From the Principal

One child, one teacher, one pen and one book can change the world. Malala Yousafzai

Welcome back Murray families! These first days have flown by and what great days they have been. So great in fact that I began falling asleep at about 8:00 each night due to exhaustion. I am sure many of our students and staff are feeling the same way as they settle into the new routine of full days of in-person school. I want to share with you what an absolute pleasure it was to see all of our families last week during our orientation/open house events. For those of you that were not able to make it, I invite you to consider attending one of our many future events that celebrate our students throughout the year. Please monitor the master calendar on our website for dates of events.

Our 6th graders are finding their way around the building and our older Pilots are getting comfortable again with navigating their day. Thank you to all of our families, staff and WEB leaders for stepping up and supporting our young 6th graders as they transition into their new school. I literally checked in with hundreds of students and they all indicated that they had a great first couple of days.

We educators got into this work because of the energy that kids radiate. Our kids are glowing with that energy and we can’t wait to see all of the wonderful things our students will accomplish this year.

Families, I thank you for all that you do and we look forward to partnering with you as your students grow and flourish at Murray. It’s going to be a great year!

Celebrations:

1st days of In-Person School - We were able to welcome our students back to in-person learning and kick off a new year at Murray Middle School.
Orientation/Open House Event - Murray welcomed over 600 individual visitors last Thursday as we opened our doors to our Pilot families.

Your Co-Pilot,

Jamin McKenzie
Principal, Murray Middle School
Hello, my name is Jamin McKenzie and I am the proud principal here at Murray Middle School. Welcome to a new school year, Pilots! I am in this business because I love working with kids. Seeing all of those smiles and all of that excitement as students and staff are walking in to start a new school year is something I look forward to every fall. With a new school year comes all of the unknowns, the new discoveries, the numerous challenges, the endless questions and the new relationships. These are all of the things that make working in education the best job in the world!

I am entering my 20th year in Saint Paul Public Schools and my 9th year at Murray. I began my career as a science teacher at Battle Creek Middle School and still have a love of everything astronomy. My family consists of my wonderful wife Lisa and our twin children Jadon and Isabelle, who are 14 years old and entering 9th grade. Our family enjoys time at the family cabin, golfing together and supporting our kids in their sporting events.

I am excited to begin a new school year as I continue to serve our Murray community. As a staff, we are very fortunate to have such a dedicated community and to be educating your young scholars. We thank you for this opportunity and we look forward to another great year!

Welcome to all and ….Go Pilots!

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Hello, my name is Michelle Bierman. I am excited to be at Murray Middle School as an Assistant Principal. I am excited to have our students and families back at school for the 21-22 school year!

I am a proud Saint Paul resident and have been part of Saint Paul Schools for over 22 years. I started as a high school teacher at Highland Park Senior High School teaching History of Americas, Civics, Asian Studies, African American History, and Economics. I continued my work supporting social studies teachers at the district level, working in the teaching and learning department, and then racial equity and gender equity. Most recently, I was the Assistant Principal at Open World Learning (OWL).

I graduated from Minnesota State University with a BS in Social Studies, University of St. Thomas with my Masters of Teaching, and University of Minnesota with my Administrator’s license. When I am not at school, my wife and I spend time with our nieces and nephews, dogs, and ride around town on our scooters. Think Vespa. I like to travel, read, kayak, and teach. I teach as an adjunct professor at Metropolitan State University in their Urban Education Program.

My belief is that each student has many talents and gifts. We, as adults, just need to get to know students, provide opportunities for them to be themselves, challenge each student academically, and add some fun into the mix to bring out the best in each student.

I am proud to be a co-pilot at Murray! Please stop by and say hello. I look forward to meeting our new families and students and welcoming back our current students and families.

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Hello, my name is Ryan Eggers and I am honored to be serving as an Assistant Principal here at Murray Middle School. I am entering my 9th year at Murray. Before becoming an Assistant Principal, I spent six years working with our incredible Murray community as an 8th grade teacher. The dedication and collaborative nature of our staff is what I find most rewarding for our students as we are always finding new, creative means to support their learning.

After completing my undergraduate work at the University of Minnesota Duluth, I began teaching high school social studies at Brooklyn Center Secondary. While working with our Data Analysis Team, I fell in love with numbers and pursued an additional licensure in mathematics to bring a new lens on how to approach problem solving and make math more culturally relevant. In 2013, I joined St. Paul Public Schools as an Algebra 1, Geometry and AVID elective teacher. Being a lifelong learner, I continued to improve upon my craft by receiving my Masters in Leadership Education and Administrative License from the University of Minnesota Twin Cities.

