

Tiger Talk

In Depth

BACK TO
SCHOOL, TIGERS!



News from the Murray Avenue School PTA/Summer 2008

PTA Volunteer Fair & First Meeting of the School Year

What: PTA Volunteer Fair and Meeting

When: Friday, September 19
PTA Volunteer Fair, 8:30 AM
PTA Meeting, 9:15 AM

Where: Murray Avenue Cafeteria

Why: Get involved and make a real difference in your child's school. Whatever your talents, interests and time constraints are, there is volunteer work that will suit you and that the PTA needs. At the Volunteer Fair, committee chairs will be available at designated booths to describe and answer questions about the various PTA volunteer activities. In addition, at 9:15 AM, the PTA will hold its first meeting of the school year, during which the proposed PTA budget for the 2008-2009 school year will be presented, discussed and voted upon by the members. All of us can do our part to help make Murray great!

New Playground Facilitator

Beginning in September, the Murray PTA will be sponsoring a new recess program provided by the Rye YMCA. The recess program, which will be offered one day per week for grades 2-5, was designed to foster positive interactions among students and offer structured activities during the recess period. The Y sends a dedicated Recess Coordinator to the school to organize games and play sports with students who choose to participate. Through playing a variety of games, including soccer, football, basketball, box ball and jump-rope games, children develop their motor and interpersonal skills. They not only learn the basic rules for each game but how to play together. The core values of the YMCA, including caring, honesty, respect and responsibility, are incorporated through the instruction. This reinforces Murray's own **ROAR** themes of **R**espect, **O**pen communication, **A**cceptance and **R**esolving conflict which we believe are life-long skills that can enrich the entire Murray Community. The Rye Y's recess program is in place at all elementary schools in Rye and Rye Neck and at Mamaroneck Avenue School where Murray Principal Jennifer Monaco and Assistant Principal Cruz Soler had a chance to speak with school administrators about the success of the program. Murray still encourages and values having unstructured recess time where children can relax and navigate the playground on their own. We are happy to be able to provide some recess programming as we strive to enhance the overall playground experience for each child.

2008/2009 PTA Executive Board

We are pleased to present the 2008-2009 PTA Executive Board. The PTA Executive Board consists of parent members nominated and then elected by the PTA membership, along with two teachers who volunteer to serve two-year terms to represent the faculty interests and perspectives. For 2008-2009 the teachers on the Executive Board are Linda DeLasho (who is in the second year of her term) and Leigh-Ann Pieragostini (who is in the first year of her term). In order to ensure that the parent members of the Executive Board are intimately involved in the day-to-day volunteer work that is the crux of the PTA, they each chair a committee in addition to other board responsibilities.



From left to right: Debra Schwartz (VP Parent Services), Lori Dente (VP Fundraising), Ann LoBue (VP Communications), Tracy Owen (Co-President), Lizette Macaluso (Secretary), Kristine Budill (Co-President), Liz Paras (VP Faculty Relations and SEPTA Co-rep), Stephanie Basta (VP Traffic, Health & Safety), Debbie Hilden (VP Student Services), and Meg Bausano (Treasurer). Not pictured Maura Carlin (SEPTA Co-rep).

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Tiger Talk

In Depth

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Many thanks to

Principal Jennifer Monaco,
Vice Principal Cruz Soler, and PTA
Presidents Kristine Budill & Tracy Owen

**"Tiger Talk In Depth", a Murray Avenue
PTA Tri-Annual Newsletter, is also
available online at
www.mamkschoolspta.org/murray**

Questions? Call Jill Miller at 833-9770

**The PTA extends the warmest
welcome to Murray's newest staff
members:**

Grade 3: Melanie Roth
Grade 4: Theresa Amelio
Band: Denise Ruchala

Please also note that the following people have
changed their names:

K: Rebekah Ward to Rebekah Spano
Grade 3: Carol Graseck to Carol Moroney

Murray Matters

A letter from your PTA Co-Presidents

Dear Parents,

We hope you have had a wonderful summer vacation – however that is defined for your family – perhaps kicking back at the beach, participating in a favorite hobby, learning new skills, or taking a trip filled with adventure and discovery. We value the diverse and unique perspectives of our Murray families and know that we are a more vibrant school community because of them.

