

ECS PCO Meeting 10/22/12

Exec Members Present: Nikki Amole, Betsy Gianakas, Dave Schuilenburg, Lisa Knight, Elena Hilf, Michelle Morrow, Lisa Smith-Butts, Christy Fitzpatrick Burns, Marcie Milletary, Susan Kelly, Marla Ferrency, Sonia Rathelot, Monte Bohna, Ayanna Ramsey, Kerry Fogarty, Lya Laberge (PCO Board representative)

Moderator's Report - Nikki welcomed everyone and reviewed the mission statement. She invited everyone to write down their questions or concerns and suggestions for future meetings.

Leanna Plonka introduced herself as a co-leader of Navigators USA. The group applied for a mini-grant to offset the start-up costs. The rest of the mini-grants will be presented later in the meeting and votes will be done then.

Secretary's Report - Marla reminded all committee members and event planners that they should submit any announcements for the Wed. Word to her by Tuesdays at noon each week. marla@ecspco.org.

Treasurer's Report

EXPENSES:

Hoagies: \$1177.50
Hoagie Paypal Charges: \$8.11
Hoagie Refund: \$13.00
Spirit Shirt Check Errors: \$12.00
Pizza (Sept. meeting): \$56.06
Bounced Check and Fees: \$60.00
PCO Child Care: \$80.00
Adult Social Hall Rental for 2012-2013: \$375
Book Bash Fund to Total: \$11669.05
School: \$6785.00
Party Kits: \$21.19
Josh and Gab Show: \$1000
Hike Guide: \$30.00
PCO Supplies: \$98.88
Hoagie Labels: \$21.98
Fall Festival Lemonade: \$6.98
Calendar: \$770.00
Compost: \$583.00
Total: \$11669.05

INCOME:

Hoagies: \$1810.00
Less One Child Care for September: \$40
Spirit Shirts: \$376.64
Viridian: \$57.00

Total: \$2283.64

BALANCE: \$8781.78

Hoagie Profit: \$ 539.41 (\$50 deposit in last report)

Josh and Gab Show: \$400 due from school

"Chapter Chats" - Ms. Tawana Cook

Nikki shared this idea with the group for Ms. Cook who wants to start a group discussion, like a book club, but less intense. She will provide the title of a chapter or an article and invite parents to discuss it during the "Chapter Chat." The first discussion will be held on Thurs. Nov. 8 at 9 am at Biddle's Escape. The chapter to be discussed is Chapter 1 (Inverse Power of Praise) from the book Nurture Shock by Bronsen and Merryman. This info will be in the Wed Word.

School Culture and Climate - Mr. Jon McCann

Jon relayed a story about his high school-aged daughter who had just sent him a text message asking him to pick her up after a gun was discovered in the high school. He explained that this is the accepted culture, but it's not okay that the school didn't contact the parents about the situation.

Culture is an important part of the school. Culture needs to be 50% of the school; academics are not the only focus. Culture is the umbrella of the school. As a school we need to focus on this. Jon wants a broader collaboration (parents, staff, administration) to focus on school culture and he is asking the PCO to get involved. He would like culture to be on the PCO's agenda each month.

Initiatives: PBS (Positive Behavior Support), Olweus, character education, school spirit/feeling, parent resources.

PBS: 12 trained staff, training of principals, classroom meetings (training), E-Day training, parents - evening event with PCO

Olweus: review/retrain students in weekly class meetings, new faculty training (reporting norms), parents (evening event with PCO)

Character Education: trait of the month, community meetings/class meetings, principal/counseling staff (champions in the building, accessible and visible at meetings), parents - better method of communication home/integrating character trait into events

School Spirit/Feeling: building memories, developmental span @ middle school, bullying programs, suicide/drug/alcohol programs, preparation for high school/larger setting, organized spontaneity

Parent Resources: collaborate to put together a list of resources for families to deal with developmental issues

Jon is asking us to develop a subcommittee of the PCO to build this program in collaboration with staff and administration. It will meet monthly, report on a regular basis, set goals for the next several months.

If you are interested in this subcommittee, email Nikki at parents@ecspco.org.

Guest Speaker - Mr. Dwight Laufman: Opening the Lines of Communication

Dwight started by telling a story in which Tawana Cook mentioned the phrase "presumed goodwill." Dwight is adopting this phrase because he likes to presume that those he meets with have good intentions. He suggested that we are all interested in the success of every student in the school; that's our common ground.

Advice to parents: begin the parent/teacher relationship early in the year before there are any concerns/issues. Make sure the teachers know who your child is and who you are before they need to contact you about a problem. It's easier to talk to someone/bring up an issue once you know them.

Remember the number of kids that teachers are dealing with every day. It may be 24 hours before you get a response from a teacher. After 24 hours of no response, it's ok to check in, but don't assume it will happen immediately.

When there is an issue that your child brings to you...

- get all info that you can from your child (you can be the judge about what info you do and do not need to know)
- make a determination if you need to get involved. Sometimes your child can be an advocate for themselves. Encourage your child to communicate, especially as they get older and prepared for high school and college.
- If you DO need to contact the teacher, think about what you need to address before you go in. Choose one main goal, not five different items. Stay with the problem. Attack the problem, not the person. Don't let it get personal. Think: what's the problem/issue? What's the data? Talk about data, not the person. Remain neutral. During talk, ask: What solutions can we agree on? How should we follow up?

