

C. C. Burr Elementary School HANDBOOK

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Revised October, 2005

Burr School Handbook

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1- INTRODUCTION

Burr School: A Brief Profile

The Burr School operates on the premise that all children can learn. To this end, students, staff, and parents are committed to creating and maintaining a climate for risk-taking and a culture of high standards, cooperative problem solving, and mutual respect. Teachers give students the message: "You can learn this; I'm not giving up on you until you learn it and believe in yourself as a learner."

Every attempt is made to provide educational experiences which will meet the diverse range of student abilities and interests. The Burr School community holds these Core Values: Academic Excellence, The Effort and Joy of Learning, A Strong Sense of Community, and Individual Growth and Expression.

For the past few years, Burr has averaged approximately 300-310 students in kindergarten through grade five, with an average class size around 20-21. Burr usually has 15-17 regular classroom teachers, two Learning Center teachers, and specialists in Literacy, speech and language, physical education, art, music and library. Literacy aides provide extra support and instruction in K-2 classes. Burr also has the services of a part-time psychologist and a part-time social worker. Occupational and physical therapy are available. Burr hosts a neighborhood ELL program with 1 teacher and part time assistants. Burr is a fully inclusive school and has one full-time inclusion facilitator.

The school, built in 1968, is wheelchair accessible to all classrooms with ramps and an elevator. Burr hosts an after-care program, the Burr Community After-School Program (BCAP) which operates Monday through Friday from 12:30-6:00 p.m.

Many Newton and/or teacher-created materials, as well as commercial textbooks are used for instruction, reinforcement, and challenge. In reading, Burr has a Balanced Literacy approach and uses leveled texts to match students' reading levels. Everyday Math (University of Chicago) is the math program in grades K-5. Ongoing curriculum review and shared staff planning take place regularly at Burr School.

The Understanding Our Differences Program is part of the third, fourth and fifth grade curriculums. Taught and developed by parent volunteers, the curriculum is designed to help non-disabled children understand what it might feel like to have a disability.

Burr School has a chorus and orchestra (as well as a voluntary before-school chorus) under the direction of the music teachers; recorder classes are given to all third graders and instrument lessons are offered to fourth graders.

Burr School (all classrooms and offices) recycles all paper as part of the city's recycling program.

Parent volunteers are active participants at all grade levels. The Burr PTO is active and sponsors many activities, both educational and social, throughout the year. The Burr School Council, composed of teachers, parents, and community members, meets 7 times each year. It advises and assists the principal on school policies.

Burr holds an all-school meeting once a month during which time individual students and classes share what they are learning in class with the whole school.

Burr School has high expectations for students, parents, and staff alike, placing a high value on continued learning and the individual's contribution to the learning process.

THE BURR SCHOOL CORE VALUES

Academic Excellence

For us this means:

- Developing reasoning and problem solving skills in all areas
- Maintaining a culture of high standards and striving for consistently high quality work in all areas of the curriculum
- Being challenged to the fullest extent possible and at a rate appropriate to each child individually
- Setting high expectations for ourselves in learning.

The Effort and Joy of Learning

For us this means:

- Having a sense of wonder and eagerness to understand
- Believing that through hard work we can achieve what we set as our goals
- Being self-directed and self-disciplined
- Taking responsibility for one's own behavior and learning
- Knowing that mistakes are a normal part of learning; being comfortable taking risks and asking questions.

A Strong Sense of Community

For us this means:

- Respecting others
- Appreciating others of different cultures, abilities and ages
- Caring for our environment
- Developing the ability to work cooperatively with others.

Individual Growth and Expression

For us this means:

- Developing a sense of self-esteem, self-expression and self-confidence
- Learning to think independently
- Being creative

2 - COMING TO SCHOOL

Walking

Crossing Guards

Crossing guards are on duty before school starts (see exact times below) and at dismissal. Students who cross the following major intersections to and from school must cross with the crossing guard:

- Pine Street
- Lexington St. (north of Staniford St. at the light)
- Auburndale Ave. at Washburn Ave.

Crossing guards are on duty during the following times, Monday to Friday:

Mornings:

- 8:05 – 8:35

Afternoons:

- 12:30 – 1:00 (Tuesdays & early release Thursdays)
- 3:00 – 3:30 (except Tuesdays & early release Thursdays)

Routes

Children who walk should follow the most direct route to and from school. In addition, please inform teachers when children plan to visit friends or otherwise depart from their usual dismissal routine.

Bicycles and Scooters

Because there is heavy traffic (both pedestrian and vehicle) at school arrival and dismissal times, students are discouraged for safety reasons from traveling to or from school on bicycles or scooters.

Dogs

Dogs are not allowed on school grounds during school hours, including pick up and drop off times. People with dogs are asked to remain on the non-school side of Pine Street. Knowing where dogs may be reduces stress and fear considerably among children who are allergic to or afraid of dogs. In addition, since many children must walk along that sidewalk, in both directions, in order to travel to and from school, dog owners standing across the street are asked to be vigilant in ensuring that their dogs are not only leashed (as required by city law) but are specifically on a short lease and under their control at all times.

Bus Transportation

Children are bused to and from the Islington Road area and Boston. It is expected that children who ride the bus, unless absent, will take the bus each day from school to home. If other arrangements are made, **please deliver notes to the office before school.** Parents will be notified about bus schedules prior to school opening each September.

Most years, there is a late bus for Boston students on Tuesdays. Late bus service must be requested by the Boston family.

A Bus Evacuation Program, which teaches children how to quickly evacuate a bus, is required by state law and is held twice a year. Please see Appendix E: Newton's Safe Busing Checklist for further information about bus transportation.

Car Transportation

Visitor Parking

Visitors should park on the street in front of the school. Please do not use the school parking lot during school hours and please do not reverse direction on Pine Street by turning or backing into the parking lot driveways. The main driveways cross the sidewalks along which most of our students travel. The crossing guard cannot monitor these driveways from her position in front of the school.

For evening meetings where a large crowd is expected, parking in the staff parking lot is permitted. In addition, this area is open on all Election Days.

Handicapped Parking & Access

Marked handicapped parking areas are found in the staff parking lot and adjacent to the dumpster driveway in front of the school. There is a ramp at the front of the building and elevator in the building.

Blue Zone Drop Off/Pick Up

Parents are requested to exercise extreme caution in front of the school during arrival and dismissal times and to obey the rules of the Blue Zone. Children must cross with the crossing guard **at all times**. Automobiles should not turn into and back out of either driveway in front of the school or in the Gazebo driveway across the street as this practice is extremely dangerous. Please pay close attention to street signs designating parking, Blue Zone pick-up and drop-off, and NO PARKING areas.

For the dropping off or picking up of a child, two Drop-off/Pick-up Zones (moving lanes) have been designated on Pine Street:

- Directly in front of the school
- Directly across from the school

Any motor vehicle may stop in these locations only long enough to let a child

exit or enter the vehicle. Signs mark the zones. The zones are referred to as "The Blue Zones." A violation can result in a \$15.00 fine. If you arrive and your child is not right there, you must drive around the block or park legally.

BLUE ZONE -- NO PARKING:

- 30 minutes before school starts
- 60 minutes before school ends
- 30 minutes after school ends

If you need to park because you wish to visit the school, want to take longer to drop your child off, arrive early and want to wait for your child to be dismissed, or find no open space in the Blue Zone, you may park your vehicle in the following locations. (Please note that further restrictions to these parking regulations are currently pending before the city traffic council.)

- Pine Street: school side (west side), from teachers' parking lot north
- Pine Street: school side (west side), from custodians' entrance down to Washburn Ave.
- Pine Street: opposite school (east side), from Washburn Ave. up to Blue Zone and crosswalk
- Washburn Avenue: parking allowed on south side only (the side that does not intersect with Pine St.)
- Orris Street: one side only

In order to protect each student's safety, **it is important that all parents are aware that if they or their children need to cross Pine Street or Lexington Street, they must use the Crossing Guard assigned to those areas.**

Using the Blue Zone Effectively

Drop Off

- Pull up to the curb so that the back of your car is not protruding onto the street. This will make it easier for other cars to get around. **Pine Street is narrow.**

- Drivers should pull toward the front of a Blue Zone to leave as much room as possible for cars behind them
- Children should be let out on the sidewalk side only.

Pick-Up

- Do not come to school until your child has had time to leave the school and meet you at the Blue Zone.
- Have your child wait for you for a minute or two instead of you waiting for him or her. If you arrive before your child, you must drive around the block or find a legal place to park.
- Plan a time and place to pick up your child, e.g., “the Blue Zone across the street,” or “the Blue Zone in front of the school.”

Please see Appendix C: Blue Zone Maps for maps showing the Blue Zone and parking regulations and Appendix D: Walking Tips for tips on walking safety and benefits.

Arrival & Dismissal Times

Children should arrive at school between 8:20 and 8:35 am. Children may not enter the building before 8:20 unless they have been invited by a teacher or are part of a before school activity, such as Chorus. **Supervision is not provided before 8:20.**

All children should enter at the front and back doors to the right of the office entrance. Children are tardy if they arrive after 8:35 am.

