

ECS PCO Meeting 2/25/13

Moderator's Report: Nikki welcomed everyone and read the PCO's mission statement. She is pleased that several people have come to her over the past few months asking to speak at a PCO meeting. It seems that we are really fulfilling the PCO's mission through our new meeting format.

Secretary's Report: The next issue of comPOST will be coming out soon. If you have any ideas for the next issue, see Felicia, our newsletter editor, at newsletter@ecspco.org. The deadline for articles and other content is March 11.

Treasurer's Report

EXPENSES:

Jan. PCO meeting pizza: \$37.00
PCO childcare: \$80.00
Excess for Recess: \$100
Staff app. (b-day cards): \$9.57
Compost printing: \$603.00
Game Night: \$152.40
PCO shelf for lower school: \$86.51
Playground equip. (lower school): \$300.00
Blooming Bash stamps: \$184.00
Total: \$1552.48

INCOME:

Game night bake sale/pizza sale: \$125.75
Game night raffle: \$62.25
Smencils: \$46.70
Uniform reuse: \$10.00
Staff app. \$20.00
Total: \$264.70

BALANCE: \$18682.69

PROFITS:

Game Night: \$35.60

Book Bash Update - The Book Bash was last year's adult social. Money raised = \$7000 which money was dedicated to books and literacy. Joe Burke has been thoughtfully planning how to spend the money to best serve the students. His plan is below:

Book Bash Spending Plan

Prepared by Joe Burke, ECS Literacy Coach

"The hub of an effective literacy classroom is the classroom library."

(Reutzel, D.R., & Fawson, P.C. (2002). Your classroom library--Giving it more teaching power: Research-based strategies for developing better readers and writers. New York: Scholastic.)

Lower School - approximately \$3300

Reading Rainbow App for Lower School iPads (6 month subscription) = \$1200

- * Kindergarten = 10 iPads x \$30
- * First = 10 iPads x \$30
- * Second = 10 iPads x \$30
- * Third = 10 iPads x \$30

Classroom libraries - Books, magazines, collections of books, leveled texts for small group work, apps, and classroom infrastructure to support literacy rich classroom libraries in the grade level loop.

- * Kindergarten = \$400
- * First = \$400
- * Second = \$400
- * Third = \$400
- * Special Area Teachers = \$400

*Teachers make their lists based on the needs of current students and the students they will have next year.

Upper School - approximately \$3300

Classroom libraries - Books, magazines, collections of books, leveled texts for small group work, apps, and classroom infrastructure to support literacy rich classroom libraries in the grade level loop.

- * Fourth = \$650
- * Fifth = \$650
- * Sixth = \$650
- * Seventh = \$650 - \$450 (already spent) = \$200
- * Special Area Teachers = \$650 - \$110 (already spent) = \$540

*Teachers make their lists based on the needs of current students and the students they will have next year.

Guest Speakers

Grow Pittsburgh Event: Jim Rowell

Farmer Jim has been working with 3rd and 4th grade classes. He spends fall and spring at the Lower School with the 3rd graders outdoors ("Chef in the Garden" curriculum) and winter with the 4th graders doing a cooking curriculum. He's planning a schoolwide ECS event on March 8th at 6:30 pm in the cafeteria. The Greater Pgh Community Food Bank will present opportunities. Tacos will be served. Email Jim to get involved or to RSVP - jim@growpittsburgh.org. Two volunteer sign-up sheets were passed around - one for event and one for Tuesday classes with Ms. Lynch (need regular volunteers starting March 12).

