

# The Winfield L. Morse School



Parent/Student Handbook



August, 2009

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Welcome to the Winfield L. Morse School!

Whether your family is new to Morse or you are returning to us, it is a great pleasure to welcome you to our school community and to the 2009-2010 school year! At Morse, we are committed to providing a high quality program that addresses the learning and social needs of our students. Our mission is to work alongside families to help children become:

- critical thinkers and problem solvers
- curious, lifelong learners
- competent readers, writers, mathematicians and scientists
- respectful, responsible and empathic human beings
- citizens who value and feel that they are valued by their community

Parents and staff form a critical partnership, and we highly encourage parental involvement. We recognize that as students grow, the nature of parental involvement changes. So, we are here to work with you to find the kind of involvement that works for you, your child and the program.

We have tried to make the following Handbook as comprehensive as possible. However, we recognize that questions will arise throughout the year. Please take time to complete the Handbook Review form and include any initial questions you have. Please also know that we welcome your feedback including questions, compliments and concerns, throughout the year. If you are ever curious about why something has happened in the classroom or the school, please don't hesitate to contact your teacher or me. We welcome the chance to clarify and learn from one another.

Together, we can prepare our students to be confident, articulate, and enthusiastic learners who will successfully meet the challenges of an ever-changing world.

I hope that your child's experience at W.L. Morse School will be exciting, productive, and fun. I look forward to working with each of you.

Sincerely,

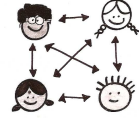
Mrs. Meghan Fitzgerald  
Principal

# Our MORSE CODE

*We share these values in our Morse community.*

## RESPECT

- We make good choices and do our best.
- We show that everyone is important by using positive words and actions.
- We celebrate the uniqueness of each member of our Morse family.



## Love of LEARNING



- We believe that we all can continue to learn and grow.
- When we learn and work together as a team, we can achieve even greater goals.
- We take risks and learn from both our successes & mistakes.

## EMPATHY

- We try to understand and think about each other's feelings.
- We value others, their feelings and their rights.
- We care for each member of our Morse family and treat each other in a way we want to be treated.



## RESPONSIBILITY



- We take responsibility for our own actions.
- We take care of the environment, the school and the things that we share.
- When we work together, we can make a real difference.

## **WINFIELD L. MORSE-- A VIBRANT LEARNING COMMUNITY**

Morse is a special place for two important reasons. First, our students are at a special stage in their learning careers, emerging from early elementary and starting to build the capacity to think critically. Our curriculum encourages Morse students to explore the world in a hands-on fashion and then begin to analyze their discoveries by applying more formal study skills. Most children enter Morse as beginning to early intermediate readers and writers. As their reading ability grows, children are challenged to think critically as well as discuss and record their thoughts about what they have read. Second and Third Graders are developmentally ready to discover the joy of formal learning. Each subject area reflects our commitment to building formal learning skills in an age-appropriate way.

Second, our location in the heart of Sleepy Hollow provides a unique setting for us to study concepts of community, sustainability and multicultural awareness-- all in accordance with New York State Learning Standards. Our students live in an active, vibrant community that cares about its members and its impact on the world. We are committed to developing our children's appreciation for these values through both what and how children learn here at Morse.

### **LANGUAGE ARTS**

At Morse, we develop students' literacy through the Balanced Literacy model, which incorporates the teaching of reading skills and strategies, writing skills and craft, as well as word work (phonics and spelling). Each day, students have a 90-minute literacy block which includes a Reader's Workshop and a Writer's Workshop. During workshop time, students learn through: direct whole group instruction; small group instruction; 1:1 conferences with the teacher; partner work; and independent reading and writing practice. Teachers use Fountas and Pinnel's Benchmark Assessment system along with diagnostic writing prompts to determine a literacy profile for each child at Morse. This allows for a personalized instructional approach through the use of leveled texts, independent and guided practice to target reading or writing strategies students need most. Teachers continue to monitor student progress and adjust instruction so children continue developing. Three times per year, teachers share independent reading levels on the report card.

A wide array of literature supports our integrated reading and language arts program. Authentic literature provides a rich opportunity for each student to set the foundation for a lifelong love of reading. Students also explore reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills in all subject areas. A coordinated writing program further extends the literacy initiative and helps students develop into independent, skilled and lifelong writers. The writing program respects student diversity of language, culture, and learning style.

Research asserts that a student should read at least 60-130 minutes each day at his or her independent level to maintain that reading level and even more to progress. It is critical that students continue to read at their independent level each night. Please be sure to check your child's reading log regularly, as this is shown to have a significant impact on their independent reading. Please also engage them in conversation about what they are reading. You can find tips on how to do this on the Morse page of the district web site. Listening to adults read books to them, listening to audiobooks, and/or interacting with computerized books are also powerful ways for students to develop comprehension strategies, vocabulary and a love for reading.

### **MATH**

The Math program addresses key skills and content in accordance with the *New York State Standards in Mathematics*. Students study math for 70 minutes per day as well as extra math sessions focused on problem solving and developing number sense and basic math facts. Our core program, *Growing with Mathematics*, focuses on helping students discover essential math concepts through inquiry-based lessons and hands-on activities. The program emphasizes real world applications of math concepts, problem solving and discussion of mathematical thinking. We also use the *Exemplars* program to help students develop competence with the following mathematical processes: solving problems strategically; communicating mathematical thinking; representing mathematical concepts, reasoning and proving solutions, and making

connections between mathematical scenarios and ideas. Please ask your child about what he or she is learning and present him or her with real life examples of Math whenever the opportunity arises!