Dismissal takes place at the door to the right of the office in front of the building at the following times:

Kindergarten:

Mon., Wed., Thu., and Fri: 12:30 or 3 pm

(October through June, depending on which days a student stays for long days)

Tuesdays: 12:30 pm

Grades 1 - 5:

Mon., Wed., Thu., and Fri: 3:00 pm

Tuesdays: 12:30 pm

The day before Thanksgiving, school ends at noon; lunch is not served.

In addition, there are six early release Thursdays (dismissal is at 12:30) throughout the year for ALL students.

Please check the school newsletters for the dates of these early release days.

Absences, Tardiness & Early Dismissal

A note is required for every absence, and in all cases of tardiness. If a child is to be dismissed early, a note from the parent or guardian is necessary. A child will only be dismissed from school if he or she is picked up at the office (the office will call the classroom to have the child dismissed) at the designated time by a parent or guardian.

The Call-Back (Absences) Line

This is a system to verify that each child who has left home has arrived at school safely. Whenever your child will be absent or late, please call the Call-Back line at 617/559-9380 before 8:20 am. The tape is a 24-hour answering machine that you may call any time. When you call, leave your child's name, day of absence, teacher's name, your name and reason for absence. If you have not called in your child's absence, you will be called at home or at work.

The principal will be notified if parents cannot be reached.

Safety & Security

One Open Door policy

It is important to us to maintain a welcoming atmosphere at Burr, but we must also be realistic about our students' safety. Because of this, the front door of the school will remain open during and after school. All other doors, including the door at the custodians' entrance, will be locked from 8:35 am on.

Visitor Sign-In/Sign-Out System

All visitors must check in at the main office as well as sign in/sign out and receive a visitor's badge. Any adult without a badge, including parents, will be directed to the office.

Fire Drills

Fire drills are held once a month. Children become familiar with the procedures for their classroom as soon as possible.

Crisis Preparedness

Burr's crisis team consists of parents, teachers, school support staff and the principal. The role of the crisis team is to be familiar with the steps that the school will take in the event of a crisis, to work as a team to direct the teachers and students, and to communicate to

various constituents, including parents. The Newton Public School system has a *Guide to Crisis Procedures* that all schools/crisis teams are to follow.

In the event that the school needs to evacuate to another location, Burr school students and staff will walk to Corpus Christi Church, at 41 Ash Street. School personnel will take a crisis kit of materials and parent contact information and will communicate with parents as soon as possible.

For more information on crisis procedures, please see www.newtonpublicschools.com.

No-School Announcements

Information about school closings and/or delayed openings will be broadcast by 6:30 am on the Newton Public Schools website, www.newtonpublicschools.com, and on the following radio and television stations:

WBZ 1030 AM

WILD 1090 AM

WNTN 1550 AM (6:30 am – 4:30 pm)

WRKO 680 AM

TV channels 4, 5, 7, 56, and Newton Cable TV

Please DO NOT call the police, the fire department, or the school.

3: AT SCHOOL

Behavior and Discipline

About Positive Reinforcement and Discipline at Burr

Our aim at Burr School is to reinforce children positively. We want them to feel they are successful people and learners. We try to create the most positive learning environment we can; we want each child to believe his or her achievement is based on personal effort and that the teachers are here to guide and support that effort. We expect students to want to learn, to respect the learning requirements of others and to experience the satisfaction and excitement that comes from success.

We know that children need to feel comfortable and safe in order to learn. Limit setting helps to provide that comfort. Limits at Burr are established through two important rules: (1) all children must feel and be safe; and (2) all children must have an optimal environment for their learning.

When a child acts thoughtlessly and impulsively, often a reminder of the group consensus is all that is needed to help him or her regain control of such behavior. However, when positive reinforcement and reminders are not producing the desired behaviors and the learning of others is negatively affected, parents may be called and privileges suspended. Clear and immediate consequences such as these need to be expected by children. We want our students to feel comfortable in their classrooms and proud of themselves as learners and as members of the Burr community; these are the requirements for optimal learning. We hope that you at home support us in these beliefs. Please also see *The Newton Public Schools' Students Rights and Responsibilities Handbook* (distributed early each school year) for an overview of the school system's discipline policy,

as well as Appendix A: Burr School Code of Behavior, for additional information regarding behavior guidelines.

Health

Burr has a full-time school nurse (see "Support Staff" for more information). Parents will be notified immediately in the event of an accident or illness. Please make certain that you have filled out the yellow family information form AND that you keep the information current throughout the year (please make sure there are at least 3 local phone numbers of friends, neighbors, or relatives in case you are not home in an emergency). The school nurse should be contacted concerning a child's return to school following a contagious illness such as chicken pox, lice, strep throat, etc.

Illness at School

School personnel assume responsibility for determining whether your child should be sent home because of an illness that begins during school hours. For your child's welfare and for the protection of others, it is important to keep your child at home if he or she has:

- a fever over 100 degrees during the past 24 hours
- a cold in the active stages
- a sore throat and/or swollen neck glands
- an undiagnosed rash or skin eruptions
- vomiting or diarrhea within the past 24 hours
- head lice that have not been treated

Medication

The school nurse is responsible for the administration of all medication. She may delegate this task to other trained

personnel who may administer the medication under the supervision of the nurse.

The following forms must be completed in ink and returned to the health office before any medication is administered:

- Parental Consent
- Physician's order *
- Liability release agreement

** The pharmacy-labeled container can be used in lieu of a physician's order only in the case of short-term medications, i.e. those medications to be given for 10 school days or less.*

The following statements highlight the main points of the policy. The entire policy is available for review in each health room and in the Health Department.

- Whenever possible, medication administered should be scheduled at times other than school hours.
- All medications must be delivered by the parent/guardian or designated adult.
- Only a thirty (30) day supply of medication will be accepted at any time.
- All medication must be delivered in a pharmacy or manufacturer-labeled container.
- Self-medication can be allowed under certain circumstances after consultation with the school nurse.
- If a medication needs to be given during a FIELD TRIP, the school nurse must be contacted in advance to make special arrangements PRIOR TO THE OUTING.
- **Non-prescription medications (over-the-counter medication) will be treated the same as prescription medication.** This means medication such as Tylenol, Benadryl, Advil, etc. will not be given unless there is a written order from your physician.

Head Lice

Head lice are a common problem among school children. Lice checks are not conducted by the school. If you find that your child has lice, please notify the school so that preventative measures can be taken. If a child has lice, all families in that classroom receive a notice informing them of this situation (no child is named). If you are unfamiliar with the problem, please get in touch with the school nurse, who will give you instructions on how to identify and treat lice. Children who have head lice may not attend school until they are "nit-free."

Snacks, Lunch & Recess

Snacks

Students need a mid-morning, nutritious snack from home. We encourage children to bring healthy snacks such as fruit, cheese, carrots, and juice.

Lunch

Children may buy the school lunch or bring their own. A lunch menu selection sheet will be sent home each month for ordering the next month's meals, and monthly lunch menus are available online at www.newton.mec.edu/foodservices/. Children may order milk even if they do not order a school lunch. For more information, call the Food Services department at 617-559-9015..

Lunch is a half-hour period scheduled by grade. Children are supervised by lunch personnel in the cafeteria and then go outside for 15 minutes except in cases of extreme weather.

Recess

Each class is expected to take daily, supervised recess outdoors, except in extreme weather conditions. During winter months children should wear warm coats, hats and mittens or gloves. During snowy conditions children may only play in/on the snow if they have boots. For more information on

playground safety rules, please see Appendix B: Playground Expectations.

Appropriate Dress

We ask that you please support our expectations for appropriate student dress at school. Spaghetti straps/tank tops, bare midriffs, low cut pants, very short skirts and bare feet are not appropriate dress for school. Even some sandals can be dangerous on the playground. If your child is not dressed appropriately, please know that we will contact you. We appreciate your support in reminding your child of these expectations.

All-School Meetings

Each month, on either the first Friday or Monday, the school gathers in one large group for an all-school meeting. These meetings open with the singing of the Burr School Song (see Appendix G: School Song, for the words), and continue with announcements and informal performances by classes as well as individual children. All-school meetings offer an opportunity for children to share their accomplishments and provide an important opportunity to create a sense of belonging to the whole school community.

Parents are welcome at All-School Meetings, but because of the lack of space and the importance of creating a close-knit school community, it is helpful if you attend only when your child or his/her teacher has invited you for a particular presentation.

Dropping off Items during the School Day

We prefer that lunches, messages, and musical instruments be dropped off in the office, for this is least disruptive to the classroom. The office will call the child from the classroom at an appropriate time to come and get the item. If a parent prefers to bring an item to a child during the day, it is important

for the parent to sign in, get a visitor's badge, and not interrupt the class at work.

Use of the School Telephone

Children are not permitted to use the telephone without permission from a teacher or staff member. Occasional use to request a forgotten lunch or music instrument may be permitted, at the teacher's discretion, but routine use is not acceptable, nor will children be permitted to use it to arrange playdates after school and so on. There is a pay phone in the first floor lobby that students may use after school.

