



MURCH PARENT HANDBOOK

Dear Murch Families,

Welcome to the new school year! At Murch Elementary, we are committed to providing a rich and engaging learning experience that nurtures the academic, social-emotional, and physical development of every child. Our goal is to create a school environment where students feel safe, supported, and inspired to grow—not only as learners, but as kind, confident, and curious individuals.

We believe that strong partnerships between home and school are essential to student success. This handbook is designed to provide you with important information about our school routines, expectations, and resources. If you have questions or need support with anything not covered here, please don't hesitate to reach out to our main office. We're here to help and happy to assist.

Thank you for being an essential part of the Murch community. We look forward to a wonderful year of learning and growth together.

Warmly,

Chris Cebrzynski
Principal, Murch Elementary School

MURCH VISION: Every child will feel safe and welcome as they develop as a compassionate person and inquisitive learner. All children will be celebrated for their individuality and will be prepared to contribute positively to our school community.

MURCH MISSION: We are a diverse and progressive school whereby every student and their families are known, valued, and respected. We collaborate to meet the needs of the whole-child through:

Being fully inclusive

Committing to equity in education, opportunity, and decision-making

Implementing whole child principles

Dedicating instructional time to SEL (Social-Emotional Learning) to empower a growth mindset, perseverance, empathy, and compassion.

Designing a professional learning structure where teachers and staff can collaborate across grades and content areas to develop a variety of differentiated instructional practices.

Celebrating student learning in a meaningful and variety of ways

Welcoming parents and the community to be a part of the learning and working with students to cultivate our school culture and values

ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL LINE-UP SPOTS

Please check the Murch website to view a line-up map with zones marked for each grade to gather in the morning and to dismiss in the afternoon.

During the first week of school (grades K-5), teachers will be outside to meet their new students and show both them and you where their arrival/dismissal line will be. They will be holding signs with their name at the front of the arrival/dismissal line. Students in grades K-5 will begin to enter the building at 8:40 a.m.

Starting on Tuesday, September 2nd, fourth and fifth grade students will enter the building on their own and meet their teachers at their classroom doors.

ATTENDANCE

Regular school attendance is critical for academic success. If you need to report a student absence, go to our [Murch Absent Form](#) to report this.

If you have questions related to attendance, email Murch.Attendance@k12.dc.gov .

You can read more about the attendance and retention policy of the District of Columbia § 38–781.02. [here](#).

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

As a school community, we believe every child's birthday is a special occasion worth celebrating. To ensure that all students feel recognized and included, we will celebrate each student's birthday during our daily morning announcements.

In alignment with our focus on student health, safety, and equity, we are moving away from the practice of food products being brought into the classroom for birthday celebrations. This shift helps us maintain a safe environment for students with food allergies or dietary restrictions, and ensures instructional time is preserved.

To keep the day meaningful, individual classrooms may recognize birthdays in non-food ways, such as:

- Choosing a classroom job for the day
- Wearing a birthday crown or badge
- Receiving a special birthday card or certificate
- Donating a book to the classroom or school library in the student's name

Please note that birthday party invitations may not be distributed at school, unless the entire class is invited. This helps protect the feelings of all students and maintains a respectful and inclusive environment.

We appreciate your support in making birthdays at school joyful, safe, and inclusive for all students.

BREAKFAST

Breakfast will be served daily in the cafeteria for students in kindergarten through fifth grade. Students can enter the building starting at 8:10am and head to the cafeteria for breakfast. K-5 students who are having breakfast will remain in the cafeteria until it ends at 8:40am. They will then be released to their classrooms.

Pre-K 4 students will eat breakfast in their classrooms after being picked up by their teachers on the front playground adjacent to Davenport Street and the school's main entrance.

BULLYING AND HARRASSMENT

Bullying and harassment are unacceptable behaviors that should be immediately addressed. Bullying and harassment include any physical act, threatening communication, or pattern of gestures or communications that places a student in actual and reasonable fear of harm or is certain to create a hostile environment. Bullying and harassing behavior includes, but is not limited to, behaviors motivated by the victim's identifying characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy, gender identity, religion, age or disability. If bullying or harassment is suspected, parents should contact Lauren Miller, our school counselor, for help. Her contact information is lauren.miller@k12.dc.gov. The district bullying policy can be viewed [here](#).

CHANGES TO DISMISSAL ROUTINE

If your child's normal dismissal plan will change for any given day, please let your child's teacher know **no later than noon on the day of the change** (except in the case of an emergency). This will ensure that your child's teacher sees the notification.

