

3/31/2014
PCO Meeting

Christy read the mission statement.

Lya explained that at the last Board of Trustees meeting they discussed the Catalyst Project which is what tonight's meeting is about.

Jon McCann – guest speaker

Jon explained that in the early years parents expressed interest in a 9-12 high school. It was very important that they weren't going to jeopardize the current K-8. The first step was to go to the Board. Things to consider – financials, how will we afford this? What will the cost be in putting a high school together? Other considerations, legislation threats towards Charter Schools, building costs, unfunded mandates for teachers, retirement. We want to ensure that we have long-term financial sustainability. The solution that arose from all of these questions was in addition to a 9-12 high school, a new K-8 would be created. Another K-8 will also fill the obligation for more students to attend ECS.

Nikole Schaeffer – guest speaker

This type of amendment process hasn't been done before. PPS is open to the idea and willing to collaborate. ECS submitted a timeline for the amendment on the day that all Charter School applications are due. On November 16, 2013 the timeline was submitted to Dr. Linda Lane. At that time we asked PPS how we can partner together. By January 1, 2014 ECS hadn't hear back from PPS. In the meantime, we've had over 50 walk-throughs with various Pittsburgh community members (big thinkers, thought-leaders, partners, and influential people). Currently we are in the writing phase. We're building the foundation of all of the research. On April 15 – the amendment goes to the ECS Board. On May 1st it goes to the PPS Board. We need 5 votes from PPS.

Why are we pursuing an amendment, and not a new charter? We want to ensure that our current students can automatically enroll into ECS High School. If not, the same process would occur as it does now for admissions, if there are more students that apply than seats in the classroom then it would go to a lottery.

Molly Bennett – Indiegogo Campaign/Fundraising

We are seeking funds to offset the cost of this project, i.e. curriculum building. Indiegogo is an easy way to raise money quickly. We've set up an online campaign. We're also looking for a foundation to help with capital. The amendment is about changing education in the city of Pittsburgh. We aren't just another school, we're trying to change status quo. Please share the Indiegogo on your social networks. Host a happy hour at your house to talk about ECS and the Catalyst Project. We are stewarding current ECS donors. The campaign runs through May 15th.

Betsy Fitzpatrick

Betsy is helping with communication between the PPS Board and ECS. We need to create a movement, find true believers. Talk to your neighbors, talk to people at church, be kind, be professional, and be polite and positive. We need reasons to give them a yes! Some people have a bad perception of Charter Schools. ECS didn't form for anything but innovative education. We are a different option for parents.

Question from parent: What is the risk of growing?

Jon – it's similar to when we split into two buildings, we want to ensure we have a coherent staff. Our goal is to drive innovation in public education. We want all Pgh kids to benefit from it. We care about all kids and as we get better everyone gets better.