Burr School Store

The Burr School Store may be open on certain mornings from 8:20 to 8:35 am (specific schedule information will appear in the *Burr Bulletin*, Burr's biweekly newsletter). The store is staffed by fifth grade students and parent volunteers and sells school supplies such as pencils, notebooks, folders, and so on. As a voluntary, parent-run activity, its format varies from year to year.

Lost and Found

There is an area near the stage in the "cafetorium" (our cafeteria/auditorium) where "found" articles are deposited. Each year we are amazed at the number of fine quality articles of clothing that are never claimed. Please check the box periodically for lost items.

Burr Community After-School Program (BCAP)

Burr School hosts an extended-day program for children, directed by Liz Kennedy. BCAP is amply staffed until 6:00 pm each school day and offers children the opportunity to rest, play, learn and study in a comfortable setting at Burr. Call 617/965-1518 for information.

4: HOMEWORK GUIDELINES

Homework is an integral part of a child's educational program. It not only expands the learning process but also provides circumstances that help develop independence and responsibility. Homework will vary in intensity and degree in different grade levels, but in every grade reading (or being read to) is always the priority homework.

Parents are encouraged to provide a quiet, comfortable place in the home for study and a consistent time for homework to be done. Each teacher will outline his or her homework policy in class meetings, conferences and in writing.

What is the purpose of homework at Burr School?

Assigning homework satisfies several educational needs. It serves as an intellectual discipline, establishes study habits, eases time constraints on the amount of curricular material that can be covered in school, and supplements and reinforces work done in school. In addition, it fosters student initiative, independence, and responsibility; it rewards students with a sense of completion and success; and it brings the realms of home and school closer together. Homework can dispel the notion that learning occurs only in school, and it can give parents the opportunity to show children that they value what they do in school.

What is homework at Burr School?

Homework is defined as out-of class tasks assigned to students as an extension or elaboration of classroom work. There are three types of homework:

Practice Assignments reinforce newly acquired skills. For example, students who have just learned a new method of solving a math problem are given sample problems to complete on their own. Practice assignments may include material taught in lessons prior to the current day as well as material taught that day.

Preparation Assignments help students get ready for activities that will occur in the classroom. Younger students may, for example, be asked to bring in objects for the science table or a picture from a magazine. Older students may be required to do background research on a topic to be discussed in class the next day.

Extension Assignments are often long-term continuing projects that parallel

class work. Students apply previous learning to complete these assignments, which include work such as book responses or research reports and projects. Extension assignments are often open-ended assignments. Teachers challenge students to take these assignments as far as they can. They expect students to think carefully, to challenge themselves and to respond to the fullest extent possible.

Teachers expect students to read at home, daily. For beginning readers, having stories read to them is very valuable homework.

How much time should students spend on homework?

At times teachers may choose not to assign daily homework, especially if there are projects that require a longer time to complete (see description of Extension assignments above). Time spent on homework will vary according to the student, since different students work at different speeds on various assignments. In addition, time spent on homework will vary depending on the degree of parental involvement. In

general, teachers follow these guidelines when they determine the maximum amount of homework that they assign:

Kindergarten: Regular homework in kindergarten consists of students being read to or students reading each day at home. Additional homework is not generally expected in this grade. It is assigned as needed and as appropriate.

Grade 1: The priority homework is that students read at home or are read to at home each day for a minimum of 10-15 minutes. Additional homework may be assigned 3-4 times a week for no more than 10 minutes a night.

Grade 2: The priority homework is that students read at home or are read to at home each day for a minimum of 10-20 minutes. Additional homework may be assigned 3-4 times a week for no more than 20 minutes a night.

Grade 3: The priority homework is that students read at home or are read to at home each day for a minimum of 15-20 minutes. Additional homework may be assigned 3-4 times a week for no more than 30 minutes a night.

Grade 4: The priority homework is that students read at home or are read to at home each day for a minimum of 20-30 minutes. Additional homework may be assigned 3-4 times a week for no more than 40 minutes a night.

Grade 5: The priority homework is that students read at home or are read to at home each day for a minimum of 25-30 minutes. Additional homework may be assigned 3-4 times a week for no more than 50 minutes a night.

Teacher Responsibilities

What students & parents can expect from teachers with regard to homework:

- Time appropriate assignments
- Developmentally appropriate assignments
- Assignments that are carefully planned and that have direct meaning for students
- A clear and clearly communicated homework system including:

Giving Assignments

- an effective method of having students record homework assignments before they leave school
- a way to support students' understanding of assignments before they leave school

Follow-up to homework

- an expectation that homework will be completed and turned in
- homework collected and reviewed by the teacher
- appropriate, helpful feedback on homework
- clear consequences for not doing homework and investigation into why homework is not being completed
- a time for students to receive help, if needed, on homework

Communication with Parents

- communication to parents about all of the above
- communication to parents about expectations for their involvement in homework

Parent Responsibilities

What teachers and students expect of parents with regard to homework:

- Communicate with the teacher about questions they have regarding the content or process of homework.
- Clarify with the teacher his or her definition of the kind and amount of parental involvement expected.
- Provide a suitable study area and the necessary tools (for example, paper, pencils, and reference books) for the student to complete the homework assignment.
- Limit after school activities to allow time for both homework and family activities.
- Monitor television viewing and establish a specific homework time.
- Plan a homework schedule with the child. Allow for free time when assignments are completed.
- When a child asks for help, ask him or her questions to work through an example rather than simply providing the answer.
- Assist younger children with thinking through homework. Go over homework assignments with the child. Check completed assignments. Ask to see homework once it has been marked and returned.
- Assist and guide students with homework, but do not do it for them.
- Assist children in communicating with the teacher when/if there is a problem with an assignment or with homework in general. Assist children in understanding that routine excuses for not doing homework are unacceptable.

Ideas and wording in these sections were taken from a publication on homework written by Beverly Swanson, Director of ACCESS ERIC, funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education.

5: NEWTON POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The *Students' Rights and Responsibilities Handbook* contains detailed information about many of Newton's school-related policies and procedures. The booklet is distributed to each child annually, and is also available online, at <www.newtonpublicschools.com>. Information on some common topics is included below.

Kindergarten Schedule

In Newton's kindergarten program, classes are divided into two groups which alternate dismissal times. One group remains in school until 3:00 pm on Mondays and Wednesdays, and the other on Thursdays and Fridays; each group is dismissed at 12:30 on the other days (all grades are dismissed at 12:30 on Tuesdays). In order to give children a more gradual transition, this schedule does not begin until October.

Transfers

In the event you plan to move out of the Burr district, you should notify your child's teacher as soon as possible. Your new address and date of withdrawal are needed so your child's records may be forwarded as quickly as possible. A release must be signed by parent or guardian for records to be sent to the new school.

Out-of-District Enrollment

Providing there is space available in that school (no new staff will be hired), a student may be allowed to attend another school in Newton other than his/her district school. Parents will be responsible for transporting their child to the out-of-district school.

Newton resident parents and Boston parents of students participating in the Newton METCO Program who wish further information or an application form should telephone the Attendance Office at 552-7652, and file an application no earlier than January 4 for the school year preceding the desired registration. Please note:
APPLICATIONS MUST BE FILED BY
THE LAST SCHOOL DAY OF THE

MONTH OF JANUARY. NO APPLICATIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED AFTER THAT DATE. Hand-delivered applications will ONLY be accepted from the applicant's parent or legal guardian. If January 4 falls on a day school is not in session, applications will be accepted the first day that school is open following January 4. Applications will be reviewed beginning April 15 at the secondary level and beginning May 30 at the elementary level. Applications will be considered in the order in which they are received. Siblings of students already enrolled in the school will be given preference over children with no siblings in the school providing there is space. Class size in a given grade, in a given year, in a specific school, may preclude any placements, including siblings.

No-Gift Policy

According to Newton School Committee policy, "no teacher in the performance of regular duties shall receive presents from the pupils under his or her direction." Burr School believes strongly in this rule, and offers parents several other opportunities to show appreciation to teachers. For instance, the PTO and the librarian run a library gift program that allows children to choose a new library book to dedicate to a teacher or other staff member.

Standardized Testing

The standardized tests given in the Newton Schools are the state-mandated MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System). These assessments are given in the spring. Students are tested in various subject areas; the tests are based on the State Curriculum Frameworks. Individual, school, and city-wide scores are reported.

Test results are used as one of many indices of the student's level of achievement and skill. Over time, a pattern of test results can suggest areas of student strength and weakness and can help the teacher, the counselor and others to plan the student's educational program. In addition, the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction uses these test results for studies that provide one source of information for program evaluation.

Internet and Computer Usage

The Newton Public School system's Internet Safety Policy is detailed in the *Students Rights and Responsibilities Handbook*. In brief, it states: "NPS will make every reasonable effort to minimize the risk that users will encounter objectionable material on the Internet....However, there is no absolute guarantee that this will happen. The NPS believes that the benefits to students...exceed any potential disadvantages....[but] respects each family's right to decide whether or not their child will have access to the Internet...at school." Accordingly, parents are asked to sign and return a permission and "user contract" at the beginning of each year.

