

COMPOST

The Parent Community Organization newsletter of Environmental Charter School **DECEMBER 2012** Vol. 5, Issue 2

A letter from Tawana

BY TAWANA COOK

About a dozen Lower School parents convened for “ECS Chapter Chat” at Biddle’s Escape recently to talk about “The Inverse Power of Praise,” a chapter in Bronson and Merryman’s *Nurture Shock*. Between sips of latte and hot chocolate, we discussed the concepts of praise, self-esteem, and failure. “Praise,” we finally agreed, “must be sincere and specific.” And, we must not be afraid to let a child build resilience by overcoming a few obstacles.

My interest in the topic arose years ago as the parent of three children, one of whom said to her unsuspecting teacher and classmates, “My mom doesn’t care about my grades; she only cares about my effort!” Part of that was, indeed, true. Though I had written hundreds of report cards, I somehow knew they were not a reflection of the authentic experiences of either my children or those about whom I wrote. The lives of children is

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YOU
ARE
HERE

Cultural Literacy

at ECS

BY MIKE BENNETT

When ECS was first established in 2008, its oldest and most advanced students were third graders. But as each year added a new grade, the curriculum had to grow with these students and their developing needs and learning styles.

Environmental Literacy teaching grew from the school’s commitment to integrating environmental education at every level and in every subject area of the curriculum. This model creates a system wherein the groundwork for more complicated critical engagement with the world is laid at the earliest stages. Students in kindergarten and first grade learn skills of observation and communication that will help them understand the more complicated points of Environmental Literacy later on. This builds toward the goal of helping students to navigate the world with the ability to recognize multiple factors that influence every system or situation.

During the school’s expansion, the administration recognized the need to separate into two campuses. The decision to draw a clear line between

See **CULTURAL LITERACY**, page 2

Your Gifts to ECS

BY MELISSA RYCHENER

ECS families and community supporters came through on the Pittsburgh Day of Giving. Generous contributions and a match from the Pittsburgh Foundation resulted in an \$18,216.68 donation to our school, an increase of more than 80% from last year. Thank you!

In contrast with funds given by a foundation or grant, these donations are considered discretionary funds and can be used for a variety of projects at ECS.

ECS, along with the PCO, is developing a phased plan to invest in the Lower School play areas. The committee will utilize a generous grant provided by the Kate & Peter Ambrusko Memorial Trust during the first phase, and Jon McCann anticipates that this committee will seek additional funds from ECS for design fees.

The Upper School also has several projects in the works that may benefit from these funds. As the school gets ready for the addition of 8th grade, the facility needs many upgrades. A renovated cafeteria space, science lab, gymnasium, and instructional coaching office are currently being planned. Additionally, the Upper School will require technology upgrades.

Finally, these funds can be used toward greening the school buildings. Last year, ECS was awarded honorable mention in the U.S. Department of Education's Green Ribbon Schools initiative, a program that "honors schools that are exemplary in reducing environmental impact and costs." Additional investments will be needed to build on this success.

If you did not have the opportunity to make a donation on the Pittsburgh Day of Giving and would like to support the school, you can always make a gift at www.environmentalcharterschool.org/index.cfm/giving/

ECS is working closely with the PCO to identify key areas that require additional support so that parents can see the tangible results of their gifts. Fundraising is one way that parents are working together with ECS to strengthen our school.

CULTURAL LITERACY, from page 1



Photos by Jennifer Bannon

the third and fourth grades, and so to split the Upper and Lower Schools, was based on a clear division between developmental stages in a student's life. This is an obvious quantum leap in the maturation of students' learning and social awareness. But at the same time, the administration had to prepare to teach students who were crossing another developmental boundary: entering the sixth grade, and middle school.

Middle school students begin to develop a more complicated social understanding of the world, and recognize differences and similarities between individuals and groups of people. The challenge of creating a middle school curriculum is to build on the groundwork of Environmental Literacy in the earlier grades while stoking the curiosity of maturing minds that are more engaged with the social dimension of the world.

The Cultural Literacy curriculum of sixth and seventh grade fulfills this promise by shifting the emphasis from the hard sciences of biology and chemistry to the social sciences of history, geography, anthropology, and sociology. As curriculum coordinator Nikole Sheaffer explains, "Cultural Literacy is the natural progression from our Environmental Literacy blocks in the earlier grades." Where Environmental Literacy concentrates on the interaction between organisms and ecosystems to teach students to make connections and recognize causes and effects, Cultural Literacy shifts the focus to interactions between people, both individually and in social and cultural groups.

According to the seventh grade website, Cultural Literacy is "the study of how human beings of various cultures interact, think,

love, dream, and so forth." In practice at ECS, Cultural Literacy incorporates Social Studies with English reading and writing. Jennifer Thompson of the sixth grade Cultural Literacy team describes the process: "Cultural Lit is divided between social studies content, novel study, current events and writing. Each quarter has one essential question, type of writing, and novel... Throughout Cultural Literacy, students will write narratives, informative opinion pieces aligning with the common core standards."

As in the lower grades, teachers emphasize context and problem-solving (in the form of answering the "essential question") rather than rote memorization. Ms. Sheaffer explains, "The idea centers around students investigating a big question, and then delving into the exploration from multiple perspectives... By encouraging students to explore questions rather than march through content, we allow them to understand diverse perspectives and examine the complexity of issues that face our society and the global environment." As the minds of students, and the social networks they engage in, increase in complexity, Cultural Literacy encourages them to recognize and understand the complicated "global environment" and see themselves as participants in it.

These are challenging concepts even for adults, and finding talented educators who would be up to the task was a challenge as well. Ms. Sheaffer describes the "rigorous hiring process" through which the school accomplished this: "We asked teachers questions around the nature of collaboration [and] their philosophy in teaching content areas separately versus integrated." An interest in, and talent for, both

collaborative and interdisciplinary teaching was therefore crucial to teaching this kind of curriculum.

However, Ms. Thompson points out the benefits of team teaching in any classroom setting, not just Cultural Literacy: "Since there are three of us in the classroom, we are able to use multiple co-teaching strategies, individualize enrichment/remediation opportunities, and have a smaller student/teacher ratio." Ms. Sheaffer assesses the success of the team: "Like any relationship, the road is not always a honeymoon, but teams are learning each others' strengths, and working through the challenges of teaching in a co-teaching setting."

Grade-level teams integrate traditional English reading and writing education with Social Studies by looking at novels in their social and historical contexts. This allows students to understand the pressures of each novel's composition, and the cultural forces that influenced their writing.