Many of the most successful programs of the Murray PTA evolved from the vision of individual parents, teachers and administrators, and we want to work with you to find and implement those ideas that enhance the Murray experience in varied and new ways. Whether you prefer to volunteer during the day or in the evening, work on your own or with a group, use your creative or your organizational skills, spend money or raise money, "PTA Volunteer" is the job for you!

Learn more about the many volunteer opportunities and other PTA news on the Murray PTA website at www.mamkschoolspta.org/murray as well as by reading our weekly newsletter "Tiger Talk" and periodic e-mail communication "Murray Minute". Please feel free to contact us directly or write to us at MurrayPTA@mamkschoolspta.org with comments and suggestions. We welcome your feedback and appreciate your active involvement which enhances the educational experience for all our children.

It has been a pleasure and a privilege to work with our outgoing PTA board members and committee chairs, and we thank them for the dedication, enthusiasm and wisdom they brought to their various roles. We are especially grateful to outgoing PTA co-president Sue Bokert for her warm and welcoming leadership, her tireless energy and her commitment to the Murray community! Welcome to the incoming PTA board members and committee chairs who bring new insights and talents to the PTA and many, many thanks to you – our Murray parents - for your continued support as we strive to work cooperatively with our parents, teachers and administrators to provide a safe and rewarding learning environment where all our children can thrive.

Enjoy your last few weeks of summer and see you in September!

Kristine Budill

& Tracy Owen

GRADE LEVEL COFFEES - Join us for a cup of coffee!

Come meet Principal Jennifer Monaco, Assistant Principal Cruz Soler, your grade level rep & other parents from your grade. Bring along any questions you have or just stop by to say hello. The PTA will host a 9:15 AM coffee in the cafeteria for each grade on the following dates:

K- Mon, Oct 27 th ;	1 st – Fri, Oct 24 th ;	
2 nd – Mon, Oct 20 th ;	3 rd – Mon, Oct 6 th ;	4 th – Fri, Oct 17 th ;
5 th – Fri, Sept 26 th .	SEPTA – Thurs Nov 20 th	

PTA Q&A – What is New York State Testing?

WHY ARE STANDARDIZED TESTS ADMINISTERED TO STUDENTS AT MURRAY?

Students at Murray Avenue take New York State (“NYS”) standardized tests in grades 3 through 5 to comply with federal and state mandates. In addition, our school district (not the government) mandates that 5th graders take the ERB (which stands for Educational Records Bureau, the name of the company that developed and administers the test) WrAP (Writing Assessment Program) test. No other standardized tests are administered at Murray.

HOW ARE THE TEST RESULTS USED?

The most important measure of a student’s achievement is his or her daily performance in the classroom. Test results are used at Murray to *complement* teacher assessments of student achievement and as a tool to monitor student progress over time. They are also used to identify students who may benefit from academic intervention services (“AIS”). Finally, they are analyzed to examine the alignment of teaching and curriculum with NYS standards.

WHAT ARE THE TEST FORMATS?

NYS tests are divided into “books” that are administered in separate sessions at the start of successive school days. The formats vary by subject and grade and are listed below:

GRADE 3

ELA

- 1: Reading Comprehension (story or other written material followed by questions in mostly multiple choice format)
- 2: Listening Comprehension (story read aloud followed by multiple choice & short-answer questions)/Writing (editing paragraph for punctuation & capitalization errors)

Math

- 1: Multiple choice
- 2: Multiple choice / short response

GRADE 4

ELA

- 1: Reading Comprehension
- 2: Reading & Listening Comprehension / Writing (longer written answers to questions on comprehension)

Math

- 1: Multiple choice
- 2&3: Short and extended (showing work) responses

Science

- 1: Written test (multiple choice & short answer)
- 2: Performance test

GRADE 5

ELA

- 1: Reading Comprehension
- 2: Listening Comprehension/ Writing (editing paragraph for grammatical errors)

Math

- 1: Multiple choice
- 2: Short and extended responses

Social Studies

- 1: Multiple choice and constructed response (short-answer questions)
- 2: Document-based short-answer questions & essay

WHEN AND HOW ARE THE NYS TEST SCORES REPORTED?