Children who do not have access to a computer or to Internet access at home are encouraged to make use of the school library or to speak to a teacher about coming in early or staying late to use classroom resources.

Life-Threatening Allergy Policy

In 2004, the Newton School Committee adopted a policy intended to "minimize the risk for children with life-threatening food allergies to be exposed to offending allergens that may trigger a life-threatening reaction." What this policy means in practical terms is that food is no longer part of classroom celebrations such as birthdays, Halloween, or Valentine's Day. The full policy and its accompanying guidelines

are available at
<www.newtonpublicschools.com>.

Kindergarten Registration Process

The city of Newton uses the city census to identify all children eligible to begin kindergarten in a given year. The registration process begins in the early spring of the year a child will begin school. At Burr, there is a Parent Orientation Meeting held in February or March each year, followed by Kindergarten Registration Day. The school will notify families with eligible children of these dates when they are set, usually during late winter.

Kindergarten Registration includes a meeting with the School Nurse to review immunization records and requirements and a screening interview for each child. The screening process is conducted by Burr School staff, as directed by the Newton Public Schools system. Screening is not designed to establish basic kindergarten readiness, but to identify any special needs a student may have. If parents have questions about their child's readiness, they are encouraged to call the school to discuss the matter.

Respect for Human Differences

The Newton Public Schools has a core value of Respect for Human Differences (see <newton.mec.edu/curr&instruct/core-values/>). Burr School has a Respect for Human Differences committee made up of both parents and staff that works to help children learn about and respect human differences of all kinds. Examples of its work include the establishment of an annual World Cultures Festival, a family screening of the movie "That's Family!" and our family quilt bulletin board.

6: PARENT/SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

Curriculum Night

Each year there is an open house in late September or early October for parents to meet classroom teachers and the principal. It is an opportunity for parents to learn about their children's curriculum for the year, to learn the teacher's requirements, and to share their questions with the teacher.

Progress Reports (Report Cards) and Conferences

Progress Reports are issued twice a year during late January or early February and in June. In addition, at least two formal parent/teacher conferences are scheduled during the year, one in the fall and one in the spring.

Communication with Teachers

Teachers are always available to speak with parents throughout the year. Teachers will return parent phone calls made to the school office and will respond to parent notes they receive in a timely manner. Each teacher will tell parents about his or her preferred methods of communication at the beginning of each school year.

General Guidelines for Communicating with the School

The Burr staff believes strongly that teachers, parents and students must work together as a team. It is important for parents to communicate to appropriate staff any issues or concerns they have about their children for this team to function well. If a parent has a worry or concern that persists, it is almost always worth discussing. In order to help parents who are unsure how to go about addressing a particular concern, the School Council has come up with the following guidelines. In addition, all parents should know that the ELL staff are ready and willing to help any family for

whom language poses a barrier to communication or problem solving.

Classroom teachers are almost always an appropriate place to start, especially if the concern involves the curriculum, their instruction, or something that is happening in their classroom. In addition, teachers appreciate knowing about home situations that might affect a child, such as a family illness or other family crisis. If you feel you need further assistance after speaking to the classroom teacher, you can choose to speak to the principal. The teacher will appreciate knowing that you are taking this step.

Other teachers or staff members -- art, music, physical education, library, early literacy aides, learning center teachers, the lunch manager or others -- may be the right place to start if the concern is related to something that is happening in their program, classroom, or area. It may also be helpful to inform the classroom teacher about such a concern or question. In addition, you may want to contact the Literacy Specialist if your question or concern is with the language arts curriculum or program, and you may want to start with our Inclusion Facilitator if your question or concern is about special education or inclusion.

The school psychologist, social worker, and nurse are also available to assist a child and his or her family, and may be an appropriate place to start if a parent is hesitant to discuss a personal, family, or medical issue with the classroom teacher.

The principal is always available to discuss issues or concerns, and is clearly the right person to ask if you are unsure where to go. It is part of the principal's job to guide families through the process of resolving issues. "Principals want to keep the communication between parents and teachers open because this approach is healthy for your child and allows everyone to maintain mutual respect," according to

Susan Benjamin and Susan Sanchez in *Should I Go To the Teacher?* Although the principal's job requires a delicate balance -- at times mediating between parents and teachers to best serve the child -- she will try to help you find a comfortable way to participate in resolving an issue.

Publications

The PTO publishes and distributes the Burr Bulletin every other week during the school year. This newsletter is an important source of current information about current school activities and events. In addition, each year the PTO publishes the Burr School Directory, which includes student addresses and phone numbers (by permission); a current staff list and school calendar; class lists and room parents; and a list of School Council members. In addition, the PTO maintains a web site at <www.burrpto.org> and manages a parent email list for communications from the PTO (more information about the email list can be found on the website).

Meetings

During the course of most years, the PTO will invite staff members to make a presentation about a topic of interest and importance to parents. Past topics have included an introduction to the Balanced Literacy Program; Choosing Books for your Child; Special Education; the MCAS; and Technology in the Classroom. The PTO welcomes input from parents about what topics would be of interest. In addition to these evening presentations, there are occasional morning presentations or meetings such as a Math Morning for parents of first and second grade students. Finally, the principal usually hosts several informal "coffees" each year, when parents are invited to discuss topics of interest or concern.

7: EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Early Intervention Program/Early Literacy Aides

Kindergarten through grade two classrooms are supported by early literacy aides during their reading workshop time. During this time the aide supports the classroom teacher by leading guided reading groups and conferring with children as they read independently. The support provided by the early literacy aides allows the classroom teacher to provide specific early intervention instruction for children in grades one and two. The early intervention support is structured to provide these children with daily direct instruction to improve fluency, comprehension and decoding skills. The groups are flexible and children are assessed regularly to monitor progress. The early intervention groups are part of the daily in-class literacy instruction and this instruction replaces the support previously provided by PIRP (Primary Intervention Reading Program).

Kindergarten children are also supported by the literacy aides. The aides work with individual children who need additional practice to learn letter names and sounds, to learn kindergarten sight words and to learn the segmenting and blending of sounds.

English Language Learners

Burr School is one of the several ELL schools in Newton. Our ELL program provides instruction in English to students whose first language is one other than English and it provides support for classroom teachers of such students. Our students from other cultures have greatly enriched the Burr community.

METCO

Burr School, like all of the Newton Public Schools, is involved in the

METCO Program (Metropolitan Council for Education Opportunity). A number of children are bused to our school from Boston, Dorchester, Mattapan, Hyde Park, Roxbury, and West Roxbury.

METCO is a voluntary desegregation/educational partnership program, begun in 1966, in which parents in Boston and Springfield choose to enroll their children in participating suburban school systems. About 3,000 students from Boston and Springfield attend schools in 33 suburban communities. Newton was one of the original participating systems and has the largest number of students (about 400) in the program.

METCO is designed to provide an integrated public school education for urban minority children and a more diversified learning experience for Newton children, as well as to promote closer understanding and cooperation between urban and suburban families.

Special Education Services

The Newton Public Schools, in accordance with the Massachusetts Special Education Law, Chapter 766, have developed a variety of instructional programs and support services designed to meet the needs of students requiring special education services. A parent or any adult working with a student may refer the student for an evaluation. The school, following parental consent, will conduct various assessments to determine if the student has a special need. The assessments may include, but are not limited to: academic testing; psychological and medical assessments; and social and developmental histories. Additional specialized assessments may be required as part of the evaluation. If a child is determined to have special education needs, the team (parents and school personnel) may create an

Individual Education Plan or an accommodation plan to meet those needs.

A variety of special education programs provide services to children with special education needs. These programs are staffed by professionals who are certified to serve students with special needs. The programs are designed to allow children with special needs to remain in the regular classroom to the maximum extent possible consistent with their needs.

If parents have questions about their child's progress or if they wonder about a need for referral, they should discuss this with the classroom teacher and/or the school principal.

TITLE I

Burr is usually one of Newton's several Title I schools. This means that our percentage of families who receive free or reduced lunch is high enough to qualify us to receive additional federal funds.

We use Title I funds to hire assistants who work in all grades to support students who need extra help in language arts and math. We also use Title I funds to staff our Tuesday afternoon homework center (grades 3-5) and our grades 1-3 book borrowing program.

8: ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS

Affinity Group

The Affinity Group provides an opportunity for children of color in grades 2-5 to receive affirmation and to participate in an open dialogue about race. The lessons support critical thinking skills. The Affinity Group is led by two teachers and meets once a month for two to three hours each time. Late bus service is provided to designated locations for Boston students.

CAPP (Child Assault Prevention Program)

The Child Assault Prevention Program's main goal is to teach children and communities ways to prevent child abuse, increase safety and avoid potentially dangerous situations. We conduct this program in grades K, 2, and 5 each year with funding from the PTO. It is a community-based program that is implemented by trained specialists in schools and other educational settings. You will receive a flier with more detailed information shortly before your child participates in the program. For more information, contact Newton CAPP at 617-969-5906.