## SCIENCE

*The Science 21 curriculum* emphasizes the scientific process approach with hands-on experiments, projects and activities. Projects help children develop observation skills that are reinforced and built upon using the scientific method. Students learn to hypothesize, predict, experiment, record and analyze results. In Grade 2, students learn to observe and measure changes in our world, in living things (Sunflowers & Crayfish), and in the environment. Grade 3 units' students learn how scientists investigate plant cycles, electricity, life cycles of living things (butterflies) and the water cycle.

## SOCIAL STUDIES

Our social studies curriculum focuses on communities - local neighborhoods in 2nd grade, and communities around the world in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Our ethnically diverse village provides a unique laboratory in which to explore these concepts. During the two years, students will gain significant understanding about governments, US States, continents, countries (Brazil, China, Mexico and the United States), map skills, and symbols. In March, 2010, we will revive the tradition of celebrating *Heritage Week*. During this week, we will reach out to community members and families to help our students celebrate and appreciate the many cultures represented in our community of learners.

### SAMPLE STUDENT SCHEDULE

- 5-day (Monday-Friday) Schedule. School begins at 8:30a.m. Dismissal is complete at 3:15 p.m. Students have time to meet as a class in the morning and pack up before dismissal.
- Most classes are broken up into 45-minute blocks of time.

Period	Start	Finish	Monday
MM	8:30	8:45	Morning Meeting
1	8:45	9:30	Flex
2	9:30	10:15	Reader's W
3	10:15	11:00	Writer's W
4	11:00	11:45	Lunch
5	11:50	1:00	Math
6	1:00	1:20	Extra Math
7	1:20	2:05	Science/SS
8	2:05	2:50	PE

"Flex" time is used for additional independent reading, read aloud books, or word work (spelling). Flex time can also be when students get intervention or enrichment support.

All students receive 90 minutes of core literacy instruction in one block, with 45 minutes dedicated to Reader's Workshop and 45 minutes dedicated to Writer's Workshop.

All students receive 70 minutes of direct math instruction (recommended amount for *Growing with Math*).

In addition, there are 20 minutes set aside for additional math fact and problem solving work.

One day per week, students have "Guided Math" which allows for small group work, independent exploration and interactive math games.

Students receive 45 minutes of either Science or Social Studies daily. Teachers go in depth with one unit at a time. So, students will spend several weeks on a Science unit, then they switch to a Social Studies unit.

Students will either take one or two specials classes each day. Specials include Art, Music, Spanish, Physical Education (PE), and Technology/Library Science (Grade 2 only).

## **WEEKLY SPECIALS FOR ALL STUDENTS**

All students leave their "home" classrooms throughout the week to attend special area classes. Art, Technology & Library Science and Music classes each meet for one, 45-minute session per week. Spanish as a Foreign Language meeting times vary between the grades. Physical Education classes meet three times per week for all students. In addition, all students attend the Library and Computer Center at least once every week with the Homeroom Teacher.

### **ART**

The art program exposes students to a variety of art media and helps children develop an authentic appreciation for the visual arts. Students work individually or in small groups on projects and activities. Planning for topics is done by the art teacher for a designated objective or in conjunction with classroom teachers, who frequently collaborate on special units related to holidays, social studies units, or ELA units.

### **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

This program includes a yearlong emphasis on fitness activities, such as circuit training, jogging, and aerobic games. Periodic fitness testing is done while encouraging students to strive for one's "personal best." The program also presents the study of health-related fitness issues and fosters concepts of good sportsmanship and team spirit. This year, we hope to engage students in setting personal goals that we hope will help them develop the foundation of a healthy and active lifestyle.

### **MUSIC**

The music program is designed to instill in children an enjoyment and appreciation for all types of music and the performing arts. The program fosters musical literacy, creativity and the discipline required to play an instrument or learn a part for a play. These goals are achieved through a multidisciplinary approach incorporating singing, listening, playing, dancing and acting. An effort is made to integrate the music program with other areas of the curriculum whenever possible. Students in third grade perform a daytime and evening concert in December while students in second grade do the same in May. All students enjoy informal chances to perform for other students and staff throughout the school year.

### **LIBRARY/MEDIA/TECHNOLOGY**

The Library/Media Program at Morse School introduces elementary library usage skills and develops listening and oral expressive language skills through interaction with developmentally appropriate literature. Students also explore electronic information sources in the technology lab. This year, we will introduce a new specials course for second graders which incorporates technology & media literacy in addition to traditional library sciences. Students will learn how to navigate a library, basic research and search skills, how to find appropriate online resources, and keyboarding skills, following the *Type to Learn* program.

### **SPANISH as a FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

While at Morse, students continue to develop their Spanish skills. In grade 2, students meet with our Spanish teacher for 45 minutes weekly, while in grade 3 that increases to 45 minutes, two times per week. In both grades, students who are not native Spanish speakers continue to develop the practical vocabulary and basic language structures that they started studying in K and 1. Native speakers stretch their speaking and listening skills and, where appropriate, start to hone reading and writing skills. In addition, all students study and compare Spanish speaking cultures to one another as well as to our community culture here in Tarrytown and Sleepy Hollow.

## **CHARACTER EDUCATION PROGRAM**

At Morse, we have developed a comprehensive student values and character education program. We designed the program based on best practices that are aimed at cultivating a thriving learning community, enhancing student self esteem and diminishing bullying behavior. We have developed a program that incorporates aspects of our existing Second Step curriculum; includes components from the research-based Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) approach; and actively teaches core community values. Please see the “Morse Code” statement on page 3 of this handbook to read more about the four values on which we will focus in this program.