Each grade level has different priorities and goals that match students' developmental benchmarks. According to the seventh grade team's explanation of the novel study, while sixth graders focus on understanding the "meaning/message of the text" through textual analysis, seventh graders dig into the "author's message and purpose" by putting skills learned in sixth grade to work. Next year, students in eighth grade will work toward interpreting texts through "various critical lenses" to develop the skill of "inhabiting viewpoints other than their own."

As Ms. Thompson explains, although sixth grade is learning about "Mesopotamia, Ancient Egypt, Ancient Greece, and Ancient Rome" through novel study this year, "current events is also a part of Cultural Literacy." This encourages students to begin to recognize the continuity of history, and understand that contemporary effects can often spring from ancient causes. Seventh grade will study "human and physical geography" to integrate history with a sense of physical

place, and eighth grade will tackle United States history, a subject which necessarily requires the willingness and ability to understand multiple and often conflicting viewpoints.

This year also marks the beginning of "looping" at ECS, where students will work with the same team of teachers for two years. Ms. Thompson looks forward to continuing to work with the same group of students and "building a community" of learners: "This will allow us to lay a solid foundation of interpersonal and academic relationship. We are already seeing how we are able to have long term goals for students to ensure growth."

Naturally, once students finish eighth grade, they should be prepared for the complexities of high school, and beyond that the challenge of college and the so-called "real world." With three years of Cultural Literacy behind them, ECS students should be uniquely qualified to meet these challenges with maturity and perspective.

Do you have an upcoming...

- Kids' birthday party
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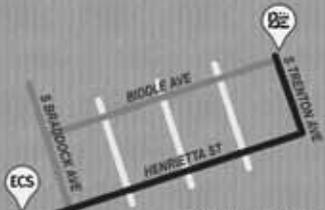
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Connections in Counseling

BY MELISSA RYCHENER

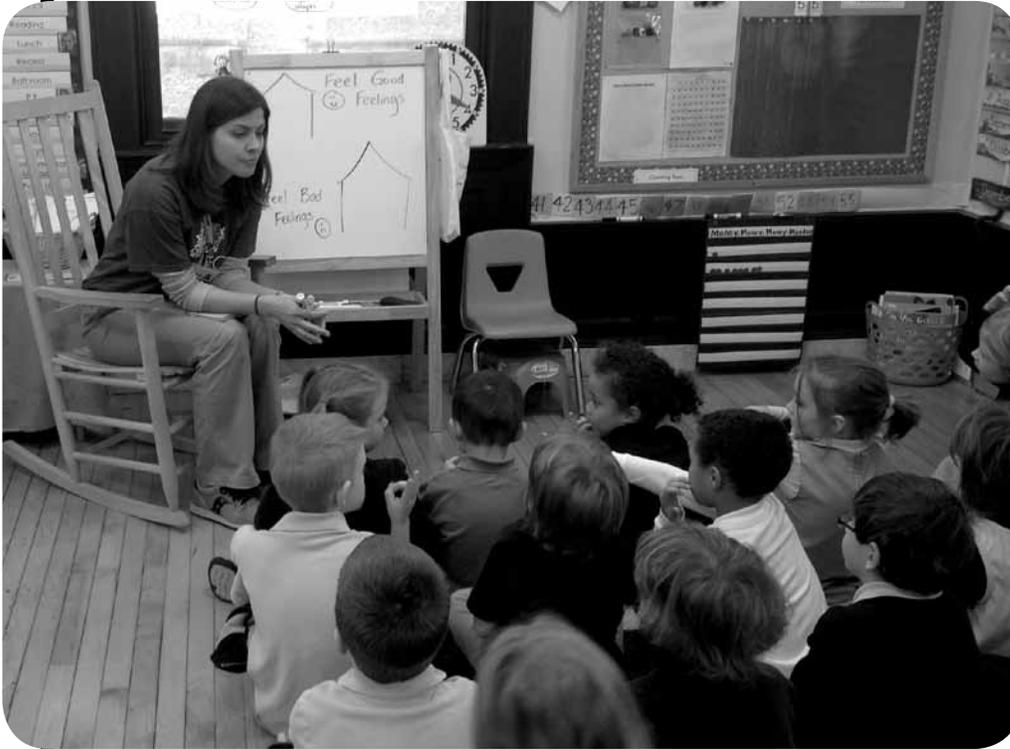


Photo by Danielle Meyer

If you are like me, when you imagine what a school counselor does, you conjure up an image of an individual who is somewhere in the periphery of school life and meets with a limited number of students. When I met with Beth Kravec, ECS's school counselor, I came to understand that in contrast with the outdated image I have, her role is central to the mission of our school, involves all children, and touches upon many aspects of their lives—from the personal and social, to the academic, to career development. The counseling program at ECS is designed to support the holistic development of students, and much of the work that she does is preventative – helping students down the line by developing awareness and building skills now.

Ms. Kravec and I met in her light-filled office on the third floor of the Lower School, one of the two offices she works from in serving students in both the Upper and Lower School. She explained that in this welcoming space she works with students on service-learning projects (like making thank-you cards for veterans), meets with small groups (to focus on such topics as anger

management, social skill development, and friendship skills), and meets one-on-one with students. However, much of Ms. Kravec's work with students takes place in the classroom, lunchroom, or wherever students meet.

Reaching out to the school community allows Ms. Kravec to collaborate with and build rapport with students, teachers, and administrators, an essential element of the work she does. She explains further that “even if students don't need me now, they may need me in the future.” This proactive approach led Ms. Kravec to develop a program she calls “fun lunches.” These lunches can be initiated by a parent or a teacher, and their focus is simply on getting to know students so that they will feel comfortable with her. Ms. Kravec also views fun lunches and other forms of outreach to be her “first tier” of support for students. If a student is having difficulty connecting to other children in the classroom, a fun lunch can serve a particular role in helping that student to develop social skills that will enable her to connect to her classmates.

Classroom lessons, mostly in K – 5 classrooms, also serve as the first tier of support for all students in these grades. A recent kindergarten lesson (pictured here) helped the children to identify feelings and build a foundation to manage difficult feelings. Previous kindergarten lessons highlighted topics such as making good choices and appreciating differences. Third grade class lessons recently focused on assertive voice and effective communication, and future topics include managing test anxiety and building career awareness. Through her presence in the classroom, Ms. Kravec also helps the children to see that the school counselor is a supportive, helpful, and normal part of their lives. She hopes that 20 years down the line, these students will feel comfortable in talking with a counselor if they need to. She wants to help them to see “there is no shame in accessing services. It is a huge strength to seek help.”