To communicate a change, please follow the following steps:

Before Noon on the Day of the Change: Email your child's teacher if your child's dismissal plan will change.

After Noon on the Day of the Change (only in the case of an emergency): Call the Murch Welcome Center (202-282-0130) so the change can be communicated directly to your child's teacher. Please use this sparingly, as it can be difficult to communicate changes at the last minute.

CLASS PLACEMENT

Class placement is designed to benefit all students. Students are assigned to classes so that each classroom reflects a reasonable distribution of students regarding gender, ethnicity, academic needs, and number. As a matter of philosophy, we encourage parent/caregiver input, and a form for such input is distributed to parents/caregivers in spring of the school year. The administration, however, reserves the right to determine final class placement to ensure educationally appropriate placements for each student.

CLASSROOM VISITS & VISITORS

We support families coming into classrooms to celebrate special events. Please contact your child's teacher to find out what these special events will be for your child's classroom and to confirm your visit. Parents or other caregivers cannot go into classrooms unannounced without having made prior arrangements with your child's teacher.

COMMUNICATION

The HSA website, www.murchschool.org will be our primary means of communicating with the parent community. The Thursday newsletter and Monday "look at the week ahead" will provide information about school announcements, important dates and events, teacher/staff contact information, reporting student absences and so much more.

To receive the latest information in your email every Thursday and Monday, sign up for the Murch HSA's e-newsletter. Sign up for the newsletter by clicking [HERE](#).

Teachers send Friday Folders home every week along with email communication about the upcoming school week as well as other important things they would like to share. This will vary by grade level. Please check Friday Folders regularly and return any paperwork that needs to be completed.

DISMISSAL—NORMAL

At 3:05 PM, Pre-K students will be dismissed from their designated location that will be shared with you by the Pre-K teachers.

At 3:15 PM, Kdg-5th grade students are walked to the **main playground** by their teachers and dismissed from their line-up lines. The dismissal line will be in the same spot as the morning line-up line.

At 3:15 PM, students who participate in after care programs will dismiss to the appropriate locations inside of the building. Staff from those programs will take attendance and provide supervision.

DISMISSAL PROCEDURES: WALKERS

5th grade parents may give permission for students to self-dismiss (i.e. walk home) by clicking [HERE](#). If you wish to give permission for a student younger than 5th grade, please reach out to the welcome center for a permission slip.

NON-EMERGENCY/EMERGENCY INFORMATION COMMUNICATED

We will use text, robocalls, and email to communicate timely information that needs to be shared with the community. An example may include but not be limited to inclement weather, a school lockdown, or indoor dismissal due to weather.

EARLY DISMISSAL

If you need to pick up your child early, make sure to sign them out in the early dismissal book at the Security Desk. This will ensure the safe accounting of all Murch students. The office will call your child to the Welcome Center once they are officially signed out. If your child is at recess when you pick them up early, they must still be signed out in the Early Dismissal Book for accounting purposes. To be able to sign out a child, the person must be an adult 18 years or older and must be listed as a parent or emergency contact in our system, unless permission is given.

Due to the movement of students at the end of the day (as they pack up or transition back to classrooms), it is **strongly recommended** that early dismissal requests end by 3:05 PM.

HEALTH SUITE & EMERGENCIES

Murch's health suite is on the main floor in the Welcome Center Wing. It is accessible to students during the school day. If it becomes necessary for your child to take a form of medication at school, parents must see the school nurse and fill out the appropriate forms. No student medication is allowed on school grounds without proper documentation via the Health Suite. If medication is found in a student's possession without paperwork, it will be taken to the Health Suite. Parents will be notified to come and complete paperwork.

We will make every attempt to contact parents in the event of an emergency. 911 will be called at the **discretion of the nurse**. If students need medical attention, the DC Fire Department Emergency Unit will transport students to Children's Hospital or to the nearest hospital providing pediatric care.

HOURS OF OPERATION

The welcome center is open from 8:00am until 4:30pm daily. The team includes Rebecca Dufresne, (clerk), Mary Eckstein, (Director of Strategy and Logistics), and Rebecca McGraw, (Coordinator of Strategy and Logistics).

LATE ARRIVALS

All students are encouraged to report to school by 8:40 AM to ensure they have access to a full day of instruction, which starts with our STRONG START at 8:45 AM. For any students entering after 8:55 AM, they should enter through the main entrance on Davenport and proceed to the security desk where they will pick up a tardy slip before they walk to their classroom.

LOST AND FOUND AND DROP OFF TABLE

Murch maintains a lost and found, which is just past the health suite (at the exit by 36th Street). Please check it for any missing or forgotten items.