Students learn about these values through school-wide assemblies and activities. They also learn about them in a weekly, 45-minute classroom meeting. We reinforce these values throughout children’s school days as they can receive positive feedback from any adult when they are caught doing the right thing. Please look forward to monthly newsletters and calendars that will help you understand what students are learning and what you and your child(ren) can do at home to further this important work.

## **INTERVENTION & ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS TO MEET SPECIAL NEEDS**

Some students at Morse have special needs. To accommodate these needs, these students receive extra support or enrichment from the following programs:

### **ESL PROGRAMS**

The primary goal of the ESL program is to help students understand and communicate effectively in English. The Program provides intensive English language instruction to non-English speaking students (NEP). In addition, limited English proficient students (LEP) receive language development skills in a structured and sequential program. The ESL teaching team services NEP and LEP students. The students are provided with materials and activities derived from the Harcourt Brace Language Arts Program. ESL has three stages, which usually correspond to the number of years involved in the ESL program. Our newcomers work with Mrs. Ocasio-Rios to make a smooth transition into a new culture and to a new language. Mrs. Etman and Mrs. Cellante work with students within general education classrooms as well as through some small group work in order to help them strengthen their English language skills.

### **ACADEMIC INTERVENTION SERVICES (AIS) IN READING**

Reading support services are provided by our two reading teachers, Mrs. DalCeredo and Mrs. Weldon in the Morse Reading Center, which is affectionately known as “The Castle” as well as in the classroom. Support services are designed for students who are identified by teacher observation or test scores as at risk in reading and/or writing. Remediation goals may include: improving decoding skills (the ability to break apart and recognize words and their meaning); improving comprehension skills (the ability to understand the meaning and make sense of texts); increasing self-confidence; developing a love of reading; and/or fostering independent work habits. Students may attend the Reading Center up to four times weekly. If students leave the classroom to visit the Reading Center, they do so during “flex” time and miss little to no core instruction (ELA, Math, Science or Social Studies), specials or Classroom Meetings.

### **GIFTED & TALENTED PROGRAM**

Challenge is an enrichment program for students in grades three through five designed to provide high ability learners with advanced curricula. There are three components to the Challenge Program: Social Studies Enrichment, ELA Enrichment & Math Enrichment. At Morse, we also offer Math Enrichment to second graders as well. Students are identified by teachers and then tested by Mrs. Hickey to establish whether or not they meet entrance criteria. Parents are notified in early September about their child’s eligibility. Mrs. Hickey and classroom teachers monitor students’ enjoyment and progress within the Challenge closely and work with parents to adjust a student’s program if and when needed.

### *Social Studies Enrichment*

Students who participate in Social Studies Enrichment receive advanced instruction in Social Studies during two periods (or approximately ninety minutes) of English Language Arts (ELA) per cycle. As part of their social studies enrichment experience, students learn to:

- Critically read, interpret and analyze text
- Solve problems using different problem solving methods
- Plan and manage time; complete tasks successfully
- Set and attain study goals while preparing for content specific tests and projects
- Take notes and organize data
- Research information from internet, text and document sources
- Organize, prepare and present information for oral and visual presentations

### *ELA Enrichment*

Students who participate in ELA Enrichment receive enriched instruction in English Language Arts (ELA) during one period (or approximately forty-five minutes) of ELA per cycle. Direct instruction includes, but is not limited to:

- ELA structures
- Discussion of Literature
- Vocabulary
- Writing

Math Enrichment is offered to students in grades 2 through 5. At Morse, we offer two tiers of Math Enrichment, Advanced and Embedded.

### *Advanced Math Enrichment*

Students who participate in Math Enrichment receive direct instruction in selected topics in mathematics during one to two periods of math per cycle.

Math enrichment topics include, but are not limited to:

- Data analysis and representation
- Open (multiple solution) and closed (single solution) problems
- Logical reasoning to develop conclusions
- Problem solving
- Interpreting and communicating mathematical information
- Number sense and numeration
- Patterns and Algebra

### *Embedded Math Enrichment*

Students, who show promise and interest in mathematics but do not indicate readiness for Advanced Math Enrichment, will receive enhanced in-class enrichment. Challenge teachers will function as consultant teachers, working with classroom teachers to devise challenging math projects that support the math curriculum and monitor students' progress. Something like the Math Olympiads at Washington Irving and the Continental Math League at Morse will give all interested students from grades 2 through 5 the chance to work towards a goal and be recognized for their extra work in mathematics.

## **SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Students who are classified as having a learning condition through the committee on special education receive an instructional program based on their individual needs. A small group of students benefit from a highly individualized and structured environment, which can be provided best in a self-contained classroom. There, under the guidance of Mrs. Yeater, students receive their core curricula in a self-contained classroom, but join general education students for special area classes as well as Social Studies and Science. For many children, we implement an inclusion model that assumes full participation in the general education classes. In the inclusion model, a special education teacher works in a collaborative approach with the regular education teacher and often with the support of a teaching assistant. The Special Education teacher who works with general education teachers in second grade is Ms. McDermott. In third grade, Mrs. Carr and Mrs. Otero work with general education teachers. Students may meet in small groups with special education teachers during "flex" time as appropriate.

## **SPEECH & LANGUAGE**

The Speech and Language Therapy Program at the Morse School is designed to provide both group and/or individual therapy to students for whom screenings indicate that there are significant speech and language needs in the areas of articulation, stuttering, voice disorders and/or delayed language development. The therapy is provided in regularly scheduled sessions by an accredited speech therapist, Ms. Sansky.