For Upper School students, Ms. Kravec is interested in developing a program to help students transition into high school. Because ECS students do not face a transition from elementary to middle school, she expects that the transition into high school will bring challenge and growth. She anticipates facilitating discussions to help eighth graders get ready to take this step. Programs to help students who are making the transition to the Upper School at the beginning of fourth grade are in the developmental stages as well.

Some students do need a higher level of counseling support, or a “second tier” of support. If a student's need justifies missing thirty minutes of instruction per week for eight to ten weeks, Ms. Kravec schedules one-on-one or group meetings and works with teachers to minimize the academic impact. Parent permission is required for this kind of long-term, consistent tier two support. Ms. Kravec points out that these sessions focus on skill-building and are not “true therapy.” Part of her role is to help parents to identify resources in the community if therapy is recommended. For children who are experiencing stresses at home, school is often a “good, normal” place to be, and keeping therapy separate from school is a way of honoring the safe space that school is for them. **(CONTINUED next page)**

Focus on: **The Coaching Team**

BY JOE BURKE

The academic coaches work to support and develop the research-based best practices of the Environmental Charter School at Frick Park. They do this in a variety of ways including quarterly grade-level meetings with the whole grade, monthly content looping meetings, vertical team meetings, and individual coaching sessions.

Every nine weeks, coaches facilitate a grade-level meeting. During this day-long session, teachers reflect on the previous quarter and revise their curriculum for the upcoming quarter. They also collaborate in order to build and improve grade-wide connections and expectations.

Coaches also hold monthly meetings with content looping teams. A content looping team consists of the content area teachers in a grade level loop. For example, the second and third grade reading and language arts teachers are a content looping team. The sixth and seventh grade Cultural Literacy teachers are another example of a content looping team. These half-day coaching sessions focus on specific instructional practices. Coaches and teachers work together to build skills around these specific practices. For example, a reading and language arts looping team might focus on vocabulary instruction. A math content looping team might focus on the practice of guided math. An Environmental Literacy team might focus on visible thinking strategies. The content looping meeting is also one of many times

when teachers study individual student data and consider the effectiveness of their current instructional practices.

There is also one after school staff meeting each month led by coaches. At these meetings all of the content area teachers gather to tackle the overarching goals of the vertical team. For example, last month the K-7 math vertical team focused on accessing and using the new Measure of Academic Progress (MAPS) student data that was collected during the first quarter.

The coaches also provide support and resources to individual teachers and co-teaching teams. This exciting and extremely collaborative work is rooted in classroom visits, data collection, and feedback. Coaches are available to model a practice, co-plan a lesson or a unit, co-teach a lesson, provide resources, and schedule observations of other teachers in our school or at other schools.

Melanie Cowherd, Jessie Handron, and Joe Burke (the Integration, Math, and Literacy Coaches respectively) are engaged in the work described above full time. Several faculty members provide similar coaching support and have additional responsibilities. Gifted Coordinator, Jennifer Kulick supports teachers by providing resources and ideas on how to promote acceleration, enrichment, and differentiation within the classrooms. She works with students in classrooms and

provides additional instructional opportunities for them in the gifted and talented program. Laura Micco, Environmental Education Coordinator, teaches fourth and fifth grade environmental science as well as sixth and seventh grade exploratory classes. She oversees the science program and works closely with Melanie to coach the Environmental Literacy and science teachers. Shannon Merenstein, Design Coach, splits her time between co-teaching and writing curriculum for the Thinking Lab and working at a school-wide level to improve our school's relationship with the built environment. Amira Wolfson, Director of Special Education, is responsible for the Special Education Program. She works with families and faculty to identify students with disabilities and supports families through the special education process. She also coaches teachers around special education and co-teaching. Todd Hoffman, Technology Coach, oversees the purchase and installation of new equipment at both schools. He works to drive the institutional progress toward technology literacy.

All of the coaches work closely with teachers to ensure that our students are making academic progress in a learning context that embodies our school mission and philosophy. The coaches add a layer of support to the school's infrastructure and are in place to further solidify ECS's commitment to achieving the highest academic standards.

A misconception about school counselors is that they are involved in the disciplinary process in cases such as bullying. Ms. Kravec clarified that she does not serve as investigator and never gives out consequences; the entire disciplinary process is handled by teachers and administrators. Rather, with teacher and administrative approval, she may meet with any of the students involved in a supportive role, to help students think about their choices and build social skills. The preventative work that she does with students also serves to address problems such as bullying.

The two-tiered, multi-faceted program Ms. Kravec is building for ECS is consistent with

the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) national model and is based on the program she developed while working in a diverse elementary school in Arlington, Virginia. This semester, she is being assisted in her work by ECS fourth grade teacher Andrea Stewart, who is completing a required internship for her master's degree in school counseling. Next semester, Ms. Kravec will be working without Ms. Stewart's assistance; she hopes that eventually ECS will be in a position to expand the counseling program to better serve our community.

Ms. Kravec emphasizes that if any concerns or questions arise over the course of the year, parents are invited to contact her by

email or phone—though she prefers phone calls as they allow a more natural conversation to take place. Due to confidentiality concerns, Ms. Kravec typically does not use students' names in an email. Ms. Kravec may be reached by email at beth.kravec@environmentalcharterschool.org and by phone at 412-247-7970, ext. 003 at the Upper School and 412-242-1480, ext. 413 at the Lower School.

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much more complicated than these numbers, letters, and comments. Perhaps it was administrative cowardice. Nevertheless, for better or worse, I never believed in publicizing the academic honor rolls nor in honoring children with awards for grades or citizenship. Perhaps I felt that names pronounced in front of others seemed, oddly, to create tension and more sadness than I wanted to be responsible for. Besides, I knew all of the children were doing the best they could.

So then, without these tangible, often audible acknowledgements, how do we adults motivate children to do their best and not risk a total collapse of self-esteem? Dr. Carol Dweck and others discredited much of the self-esteem research, i.e., everyone on the soccer team takes home a trophy, from the late 20th century as flawed science. And, preadolescent children saw teachers' praise as a sign that "you lack ability and need encouragement."

Here is one recommendation. Let children know that the brain is a muscle and that their intellectual capacity is not fixed. "Emphasizing effort gives a child a variable they can control; emphasizing natural intelligence takes it out of the child's control," offers Dweck in her 2006 book *Mindset*. Students praised for effort are more willing to take on challenging tasks.

I am convinced that with each earned accomplishment, children do become intrinsically motivated. Nothing feels better than realizing your own gifts. So, we must teach them to practice, to challenge themselves, and to try again. As I say to the children in the Lower School, even when no one else is there to do it, you can "pat yourself on the back."



help to make indoor recess fun
and engaging for our children!

