

ECS PCO Meeting 9/24/12

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 Ferreny, Sonia Rathelot, Lya Laberge (PCO Board representative)

Exec Members Absent: Monte Bohna, Ayanna Ramsey, Kerry Fogarty

Guest: Julie Murphy from Park Place introduced herself. She supports ECS and testified in favor of the school. She came to invite us to an event about energy efficiency in homes. On Oct. 20, there will be a lecture at the Lower School at 1:00pm, followed by a tour of her home which is a test case. Open to all to learn about energy conservation.

Moderator's Report - Nikki welcomed everyone to our first PCO meeting of the year. She read the PCO mission statement and asked us to be mindful of others' time when speaking. If you have a specific or personal concern, please feel free to add it to the "Questions, Comments, and Concerns" boards hanging on each side of the room so that we may address it outside of the scheduled meeting. Each meeting this year will begin with a guest speaker or special topic, followed by our business meeting. When a vote is taken, all PCO members in attendance may vote, which is different than how we've done it in the past. The October meeting will feature Dwight Laufman speaking about parent/teacher communication. Jon McCann was unable to attend tonight's meeting because he's representing ECS at a Park Place community meeting, but he submitted an explanation of the new staffing structure at ECS, which Nikki circulated with the agenda. It will also appear in the Wed Word. Steve Pellathy, Upper School Principal and Tawana Cook, Lower School Principal, are attending tonight's meeting.

Secretary's Report - Marla has additional wall calendars if anyone didn't get one or needs one for a second household. She also announced that the PCO Executive Committee voted to approve funds for an anti-bullying presentation, the Josh and Gab Show, which will be held on October 11. There will be two performances at each building.

Treasurer's Report

9/24/2012

EXPENSES (since June meeting)

Pizza for May Meeting: \$43.09

PCO Childcare: \$80.00

Second Grade Mini-Grant: \$197.00

May Issue of Compost: \$423.00

June Issues of Compost: \$423.00

Triangle Hoagie Deposit: \$50

Summer Pavilion Rental: \$75

Kick off party expenses: \$363.61

Staff Appreciation: \$75.82
Polo Repairs: \$515.00
Polo Refunds: \$122.00
Spirit Shirts: \$5581.00
Polo Shirts: \$1770.50
TOTAL: \$9719.02

INCOME

Polos: \$1688.00
Spirit Shirts: \$6354.61
Uniform Re-Use: \$484
Label Fundraiser: \$37.32
TOTAL: \$8563.93

BALANCE: \$18,167.19

PROFIT:

Spirit shirts: \$773.61

We also have \$7000 in the PCO bank account that was raised at last year's Book Bash. Beth is meeting with Joe Burke on Monday to make a plan for spending it.

Steve Pellathy mentioned that he is working with Kelsey to bring healthy food in to the school, and he would like to continue this effort with any food that is associated with ECS - bake sales, other fundraisers, etc. It's still too early to come up with a policy, but it's something to think about as we move forward.

Steve also asked for help on who to go to for funding requests other than mini-grants. If a student needs financial help (glasses), or would like to get funding for a program or project, who do they go to? Marla mentioned that we have a budget for families in need. Requests should be sent to the officers. Dave said that we are working on developing an organizational chart to identify roles and contact people within the PCO. And room parents are a classroom-based resource, headed by Beth Lott and Sonia. We will post our committee list on the PCO website soon.

Guest Speakers - Ms. Tawana Cook and Dr. Steve Pellathy

Tawana and Steve introduced themselves and expressed their enthusiasm for their new roles at ECS. They are here to listen, observe, and answer questions. They are learning who's who at ECS and how to navigate the school community.

At this time, we had an open discussion with the principals and PCO members.

Tawana suggested having a book/article talk to develop some community among the leadership and parents. This is one thing we can create a gathering around.

Nikki pointed out that Jon McCann's state of the school climate agenda item (at previous PCO meetings) was well received. The principals would be open to doing this at our meetings. Good way to touch base.

Dave suggested that Java with Jon was also a good way to access the leadership. Kate said it was an effective way to avoid bringing personal issues into the PCO meeting.

Tawana thought we could invite one instructional coach to each PCO meeting as a way to connect with staff. Steve agreed that it would be a good role for them.

PCO meetings have always been useful for Jon as well as parents. He could get a feel for parents' attitude about current school events, stop rumors, explain the school's decision about controversial issues, etc.

Steve wondered how the school could reach out to people who don't attend meetings? Perhaps via informal networking - parents need to help get other parents involved. Tania suggested virtual options - google hang-out, Java with Jon online, explore new options. Also Back to School night - if it was open to kids - another option is an event where the kids will pull parents in and get them excited about coming to a school event in the evening.

Tawana asked if we could make sure that PCO Exec is represented by all grades to ensure continuity. What about geographical diversity - should we have parents from all buslines/communities represented? We confirmed that we DO represent all grades now, but it can be hard to fill all 15 Exec positions, so sometimes we have to take what we can get.

Lya pointed out that the PCO changes every year as we grow older. To new parents, it may seem established/set in stone, but we change as needed.

Ellen suggests personal invitations to get people involved, and not just from Exec members, but all parents, teachers and staff should be inviting people to PCO meetings and other events.

Steve has a vision of how the Upper School will improve: every student will improve and move the school forward. We have an excellent school, teachers, coaches, program, home team, but we have students who are not accessing this excellence that ECS offers. The way we get better is for more students at every level (and their families) to access the benefits of ECS. How can we grow this community (including parents/PCO)?