The district “marks” the tests and sends them to the state; the state creates reports and sends the reports back to the district. Individual student reports for the ELA, Math and Social Studies tests are distributed by the district to parents. Reports are generally available several months after a test is given.

The report received by parents comprises two pages. The child receives an overall score on a scale of 1-4. The child also receives a score for each curriculum “strand” covered in the test, compared to a target range of scores.

Students are not scored individually on the Science test. The test is used by schools as a tool to analyze the effectiveness of the school’s science program as a whole.

For each test, schools also receive a report detailing how each child scored on specific questions. The school analyzes this report to identify trends across a grade.

WHAT DO THE SCORES MEAN?

The NYS tests are scored from 1-4:

- 4 – Meeting learning standards with distinction
- 3 – Meeting learning standards
- 2 – Partially meeting learning standards
- 1 – Not meeting learning standards

HOW DO TEACHERS PREPARE STUDENTS FOR THE NYS TESTS? HOW CAN A PARENT HELP PREPARE CHILDREN FOR THE TESTS?

The NYS tests are cumulative. They cover curriculum and skills acquired by students up to that grade level and not just the curriculum taught in the school year the test is given. That means, for example, that the math test given in 5th grade requires students to use skills learned in grades K-5.

Murray does not “teach to the test” or use “test prep books”. However, students are exposed to test procedures and question types several weeks before the test is administered so that they are familiar with the format and testing environment.

Because the tests are cumulative, there is no curriculum for which parents can prep their children. Parents can help their children by encouraging them to get a good night’s sleep & eat a healthy breakfast before a test. They also can encourage their children not to worry & to see the test as just one measure of what they have learned.

ARE ACCOMODATIONS MADE FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS / DISABILITIES?

Yes, testing accommodations are provided as specified in a child’s IEP (individualized education plan) or through a child’s 504 plan.

WHAT SERVICES MUST THE DISTRICT PROVIDE TO STUDENTS WHO “SCORE” 1 OR 2 ON THE TESTS?

The goal of the school is for students to “meet or exceed” learning standards; i.e. score 3 or 4 on all NYS tests. Students who score 1 or 2 are required to receive academic intervention services in that area.

WHAT IS THE ERB WrAP TEST?

Fifth graders take the ERB WrAP test in September. It is used as a diagnostic tool.

The ERB WrAP test is a direct measure of writing. Students provide a writing sample based on a standardized prompt provided in the test. Students take the test in two sessions over two consecutive days. In the first session, they create a rough draft; in the second, they produce their final essay. The essays are reviewed and scored by two trained readers. The results – received about one month after the test is given -- are used by the school to develop targeted writing instruction and are not reported to students or parents.

For the 2008-09 school year, NYS tests will be given as follows:

	English Language Arts (ELA)	Math	Science	Social Studies
Grade 3	Jan 09	Mar 09		
Grade 4	Jan 09	Mar 09	April 09	
Grade 5	Jan 09	Mar 09		Nov 08

For more information about NYS testing standards, and related topics, visit www.nysed.gov and click on “Resources for Parents” on the left toolbar.



Traffic & Safety

As many of you know, the streets around Murray Avenue School, especially during drop-off and pick-up times, are crowded. The congestion and related traffic issues stem largely from the fact that the secondary streets surrounding the school were not designed originally to carry the traffic load that is generated now by parents and caregivers driving our kids to school. In addition, there is a high demand for parking on the same streets by parents and teachers. The school's PTA and administration work hard to ease the resulting traffic and safety problems.

First, we encourage parents to walk or bike with their children to school. We have done this, for example, through Walk-to-School-Weeks, sending flyers and letters home, and bike safety days. This year, the entire Mamaroneck School District is embarking on a national program called **Safe Routes to School**. This program, through a variety of education, engineering and enforcement strategies, strongly encourages students to walk or bike to school safely.