## **LUNCH AND RECESS: TIME TO PLAY AND LEARN**

### ***Lunch and Recess***

Each day, students go to lunch and recess for 45 minutes. Both lunch and recess are spent with students at the same grade level. Due to the size of the cafeteria and play area, only 4 or 5 classes eat together, while the other half of the grade plays. Half way through the lunch session, the two groups switch.

Lunch staff, a combination of lunch aides and teaching assistants, supervise students as they walk to the cafeteria, get their food, eat and while they play outside. Lunch staff also escorts students back to their classrooms after lunch. Our lunch staff receives training on managing Peaceful Playground, our values program, and how to support students who may struggle with recess.

### ***Peaceful Playground***

Our Physical Education teachers have developed and trained both students and Lunch Staff in the Peaceful Playground program. The program includes a range of games that are taught to all students in the fall during PE class. These games are designed to be safe, fun and managed by students themselves, under the supervision of trained adults. If you notice on the ground in our play area, there are a variety of games that encourage the use of different forms of physicality and different types of play. The program also includes methods for resolving disputes and conflicts that help students keep the playground a peaceful and fun place.

### ***Special Lunchtime Programs/Parent Support***

We enjoyed a new Art Club at recess last year and hope to offer art-based activities to students on both a drop in and repeated basis this year.

Last year, we enjoyed several highly successful alternative programs at recess time. Our FLIP (Fun Lunch Indoor Program) was developed and delivered by parents during the winter months. FLIP offered a variety of fun activities for students when it was difficult to get outside. Last year, several parents were trained on how to run Lunchtime Literature Circles and guided small groups of students through high quality literature once a week over 5 to 6-weeks. Students were also able to pay to take chess lessons during recess and, thankfully, several students took advantage of limited scholarships. We are grateful to the parents who lovingly came in to volunteer and develop these programs, all of which enriched the days and lives of the students who participated.

We are always open to new ideas for recess play and hope that we can build on our successes from last year.

## HEALTH SERVICES

As a member of our community and school district, we want you to be aware of the following specific health requirements for your child. **Please read them carefully and call our school nurse, Mrs. Carey (914-63104064) or our main office (914-631-4144) if you have any questions.**

- 1. A doctor's copy of your child's immunization record is needed.** This should list all immunizations that your child has received and the dates for each immunization. If your child is not immunized, he/she will not be allowed to enter school, until such time as he/she has had at least 1 diphtheria-tetanus (DT or DPT), 1 oral polio, and 1 measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccination. A second measles (or MMR) vaccination is needed for all children born after December 31, 1984. If your child is under 5 years of age, he/she must be immunized (after 15 months of age) against Haemophilus influenza type B (Hib). Documentation of booster doses should be submitted to the nurse to keep records current.
- 2. State Education Law mandates physical examinations upon entrance to school and upon entrance to grades 1, 3, 7 and 10.** Since your family physician knows your child, it is better that he/she does the examination, especially since immunizations need to be updated and tuberculin testing should be done yearly. Students may be excluded from physical education or playground activities until a medical is received. All medical conditions should be noted (e.g., asthma, epilepsy, allergies, any medications administered regularly at home, etc.). Please forward a copy of the health exam to the school nurse.
- 4. To make sure that we are able to reach you in the event your child becomes ill, we need to have your home telephone number, work number(s), and two local (emergency) telephone numbers of relatives, friends, or neighbors who will take responsibility for your child if you are unavailable. Someone must be available to come and pick up your child.**
- 5. In the event that your child is exposed to or is ill with a contagious disease (e.g., strep throat, impetigo, pink eye), a doctor's note indicating that he/she is not infectious is necessary for your child to return to school.** In the case of strep, a child must be on an antibiotic for 24 hours before returning to school.
- 6. If your child is injured at home, after school, or in school, and is seen either by a doctor or in the emergency room of a hospital, please send in a doctor's note or the emergency room sheet to the school nurse.** This should include a diagnosis and any restrictions indicated.
- 7. If your child is unable to participate in physical education** or needs limited physical education activities for health reasons, a doctor's note stating the reason for this limitation needs to be sent to the school nurse. When the student is able to resume the usual physical education activities, a doctor's note is also needed.
- 8. The school nurse does a yearly check on your child's eyes, and ears. A spine check is done also for scoliosis.** If there appears to be a problem, you will be notified and referred to a physician of your choosing for further examination of your child. The nurse will send a referral form home, to be filled out by your physician and returned to the school nurse.
- 9. Medications that are prescribed when your child is ill may be given to your child at school. All medications, including aspirin and Tylenol, cannot be given in school without a doctor's order and a parent's written permission.** An in-school medication sheet is available in the nurse's office. If a student is found to have any type of medication (even cough drops) and no permission notes or doctor's orders have been sent in, the medication will be confiscated, not administered, and parents will be notified. All medication must be in the original container with a pharmacy label on it.
- 10. If your child is sent home with a fever by the school nurse DO NOT send him/her back to school the following day. Please keep your child home until the temperature is normal (98.6) for twenty-four hours.** This ensures complete recovery and reduces the chances of spreading a contagious or infectious condition.
- 11. If your child is not coming to school you must call the nurse at 631-4064 by 9:30 am or you will receive a call from the school.**

## **SUPPORT SERVICES**

### **THE SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST AND SOCIAL WORKER**

When families and students make the transition from John Paulding, they are fortunate to see two familiar faces at Morse: our social worker, Ms. Regla Cayon, and our psychologist, Mrs. Yvonne Feliciano. Fortunately, these talented professionals can still play a key role in your and your children's experience. We believe that school should be a safe and happy place for all children. If parents or teachers are concerned that their child may be struggling with his or her feelings in or out of school, support services are available. The school psychologist or social worker can meet individually as needed with a concerned parent and/or student to help identify issues, brainstorm solutions and provide ongoing support when helpful.