One parent has experience from another school, a feeder school in the East Hills. She and the administration at that school addressed the issue of how to reach out to underserved families. She offered to meet with admin at ECS to move this conversation further.

Leadership and teachers can show support for students/families through extracurricular activities, like attending informal sporting events.

Families want to see themselves represented in faculty/admin. If they don't, they won't feel part of the community. Would it make sense if Tawana or Steve went to the North Side or other communities and met with families in their own communities? Go where they are to reach out to families instead of asking them to come back to the school.

Sonia suggested that instead of "Java with Jon," the current principals have to find their own format, what works for them. She is disappointed about no more morning meetings, which was one way for parents to feel welcome in the school. A sense of community develops there.

Kate wondered if we should explore the idea of a Parent Engagement Specialist, a position which has been cut from PPS schools.

One new parent asked, who comes to events? Is there a good turnout? Christy suggested that events like movie nights might be an opportunity for parents to meet with admin over coffee while the kids are engaged. Also - great to see older kids partnering with younger kids - lots of positive things can evolve from this. At events, older kids can "run" some activities.

Lya appreciates that principals are available to the students and have established some good relationships.

Lisa pointed out that ECS is not just a school, but a community.

Tania said that an established gifted program will add to the sense of community/ownership. The position has been sort of a "Defense Against the Dark Arts" position which turns over every year. There are a lot of parents backing this and supporting the establishment of a strong program.

We had a great discussion, but Nikki directed us back to the agenda.

Grade Level Representatives - Tawana would like to see two parents from each grade serve as Grade Level Representatives. They will meet with her on a monthly basis, and also attend PCO meetings regularly. They would be available to other parents in that grade who may not feel comfortable coming directly to principal.

Beth questions whether we can find enough volunteers to step up, and how they will interact with room parents. She would like to further discuss this. Tawana feels comfortable personally inviting parents to serve in this role. It's also a great way to different grade levels to connect with each other.

It's worth considering because it's a different role than room parents serve. They would be committed to attend PCO meetings as well - way to bring in a larger group of parents.

Committee Reports

Welcome Committee - Christy is questioning how necessary this committee is. This is the second year we've tried to pair new families with veteran families (matching according to neighborhood/age of kids). The idea is that veteran families can answer questions about pick-up/drop-off, lunch, uniforms, etc. and when new kids come to school on first day, it's great to have a friendly face in the school. Parents generally like the concept, including the new families present at the meeting, but there was not much response this year-- did new families not see this info in the summer mailing? Maybe there is not enough notice to get people involved? Should we have this option available on lottery night or another time? One new parent said she appreciated having the offer, but didn't feel a need to take advantage of it. She felt welcome just knowing it was an option. To connect people, Molly suggested using color-coded name tags at Back to School Event/Playground Party to identify new students or grade levels. Lya suggested a PCO representative be present at orientation night for new families, and maybe PCO could plan a "teddy bear picnic" just for kindergarteners to get all of those new families together.

Staff Appreciation - Beth reported that the committee just planned a whole year's worth of events. There is something every month to show the staff our appreciation. This month, we provided soups and breads to all staff before Back to School night. It was very much appreciated. Beth will put something in the Wed. Word this week.

Excess for Recess - Nikki explained this event: Families donate activities, games, books, etc. to teachers for indoor recess. Then we set up a "store" for teachers on their staff development day. We're starting to collect things for this year. We had originally planned for distribution on Oct. 8., but there may be logistical problems with this. Sounds like it needs to be postponed. We can continue to collect things and have the event in Dec./Jan. We will put together a committee and continue working on this: Nikki, Lisa K., Marla, Betsy, Sonia have volunteered.

Fall Festival - This event is on Friday, October 26, 2012 at 6-8 PM. Marcie reported that there was a planning meeting last week. There will be storytelling, night hikes, games, etc. To get the older kids involved, Marcie will attend the student council meeting to ask for ideas. We need lots of volunteers the day off and weeks leading up to the event. The committee is working with Kelsey to include healthy food as part of the event. Contact volunteer@ecspco.org if you want to help.

K-3 Movie Night - Monday, November 5, 2012 at 6:30.
No report.

Holiday Marketplace - December 7-9, 2012 with "Mini-Markets" during holiday concerts and Gingerbread Night
No report.

Gingerbread Night - Saturday, December 15, 2012
No report.

Mini-Grants

No report.

ComPOST - This is our bimonthly newsletter. We have a great newsletter committee this year. Our first issue (20 pages) should be distributed next week.

Lost and Found - Kate reminded everyone to label their children's belongings - there are many, many unlabelled items. On Friday, Oct. 26 Kate will set up a table during recess and lunch at the Upper School to allow the kids to claim their items. After that, everything will be donated. We will post this in the Wed. Word.

PCO Board of Trustees Representative Report - Lya has been elected as a member of the Board of Trustees and as a PCO member, she represents the PCO at board meetings. Lya has attended three meetings so far. She has learned that the board is going through some major changes. Lya is trying to get the board agendas to be more public/accessible. There may be one original member of the board left, there have been a lot of new members over the past couple years. The committee structure of the board is changing. There is a 1/2 hour presentation at each meeting about school/leadership/how the admin makes decisions. Lya will forward agenda topics to the PCO when she can. The 5-year renewal for the charter is going well. Every year there has been a mini review, no red flags.

Next meeting: October 22