Indoor recess is an inevitable part of the winter season, and the PCO would like to help teachers replenish their game closets for those days when recess time must be spent indoors. This is a great excuse to clean out your closets and pass on items such as board games, puzzles, blocks, Legos, flash cards, card games, books, etc.

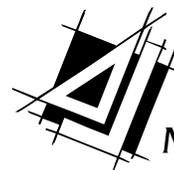
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Take A Hike!

Amy Bianco takes you on an adventure in Settler's Cabin Park

Settler's Cabin Park is one of the Allegheny County parks located west of the city heading towards the airport. The park is home to eleven picnic groves, and a wave pool; it is quite large, at approximately 1600 acres. There are foot trails all through the wooded hills and a few of them are mapped out and blazed. A trail map can be found on the county website.

I chose the Green Loop, a two mile hike that starts out level, dips into a stream valley and then climbs the opposite ridge. I parked at Tomahawk Shelter to find the Blue Loop trailhead that quickly leads to the Green Loop. As soon as you step into the trees, the trail rolls downhill into a stand of white pines. The smell of dead leaves and pine needles was refreshing as I crunched along looking at the scenery. Most of the leaves had fallen to the ground, making tree identification more of a challenge. I found the leaves of a beech before I found the actual tree and may have even passed it over if I hadn't found clues of its presence. There were a lot of Bigtooth Aspen trees along the trail. Again, the leaves on the ground are what clued me into this. They're somewhat oval with large, curved teeth. The leaf stalks are long and flattened. My homework for this winter (and you should try it too!) is to get better at identifying trees by just their bark and twigs.

The trails here are rustic and narrow widening in the more swampy areas where hikers have walked around the muddy mountain bike ruts. Hiking alone has its good points. I can stare at fungi and follow spider silk lines glistening in the sun without worrying about boring someone to

tears. I chased a Mourning Cloak butterfly for a good 15 minutes before I gave up trying to get a picture. Mourning Cloak butterflies overwinter as adults. They hibernate in tree holes and crevices emerging in early spring to feast on tree sap. I guess this one was out enjoying the mid-November warmth like everyone else! I swear it was giggling at me.

I decided to stand still at a point to observe the birds foraging through the brambles. I distinctly heard a robin among the chickadee dees and the reet-reet-reetes of the titmice.

After about a half hour of very amateur birding (note to self and readers: remember to bring binoculars!), I heard leaves crunching in the distance. They were slow footsteps. It was either someone off trail or some THING. I finally spotted movement between the trees about 20 yards away. I slowly brought my camera up and waited to capture the emergence of the full rack of a white-tailed buck. I was upwind and it didn't notice me until my camera shutter clicked. In an instant, the white tail flashed up and the buck vanished in a flurry of leaves and mud. Of course, you can't see him in the photo because he blended in so well with the backdrop of brown leaves and trees.

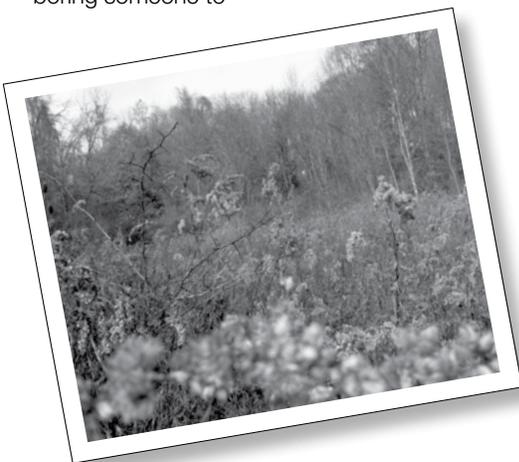
Eventually, the Green Loop intersects with the Purple Loop, and I had to consult my map and do a quick review of how to read trail blazes. Up until now, the trail blazes would occasionally appear, giving me a friendly thumbs up that all was good in the world of Green Loop. I found myself looking down a very steep hill covered with slippery leaves and loose rocks. It was a pretty view of outcroppings and a meandering stream but the way down looked tricky. There were no trees to use as handholds. In fact, it was nearly a CLIFF where there WERE trees. I ended up doing the old side step shimmy all the way down and thought to myself that hiking alone could have its bad points, too – if I slipped there'd be no one to laugh and help me up. I also thought to myself that I was glad I hadn't worn my Chuck T's this time and that this trail would definitely NOT be the best for kids.

Once I reached the stream, I wasn't even sure if I was still on the Green Loop. There



was no obvious path; the entire floodplain was covered with leaves. Finally, Green Loop trail blazes appeared all over and I relied on them to guide my way until the path became more visible.

The trail began to go uphill along the ridge. Below, another branch of the stream flowed over rocks and down falls. It was a pleasant view and there's a side trail that will take you down to a particularly scenic waterfall. After a good uphill stint the trail levels out into the white pines again. My hike took two hours including a lot of observing and bug chasing. Settler's Cabin is large enough for some adventurous exploring. The blazed trails only represent one-third of the entire park. There are numerous unnamed trails and what looks like maybe a small lake or large pond west of the park office. I'm curious. I will definitely be back to check that out – but next time I'll be taking binoculars and a butterfly net!



Our Time Together

Albert Camus wrote "Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower." ECS celebrated the glory of the Fall season through many wonderful family events. Thank you to all the staff and volunteers who worked to bring us the Harvest Festival, (World-Famous) Pumpkin Parade, ECS Book Fair, and Harvest Feast.



USA Navigators: Course Set at ECS

BY HEIDI GREEN



Photo by Leanna Plonka

November 5th marked an exciting event: the launch of the first-ever Navigators group at ECS (and in western PA)! This year, ECS 4th graders have the chance to be a part of an alternative to Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts that is inclusive, secular, co-ed—and in line with our school's mission of environmental education.

Navigators USA is an organization that was developed less than a decade ago in East Harlem, NY by a group of committed Boy Scout leaders unhappy with that national organization's decision to enforce policies that many considered exclusionary. Originally, the program served boys and girls ages 11-18; a few years ago, the group added a Junior Navigators program for younger children. There are currently 36 chapters nationwide—more than half of these started in the past twelve months!

Led by ECS parents Michael Green and Leanna Plonka, ECS Navigators started with the 4th grade, but the leaders intend to expand to other grades as parents step up to serve as leaders. So far this year the Navigators have learned about the program's mission and goals, focused on compass skills, identified a "wish list" of activities, participated in a map/compass program sponsored by the Western Pennsylvania Orienteering Club, and prepared to assist with the ECS Holiday Marketplace, as a service project. More learning and outside activities are planned for the Spring.