When I am away from school, I am spending time with my wife Nakeea and our two boys, Maddox and Miles. We enjoy traveling, hiking and scouring the cities for the best new cuisines. You could say we’re “foodies” but we only occasionally Instagram our plates.

I believe all children are unique and must have a stimulating educational environment where they can grow physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially. When these needs are met, students are more willing to share their ideas, take risks and be their true, authentic self.

I am excited for our new school year and I look forward to building positive relationships with our students, families, and Murray community. Go Pilots!!
Important Information as Your Child Transitions to Middle School

Transition time is upon us! Our students will transition to a new school or a new grade level. Besides great excitement, many are worried about teachers, classes, friends, lockers, etc. The reality is many will transition without a single issue. Others will need more support academically, socially and emotionally. As a school community using a middle school model and committed to partnering with families, we are here to support the transition. Please contact us early with any questions, concerns or needed supports.

Many educators feel that for some students the transition is harder on the parent/caretaker. What can parents do to erase the strain and concern of transitions?

First, please take a step back, stay calm and know that your child is growing up and you can help. They are feeding off of your emotion. Be confident and your child will feel that. The reverse is true as well. If you are nervous or upset, your child will feel those emotions. Supporting your child can simply start with your excitement and confidence as they grow up to more independence in middle school.

Another way to support your child is making sure that they are in good physical and mental health. If you have concerns about your child’s health, talk to your pediatrician, they can help determine if your concerns are normal, age appropriate issues. You may also reach out to our school counselors Justine Revermann at justine.revermann@spps.org or Lisa Engelstad at lisa.engelstad@spps.org and our nurse, Diana Dishop at diana.dishop@spps.org. These professionals can assist in navigating school supports and services as well as any needed community resources.

Next, look carefully at the information sent from school. Mark your calendar with important dates, check out volunteer opportunities, participate in advisory councils and Murray’s Parent Teacher Association. Visiting school can also help with transitions. Attend those “meet the teacher” opportunities. Being present at school events is important through your child’s secondary school experience. Your child may not tell you that and that is developmentally typical. However, they want you there and will someday thank you for your presence.

Your presence at school is as important as your child’s participation in not only academics, but extra-curricular as well. When students try new things, find their passions or join clubs to meet new friends, middle school is a better experience.

Securing the school supplies early can alleviate stress from students who are worriers. Plan to set or reset a schedule once school starts. Talk with your children regarding how important it is to have a routine that includes homework time and a clear space to do it, bedtime, reading and any chores they may be responsible for. Encouraging less passive activities like the television can also better prepare children for learning.

All recommendations above are only suggestions. They can contribute to a positive transition. Most children are absolutely resilient, with your support and encouragement they will grow and prosper throughout their middle school experience. Thank you for being a part of our school community. All of us at Murray look forward to welcoming your family and making it an amazing school year.

Covid Testing Resources

According to the Minnesota Department of Health:

Based on current levels of community spread across Minnesota, the CDC and MDH recommend that all unvaccinated school-age children and school staff get tested for COVID-19 at least weekly throughout the school year. Unvaccinated children involved in extracurricular activities or sports should be tested more frequently.

There are many ways to access FREE COVID testing:

1. You can order a test to be delivered to your home: https://learn.vaulthealth.com/state-of-minnesota/

2. You can visit one of the community sites. Here is the listing for all the sites: https://mn.gov/covid19/get-tested/testing-locations/community-testing.jsp
The Flipside afterschool program at Murray Middle will begin Monday 10/11/21!

Monday – Thursday: 3:30 – 5:00

Flipside provides Murray students with a variety of classes that offer academic support as well as enrichment activities. Flipside also provides students with an afterschool snack and bussing home if they receive bussing during the regular school day. The goal of Flipside is to provide our students with opportunities to explore and discover their passion in a safe, structured, and supportive environment.

Flipside will have two sessions during the year, 10/11/21 – 1/27/22 and 1/31/22 – 5/21/22.

Registration forms will be available in the coming weeks.

Please reach out with any questions!
Kari Gonzalez – Flipside Coordinator
651-774-3189 / kari.gonzalez@spps.org

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**Volunteers needed for iPad Hand-out!**

Murray is looking for volunteers who would like to help hand out iPads. If you are interested, please contact Stefanie Folkema at stefanie.folkema@spps.org or 651-744-3922.

Thank you!

Wednesday, September 15th, 9:00am
Thursday, September 16th, 9:00am
Friday, September 17th, 9:00am
Interpreter Available
Upon Request

Intérprete disponible
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