Creative Arts and Sciences

Creative Arts and Sciences is a city-wide curriculum enrichment program organized and funded by school PTOs. A variety of science, music, cultural and theatrical performances are presented; each grade has an opportunity to experience three to four different performances every year.

Music

All students have music class once a week for 30 minutes. In addition to this:

- Third graders take recorder lessons once a week for 30 minutes.
- Fourth graders have the opportunity to take group instrumental lessons, free of charge.
- Fourth and fifth graders take part in chorus once a week.
- In some years, fourth and fifth graders may join a volunteer chorus called the Burr School Singers. This group meets before school.
- Fifth graders may join the School Band/Orchestra.

For further information about these music opportunities, talk to your child's music teacher.

Open Circle

The Open Circle program was developed at Wellesley College's Stone Center and is part of K-4 classrooms at Burr. During Open Circle meetings, teachers lead children in discussions that teach various social and emotional skills. The goal is "to teach and embody principles of communication, responsibility, cooperation, respect, assertiveness, problem-solving, and conflict resolution. These principles are essential for helping children foster healthy relationships, become engaged, thoughtful citizens, and enjoy productive, fulfilling lives." See <www.open-circle.org> for more information about the program. A list of common Open Circle terms and their meanings is included in Appendix F: Open Circle Vocabulary, so that parents know what their children have learned and can reinforce the concepts by using the same vocabulary at home if desired.

T.O.P.S. (Thursday Opportunities for Success)

Each week, one grade participates in T.O.P.S., on Thursday afternoon. During this time, the students participate an extended period in three special subject areas, while that grade's classroom teachers use the time for planning and collaborating or professional development. Each grade has T.O.P.S. five to six times a year.

Understanding Our Differences – A Disability Awareness Program

In grades 3 through 5, parent volunteers present "Understanding Our Differences." This is a unique program designed to help non-disabled children understand what it may feel like to have a disability by giving accurate information in a hands-on setting. The program encourages children to discuss their feelings and concerns about the visible effects and consequences of various disabilities. It helps them appreciate that a disabled person is more like than unlike himself or herself.

9: BURR SCHOOL SUPPORT PERSONNEL

Building Aide

The Building Aide works as a support to the classroom teachers and to the principal. Typical responsibilities include providing small group instructional support in classes with large enrollments; doing bus dismissal duty; covering the office at lunch time; substituting; and working on other special projects as needed.

Inclusion Facilitator

The job of the inclusion facilitator is to make sure that all children succeed in the school environment. The facilitator coordinates program planning for children with significant special needs and communicates with and supports their families and all staff who work with the students. The facilitator is a resource person for curriculum accommodations and modifications, behavior interventions, therapeutic environments, friendship development, and life skills. The facilitator:

- Creates new materials that support learning
- Assesses classroom environments to help determine how a student's needs can best be met
- Conducts assessments
- Provides support and alternative assessments during MCAS testing
- Coordinates transition from preschool and to middle school
- Provides ongoing support and consultation to parents over the course of a student's six years in elementary school
- Hires and trains assistant teachers in the program
- Communicates with therapists, specialists, evaluators and consultants outside the school system

Instructional Support Staff/In-School Substitutes (ISS)

The main responsibility of Instructional Support Staffers is to serve as substitute when a teacher is absent for a day or more. When an ISS is not needed to substitute on a given day, s/he has an alternate schedule in which s/he serves as an aide in several classrooms throughout the day. ISS are often in charge of morning door duty.

Learning Center Teachers

The Learning Center teachers' main responsibilities include teaching individual children or small groups of children with special needs either in the Learning Center or in the classroom; administering and interpreting the results of educational and diagnostic tests; consulting with the classroom teacher about students who are of concern; and working with the teacher to adapt and modify the classroom program for students with special needs. Additional responsibilities include monitoring the special education process; attending special education team meetings with staff and parents; attending consultation group sessions where techniques for helping children are explored; writing Individual Education Plans and twice yearly reports; working closely with other school specialists; and maintaining contact with parents. Our Learning Center teachers can provide materials for children with special needs and they can give suggestions to parents for home activities.

Literacy Specialist

The literacy specialist helps to develop and maintain the language arts program from kindergarten through grade five. She works with teachers and staff to implement the standards-based Balanced Literacy Program in the classrooms through modeling, collaborative teaching

and consultation about students, materials and resources. She coordinates the Early Intervention Program in grades kindergarten through grade two and organizes the support for fragile readers in grade three through five. *Early Literacy aides* work in kindergarten through grade two. These aides support the classroom teachers by leading guided reading groups and conferring with children as they read independently. Additional responsibilities of the literacy specialist include assessing children's needs through diagnostic testing and making recommendations regarding techniques and materials. She also maintains the guided reading collection in the Book Room and supports teachers and staff as they provide a rich blend of literacy experiences for all students.

There is one literacy aide in each grade one and grade two classroom for an hour a day. When it is possible, literacy aides provide support to grade 3 classrooms during their reading workshop times as well.

Lunch Coordinator & Attendants

The lunch coordinator manages the lunch program (ordering, billing) and serves as the food handler. Lunch attendants serve lunch, help children during lunch, and supervise them at lunch recess time.

Nurse

The school nurse provides a variety of health services at Burr, including:

- State mandated annual screenings of vision (K-5), hearing (K-3), height and weight (K-3), and scoliosis (grade 5)
- Medication administration and monitoring
- Skilled nursing care and case management for children with special healthcare needs, including individual health care plans
- Monitoring of mandated immunizations and enforcing state and local immunization requirements

- Acute and emergency care
- Teaching about health topics such as:
 - proper hygiene skills (e.g. hand washing)
 - nutrition and dental hygiene
 - smoking prevention
 - muscular and skeletal systems

Occupational Therapist

The occupational therapist also participates in the special education evaluation process by evaluating the student's functional abilities for performing in the educational setting. The therapist may address visual perceptual skills, fine motor skills, sensory processing, daily living skills, and additional motor skills that limit independent functioning in the school environment. The therapist will evaluate the student's abilities, the expectations of specific tasks, and the environment in which the student needs to perform. The student's independent functioning is promoted through consultation with the team, direct intervention, and teaching compensatory strategies for various learning styles.

Psychologist

The school psychologist provides a variety of services at Burr, including:

- Working in classrooms in small and/or large groups to facilitate social and emotional learning (for example, getting along with others, sharing, resolving conflicts, etc.)
- Consulting with teachers and families
- Conducting psychological evaluations
- Working with children outside the classroom (individually and in groups)
- Assisting in urgent situations
- Participating on special education teams

Social Worker

The part-time social worker at Burr is also part of the school's special education

team and assesses and works with children who may have special education needs. As a member of the special education evaluation process, the social worker meets with families to get a sense of their concerns and to gather medical, family and developmental information that can be helpful in formulating an Individual Educational Plan for a child.

The social worker is available to consult with parents and teachers, and may at times offer short-term individual counseling or lead groups that focus on a particular issue. Parent permission is always obtained before a social worker works directly with a child outside of the classroom, unless there is an urgent crisis.

Other services offered by the social worker include:

- Consulting with parents on family issues, especially those that affect a child's learning, and informing families about community resources that may be helpful
- Responding to children's issues which are part of normal development (for example, entry to school, learning to make and keep friends, handling feelings appropriately)
- Helping a child cope with some special life situation, such as dealing with a loss, an illness or a disruption in the family
- Providing parents with short-term counseling and collaboration with community agencies.

Special Education Assistants

Special Education Aides are assigned to a classroom when there are one or more children in that classroom whose Individual Educational Plans specify the need for the assistance of a classroom aide. Special Education Aides work part time or full time to support the classroom teacher as she or he implements the curriculum in general and the goals and objectives for the student(s) with special needs in particular.

Speech-Language Pathologist

The Speech-Language Pathologist at Burr is available to provide diagnostic evaluations and services in the areas of language comprehension and expression, speech sound production, and fluency. Services may include direct therapy, monitoring, and/or consultation. The Speech-Language Pathologist participates in the special education evaluation process and the development of Individual Education Plans.

Technology Specialist

Each elementary school has the services of a Technology Specialist about one day a week. The technology specialist helps maintain hardware, implement technology programs and applications, and integrate technology into the curriculum at all grade levels.

Title I Assistants

Title 1 assistants are described in "Educational Programs" under "Title I."

10: PARENT INVOLVEMENT

There are many opportunities for parents to volunteer at Burr School. Choosing to spend time in the library classroom, on a field trip or organizing a school event is an invaluable gift to your child.