When the school identifies a child as a candidate for an educational evaluation, our school psychologist and social worker conduct components of those evaluations and review evaluation results with families and staff. These professionals also provide a support service to our teachers and act as liaison with numerous outside agencies. The psychologist and social worker are members of the Instructional Support Team at Morse, which meets regularly to identify and accommodate students with special needs in the areas of academics, emotionality, and/or behavior.

Parents are encouraged to call any member of the support staff regarding concerns at home or at school. The phone numbers can be found on the school directory in the front pocket of this handbook.

### **FOOD SERVICES**

Full breakfast and lunch are available for purchase every full school day. Monthly lunch and breakfast menus are distributed via your child's backpack a few days before the beginning of each month. For students who bring a packed lunch, milk, juice drink and some snacks are available for purchase in the lunchroom as well. Please call the office if you have questions about the menu, cost of meals or free or reduced lunch programs.

Your child's teacher will notify you regarding "Snack Time" procedure for his/her class.

### **TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**

The Public Schools of the Tarrytowns provides bus transportation for students depending on the distance you reside from Morse School. The bus routes and schedules are included in the summer packet. Any additional questions or comments about the transportation service at Morse can be directed to the Transportation Department, 631-3663.

# MORSE SCHOOL POLICIES

## GENERAL SCHOOL ROUTINES & GUIDELINES

1. Attendance and punctuality are very important to success in school and, in turn, later in life. In the morning, students should report to school on time (by 8:30 a.m.). All students arriving after 8:40 a.m. are to report to the Main Office and are considered tardy. **\*\*Please do not bring students to school before 8:15am. Full supervision is not available before 8:15\*\***
2. Lockers are assigned to all students. Students store their outer clothing and backpacks in the lockers. Please do not send valuable items into school with your child.
3. When you come to visit Morse, please be sure to report in to the Main Office, sign the Visitor's Log and receive a Visitor's Pass.
4. When taking your child out of school early, he/she must be signed out in the Main Office.
5. When dropping off something for your child, please take it to the main office to avoid disturbing classroom activities.
6. Cell phones offer many families the ability to communicate with their children. While students are in school, cell phones must remain turned off and out of sight. If you need to communicate with your child during the day, please call the office.

## CONTACTING A TEACHER

1. Should you need to speak to a teacher please call the Main Office. The teacher will return the call and schedule an appointment if desired.
2. You can find a directory of staff email addresses on the district web site. To address e-mail to a staff member, type the username followed by @tufsd.org (i.e. myteacher@tufsd.org). Please expect that teachers will respond to an email by the following school day; teachers must remain focused on students during the school day and often have professional obligations after school.
3. If you need to communicate with a teacher immediately, or convey confidential information, please call the office and make sure that we know your message is urgent.

## SNACKS at MORSE

1. Students are not permitted to chew gum or eat candy during the school day.
2. We encourage parents to please not send students with sugary drinks (Gatorade, sugary juices, soda etc.) or sugary snacks (cookies, chips, snack cakes). We have found that these impede many students' ability to concentrate and manage their energy levels. If you would like to know more about healthy nutrition for kids (and much more helpful information), visit [www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org) and read about nutrition and fitness.

## PARKING LOT & DROP OFF

1. In the morning, please follow the cones that are set up if you will be driving your child or children to Morse School. Students should be dropped off on the East side of the building by the cafeteria door where staff will be waiting to greet them.
  - a. If you arrive after 8:30, you will be directed to drop your child off at the front door.
2. **Please DO NOT drop off your child on Pocantico Street.** We have had some very dangerous near misses and, for safety reasons, no one is allowed to drop children off on Pocantico Street.
3. Whenever you drive through the parking lot/play area, especially during morning arrival or afternoon dismissal, please exit via Washington Street.

## LATENESS & ABSENCES

1. When writing notes for play dates, early dismissals, etc., include child's first and last name as well as their teacher's name. Also, notes are needed from both sets of parents when a child is going to another child's home. Notes requesting any change in the usual dismissal procedure must be received in the Main Office by 2:00 p.m. on the day of the requested change.
2. When your child will not be in school due to illness, the nurse (631-4064) must be notified after 8:15 a.m. Please send a note in with your child if he or she is going to be out for any reason. Please also refer to the list of excused and unexcused absences.
3. When a child is out and you request that homework be gathered for pick-up, please know that homework will be ready for you in the Main Office at 3:00 p.m.

A legal absence from school occurs under the following circumstances:

- Illness or death in the family
- Religious observance
- Quarantine
- Music lessons
- When required to be in court
- Attendance at health clinics
- Impassable roads or weather
- Part-of-the-day absence approved by the Principal in advance

An illegal absence occurs in the event of:

- Truancy
- Out-of-school suspension
- When the student is absent from school with the knowledge and consent stated (or implied) of his/her parent/guardian for other than legal reasons. (Such excuses as "visiting, away, went hunting, vacation, went to the city, shopping, work and needed at home" are examples.)

Once again, please be sure to send a note in with your child when he or she returns to school. A written note is necessary even if you have called to alert the school.