Urban Ecostewards Program: Patty Himes

Patty works for the Frick Environmental Center. Urban Ecostewards is a joint program between the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy and the Environmental Center. It was started years ago by Marijke Hecht, an ECS parent and a PPC staff member, to get people to connect to the park and understand what it takes to restore the park. Urban Ecostewards was developed to build sustainable ecosystems in the green spaces in our city through citizen engagement. Started in 4 city parks, it's now in 5 regional parks as well and expanding to other green spaces. In 2012, there were 57 Urban Ecostewards putting in 1422.75 hours of service. Tasks include: removing invasive plants, planting natives, constructing erosion control systems, picking up trash and litter. Training includes monthly training with topics such as invasive ID, native plant ID, native seed collection, planting techniques. The ECS site is in the Fern Hollow Wetland under the Forbes Ave bridge. To get there, go down Biddle Trail, turn right onto Fern Hollow. It's a natural wetland with some plants which are not found in other places in the park. Rebecca Reid coordinates the work at the ECS site which is done April through November each year for 2 Sunday afternoons each month. The group is desperately looking for new volunteers. There is no obligation to show up every month. Contact Rebecca to get involved. Kim, another Ecosteward, spoke about her family's experience over the last 8 years with her 4 children.

Mini-Grants Committee

Erin explained the format of mini grants for this year. It's been moved to a committee, and applications are being judged with a rubric with clear criteria. Grants are scored on these items: number of students benefitting, level of enhancement/innovation, percent of products that are reusable, connection to curriculum, maintenance costs. There were seven proposals in this round. The Mini-Grant yearly budget is \$2500. There are three grant request periods total. This is the second. \$888 was spent so far in the first round.

1. Counseling department requests money for books, therapeutic games, workbooks. \$250 requested, committee recommends funding whole amount.
2. Physical Education teacher at Lower School requests funding for equipment to follow a specific curriculum (parachutes, etc.) - \$250 requested, committee recommends funding whole amount.
3. Saturday Light Brigade radio program for 2nd grade requests \$250 as part of a \$4000 program. This proposal received a low score on the rubric and because the \$250 would fund just a small percentage of total (school would have to cover the rest), the committee recommends not funding this.
4. 3rd grade Literacy teachers request money for equipment to use with iPads to create a fluency center. \$250 requested, committee recommends funding whole amount.
5. Science teaching teams would like to send four staff members to a national conference to learn about new science standards. Thousands of dollars are needed and \$250 is such a

small portion that it might be more efficiently used for another grant. The committee recommends not funding this.

6. 6th grade math teachers would like to purchase calculators for one class's worth of students (1 set for 3 classrooms). \$87 requested, committee recommends funding whole amount.

7. Nursing office would like to buy trial size deodorant and underwear for middle school students in need of these items during the school day. Amount requested is \$150. This cost could come out of the special needs line item (not mini grants) - a vote was taken and it passed. We also discussed ways to get some donations, which we will suggest in the future (requesting from Costco, Target, etc.) The nurse already tried approaching companies (not retailers). Erin will follow up with nurse about whether she wants to make the purchase or PCO should.

Erin suggests opening up a conversation about funding issues - how to fund professional development things like the science conference.

Nikki pointed out that there's a need to have school rep. on the mini grant committee. Steve agreed.

Fundraising

Orchestra fundraising event: Shirli Nicholsburg

ECS parent Shirli, whose husband in in the Pgh Symphony, would like to organize a gala night in the concert hall - chamber music concert - 400 seats - as an ECS fundraiser. \$10,000-30,000 fundraising goal. Silent auction, reception. CAPA auditorium downtown could be a potential venue, with a private room for a reception. Beth Lott and the adult social committee will discuss with Shirli to move forward with this idea for a potential fundraiser next year.

Hoagie Sale

Kerry reported that we need volunteers for afternoon delivery at the lower school and packing help at the upper school on March 7. Deadline for ordering is Friday, March 1.

Update on car magnet fundraising idea: Jess Gonzalez

Jess is starting this process, working with Felicia on a design.

General discussion of field trip fundraising

Beth pointed out that one way the PCO could help with field trips is to help cover the costs for volunteers. It's hard for parents to volunteer when they have to pay \$10-15 admission fee to certain facilities like the science center or zoo. Classes are desperate for chaperones who have clearances and have the availability to spend the day volunteering. If parents have already paid for clearances and have taken time off work, we shouldn't be asking them to pay to volunteer. School should be having a discussion with the organizations we are visiting -- wouldn't they rather have more chaperones to help control

the kids, rather than fewer? Steve will follow up on contacting organizations about chaperones fees. One of our fundraisers could be earmarked for this in the meantime. Molly suggested having a clearly marked donation option on all field trip forms so families who are able to can help support field trip funding when necessary.