The group meets 1-2 times a month on Monday evenings, and on other dates for special events. For more information about the group's mission and cardinal points, visit navigatorsusa.org. To find out more about the 4th grade Navigators—there are still a couple of spots available—or if you're a parent who would like to lead a group for another grade level, please contact Heidi Green at heidigreen100@gmail.com.

Photos by Lydia Blank,
Marla Ferrency, Kirsi Jansa
Felicia Turano, and Julia Zelinsky.



Getting to know... **Women of the Cloud Forest**

An interview with Co-Founder Amy Sobkowiak



BY TANIA LYON

Meet one of the locally managed organizations providing “Fair Trade” wares to our Holiday Marketplace at ECS! Founded and run by ECS parents Amy and Michael Sobkowiak, *Women of the Cloud Forest* sells rainforest-themed jewelry and embroidery made in Costa Rica.

How did you and your husband get involved with this project?

Michael served in the Peace Corps in Honduras. When we got married I wanted to learn Spanish, so we moved down to Costa Rica to live in a small town called Monteverde located in a rural mountain area of the cloud forest known for its incredible biodiversity. This was in 2000-2001, a time when ecotourism was just starting to come to Costa Rica. I had a background in art, so I started volunteering at a bilingual school teaching art classes to local women. We eventually became business partners with a young Costa Rican mother, Yesenia Alvarado, running an evening cafe that showed movies for tourists. Before we returned to the U.S. 18 months later, we came up with a business idea that emerged from Michael’s love of bird watching. He had always wanted a field bag, something to carry his gear in when he went out on the trail. So at his request, a local seamstress and two embroiderers designed and made a bag for him. I taught Yesenia how to make

jewelry from rain forest seeds and we soon had a 4-person artisan shop with a bank account. We brought their work back with us and it sold quickly. The women were surprised and thrilled! And the project took off from there.

Is it still a group of four women?

Oh, no! It has grown quite a bit—at times faster than space could accommodate them. For a while, Yesenia ran the operation out of

her tiny two-room house and stored the fabric for their work under her bed, so they rented a building along the main road of town and turned it into an art center. Word spread quickly, and at one point they had 120 women show up from bus rides as long as 90 minutes asking for work. The first few months were chaotic until we figured out a system: we gave free jewelry making and embroidery classes to prospective employees and let them “audition” their skills before we finally stabilized the business at 28 women. Many of them have heart-wrenching stories about their struggle to feed themselves and their families. Thanks to ecotourism, the town of Monteverde has grown ten times in size from when we first lived there. This was good news for the Cloud Forest Project because as more of the roads between the capital and Monteverde were paved, it became easier to purchase materials in the major urban centers and to ship products out in return—although, even now, it is a four-hour trip each way for Yesenia.

What do the Women of the Cloud Forest make?

They know that to compete in the global market and enjoy repeat business, they must produce high quality, carefully well-made products. The women have learned to embroider 220 different local flora and fauna species onto field bags and clothing like

t-shirts and cotton dresses. And they make jewelry of all kinds.

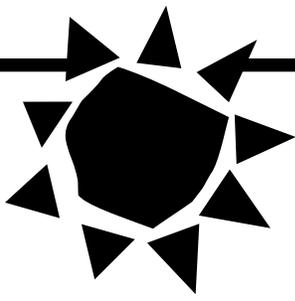
Did you have to certify as a “Fair Trade” organization?

As we continued to find new markets for the Cloud Forest Project, and sell at local fairs, we began hearing the term “fair trade.” We soon realized that just by building our little company on ethical business practices, we were a part of this growing movement, and in 2005 we officially joined the Fair Trade Federation. Many of the other vendors at the ECS Holiday Marketplace were found through our contacts within the Federation.

Where is Yesenia now?

She is still going strong as the business leader of the Monteverde group. In fact, she represents a real generational turning point in her family. She was the daughter of an illiterate farmer who became pregnant at age 15 and escaped a relationship with the alcoholic father, and now her son is the first in her family to graduate from high school and start college. His life will be very different from his grandfather’s thanks to a hard-working mother who was given a chance to make the most of her skills and abilities.





Holiday Marketplace & Mini-Marketplace

BY MARLA FERRENCY



Guided by the school's mission, the ECS Holiday Marketplace and Mini-Marketplace aim to provide a selection of fair trade, sustainable, affordable items for students, staff, family members, and the public who want to purchase holiday gifts.

Why fair trade? Fair trade organizations offer a wide variety of unique, often hand-made products at affordable prices. Through fair trade, artisans and farmers in low-income communities are able to earn an honest living, to provide for their children, and to be gainfully employed in a job that brings dignity and joy. Fair trade organizations cultivate partnerships with their suppliers and contribute to the development of communities through educational, nutritional, environmental, and health programs.

Where and when can I shop? The Holiday Marketplace will feature the full selection of products and will open for ECS families and staff only, on Friday, December 7

in the Upper School Auditorium from noon to 2pm (after the half-day dismissal). ECS families are also encouraged to shop when the market opens to the public on Saturday, December 8 and Sunday, December 9 from 10 am to 2 pm each day.

The Mini-Marketplace will showcase a sampling of products and be open in the Upper School Teachers' Lounge during the four Holiday Concerts. All ECS families are invited to shop during and after the concerts at these times.

K-1 CONCERT Mon., Dec.3, 6-7:30 pm

2-3 CONCERT Wed., Dec. 5, 6-7:30 pm

4-5 CONCERT Mon., Dec 10, 6-7:30 pm

6-7 & STRINGS CONCERT Wed., Dec. 12, 6-7:30 pm

With its attention to environmentalism and equality, fair trade shopping demonstrates not only true ECS school spirit, but also holiday spirit—no matter which winter holiday you're celebrating!

Holiday Marketplace Club: Students Get Involved

Upper School students were invited to participate in the first Holiday Marketplace Club this year. For four weeks, they have investigated interesting artists, their countries, and the products they produce. They learned about the importance of responsible consumerism and had a chance to see how our purchases can truly make a difference in the lives of others. Now they will share their knowledge at the Holiday Marketplace itself as they help set up displays with signs and posters they've made and educate shoppers during the sale.