If your child forgets an item for the day, there will be a pick-up table located across from the security desk in the main lobby. Parents may leave items there for students who have forgotten them. Please label the items with your student's name and teacher's name. Then send a message to your child's teacher, so the student can retrieve their item.

LUNCH PROCEDURES

Pre-K students will eat lunch in their classrooms.

K students will eat lunch in the early childhood commons.

1st-5th grade students will eat lunch in the main cafeteria.

Students either bring their nut-free lunch from home or receive school lunch.

For information regarding school meals, including information on how to set up a lunch account or apply for free or reduced meals, please visit the DCPS Food and Nutrition website at dcps.dc.gov/page/meal-prices-and-payment.

Per the DCPS Local Wellness Policy, third-party meal delivery services (i.e., UberEATS, Door Dash, etc.) are prohibited. Specifically, "schools will encourage teachers and families to bring food and beverages that meet the nutritional standards of Section III.K on school grounds, including in student lunches from home and prohibit third-party meal delivery services." Please visit [DCPS Local Wellness Policy 2022 FINAL 0.pdf](#) for more information.

MURCH SPIRIT WEAR

If you wish to purchase Murch t-shirts or other apparel, click [HERE](#). Items are shipped directly to your home address.

We are looking forward to a great school year. Thank you to all Murch parents for your support of our school community. Go Mustangs!

PARENT PARKING & DROP OFF

During the school day, there is 15-minute parking along the school-side of Ellicott Street (between Reno Road and 36th Street). The bulk of Davenport Street on the school-side is a NO STANDING OR PARKING ZONE. This is designated for bus loading/unloading and is the KISS AND RIDE AREA for students who are off-loading. Parents should remain in their vehicle if they are utilizing this zone. There is also a designated handicapped parking spot near the corners of Davenport and 36th street.

Please do not park on the school-side of 36th Street (between Davenport and Ellicott Streets). This is designated as staff parking.

Please consider parking on one of the side streets (not immediately adjacent to Murch) to alleviate pressure around the school. We also encourage all our students & families to walk to school, if possible.

PEANUT AND TREE NUT FREE

Murch will continue to be peanut and tree-nut free this year. Please check the Murch website for more information and an FAQ, which will also be available at back-to-school night.

RECESS

The Early Childhood Playground (closest to Davenport Street, NW) will be utilized by our Pre-K and K students, who may have multiple outdoor learning times (for 20-30 minutes at a time)

The Main playground (running parallel to Ellicott Street, NW) will be used by our 1st-5th grade students, who will have recess once a day for at least 30 minutes.

SAFETY IN EARLY AM

It will be all hands-on deck in the first week of school, and all teachers and staff will be outside to assist with new routines. In addition, multiple adults will be assigned morning duty to supervise the grounds as students arrive at school. Please arrive as close to 8:40 AM as possible. Outdoor supervision begins at 8:15am.

SECURITY

Murch has security guards assigned to our campus. One guard will be posted at the security desk, monitoring cameras and receiving visitors. The other guard will patrol; they will rotate per their post orders.

SMARTWATCHES AND TOYS IN SCHOOL (INCLUDING TRADING CARDS I.E. POKEMON)

We believe that students should primarily focus on learning when they are in school. No electronic games, electronic tablets, trading cards, toys, or special possessions of students should be brought to school. This list is not all-inclusive. Occasionally some of these items are costly, look the same, and are easily broken, lost, or stolen. This can result in anger, accusations, or disappointment.

Unfortunately, even putting items in one's backpack or desk does not ensure security. With their many duties, teachers cannot be expected to guard students' belongings.

Watches that act as communication devices (i.e. smartwatches) are permitted to be worn for time purposes, but they are not to be used during the school day as a communication device (i.e. texting and making calls).

If a student uses an electronic device during the school day, the teacher will remind the student to turn it off and place it in their backpack. If the student is found to use the device again, the device will be held at the main office of the school until the parent/caregiver may pick it up. If a parent/caregiver needs to communicate with their child during the school day, the main office should be notified. Parents/caregivers are asked to avoid contacting their child during the school day through a cell phone or smartwatch.

The school is not responsible for any lost, stolen, or damaged cell phones. All electronic devices are brought to school at their own risk.

There may be an occasion when a student might be given permission to bring one of these items to school for a specific educational purpose. In this instance, the teacher will discuss this with the student and/or parent/caregiver. Your support is appreciated. The building principal has discretion over the safety and appropriateness of all items.