The School Council

According to the Massachusetts Law that established mandatory School Councils in 1993, "a school council is a representative, school building-based committee composed of the principal, parents, teachers [and] community members..." The Burr School Council is an elected group of five parents, four teachers, up to two community members and the principal. The purpose of the Council is to advise and assist the principal in determining and carrying out the school's yearly school improvement plan. Elections for the Burr School Council are held each spring. Parent members are elected for either a 1, 2, or 3-year term. One ballot, containing brief statements from each candidate, is mailed to each family or household currently enrolled at the school. All Burr parents are eligible, and encouraged, to run. For a list of current members of the Burr School Council, see the annual Burr School Directory or the Burr School web site <www.burrpto.org>. Parents are welcome to contact any member of the School Council individually, or to email the whole council at <school-council@burrpto.org>. Additional information on school councils in general is available at the Massachusetts Department of Education's website at <<http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/advisory/schoolcouncils/>>.

Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO)

The Burr School PTO provides an opportunity for parents to become involved in the school in various ways. The PTO is made up of parent volunteers who meet monthly to discuss and organize activities that happen throughout the school year. All parents are welcomed and encouraged to join. The PTO maintains a website at <www.burrpto.org> with information on current activities and events; officers & committees; budget information; past meeting minutes, and current and past issues of its biweekly newsletter, the *Burr Bulletin* (password required: username = "burr" password = "171pine" -- all lowercase). A copy of the PTO's Operating Policies and information about its typical annual activities follows.

Please feel free to contact any PTO officer to ask how to volunteer your time -- it's a great chance to get to know other parents, teachers, and administrators. PTO officers are elected each spring to serve the following school year. Any interested parent is qualified to serve in one of the many available positions. PTO meetings are generally scheduled about once a month at 7:00 pm at Burr, and agendas for the meetings are sent home ahead of time. All are encouraged to attend and share their concerns and ideas with the other members of the PTO. Parents are encouraged to phone any individual member of the board or to email the whole PTO board at <pto-board@burrpto.org>.

PTO Operating Policies

As approved on February 8, 2005; changes regarding insurance and nominations process still pending.

1) The Organization:

- Purpose: The Burr PTO is a membership organization, comprised of all parents or guardians whose children attend the Burr School. Its purpose is to strengthen the Burr School's capacity to provide quality education to all our children by:
 - a. Serving as a communication link between parents, the school and the broader community
 - b. Raising funds to support the education of our children
 - c. Providing supplemental educational programs within the school and
 - d. Building community among Burr families and faculty.
- Dues: Dues do not define membership in the PTO. Each year the PTO asks families to pay a nominal dues fee per student in the school, which contributes a significant part of the PTO budget. However, all Burr parents are automatically members of the PTO and can vote on PTO decisions regardless of whether or not they pay dues.
- Tax Deductible Status: The Burr PTO is incorporated with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. All donations to the PTO are tax deductible. With regard to goods and services purchased to support the PTO's fundraising efforts, a donation is defined by the IRS as any portion of a purchase that exceeds the market value of the purchase. Donations in excess of \$250 will be acknowledged with a letter from the PTO, in accordance with IRS policy.

2) PTO Operating Policies:

- In addition to the PTO By-laws submitted to the Commonwealth for purposes of incorporation, the PTO maintains written Operating Policies as a mechanism for guiding the organization and for ensuring transparency of its policies. These Operating Policies and any changes are approved by the PTO membership through its standard decision-making process.
- As part of these policies, the PTO maintains an Organizational Chart that lists all committees and their chairpersons, to help inform the entire parent membership of the PTO structure and opportunities for involvement.
- There are several ways to get copies of the PTO Operating Policies, Organizational Chart and Job Descriptions. They are always available from the PTO web site. They are also available anytime by request to the PTO Secretary (who will also put a reminder to that effect in the Bulletin prior to PTO Elections in the spring and again in September, prior to the September PTO meeting). Finally, the PTO will ensure that copies of these documents are sent home to all incoming new families each year prior to the September meeting.

3) PTO Structure:

- Board of Directors: The PTO Board consists of eight elected Board Members and the School Principal as an ex-officio member. The officers of the corporation are the two Co-presidents, Treasurer and Secretary. In addition, the Board includes four elected Coordinators. In the event that two individuals are selected as Committee Co-coordinators for a given area, one of them will be designated to formally serve on the Board of Directors. Terms for all positions are 2 years, ending in June. Whenever possible, the terms of the two co-presidents should be staggered to provide greater continuity from year to year.
- Board Member Elections: When a Board member's two-year term is ending, Burr parents are informed through the PTO bulletin that the PTO is looking for candidates. Board members are elected at the May PTO meeting. Once candidates are identified,

each candidate will provide a brief bio/introduction so parents are more informed prior to the elections. (This should be done whether there is only one candidate for an office or more than one.)

- PTO Committees: The PTO has numerous committees focused on aspects of Fundraising, Education Support, Community Building and Communications. Committee Chairs or Co-chairs are individuals who volunteer for the position. Whenever possible, individuals who have served as volunteers on the committee are encouraged to become Committee Chairs. New committees can be created at the initiative of any Burr parent, with the ratification of the PTO at one of its meetings. Proposals for new committees should be submitted to one of the Co-Presidents.
- Volunteers: All Burr parents are invited and encouraged to volunteer and participate in the variety of school and community-based activities throughout the year. Volunteer opportunities are one-time or ongoing, large or small, leadership or implementation. See the list of committees and their descriptions for more information about the individual committees.
- Volunteer recruitment: In September, the Burr School Information Packet is distributed to all parents. The PTO puts an information sheet in that packet with a description of volunteer opportunities and a sign up sheet. All volunteers names collected from these sheets are added to the Committee sign-up sheets, which are then put on tables at the first PTO meeting, when all those attending are also encouraged to sign up. At the first PTO meeting of the year, the agenda will include an opportunity for parents to learn more about each of the committees, which committees are still in need of chairpersons, and which committees need more volunteers.

4) Decision-making:

- Advance Notification of Major Decisions Coming Up for PTO Vote: Prior to a decision on any major issue, all parents are notified of the agenda and proposals via flier in student folders and via email. The PTO strives to notify parents of all issues up for consideration and decision. However, from time to time, smaller issues arise during the meeting that require a decision and votes will be held as necessary. A major decision requiring advance parent notification is defined as any issue regarding 1) PTO budget approval, 2) selection of PTO leaders, 3) changes in PTO priorities, 4) changes in PTO Operating Policies. The proposal to be discussed will be distributed ahead of time to parents, along with notice of the meeting.
- Voting: All parents are encouraged to exercise their right to vote on any and all PTO decisions. Decisions on PTO business are made at the monthly PTO meetings by a vote of those attending the meetings. The decision makers are the parents who are at the PTO meetings. Whenever possible, the PTO strives for a consensus of those present. However, in the event that no consensus can be reached, a majority vote is required for decisions.

Because proposals are often revised as a result the exchange and discussion at the PTO meeting, PTO members cannot vote via email ahead of the meeting, but must be present at the meeting to formally cast a vote. However, people who are unable to attend shall be encouraged to communicate their opinions on all proposals to the co-presidents by email or letter, who will communicate these viewpoints during the meeting.
- Parent Notification of PTO Decisions: The entire minutes to each PTO meeting as recorded by the Secretary are posted on the PTO web site and bulletin board. Key decisions are reported back to parents via the Burr Bulletin. Any parent can contact the Secretary for a full copy of the minutes.
- In order to facilitate the timely conduct of business, the PTO Board is empowered to authorize the spending of up to, but not more than, \$250 for any given item or activity without requiring a vote of the PTO as a whole.

5) PTO Monthly Meetings:

- Purpose: All Burr parents are invited and encouraged to attend monthly PTO meetings.
- The PTO meetings have two purposes:
 - To conduct PTO business and make decisions regarding the PTO and its work.
 - To educate parents about various education-related issues that impact their children.
- PTO Meeting Schedule: The PTO meets monthly between September and June, except during the month of December. Meetings usually run from 7 – 8:30 on alternating Tuesday or Wednesday nights, with an informal time for socializing beginning at 6:45. The schedule of PTO meetings is set at the beginning of the year by the Co-presidents and the Principal. The following are a standard part of the annual PTO meeting cycle:
 - September: Approve PTO budget for the year; committee volunteer recruitment; recruitment of any committee chair vacancies.
 - May: Election of PTO leadership, recruitment of committee chairs, and review of draft budget for the coming year.
 - June: Develop annual Fundraising Plan.
- PTO Meeting Agenda: The PTO Meeting Agenda is set by the PTO co-presidents and the Principal at their bi-monthly meeting. Some meetings (typically 3-4) include invited guest speakers or program presentations, e.g., balanced literacy, MCAS. Topics for the agenda are chosen based on issues and events happening at and around the school. Agenda items and ideas from members are welcome and should be referred to the co-presidents or the Principal. At every meeting, time is set aside for open discussion and ideas that come up during the meeting. The agenda is publicized to Burr Community in advance of the meeting.
- Cancellation of Meetings: In case of bad weather or another emergency on the day of a scheduled PTO meeting, the PTO co-presidents will confer with the Principal and make a decision before the end of the school day. Any decision to cancel will be posted at the school, at BCAP after school, on the PTO's website, and be broadcast via the all-school parent email list.