What's missing in communication: LISTENING. Listening is a lost art in our society. LISTEN to your child's teacher. Dwight advises teachers to LISTEN to parents as well.

Sonia commented that starting the relationship with the teacher early on is really valuable. But this year, for the first time at ECS, it's been harder to create this relationship (not at morning meeting, not at pick-up, teachers are less accessible). She really misses this as ECS is changing and growing. Other parents concur.

Sabine: There should be more of an effort to have opportunities to meet the teachers, maybe a grade-level get-together.

Dwight agrees that the grade-level meetings would be a good idea. Meet with the whole grade team, since there are five teachers to meet, not just one for your student. School needs to figure out how to bring parents back in.

Ellen - Because many parents must leave quickly after pick-up to go to lower school, there is less opportunity to meet with other parents.

Sabine - Some opportunities to connect with staff have been dropped (like Java with Jon). It's hard to get to know new staff without opportunity to meet them and hear about their vision for the school.

Coffee with Coaches are being planned.

Dwight addressed the need to work harder with the new staff to explain Olweus and other programs. Training at the beginning of the school year was not enough. All staff doesn't have the same background and training, but the school is working to improve this, which will impact the culture. All staff will be brought up to speed throughout the year.

Discussion of Upcoming Events

Fall Festival- Marcie Milletary

This is happening on Friday, October 26, 2012. We still need lots of volunteers, info in Wed Word.

K-3 Movie Nights - Deb Farrington

Movie night scheduled for Monday, November 5, 2012. Dave will get Deb in touch with Kerry and Beth to plan this.

Meet the Maestro - Elena Hilf

This is scheduled for Sunday, December 2, 2012. It's an enrichment program with in-school workshops and activities culminating in a Pgh. Symphony Orchestra performance at Heinz Hall. \$20/adults and \$15/child are reduced rates. Goal is to get as many families there as possible. Jon would like to see a ticket price of \$6, so we need to subsidize the cost. We agreed on a sliding scale of \$6-20, also asking for donations. What are we able to put towards this event? Dr. P will have some dress-down days to help fundraise as well. Kate moves that the PCO approve up to \$500 to help subsidize the cost. Vote passed.

Holiday Marketplace - Marla Ferrency

The maion marketplace is schedule for December 7-9, 2012 with mini-markets during holiday concerts. Volunteers are needed for the event. Anyone who want to help plan should contact Marla.

Gingerbread Night - Michelle Morrow and Cheryl Ritts

On calendar for Saturday, December 15, 2012. More info to be announced

Excess for Recess - Nikki Amole

Donations are being picked up regularly, so please keep donating. Ms. Cook suggests having a separate event for each school. PCO consensus is that it should happen on one day instead of two because this will be a lot easier logistically and for volunteer needs. We need to discuss with the staff further.

PCO Board of Trustees Representative Report - Lya Laberge

Last year, the board voted to start doing research to open an ECS high school. There was a retreat last year and this was one of the top three goals of the board. After some board turnover, there is now hesitation to focus on a high school. At the next meeting the board needs to decide if they can do a feasibility study. Lya wants parents to attend the board meeting. We need to speak up and keep tabs on how the board is managing this issue. Lya will make agenda and minutes available. Next meeting is on Nov. 21 at 6:30, in the Upper School admin office. Email Nikki at parents@ecspco.org if you plan to come so we can alert the board. Best to have a small group of well-informed parents at this point to show real support for this issue, show that this is important to the parent community. There are two routes: extending the charter (will include every current student) or a second charter with entrance requirements to be written in such a way that most if not all students will get in, but that may not serve the public in a way that the charter will get approved. We also don't want to jeopardize our charter renewal by trying to change the charter. The board had no problem with us removing Imagine from the charter. Two things to work on - facilities and curriculum, with time for an inevitable rejection and re-application.

The board is going through changes - it would be good for parents to go through meetings just to sit through them and learn from the board's perspective. They have several interesting 1/2 hour presentations that will be occurring in each meeting.

Lya - There is a disconnect of board from parents. We should invite them to events like Fall Festival. Marla suggested giving each board member a copy of PCO publications like the calendar and newsletters. Christy said maybe we can highlight a board member in comPOST.

Mini-Grants - Ayanna Ramsey and Erin Pierce

Ayanna explained the new mini-grants procedure. The Mini-Grants Committee meets prior to the PCO meeting, analyzes all proposals according to the rubric, and makes recommendations to the PCO. Nine mini-grant proposals were submitted.

Erin explained that two of the nine proposals were for field trips. The committee decided that field trips are not eligible for funding via mini grants. The PCO can find another way to fund field trips if we want, but they will quickly deplete the mini-grant budget if they are included in mini-grants. One proposal was for an event which was over before the deadline. One was for a mentoring program that affected a very small group of students and scored low on the rubric. None of these are recommended for funding by the committee. Proposals recommended for fall funding (and which scored well on the rubric) include:

- Musical instruments for lower school music class
- Storybird project - kids are writing a book - binding of it to have a copy for each classroom
- Magazine subscriptions for classroom use in current events - 3rd grade
- Cameras for yearbook

This project was recommended for partial funding:

- Navigators alternative scouting group, because it only affected a small number of students (open only to 4th grade this year, to be expanded in future years with additional leaders). The applicants can ask again for the remainder of the money since it's only partially funded.

Dave moves that we accept the mini-grant proposals as presented by the committee and look into whether applicants can re-apply during the year or wait until next year. Vote passed.