Second, we have established two designated drop-off and pick-up zones at the school. The Daymon Terrace drop-off zone is on Daymon Terrace between the doors on each side of the Kindergarten playground. It is staffed by parent volunteers in the morning, from 8:30 am to 8:50 am. Children who are independent enough to get out of their car with their belongings and get to their classrooms by themselves can be dropped off at the Daymon Terrace Drop-Off. During the afternoon, the Daymon Terrace Zone is not staffed; it is an area where parents and caregivers can wait in their cars (parked along the curb and double-parked) for children to come out of the school. The Murray Avenue zone (which is located on the

school side of Murray Avenue from the beginning of the large playground to the bus-stop near Forest Avenue, including the fire lane) can also be used for drop-off and pick-up. It is not staffed. With both zones, drivers must stay in their cars at all times and drop-off and/or pick-up curbside only.

Third, we urge parents and caregivers who pick-up and drop-off children at school carefully to read and obey all traffic signs, e.g., not to park or stand where no parking or standing is permitted, not to park in or too close to crosswalks or stop signs, and not to leave cars double-parked and unattended. We regularly remind parents and caregivers of the importance of abiding by these basic traffic rules throughout the school year.

Finally, we work with town officials to improve traffic flow and safety around the school. The Town of Mamaroneck recently passed two new parking rules that were recommended by the PTA at the request of parents. The first is that during the school year parking will not be permitted on a portion of Colonial Avenue during drop-off and pick-up times and the second is that a parking space on Forest Avenue at the corner of Forest and Sheldrake Avenues will be eliminated. More details about these changes are contained in the flyer included in this mailing.

There is no doubt that the streets around Murray are crowded. We urge all who can to walk or bike. If you cannot do that, then we ask you to leave plenty of time to get to and from school, to drive cautiously and to obey the traffic regulations.

SAVE THE DATE

FALL FLING

October 15th, 2008,

7PM, Chat 19

Join other Murray parents, teachers and staff for a fun evening out filled with good food and conversation.

Don't miss this!

September through November – Calendar Highlights

Day	Date	Time	Event
Wednesday	Sept 3	8:40-11:45 AM 9:00 & 10:45 AM	First Day of School Kindergarten & New Parents Coffee
Thursday	Sept 4		First Full Day of School (Kindergarten Morning Only)
Friday	Sept 19	8:30 & 9:15 AM	Murray Volunteer Fair & PTA Meeting
Tuesday	Sept 23	6:30 PM 7:15 PM 7:45 PM	Murray Back-to-School Night (K-Gr2) Kindergarten & Grade 1 in classrooms Presentation in Auditorium Grade 2 in classrooms
Thursday	Sept 25	6:30 PM 7:15 PM 7:45 PM	Murray Back-to-School Night (Gr3-Gr5) Grade 3 & Grade 4 in classrooms Presentation in Auditorium Grade 5 in classrooms
Thursday	Sept 25		Full Day Kindergarten begins
Thursday-Friday	Sept 25-26		Murray School Photo Days
Tuesday-Wednesday	Sept 30 - Oct 1		NO SCHOOL Rosh Hashanah
Monday-Friday	Oct 6-10		Walk to School Week
Thursday	Oct 9		NO SCHOOL Yom Kippur
Monday	Oct 13		NO SCHOOL Columbus Day
Wednesday	Oct 15	7:00 PM	Murray Fall Fling (Parents' & Teachers' Night Out) at Chat 19
Thursday	Oct 23		Murray Orchestra Learn To Play Night
Friday	Oct 24	2:45 PM	Emergency Drill—All Schools Dismissed
Tuesday	Nov 4		NO SCHOOL Superintendent Conference Day
Friday	Nov 14		Visiting Morning & Bake Sale
Monday-Thursday	Nov 17-20		Murray Book Fair
Wednesday	Nov 26	1:00 PM	Thanksgiving Holiday – All Schools Dismissed
Thursday-Friday	Nov 27-28		NO SCHOOL Thanksgiving Holiday