

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

March 16, 2010

Summary

I. Kindergarten

- Discussion of NYT article: “Play, Then Eat: Shift May Bring Gains at School”*, and applicability at Murray: The article has sparked conversation about having recess before lunch. The model was tried at Murray about four years ago. It was unsuccessful because of hand washing issues and the fact that students didn't finish their lunch and were taking classroom time. Now that we have hand-sanitizing pumps at school, Ms. Monaco may pilot the model in one grade level next school year to see how it works.
- Clarification of proposed budget changes impacting staffing/class size at the elementary level: Last school year, the District increased the class size guidelines for grades 2 to 5 by two students. Currently, K and 1 have a class size guideline of 22, which could potentially go up to 24. At Murray, this potential increase will not affect 1st grade, as we will still have 6 sections. Kindergarten is harder to predict because of the new registrations, but it is estimated that there will be 6 sections, too. The projections for next year are:
 - 6 sections for K
 - 6 sections for 1st grade
 - 5 sections for 2nd grade
 - 6 sections for 3rd grade
 - 5 sections for 4th grade
 - 5 sections for 5th grade

- Security procedures at the front door desk: Murray takes the lead from what the District dictates, so IDs are not checked across the six buildings. There is a crisis team in every building, composed of teachers, administrators, nurse and custodians. Murray's team worked with the Town of Mamaroneck and the youth detective to put in place emergency plans, such as in case of a bus accident, a bomb threat, or an intruder, amongst other emergencies. Everybody in the building is responsible for ensuring visitors are wearing a visitor's pass. All the doors are locked at 9:00 am, with the exception of the front door. If the security person is not sitting at the desk, the secretaries in the main office keep an eye.

II. *1st Grade*

No issues/questions raised.

III. *2nd Grade*

- Discussion of NYT article: "Play, Then Eat: Shift May Bring Gains at School"*, and applicability at Murray: Please see summary under Kindergarten.
- Self categorization of girls into "girly" or "sporty": Ms. Monaco will ask teachers to revisit the concept through the Building Bridges framework by reiterating that we are all the same, but we have differences. Also, at a recent Parent Faculty Program, Pam Allyn talked about gender differences in reading and writing. She recommends books that go beyond the stereotypes in her website, which can be accessed through Murray's PTA website at www.mamkschoolspta.org.
- Memorization of addition and subtraction facts: Children should be working on memorizing their facts in 2nd grade. They also have some months at the beginning of 3rd grade to reinforce this, before they move on to multiplication.
- Learning to spell methodology: study spelling words vs. focus on rules and strategies: Children should understand the rules and strategies so they can apply them to new and unfamiliar words. There are sight words that don't have rules and should be memorized. Also, every child is different, so if memorizing works better for them, then they should do flash cards or something similar.

IV. *3rd Grade*

- Discussion of NYT article: "Play, Then Eat: Shift May Bring Gains at School"*, and applicability at Murray: Please see summary under Kindergarten.
- 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. On Thursday, March 25th at 9:15 am Murray will hold a “Words Their Way” workshop. Allyson Daley, the District Literacy Coach, will facilitate the meeting.

V. *4th Grade*

No issues/questions raised.

VI. *5th Grade*

- Custodians smoking on school grounds: The rule is no smoking on school grounds by any school employee. They can cross the street or go to their car. Ms. Monaco will remind custodians that this also applies to after 3:00 pm when there are children in the building for after school clubs or other activities.
- Lack of opportunity to “hang out” with friends at year-end field days: 5th graders have a lot of activities in which friends can be together, including the Square Dance, the Graduation Reception, and the Graduation Party, amongst others.
- Distraction of the opposite sex: This is typical behavior in 5th grade. Teachers address the issue by reminding students about being respectful and talking appropriately to each other. Ballroom talk does come to school, and teachers manage it.

VII. *Special Education*

Upcoming meetings:

- March 17 at 7:30 pm, Hommocks Library: SEPTA Program – Organizational Skills