Fair Trade Organizations Participating in the Marketplace

Building New Hope is a non-profit organization based in Pittsburgh, PA and Granada, Nicaragua that has been supporting grassroots development projects in Central America since 1992. They sell the organic coffee that has been sold as a fundraiser at ECS. <http://www.buildingnewhope.org>

Education and More is a non-profit, fair trade organization that assists disadvantaged artisans in marketing their handcrafts thereby creating economic opportunities for artisans who are otherwise unable to earn an income in rural Guatemala. <http://www.educationandmore.org>

Equal Exchange's mission is to build long-term trade partnerships that are economically just and environmentally sound, to foster mutually beneficial relationships between farmers and consumers and to demonstrate the contribution of worker co-operatives and fair trade to a more equitable, democratic and sustainable world. <http://www.equalexchange.coop>

Haiti H2O works with rural Haitian communities, cultivating hope and opportunities. They work to provide basic necessities like clean, running water and to develop sustainable business projects in these villages, like community farming projects. <http://haitih2o.org>

HandCrafting Justice is a fair trade partnership working with women struggling for economic justice and independence in developing countries. They promote human dignity and justice by creating opportunities for economic and social transformation by marketing items the women make. <http://www.handcraftingjustice.cedris.org>

INTO is a fair trade organization working directly with families in Ecuador. They aim to give their partner artisans the opportunity to establish sustainable living through their skilled work. <http://intoworld.org>

Mr. Ellie Pooh is an eco-friendly fair trade company that sells handmade paper products made of 75% elephant dung from Sri Lanka and 25% post-consumer paper. <http://www.mrelliepooh.com>

Project Have Hope helps women in Uganda transform their lives through the sale of their hand-made paper bead jewelry, so the women can feed their families, send their children to school, and look forward to a richer future. <http://www.projecthavehope.org>

SERRV is a nonprofit organization with a mission to eradicate poverty by providing opportunity and support to artisans and farmers worldwide. Through their work with community-based

organizations in 36 countries, they create economic opportunity so these artisans and farmers can support their families and themselves. <http://www.serv.org>

Shop Mira works with cooperatives in rural areas of the world, helping the artists earn a fair wage by bringing beautiful products to mainstream customers all over. Their fair trade model fulfills business goals of leveraged social impact and a financial return and is driven by social as well as economic considerations. <http://www.shopmira.com>

Wanderlust Handcrafted Jewelry is a collaboration between Peruvian artisans and Studio Hart to produce a line of hand-painted jewelry. They have maintained a standard policy of fair wages for the artisans in Peru for almost thirty years. <http://wanderlustjewelry.com>

Women of the Cloud Forest is a fair trade organization based in Pittsburgh, PA that works with artisans in Costa Rica to produce jewelry using sustainably harvested seeds from tropical forests. They also hand-embroider fabric bags with colorful reproductions of plants and animals. <http://www.womenofthecloudforest.com>

E-DAY

Wednesday Workshops

BY GINNY LEVY

Wednesdays are for Workshops in E-Day, the tuition-based after school program at ECS. Each week, E-Day students are able to participate in unique enrichment activities, designed and led by the talented E-Day staff.

Recently, the students at the Lower School stretched like cats, stood tall like palm trees, and slithered like snakes in Miss Megan Garofola's yoga workshop. They learned about the powerful phrase, "Namaste," which means, "The kindness in my heart sees the kindness in your heart."

During another Wednesday Workshop, Upper and Lower School E-Day students got a special treat when Miss Vanessa Kettering, E-Day art teacher and sculptural ceramicist, described the process of sculpting clay and firing it in a kiln.

"How hot does a kiln get?" they wondered. "100 degrees? 178 degrees? Hotter than when we bake cookies?"

"The temperature in a kiln will reach about 1,200 degrees Fahrenheit," Miss Kettering explained.

Students rolled, rubbed, smashed, and stamped hunks of clay to create their own holiday ornaments. How did it feel? According to the E-Day artists: "cold," "so squishy," "like chocolate!"

For more information about the ECS Extended-Day after school program, please visit <http://eday.weebly.com>.



PCO Mini Grant Awards

The PCO Mini-Grants Committee reviewed eight applications submitted for the first review cycle. Using the designated rubric, committee members ranked the applications and awarded full grants for the following projects:

- **MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS** for lower school music class
- **7TH GRADE BOOK PUBLISHING PROJECT.** Students are writing books on bullying and binding copies for classroom use.
- **CURRENT EVENTS MAGAZINE** subscription for the 3rd grade classes
- **CAMERAS** for ECS yearbook photographers

A partial grant toward startup funds for **AN ALTERNATIVE SCOUTING GROUP, THE NAVIGATORS**, was also awarded.

Due to budget limitations, not all grant requests could be funded. (For example, the PCO is working with the administration to identify more appropriate sources of funds for field trips.) However, the committee has reserved money that will fund new grants selected from future applications in the current school year.

The next application due date is January 14th, 2013. ECS teachers are encouraged to visit http://ecspco.org/pco_blog/how-to-apply-for-mini-grants.html for more information and to get an application.



The ECS PCO is on Facebook.
Search "ECS PCO"

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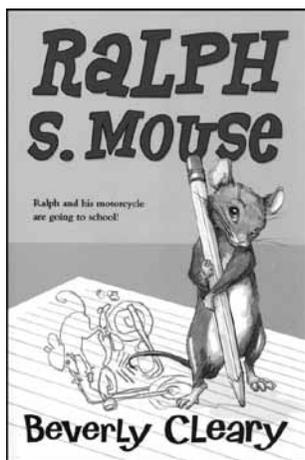
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What students are **READING NOW**

BY HEIDI GREEN AND
CHRISTY PEPERATO

“There are many little ways to enlarge your child’s world,” Jacqueline Kennedy once said, “Love of books is the best of all.” Sharing reading can help to create a sense of engagement in reading—and, often, excitement about it. Parents have an opportunity to support our children’s growing habit of reading, too. A good start is to ask your children about the books they’re reading with their class—including these.



IN GRADE 3

Ralph S. Mouse
by Beverly Cleary

The adventures of Ralph S. Mouse continue in this third and final book of this classic series (see also *The Mouse and the Motorcycle* and *Runaway Ralph*). Ralph lives at the Mountain View Inn, and this story centers on his friendship with

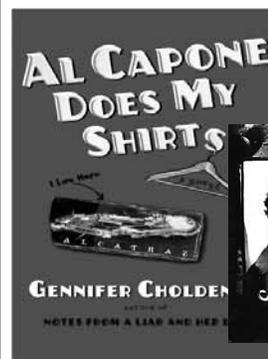
Ryan, the son of the hotel's new housekeeper. Fed up with his pesky relatives, the mouse asks the boy to take him along to school. He expects to have great adventures there, like riding his beloved motorcycle up and down the hallways after the children leave for the day. What he doesn't expect is to be discovered, become a class pet, or have to deal with an exterminator! Then Ryan gets into a fight with a classmate and Ralph's beloved motorcycle is broken. What will become of Ralph? The boys? The motorcycle?