Nikki reminded us that we usually talk about asking for a general donation at the beginning of the year, but we never have done it. It could give people the option of opting out of fundraisers. This money could go toward a number of causes. 100% of this money comes back to the school. This should go out in the summer mailing. Mike Bennett will help write this letter.

Lya suggested that the upper school students could get involved in fundraising soon too.

Blooming Bash pARTy

Beth reported that invitations are being addressed this weekend - she will put a call out for volunteers. Beth is launching a Facebook page for the event soon. Next week, Beth will have room parents send out a letter about classroom gift baskets with themes (chocolate, sports, etc.). If you have or know of a business that may be interested in donating, Beth has a letter to send. Goal is to raise money for arts enrichment and experiences at the school. School has a great wish list that we will try to help offset the costs of. We have a donation of wooden chairs - each grade level will paint a chair which will be auctioned off.

Parent Liaison Committee

Kate explained that this is a new committee - a merging of two informal groups of parents with similar concerns, to increase productively and channel concerns effectively. Main purpose is to assist ECS families in communications with the school, where and when it is needed. For example, if there is a bullying situation and the parent has gone through a number of steps which aren't working, this committee can help navigate this communication chain. This is a neutral committee, not meant to advocate for one party or the other. It should help prevent a situation from exploding online or in person. The committee will only take on issues that directly affect a child on a personal level, not general schoolwide issues, like homework, dress code, etc. PLC will keep any details confidential.

If a parent doesn't know where to start, can they come to PLC? PLC will work with the website team to make sure a list of channels will be publicized. Ideally, the PLC will not need to be activated.

Would PLC intervene if an issue does show up on Facebook? Yes, a reminder will be sent that the committee exists, some next steps, and encourage them to remove post.

Molly, Joe, Rebecca, Christina, and Kate have been meeting once a week since December to develop this committee. They are launching it and will publicize it over the next few weeks. They will be the PLC members for the remainder of the year, and then will figure out how to open up some committee seats for the future. One idea is to have a

grade level representative on the committee for each grade. PLC will be working closely with principals as needed. Intention is to fulfill PCO's mission. Steve is very supportive of and excited about the committee.

New parent, Jess, started partway through school year, feels that there was a big lapse in communication from both school and PCO. Christy will follow up with school staff to make sure the PCO communication goes out to new families.

Staff Appreciation

Beth said that spring break care packages need to be put together for teachers. She needs someone to oversee that project. Ilona offered to help.

Administrative Update

Steve Pellathy will schedule an hour-long meeting another evening to continue the AYP discussion and talk about ECS's position in the community. Two things to update now: he read a letter from Linda Lane, PPS superintendent, with an invitation for charter schools to meet with her to work collaboratively. Steve said this is a remarkable letter and looks forward to meeting with her. Steve will report on that meeting at the hour-long meeting he is proposing. #2: The Pittsburgh district put out a \$2.4 million dollar proposal to create a new blueprint for the district. Steve has been invited to have a one on one conversation with the consultant who is leading this effort, probably in the next week. He will reach out to the PCO via Nikki to schedule a meeting. A quick poll at the meeting determined that evening times work better than after school.

PCO Board of Trustees Representative Report

Lya said a lot of parents showed up to talk about arts/after school programming. A lot of teachers are already working overtime, so it's hard to ask staff to run after school programs, but the school is hearing the concerns.

Architect diagrams for the Upper School renovations were on display at the Board meeting. Ongoing plans are being made, not finalized yet. Students have been asked about building upgrades, what they want to see. One idea is to add auditorium windows and door, with a new Thinking Lab on the stage area with glass partitions. Kitchen and cafeteria will be in the auditorium, with an art room and space for town meetings for students. There may be a wheelchair ramp on the stairs instead of elevator. Gym will remain a gym for next year, but there will probably be two years' worth of renovations. The home office will move offsite to free up classroom space that is currently being used as offices. Construction timeframe will be very tight, so a construction manager will be hired.