## DISMISSAL ROUTINES

1. Dismissal will occur every day at 3:15 p.m.
2. All students leave the building through the front door.
3. Students who are picked up will wait for their parents on the stairs, supervised by a staff member, until their parents arrive.
  - a. If you are picking up a student, please do not block buses in the parking lot and please pull through the back of the parking lot to exit onto Washington Street via Carmody Way.
4. Students who walk will be released at one time, supported by staff members and crossing guards.
5. Students who take the bus will be released as buses arrive and escorted onto the bus by staff members.

## EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSING PROCEDURES

Occasionally during the school year, it is necessary to close or delay the opening of school or to dismiss school early. You should receive an automated call from our K-12 Alerts system. In addition, any notice of school delay or closing will be posted on the district web site ([www.tufsd.org](http://www.tufsd.org)). The following radio stations will announce school closings, delayed openings and early dismissals:

WFAS FM104  
WPUT AM1511

WINS AM1010  
WVIP FM106.3

WVIP AM1310  
WHUD FM101

WLNA AM1420

Parents who are not at home during the day should make provisions for their children to go to the home of a friend or neighbor if an early closing of school is necessary. The children should be made aware of these arrangements and the school must have an update early dismissal form indicating where your child should be sent.

## **REPORT CARDS, INTERIM REPORTS and PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES**

Teachers evaluate students on the progress with state standards three times each school year (November, March and June). At each point, a standards-based report card will be mailed home (See the district calendar for relevant dates).

Interim Reports will be sent home to parents at the mid-points between the first and second and between the second and third marking periods. This report is designed to enhance routine teacher-parent communication and formally highlight areas of remarkable growth or particular concern well before a marking period comes to a close.

Parent/Teacher Conferences will be held twice a year, in November and in March. At these conferences, teachers will walk parents through the New York Standards-based Student Report Card and will use samples of student work to help parents understand how students are progressing. The school will reach out to parents in advance of conferences with directions about how to schedule conference times.

Translators are available for conferences. Please make your needs known to the Teacher or the Principal at your earliest convenience. Of course, teachers are happy to meet with parents for ad hoc conferences should you have concerns at anytime throughout the year. Just call the main office to schedule an appointment.

## **HOMEWORK GUIDELINES**

The Morse Staff assigns homework in an effort to extend and reinforce learning and to help students develop self-discipline, personal responsibility and independent thinking. To this end, we seek to make all assignments clear, purposeful, and related to class activities as well as to individual children's interests, needs and abilities. Homework assignments should be differentiated, that is, tailored to students' skills and abilities levels. Home/school communication is very important to help us gauge the effectiveness of homework. Please notify the teacher if the child is consistently struggling with homework or taking either too little or too much effort and time to complete daily assignments.

We follow National PTA guidelines that recommend approximately ten minutes of homework be given per grade, four nights a week. Independent reading is assigned in addition to the ten-minute guideline rule. This means that Grade 2 students can expect approximately 20 minutes of homework plus 15 minutes of independent reading. Grade 3 students are assigned approximately 30 minutes of written homework plus 20-25 minutes of independent reading.

Homework usually is not assigned over regular or holiday weekends. However, long-term projects, long-term reports, or optional assignments may be given during vacations. If a long-term project is assigned, it should be assigned at least one-week prior to the vacation and due no earlier than three-days after students return from vacation.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

- A blanket permission form for local class trips (within Westchester County) must be signed by parents at the beginning of the school year and returned to the classroom teacher.
- Individual permission forms are needed for trips outside of Westchester County.
- All permission forms must be received by the date of the scheduled trip. No child without a form on record may participate.
- Field trips are an integral part of our curriculum at Morse. Parents are informed in advance of field trips and we encourage you to join us.

## **SPECIAL EVENTS**

To follow is a list of special events we look forward to in 2009-2010. Please check the district calendar, the Morse online calendar and our monthly calendars for specific times.

Back-To-School Night (Sept)  
Class Parent's Tea (Sept)  
Halloween Parade (Oct)  
Literacy Celebration (Nov)  
Grade 3 Winter Concert (Dec)  
Family Math Night (Jan)  
Healthy Heart Week (Feb)  
Heritage Week (March)

Green Week/Earth Day (April)  
Poem in your Pocket Day (April)  
Creativity Fair (May)  
Grade 2 Spring Concert (May)  
Book Fair (May)  
Field Day (June)  
Grade 3 "Moving Up" Assembly (June)

# GENERAL STUDENT CONDUCT

## DISCIPLINE: AN OVERVIEW

Using a multi-faceted approach, we will help students to develop an understanding and capacity to make good choices in their behavior and to exhibit these core school values:

- Respect
- Love of Learning
- Empathy
- Responsibility

The various facets of our approach include:

- School-wide education
- Parent and community education
- Weekly classroom meetings
- Morse Code rewards program
- Discipline integration

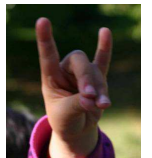
When a student does not make a good choice, staff will work with him or her to think about the choice that he or she made, identify how that choice doesn't make sense with our four key values and/or doesn't follow school rules, and set goals for how to make better choices in the future.

Students may be asked to fill out a "Poor Choice Learning Form" if they have either repeatedly struggled with the same bad choice or have hurt another student with unkind words or actions. In that case, the form will be sent home for a parent or adult to review with the child and sign. Families should also receive a phone call from the staff member who worked with the student that same day. If you ever receive a form and do not receive a phone call, please call the school and let us know so that we can clarify and partner to help your child learn and grow from the experience.