IN GRADE 4

Al Capone Does My Shirts
by Jennifer Choldenko

This work of historical fiction takes place in the 1930s on Alcatraz Island. Twelve-year-old Moose and his family move to Alcatraz in 1935 when his dad gets a job as a prison guard and electrician. Written in a memoir/diary style, Moose writes about his experiences on the island and his adjustment to his new life. Having a sister with developmental disabilities and dealing with the moneymaking schemes of the warden's daughter makes Moose's life all but boring. This book challenges students to think about life in a different era and the struggles that all children go through. It is supported through the

study of historical fiction texts, and memoir and novella writing. A 2005 Newbery Honor book.



Eco-Literacy for the Holidays

BY RACHEL MEYER

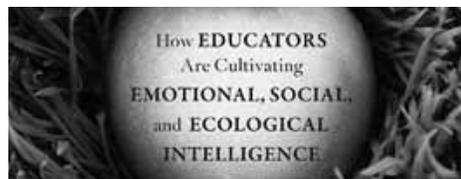
Looking to expand your understanding of ecological literacy this holiday season? I have a few suggestions for you.

HOLIDAY READING

Read the new book *Ecoliterate: How Educators Are Cultivating Emotional, Social, and Ecological Intelligence* (Jossey-Bass, 2012). The book extends the potential benefits of social and emotional learning beyond reduced behavioral problems and increased academic performance within schools to positive action in the greater community. This action, when paired with the knowledge from an ecological education, can result in more sustainable communities designed by ecologically literate community members. This is an inspiring book filled with real examples of socially and emotionally engaged ecoliteracy in action.

I caution you not to skip this book's introduction. In the words of authors Daniel Goleman, Lisa Bennett, and Zenobia Barlow

“In the pages that follow, we will show you how you can cultivate teaching and learning that help young people develop the capacity to perceive, understand, and care about the interrelationship between the natural world and human actions—and then apply that understanding to guide individual and collective human action toward the wiser use of natural resources and adaptation to our true ecological niche, which is, of course, nothing less than our interconnected world.” Trust me. There was some serious collective brain power put into this. Whether you are a teacher, student, parent, or community member, there is something to be gleaned from this publication.



SPECIAL EVENT: DECEMBER 13

In the Summer 2012 issue of the comPOST, I listed some other great reads relevant to the topic of ecological literacy. This list, along with an article explaining the philosophy of ecological literacy can be found online at http://ecspco.org/pco_blog/compost-archive.html.

One of the authors from this list will be visiting Pittsburgh soon: **David Sobel**. He will be at Phipps Conservatory on December 13th to speak about the philosophy of place-based education which is a critical aspect of ecological literacy. To find out more and to register, visit the Green Building Alliance's website at <http://www.go-gba.org/> and click on the events calendar.

I wish you and your family a holiday season filled with peace, joy, and ecological literacy!

Kelsey's Kitchen: Where ECS Goes to Get Fresh

A BIG THANK YOU to all of our outstanding community members who came together to help make this year's Harvest Feast special. Instead of just serving up the standard meal, ECS decided to bring together local foodies to share the power of the table. Thank you to:

Stephanie Gelbred,
Chef for our ECS Harvest meal!

Virginia Phillips from Slow Food
Pittsburgh and Pittsburgh Post Gazette

Trevett Hooper and **Will Groves** from
Legume Bistro

Tim Garso from Kaya

Allie Contreras from Bar Marco

Emily Dilts from E2

Kyle Wojcik, a Pittsburgh food lover

Nicole Kubiski from Legume Bistro and
Who Cooks For You Farm

Lynn Trizna from Blackberry Meadows
and The East End Food COOP

Maria Bowman and **James Rowell**
(**Farmer Jim**) from Grow Pittsburgh

Joe Bucco from Nine on Nine

Jeff Spirer and **Kate Borger** from
Phipps Conservatory

Hal B. Klein from The Allegheny Front
and City Paper

Logan Serbin from Bucca de Bepo

Tim Tobitsch, **Megan Lindsey** and
Todd Caldwell from Franktuary

Chris Fennimore from WQED

Kevin Hunninen from Park Brugges

Jen Flanagan, **Chef Wink** and **Tod**
Shoenberger from Spring Board Kitchens

Justin Steel, **Kevin Cox**, **Bobby Fry**
and **Michael Kreha** from Bar Marco

Mark Mulshine from Clarion River
Organics

Brandon Baltzley from Stagioni

BY KELSEY WEISGERBER



ONE YOUNG WORLD

In October, I had the pleasure of attending the international One Young World summit as a delegate and also as a co-presenter. The summit brought together about 1300 young leaders from 183 countries around the world to discuss a wide array of topics from human rights to health and wellness.

Julie Pezzino, the executive director at Grow Pittsburgh and I co-hosted a breakout session at the Lower School for about 25 delegates from OYW to talk about the school lunch and the Edible Schoolyard. The purpose of the breakout sessions across Pittsburgh was to highlight work that was going on in the city and create a setting where young leaders could learn, engage and reflect. We had delegates from China, Japan, Germany, Iran, Iraq, Czech Republic, England, the Ivory Coast, Ghana, and many more attend our session. We spoke with the delegates about their food traditions and used the ECS lunch and garden program as

a case study to examine the food issues in Pittsburgh and the United States. It was an honor to share the work that ECS teachers and administrators have helped create, and it reminded me how lucky we are to have such a strong community here at ECS.

Having the opportunity to meet so many accomplished young leaders and listen to outstanding lectures from the likes of Kofi Annan, Jamie Oliver, and Muhammad Yunus really ignited a larger will in me to find better and more effective ways to engage with our students.

The entire experience was a whirlwind, but I am excited to announce that because of this opportunity Bobby Fry, the owner of the local restaurant Bar Marco, and I will be launching a special project through Jamie Oliver's Food Revolution Movement that will include our students and others in the community. I am looking forward to get our students involved with the movement. Stay tuned for more news as we iron out the details!

ECS CAFETERIA NEWS

Good things are around the corner... Design Coach Shannon Merenstein, Environmental Science Coach Laura Micco, and I are currently in the midst of redesigning the cafeteria space at both schools for aesthetics AND culture. Keep an eye on the developments as we work on improving the school space to reflect our school culture.

Please also take the time to welcome our new *staffeteria* member, Deborah Salzman to the Upper School cafeteria!

Holidays are for the Birds....

If you decorate with garland, buy the real stuff to wrap around outside staircases. A few pine boughs will go a long way. When you're finished with the garland, you can add honey or some other sticky substance that birdseed will stick to. In the cold winter months when the birds are looking for sustenance, they'll welcome a string of seed-covered garland in your yard. Not sure what seed to use? Stick with sunflower or safflower seed and be generous! Coat the garland with a thick mixture of honey and add a lot of seed for the birds to enjoy this winter season.