6) PTO Budget:

- Fiscal year: September 1 to August 30.
- Budget Cycle: The PTO raises money each year for the following year's budget, enabling predictable budget planning for the year.
- Budget Development: The next year's budget is drafted by the Treasurer in the spring, with input from the PTO Co-Presidents. Committee Chairs seeking an increase in their budget line item for the coming year should submit their request to the PTO Co-president by the end of April.
- Budget Approval: The PTO budget is presented to the PTO at its annual budget meeting in September for review, revision and a vote of approval. The proposed budget will be distributed with the agenda ahead of time to all parents and will also be available on the website.
- Budget Amendments: Any changes in the budget can only be made by a vote of the PTO membership at one of its regular meetings.
- Sections of the Budget: The budget is divided into 3 sections. Within each section, there are specific line items for various categories of expenditures. The 3 sections are:
 1. School operations: This portion of the budget is used for school activities, and these expenses are overseen by the Principal. The Newton School Committee's

Citywide Equity Policy places a cap on PTO support of school operations. PTO support for school operations cannot exceed 55% of the school system's total per pupil spending figure.

2. **Technology:** This portion of the budget is used for purchases of equipment for use by the teachers in the classroom. Currently, there is no cap on PTO support for technology. As part of its Fundraising Plan, the PTO determines the amount of funds it will seek to raise for technology. As part of the budget approval process, the PTO approves the use of these funds, based on a recommendation from a joint teacher/parent Technology Committee and the Principal.
3. **PTO operations:** This portion of the budget funds Community Building events and other PTO activities that take place outside of the regular school program.

7) Fiscal Oversight and Authorization for Spending:

- Spending of funds: Funds can only be spent within the parameters of the approved PTO budget. (see budget amendment policy above and Section 4, Decision-making.)
- Authorization to spend: Checks are only cut with the written authorization of either the Principal (school operations funds), committee chair (committee line items), a PTO co-president or the Treasurer. A written check request must be completed indicating what line item the check is to be taken from and who authorized it. Receipts, invoices or other documentation should also be attached.
- Check signing: The Treasurer cuts and signs all checks. The co-presidents are also listed as signers on the account.
- Cash: When a cash bank is needed for a fundraising event, a check is written to cash along with written authorization. After the event, cash for the same amount is then re-deposited on a separate deposit slip to provide paper trail.
- The Principal, Committee Chairs or Co-Presidents provide written authorization to spend funds, and the Treasurer cuts and signs the checks.

8) Fundraising Plan:

- A draft Fundraising Plan for the coming year will be sent to all parents in May prior to the June PTO meeting. The Fundraising Plan will be discussed, amended and approved at that meeting. To give parents some context and information regarding the PTO's fundraising goals, the proposal will also include information on the current year's fundraising goals and actual funds raised, and a summary of the current year's budget. It will also include a rationale for any significant proposed increases in the fundraising goals for the coming year.

9) Relationship to External Bodies:

- Burr School Council: The Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993 requires that each public school form a school council. At Burr School, the Council consists of 5 elected parents, 4 teachers elected by the professional staff and the principal. The purposes of the council are to assist and advise the principal in adopting educational goals, identifying the educational needs of the students, reviewing the annual school budget, and formulating a school improvement plan. The Burr PTO supports the process of parent elections to the Burr School Council and helps to disseminate information about the decisions of the School Council. Open positions for the School Council are publicized in the Burr School Bulletin, and a paper ballot, along with bios of each candidate, is sent home to every household in May.
- Newton Citywide PTO Council: The Burr PTO is an automatic member of the Newton Citywide PTO Council. One or both of the co-presidents represents the Burr School at these meetings. In the event that neither co-president is available to attend, the co-presidents can request that another Burr PTO board member represent the school in their place.

FAQs about Burr School PTO Finances

Note: A current copy of the budget is available at <www.burrpto.org>.

How does the fundraising/spending cycle work?

Each year we budget to spend approximately the amount that we fundraised the previous year. Two programs are the exception – the Literature Fund and the Library Gift Book program. These funds are generally spent in the year in which they are received.

What is PTO money spent on?

We fund two types of programs: academic support and social activities. For instance, we supplement the library budget, fund the entire Creative Arts and Science program, provide teacher supplies, and pay for C.A.P.P. (Child Abuse Prevention Program) and the Understanding our Differences program. In addition, we provide support for school field trips and discretionary funds that supplement the school's budget. To keep parents informed and in touch we distribute the Burr Bulletin and the Burr Directory. We also fund a number of programs and events to build community and school spirit including the Welcome Back Picnic, landscaping, the Halloween Family Fun Night, Color Day, and Metco-sponsored events. This is only a sample of the activities the PTO is engaged in.

When and how is the budget developed?

Throughout the year the treasurer tracks actual spending and collects wish list items from PTO subcommittees, Ms. Bencal, and the teachers – anyone can make a suggestion to the PTO. In the spring, the PTO board works with Ms. Bencal to develop a draft budget using this information. This draft is discussed at the May PTO meeting, and the final budget is then presented and voted on at the first PTO meeting of the school

year. The budget is also posted on the PTO bulletin board along with actual spending from the previous year, as well as on our website, www.burrpto.org (username=burr, password=171pine).

I pay taxes. Why do I need to support the PTO?

Burr School's Per Pupil Allocation Budget from the School System for the 2004/2005 school year was **\$35,409**, or about \$113 per pupil. It is from this budget that the school buys its instructional supplies and materials, textbooks and workbooks, professional development materials, art, office, classroom and computer supplies. In recent years, the PTO budget has hovered around **\$40,000** of which about half goes directly to support school operations. *PTO funds really make a difference.*

Can we spend as much as we want to?

We can spend an unlimited amount on community activities. However there is a citywide cap on the amount that PTOs can spend to fund school operations. There is an equity policy monitored by the School Committee that limits this type of spending to 55% of each school's budget. However, technology is specifically excluded from this cap – so we can also spend as much as we wish on computers and related items.

How can I get more involved?

Your participation in PTO activities either by volunteering or by making a donation makes a big difference. As a volunteer, you learn a great deal about what happens at the school, get to know the staff and teachers better, and meet a lot of fun people. Think about it!

Annual Activities

A current calendar and committee list is distributed at the beginning of each year, and up-to-date versions are always available on the PTO website at <www.burrpto.org>. The following list shows an approximate, typical annual schedule of activities and events that the PTO either runs or supports, but PTO activities and events vary from year to year depending on the interest and availability of volunteers.

Aug	Kindergarten picnic (Tues. of week school starts)
Sep	Welcome Back Teacher luncheon (day before school starts)
	Welcome back coffee – all parents
	Back to School picnic (first Monday of school year)
	Curriculum Night
	First PTO Meeting: (Welcome; vote on budget; volunteer recruitment)
	Gift Wrap Sale
Oct	Halloween Family Fun night
Nov	Book Fair
	Holiday Toy Drive/Community project
	Election Day bake sale
Dec	Library Gift Book Sale
	Literacy Fund
Jan	World Cultures Festival
	Winter Concert
Mar	MCAS grades 3, 4, 5
	Book Swap
	Major Fundraiser Event (Auction every other year)

	Incoming Kindergarten Parent Orientation Meeting
	Kindergarten Registration
	Family Ice Skating Outing
Apr	5th Grade Play
	Newton SERVES project
	Spring Cleanup: Garden and Landscaping
May	School Council Elections
	Teacher Appreciation Week
	Art Show
	MCAS (grade 3, 4, 5)
	May Fair
Jun	Color Day & Lunch
	Spring Concert
	Grade 5 Graduation
	Library Gift Book Sale
	End-of-Year Teacher luncheon
Jul	Garden Club

Appendix A: Burr School Code of Behavior

Burr School students, staff and parents are committed to creating and maintaining a climate of mutual respect, caring and cooperative problem solving. To this end, we ask that all members of the school community join us in upholding the following guidelines.

I. Respect for People

- Always be considerate of other people.
- Be courteous and speak in a respectful tone of voice.
- Use appropriate language at all times.
- Listen respectfully to other students when they are speaking in a group or in front of the class.
- Listen respectfully to adults and follow directions.

II. Respect for Learning

- Work quietly.
- Walk quietly in the halls.

III. Respect for Property

- Take care of your desk, materials, school equipment, books, school and school grounds.
- Keep your desk and room neat and orderly.

IV. Playground Behavior

- Play fairly and give everyone else a chance.
- Display good sportsmanship at all times.
- Never throw snowballs or stones.

V. Lunchroom Behavior

- Listen respectfully to the lunch monitors and follow their directions.
- Sit down while you are eating.
- Talk in a quiet voice.

VI. Bus Behavior

- Be courteous; do not push or yell.
- Obey any instructions the driver may give you.
- Remain seated at all times.
- Do not throw anything out of the bus.
- Do not put hands, arms or heads out the window.

VII. General Reminders

- Fighting will not be tolerated.
- Gum chewing is not allowed.
- No one is allowed to leave the school property without a teacher's permission.
- Electronic games or devices, including cell phones, cannot be brought to school without teacher permission.
- Inappropriate language will not be tolerated.

