of reducing number of children lunching together in cafeteria: Murray is a large building with not a lot of extra space. The teachers are generally in the classroom

at lunchtime, and they are entitled by contract to a duty free lunch hour. Food is not allowed to eat in the gyms. There are also hot lunch management issues. When the school was built, children went home for lunch. The small lunchroom was originally a classroom, so it's not built with soundproof materials used for cafeterias. Ms. Monaco suggests parents take their children out for lunch occasionally as a treat.

III. 2nd Grade

- Explanation of “Words Their Way”: This is a word study program, which includes vocabulary, spelling, and phonics. It will phase out “Wordly Wise”, which was strictly about vocabulary. “Words Their Way” provides a very hands-on experience and children can work independently or in groups. Each child is assessed and placed where he/she should be. “Words Their Way” is currently being used by 1st to 4th grades in Murray, and the hope is that it will be expanded to 5th grade next year. Across the District, schools are using “Words Their Way” on 1st and 2nd grades, but Murray is doing an expansion to 3rd and 4th grades of full implementation. On Friday, Feb. 26 at 9:15 am Murray will hold a “Words Their Way” workshop. Allyson Daley, the District Literacy Coach, will facilitate the meeting.
- Subdividing a class according to ability: The trend in teaching is to differentiate instruction, to teach to ability, to look at kids as individuals. Research shows that there are many good reasons to group, including: children are held to high standards, teachers look at kids as individuals, and groups are flexible.
- Consistency of pace in covering science curriculum: By the end of the school year, all the teachers cover the same material. Since teachers share science material, they have to be flexible, and some classes have to cover the material first and some later.

IV. 3rd Grade

No issues/questions raised.

V. 4th Grade

- Policy on outdoor recess when there is cold/inclement weather: There is no District policy; it's up to each school. There's no temperature policy either: You have to look at the conditions overall. Administrators need to think about children and the adults supervising. If the wind chill factor is too low, it's unhealthy. If there's icy snow on a lot of the ground, it's unsafe. Ms. Soler and Ms. Monaco try to have the children go out as much as possible. Some times the children go out for part of recess, other times, if there is staff, children are given the option to go out or stay in.
- Effect of upcoming budget cuts on Language Arts: The hope is that “Words Their Way” will be expanded to 5th grade next school year. For a description of “Words Their Way”, please see 2nd grade summary above.

VI. *5th Grade*

- Cleanliness of cafeteria: Custodians wipe down tables and benches and change full garbage bags between lunch periods, but don't have enough time to do a full sweep. During the December break they did a thorough job, so coming back from vacation the cafeteria looked great. Ms. Soler and the aides do encourage children to pick up their trash – it fosters a community feeling to pick it up even if it's not yours.
- Strictness of aides at lunchtime: Please see Dec. 16th, 2009 summary under 1st grade.

VII. *Special Education*

Upcoming meetings:

- Jan. 25: District's Q&A meeting for incoming Special Ed Kindergartners
- Jan. 27: District Program – Preparing for your Child's CSE and Understanding Assessments
- Feb. 8: District's Q&A meeting for incoming Special Ed 6th graders
- Feb. 9: District Program – Language Based Learning Disabilities
- Feb. 10: SEPTA Program – Organizational Skills