Below are some basic rules that we need students to follow to keep our learning environment safe, productive and positive for all:

## HALLWAYS and CLASSROOMS

- When students walk in the hallways, they must remain quiet and respectful of the learning of others throughout the building.
- Students must walk at all times in the building.
- When classes travel to and from their classroom, they line up in order by number, which is assigned by the teacher and rotates regularly so everyone gets a chance to be "first."
- When students are travelling in a group or are in the cafeteria, adults prompt them to be quiet by showing the "Quiet Coyote" hand sign. We encourage children to help one another quiet down by also using the hand symbol.



## CAFETERIA

- A group of four to five homeroom classes eat at the same time in the Morse cafeteria. While one group is eating, the other is playing. Half way through the lunch time, the groups switch places.
- Staff members (cafeteria aides or teaching assistants) escort classes to the lunchroom and oversee them as they get food, eat and play.
- Students will enter from south door and exit from the east door. The north door is used only in case of emergency.
- Each class will be assigned a staff member who will supervise and monitor the class throughout the lunch period. Since the Morse lunchroom is small, students are encouraged to speak softly during lunch. Lunch staff uses the non-verbal "Quiet Coyote" symbol to direct students to stop talking and resume at a quieter level when the noise level gets too high.

## **CAFETERIA (continued)**

- Students are expected to eat a nutritious lunch, using good manners and keeping the table and lunch room free of trash and food.
- Under the direction of the lunch staff, the classes will be dismissed one table at a time through the east door.

## **RECESS**

### *Toys*

We discourage students from bringing toys into school. If you would like to send a game that multiple children can play, please do send that in to the classroom teacher's attention. Please note that electronic toys and video games are not permitted. If seen or found, they will be kept in the office until a parent can come to get them. MP3 players that students use to listen to books and other text are welcome.

### *Peaceful Playground*

Our Physical Education teachers have developed and trained both students and Lunch Staff in the Peaceful Playground program. The program includes a range of games that are taught to all students in the fall during PE class. These games are designed to be safe, fun and managed by students themselves, under the supervision of trained adults. If you notice on the ground in our play area, there are a variety of games that encourage the use of different forms of physicality and different types of play. The program also includes methods for resolving disputes and conflicts that help students keep the playground a peaceful and fun place.

### *Play Structure*

We are very fortunate to have the play structure on Beekman Avenue for our students to use. To maintain safe play on the play structure, we have to limit access to two to three classrooms at a time. Lunch staff will let students know which classrooms can use the structure on which days and will be sure to alternate so that access is fair.

If a student behaves in a way that is dangerous or inappropriate, he or she may lose his or her privilege to use the structure for a period of time and will meet with the Principal or Assistants to the Principal to set new goals for appropriate play.

### *Hands to Ourselves/Physical Aggression*

At this age, we still occasionally need to remind students that they need to keep their hands to themselves. If a student pokes, touches or invades the personal space of another student, a member of the staff will work with that student to understand that that behavior is not allowed and why. If a student continues to do this, the Teacher or Principal will contact parents to take further steps together.

Although fighting rarely happens at this age level, there are times when one student gets physically aggressive with another student. It is very important that we teach children to use words to settle disputes, and we must help all students feel safe and understand that we do not tolerate hitting, kicking, pinching or poking. In turn, if a student hurts or clearly attempts to hurt another student physically, the Principal will contact that student's parents and ask that the student go home for the remainder of the day.

### *Bullying*

At Morse, we strive to address bullying with a speedy and thorough response. We define bullying as the purposeful, repeated use of mean words and/or actions that make another student feel badly. If a child is the victim of bullying at recess or at any point in the school day, we will work with both the victim and the bully separately, typically in the following manner: (see following page)

Victims will receive support and initial counseling to make sure that they feel safe, know that bullying is not tolerated, and identify some positive aspects to school or recess to help them re-focus. During the next classroom meeting, the classroom teacher will discuss bullying with the class in a general way so that the victim and his or her classmates can think of ways that bystanders can help prevent this from happening again. Research shows that this kind of response makes the greatest positive impact on the victim and the community. We will contact families immediately and, if we feel that ongoing counseling is appropriate for the victim, we will suggest that to the family and identify together the best way to provide that support.

When children behave like bullies, the Principal will meet with them to discuss their behavior. The Principal will notify parents and will consult with them to develop consequences both at school and at home. At school, students who bully will receive consequences that may include missed recess time or missed community events. Students who bully will also receive counseling from the Principal, Assistant to the Principal or one of our work-it-out counselors. This counseling will focus on establishing that bullying behavior is not tolerated, trying to identify what the bully was seeking by bullying, and setting new goals for better behavior and kinder treatment of others. Students who bully will also need to formally apologize to their victims, but in such a way that is meaningful and sincere.

If your child has been a witness, perpetrator, or victim of bullying, please reach out to the Teacher, Psychologist, Social Worker or Principal so that we can help.

## **BATHROOMS**

Students are to use the bathrooms located on the floor on which they are attending class. At the beginning of the school year, students may go with a bathroom buddy.

We remind students that the bathroom is neither a place to socialize nor to play. If students misuse the bathroom or the resources in the bathroom, the Principal will notify parents. They will work together, either over the phone or in person, to help the student set clear goals for appropriate and respectful bathroom behavior.

If a student ever feels uncomfortable or intimidated by using the bathroom, please let the Teacher and Principal know immediately. If we know, we can work together to alleviate at once whatever is causing the concern.