Appendix B: Playground Expectations

Think Safety and Have Fun!

SLIDES

- Slides are used to go DOWN
- Correct body position is feet first and sitting down
- On tube slide, lean back to prevent bumping of head
- Take turns and go down one at a time
- Make sure the person ahead of you is out of the way before you start
- On the spiral slide, wait until the person ahead of you says “All Clear” before starting down

TRACK RIDES

- Hold onto handle with both hands
- Look before starting
- If handle is in the middle, ask an adult or taller person to get it: **Jumping for the handle is dangerous!**
- Look both ways before crossing to the other side of the track
- K's and 1's should use lower track

CLIMBING

- Find safe ways to climb up platforms
- Use ladders, ramps, ropes and stairs

RINGS

- K's and 1's should be supervised on the rings
- Children travel from one ring to the next with one hand on each ring
- Inverted activities are not allowed

BOUNCING PLATFORM

- Two people at a time
- The object is to cooperatively stay on the platform

GENERAL SAFETY SUGGESTIONS

- Tag and chasing games belong on the field, not on the playground
- Share equipment, take turns, and work cooperatively
- All swings are meant to be sat upon

Appendix C: Blue Zone Maps

Blue Zone: Area Map

Blue Zone: Detail Map

Appendix D: Walking Tips

Good Reasons to Walk

Walking gives children the opportunity to:

- Exercise
- Socialize

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Walking reduces:

- Tension, stress & anxiety
- Pollution

•

Walking Develops:

- Fitness
- Good judgment and decision-making skills
- Self-confidence & self-esteem
- Friendships
- Independence

Safe Walking Suggestions

Start a Walking Partnership

- With other children in the neighborhood
- With other families

Do a Combination Ride and Walk

- Before school, drive to within a block or two of the school and let children walk the remaining distance
- After school, arrange to meet your child in a prearranged location at least one block from the school
- Have your children walk across the field and pick them up on Lexington Street

If Driving is the Only Option

- Carpool as much as possible
- Avoid driving to school during peak drop-off and pick-up times

Appendix E: Newton's Safe Busing Checklist

Waiting for the Bus

- **Don't miss the bus!** Give yourself plenty of time to reach the bus stop. Leave your home early. Walk, don't run!
- **No horseplay!** Running around and playing may be okay for the playground, but not the bus stop. Stay out of the street while you wait for the bus. Traffic is heavy in the morning, and you could be hit by a car or cause an accident if a car is forced to stop quickly for you.
- **Respect property!** Stay at the bus stop. Do not trespass on people's private property.

Boarding the Bus

- **Sshhhh!** People in the area may still be sleeping when you leave for school, so keep down the noise in consideration of your neighbors.
- **Wait!** Be sure the bus has stopped completely before stepping off the curb.
- **Form a line!** Don't push or shove; you'll get on the bus eventually. If you have to cross the street while the bus is stopped, cross carefully (even though motorists are supposed to stop for a school bus, they often don't and you could be hurt).
- **Move along!** Step quickly and use the handrail when you are entering or leaving the bus. Watch your step.
- **Sit down!** Go directly to a seat and sit down. Don't wait for a friend to get on before you take a seat.
- **Share your seat!** Don't save a spot for a friend, but keep the seat open for anyone who wants to sit down.

Riding the Bus

- **Stay in your seat!** The driver needs your help. He/she may have trouble concentrating if there is a commotion on the bus.
- **Be respectful of others!** Do not mistreat others either physically or verbally, or in any other way.
- **No food or drink allowed!** Do not eat or drink while on the bus. If the driver has to stop suddenly, you could choke.
- **Keep the aisles clear!** Nothing -- not books, bags, legs, arms, or bodies should block the aisle. Do not stand in the aisle. If the driver is forced to make a quick stop, you could be thrown around, hurting yourself and others.
- **No pets allowed!** Animals in boxes or cages are not allowed on the bus.
- **No throwing!** Do not throw any objects, including small items such as candy or coins. Do not throw anything out of the windows.
- Never touch or tamper with the emergency door! This door is for emergencies only.

Getting off the Bus

- **Never behind!** Never cross behind the bus because students cannot be seen.
- **Never in front!** Never cross in front of the bus when the door is closed unless the driver instructs you to do so. The bus has a blind spot and students cannot be seen.
- **Never underneath!** Never reach under the bus for anything. Wait until the bus has moved and it is safe to do so. Ask an adult for help if necessary.

- **Be organized!** Be ready to leave when you reach your stop. Don't keep the driver and other bus riders waiting while you gather up your belongings.
- **Stay put!** Wait until the bus has stopped completely before you get up from your seat. Always let people in the front of the bus get off first.
- **Don't push!** You will get out faster if no one shoves or pushes. Also, chances are better no one will trip and fall, causing delays.
- **Be properly dressed!** Be sure that no items of clothing have belts, toggles, sleeves dangling. They can get caught in the door when it closes.
- **Leave immediately!** After you get off the bus, leave the area quickly so that you are out of the way of other buses bringing more students to or from school.
- **Stay Clear!** Keep away from the side of the buses. If you must cross the street, cross in front of the bus, and wait for an "all clear" signal from the driver before you leave the curb. Look both ways before crossing!

It's Up to You

- **Stay calm!** In case of an emergency, listen to the driver and follow his/her instructions.
- **Set a good example!** We expect you to show responsibility.

Appendix F: Open Circle Vocabulary

Annoying behaviors: A behavior that is annoying or disruptive but not a “Double D.” To handle annoying behaviors, identify the behavior and explain why it’s annoying, then suggest what you would like the other person to do instead

Body Language: A way to send messages using only your face, body or hands.

Compliment: Saying something good about someone.

- When you give a compliment, be truthful, specific, and positive.
- When you receive a compliment, look at the person, smile, and say “Thank you.”

Compromise: Reach a decision by each side giving up some of what they wanted.

Consensus: A decision that everyone will agree to even if everyone is not completely satisfied.

Cooperate: Work together to get something done.

Double D’s: Dangerous or Destructive behavior.

- Dangerous = someone might get hurt
- Destructive = something might get broken, damaged, or destroyed

Excluding: leaving others out intentionally.

Goal: something you want to have happen; how you want things to end up.

Good Leader:

- Does things to help the group
- Comes up with good ideas
- Sets a good example

- Gets things going
- Organizes activities
- Helps others play
- Helps the group calm down

Included: Part of the group, accepted, welcomed.

Non-negotiable Rules: Important classroom rules that cannot be changed. (You may ask questions about them and ask to have them explained.)

Nonverbal Signal: A way of communicating without words.

Positive Self-Talk: Saying encouraging things to yourself.

Problem: A situation that causes people to be confused or upset.

School Listening Look:

- Look at the person who is speaking
- Pay attention

Speaking Up:

- Look at the group
- Speak slowly and clearly
- Speak loud enough so that everyone can hear

Appendix G: School Songs

The Best We Can Be!

The Burr School Song

Burr is our school and a special place
Where all of us learn every day
About the wide world and our human race
And being good sports when we play.
Here we work hard to cooperate
Workin' together sure feels great!
All of us smile so proudly when we can say

**We're all for one here!
Under the sun we're
Feelin' just like family!
We're Burr School,
THE BEST WE CAN BE!**

Under our colors of blue and white
Standing together are we,
All of us different
We're quite a sight;
But we're united, you see!
Whether from here or from foreign lands,
Brothers and sisters, now let's join hands --
Helpin' each other find out how good we
can be!

**We're all for one here!
Under the sun we're
Feelin' just like family!
We're Burr School,
THE BEST WE CAN BE!**

**We're all for one here!
Under the sun we're
Feelin' just like family!
We're Burr School,
THE BEST WE CAN BE! YEAH!**

Here We Are

(Chorus)

Here we are, altogether,
As we sing this song, joyfully
Here we are, altogether,
As I hope we'll always be.

Verse 1:

Join we now as friends,
And celebrate the community we share, all
as one,
Keep the fire burning,
Kindle it with care,
As we all join in and sing....

(Chorus)

Verse 2:

Let us make the world, A Hallelujah,
Let us make the world, a better place,
Keep a smile handy,
Lend a helping hand,
As we all join in and sing....

(Chorus)

Important Telephone Numbers

School Office	(617) 559-9360
Call Back Line (to report absences)	(617) 559-9380
Burr Community After-School Program (BCAP)	(617) 965-1518
Newton Schools Department	(617) 559-6000
Food Services (School Lunch)	(617) 559-9015
School Committee Office	(617) 559-6110
METCO Office	(617) 559-6132
Parks & Recreation Department	(617) 796-1500
Newton Community Education	(617) 559-6999

Important Email and Website Addresses

Newton Public Schools: < www.newton.mec.edu >
Newton School Committee: < www.newtonpublicschool.com >
Newton PTO Council: < www.newtonptocouncil.org >
Burr School PTO: < www.burrpto.org >
Burr PTO Board email: < pto-board@burrpto.org >
Burr School Council email: < school-council@burrpto.org >