SNACKS

Students in grades Pre-K through 3rd grade typically have a snack prior to lunch. Please check with your child's teacher directly regarding snacks and plan to pack an extra nut-free snack for your child during snack time.

SPECIALS CLASSES

Art, Music, PE/Health, and a Social Studies class will be held in dedicated classrooms, and students will rotate through the offerings regularly.

STUDENT BEHAVIOR

We expect students to respect each other, their teachers/administration/school staff, and themselves when on campus. Misbehaviors that need to be addressed will be done using

Proactive behavior response strategies will limit the need for over reactions to take place. All teachers and staff will be utilizing a behavior response chart to be more intentional and thoughtful, but more so, proactive in managing student behaviors. If a child's behavior warrants communication from the teacher/administration, you will be contacted by phone, in person, or email that day, depending on the circumstance and availability in some cases to meet in person at dismissal.

The Murch Behavior Response Chart was developed in collaboration with our partners at Transcend, with a strong emphasis on Whole Child Practices at the core of our approach. This tiered framework serves as a comprehensive guide for educators, outlining proactive and restorative strategies for managing classroom behaviors effectively.

The chart delineates both teacher actions and administrative responses, ensuring clarity and consistency in behavioral support across all levels. Importantly, every response is designed to prioritize students' social-emotional well-being, fostering a sense of belonging within a welcoming and supportive classroom and school community.

When determining logical consequences for student misbehavior, every DCPS school utilizes the Disciplinary Responses to Student Behavior (DCPS Student Discipline Policy, DCMR Chapter 25). You can view a copy of this tiered approach to student discipline [here](#).

DCPS STUDENT CELL PHONE AND ELECTRONIC DEVICE POLICY (new 2025)

The district adopted a new policy which will start at the beginning of the 2025-26 school year. The policy can be found [here](#).

Please read this letter which outlines how we will implement the [cell phone policy](#) for students at Murch.

SUPPLY LISTS

Students in grades Pre-K through 5th are asked to bring specific school supplies with them by the first day of school. Updated supply lists can be found by visiting our website.

WHO's WHO?

Murch staff can be contacted directly by visiting our [Murch Staff Page](#) and clicking on the staff member's name to link to staff members' k12.dc.gov email address. Please contact staff via their government-provided email account.

If you have questions/concerns involving classroom/teacher/curriculum, communicate directly with your child's teacher(s). You also have the option to set up a time to discuss your concerns with your child's teacher. If after this discussion you still have questions/concerns, feel free to set up a time to discuss this matter with the appropriate person, either in person, virtually, or by phone, from the chart below. IF you are interested in speaking/meeting with Principal Cebrzynski and/or AP HAWkins, you can schedule a meeting with Ms. Dufresne, our school clerk, in the welcome center. **Principal Cebrzynski** (Chris.Cebrzynski@k12.dc.gov)

Classroom instruction, Assessments, Supervision, Budget, LSAT, School Culture and Climate, Comprehensive School Plan, Master Schedule.

Assistant Principal Hawkins (Devario.Hawkins@k12.dc.gov)

Classroom instruction, Assessments, Student behavior/DCPS Chapter 25 Discipline code, Inclusion and Self-Contained Special Education Programs, IEP Meetings, Special Education transportation, recess, arrival and dismissal.

School Counselor Lauren Miller (Lauren.miller@k12.dc.gov)

Social/Emotional Learning and classroom instruction, Counseling, Bullying, Student Support Groups, Transcripts, Attendance, Student Scholarships.

Director/Strategy & Logistics Mary Eckstein
(Mary.Eckstein@k12.dc.gov)

Enrollment, procurement and budget management, Facilities, Food and nutrition, Logistics and scheduling, Custodial/office/technology inventory & supply management, School emergency preparedness, Technology, External partnerships, School-based operational systems, Field trips

Coordinator/Strategy & Logistics Rebecca McGraw (Rebecca.McGraw2@k12.dc.gov)

Enrollment POC & School-wide Logistics: Student Classroom placement, School Nurse, Welcome Center, Kids Ride Free Cards.

Psychologist Sam Fisk (samuel.fisk@k12.dc.gov)

Multi-Tiered Student Supports (MTSS) Interventions for struggling students, Psychological Testing for student eligibility for specialized instructional services: Sam Fisk (samuel.fisk@k12.dc.gov)

Social Worker Deena Guirguis (deena.guirguis@k12.dc.gov)

504 Plans

Athletic Director – INTERIM - Mary Eckstein (MurchAthletics@k12.dc.gov)