## **BUS**

Bus transportation is provided for the safety and convenience of pupils. Students are required to obey established rules in order to continue the riding privilege. These rules are in the transportation booklet that is handed-out at the beginning of the year with the busing schedule. The most important rules to remember are:

- Say “Good morning,” “Good afternoon” and “Thank you” to your bus driver and monitor every day.
- Use kind words to everyone on the bus.
- Keep hands to yourself.
- Stay seated with a seatbelt fastened until the bus stops at your stop.

If students have any trouble acting appropriately on the bus, the Principal will notify parents and we will work together, either over the phone or in person, to help the student set clear goals for safe, appropriate and respectful behavior on the bus.

If a student ever feels uncomfortable or intimidated by something or someone on his or her bus, please let us the Teacher and Principal know immediately. If we know, we can work together to alleviate at once whatever is causing the concern.

## **FIRE DRILLS**

- Students are to exit from the building quickly and quietly, following the direction of the teacher.
- Each teacher will review the fire drill route and procedures with students on the first day of school.
- We will help children understand that fire drills are a serious safety precaution and not a time to talk or fool around.

## **DRESS CODE**

Students are expected to dress neatly and appropriately for school. They are also expected to maintain a proper level of personal hygiene. Any mode of apparel that distracts from instruction is discouraged. Students who disrupt instruction due to "form of dress" may be sent home by the Principal to change clothing. We have a few simple additional rules to follow:

- No hats are to be worn in the school building during the school day.
- No flip-flops should be worn, as they are dangerous both in the building and in the play area.
- Students should wear gloves/mittens as well as hats/hoods when the weather is cold. Our nurse has spare gloves and hats, so please only ask if your child needs them.
- On PE days, we request that students wear sneakers with rubber soles.

## **SUSPENSIONS**

Suspensions are extremely rare at this age. The Principal may suspend a student from school due to disruptive patterns of behavior that present a danger to himself/herself or another pupil. The following procedures will be followed:

- Pre-suspension Hearing is an official conference with the Principal and the parent to review patterns of behavior that might lead to suspension.
- Principal's Suspension - A child who continues a disruptive pattern of behavior, or has endangered himself/herself or another pupil, is removed from school to home for one to five days. The purpose of this suspension is to emphasize the seriousness of an incident and/or to gather information concerning general patterns of behavior.
- Administrative Suspension - When the school has done all in its power to modify a child's behavior and the child's behavior continues to be a danger to the school, the child, or other children, he/she may be placed on an administrative suspension. The child is suspended from school until the Superintendent holds a hearing during which the causes of the suspension are reviewed. The Superintendent provides for the continuation of the child's education in a suitable environment.

## **PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

Parents at Morse support the school in a variety of ways including participating on building committees, volunteering in classrooms, volunteering for before school and lunchtime programs, attending Morse Special Events, join us for our Principal's chats and discussion sessions, taking advantage of special courses offered by the school, and being actively involved in the Elementary Parent Teacher Association or the Foundation. Please rely on the following to learn about these various ways to get involved:

- District calendar (printed and online)
- Monthly Morse Calendar (sent home on the last day of the previous month)
- Monthly Morse Newsletter (sent home during the last week of the previous month)
- Special flyers

## **THE ELEMENTARY PARENT/TEACHER ASSOCIATION (EPTA)**

The Elementary Parent Teacher Association (EPTA) is an organization committed to bringing quality education to all children in the Tarrytowns. Parents, teachers and administrators all work hard to make this happen. The EPTA sponsors workshops and programs; funds Cultural Arts programs for each of the 4 elementary schools; raises funds for programs; and ultimately acts as an advocate for every child.

We support the N.Y. State PTA mission statement:

*Recognizing that every child deserves excellence in education and a quality of life, New York State Parent Teacher Association's obligation is to maintain its commitment and service to all children and its diverse membership through increased parent awareness, advocacy education, and involvement.*

## **THE EPTA (continued)**

“Specifically here at Morse School the EPTA shows its presence in a variety of ways. Volunteers from the EPTA organize and run The Cultural Arts Dinner, The Afterschool Program, The Book Fair, Photo Day and Fun Day. We fund many of the Cultural Arts programs as well as field trips and a partial funding of the Morse Publishing Center and the end-of-the-year Fun Day. Our members are often found assisting with special classroom events and are able to show our appreciation to the staff with our Teacher Appreciation Luncheon. We fundraise only as a means of providing the many worthwhile programs and events we sponsor in the elementary schools.”

## **THE FOUNDATION FOR THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF THE TARRYTOWNS**

A core of concerned Tarrytown and Sleepy Hollow residents created the Foundation to insure that our school system advances beyond the basics funded by the district's operating budget. Their mission is to encourage and support the technological, academic, athletic, and social programs of the Tarrytown's students. Foundation administrators identify and solicit private funding for projects that support these objectives. They are actively compensating for decreased state funding for education, rising tax certioraris, and an already high tax base. They are committed to enriching the learning experience of the student body.

"Our aim is to reach as many students as possible, providing them with the tools to excel in their area of interest - academics, the arts, athletics, or community service."

<b>EEO STATEMENT</b>
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The Public Schools of the Tarrytowns does not discriminate on the basis of sex, marital status, sexual orientation, religion, national origin, citizenship, age, disability, or any other protected classification in its employment, admissions practices, vocational opportunities or access to and treatment in programs or activities, in accordance with Title IX Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1073, and Title VII and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Inquiries concerning application of these regulations may be made to the Assistant Superintendent, Public Schools of the Tarrytowns, 200 North Broadway, Sleepy Hollow, NY 10591.