Recipes for Festive Gatherings **from Park Bruges**

CONTRIBUTED BY EXECUTIVE CHEF
KEVIN HUNNINEN

{Merry} Muhammara

Red Pepper and Walnut Dip

- 1 cup (2 large) roasted red peppers, chopped
- 1 1/2 cups walnuts
- 1/3 cup breadcrumbs
- 1/4 teaspoon cumin
- 2 teaspoons paprika
- 1 teaspoon sambal chili paste
- 3/4-1 1/2 teaspoons minced garlic
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 2 Tablespoons pomegranate molasses
- 1 1/2 Tablespoons lemon juice
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil

1. Combine peppers, nuts, breadcrumbs, cumin, paprika, sambal, garlic, salt and pepper. In a mixing cup, combine pomegranate molasses and lemon juice.
2. Place the red pepper mixture in the bowl of a food processor; chop until everything is very fine, scraping the sides as needed.
3. Add the pomegranate molasses/lemon mixture, puree until creamy, then blend the olive oil.
4. Add a little water if the mixture is too thick.

Yields: 2-3 cups

Note: Pomegranate molasses is available at middle eastern specialty stores, such as Stamboulis in the strip. Sambal chili paste can be replaced with a little cayenne, aleppo peppers, or harissa paste.



Have a Hummus {of a Holiday}

- 15-ounce can garbanzo beans
- 2 cloves, minced garlic
- 1/2 cup tahini (sesame paste)
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- few grains cayenne
- pinch ground cumin
- 1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 2 Tablespoons water (or more as needed)

1. Drain and thoroughly rinse beans.
2. Combine beans, garlic, tahini, lemon juice, salt, cumin, and cayenne in the bowl of a food processor.

3. Run the food processor for 1-2 minutes, stopping to scrape the bowl a couple of times, until the hummus is almost a smooth puree.
4. Add olive oil and water, and run the food processor for another 1-2 minutes until hummus is very smooth and creamy. Add more water if necessary.
5. Put in a serving dish; drizzle with a little more olive oil, chopped parsley, and paprika, if desired. Serve with pita bread and fresh vegetable sticks.

Yeilds about 2 cups



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What's Happening Around Here?

A sampling of local events for you and your family

December 6, 8 & 9

Fiddler on the Roof at the JCC Katz Performing Arts Center, Squirrel Hill

December 6 (7 p.m.), December 8 (8 p.m.), and December 9 (2 p.m.). Featuring several ECS students! Adults: \$8. Seniors and students: \$6. Tickets can be purchased by contacting Lauren Grinstein at 412-521-8011, ext. 852.

December 15

Family Snowshoe Walkabout with Venture Outdoors, Highland Park

1:00 p.m.–3:00 p.m. Venture Outdoors will provide the snowshoes and nature will provide the snow, so bring the whole family for this fun-filled snowshoe day in the park. Drop-in between 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. and get fitted for a pair of snowshoes and take a walk around in the snow! Guides will also be on hand to lead short nature hikes throughout the event. Walk-ups are welcome. Free! Visit www.ventureoutdoors.org/Activities.aspx for information.

December 22, 2012

Family Holiday Sing-Along at Carnegie Museum of Art

2:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m. Hall of Architecture. Join singer/songwriter Frank Cappelli (best known for his television show *Cappelli & Co.* on Nickelodeon) for a lively and festive sing-along of your favorite seasonal tunes. Have fun with the family in the Hall of Architecture, where the Holiday Tree Display and the famous Neapolitan *presepio* are on view. For more information, see www.cmoa.org.

December 26-30

Family Fun Days at Phipps Conservatory

11:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m. Seeking something fun, yet educational to do with the kids while they are on winter break from school? Join Phipps for Family Fun Days and visit discovery stations, make crafts, pot plants, and much more. All activities are free with Conservatory admission. For more information, visit <http://phipps.conservatory.org/exhibits-and-events/events-calendar.aspx#tab2>

December 27-28

Winter Camp at the Carnegie Museum of Art/Natural History

\$40 per day (\$35 for Members). Sign up for one or two days of exploration in a variety of camps for ages 6-13. The museums are a field for discovery and creativity where kids investigate science and make art. Registration required. See <http://www.carnegiemnh.org/holidays/#camps> for information.

December 29

Penguins! Family Camp at National Aviary

9:00 am–2:00 p.m. Ages 6 and up. Celebrate the season as a family! Get up-close and personal to the National Aviary's colony of African penguins as you discover the many types of penguins living in a variety of habitats. Families will also help prepare food for the Aviary's penguins and see first-hand how these amazing birds are cared for every day by National Aviary staff. At the end of the day, attendees will take home an original "masterpiece" painted by one of the penguins! Members: \$60 adult/\$40 child. Non-Members: \$65 adult/\$45 child. Visit www.aviary.org/familywinter for information.

December 31

New Year's Eve Family Celebration at Phipps Conservatory

6:00 p.m.–9:00 p.m. Kids may not always be able to stay up late to see it arrive but they still love to welcome the New Year! Ring in 2013 with the whole family at Phipps and participate in an early countdown at 8:45 p.m., all before youngsters head off to bed. All activities are free with paid Conservatory admission.

December 31

Pittsburgh Cultural District's First Night 2013

6:00 p.m.–midnight. Highmark First Night Pittsburgh, a production of the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, is an arts-focused and family-friendly New Year's Eve celebration in downtown Pittsburgh's Cultural District. It is the largest single-day celebration in the region offering around 150 events at nearly

50 indoor and outdoor locations within the 14-block Cultural District. The celebration offers something for everyone. Go to www.firstnightpgh.org/about-first-night/ for details.

January 18

Teen Event: Sarah Dessen Lecture at the Carnegie Library

Carnegie Library Lecture Hall, 7:00 p.m. Ages 12 and up. Sarah Dessen is one of today's most popular young adult writers. She'll be talking about her life, her journey to becoming a writer, and her latest book, *What Happened to Goodbye*. Visit <http://www.pittsburghlectures.org/interior.php?pageID=340> for tickets and information.

January 21

ECS Movie Day at the Waterworks Cinema

Spend the day off from school at the movies! Enjoy discounted admission and popcorn. ECS families will have the theater to themselves. Movie/show time to be announced.

January 25

ECS Ice Skating Event at the Schenley Ice Rink

12:30 p.m.–3:00 p.m. What better way to spend the afternoon after a half-day at school than at the rink? Bring your skates, if you have 'em. If not, skate rental is only \$2.50. Concessions will be available for purchase.

January (on-going)

Events at Boyce Park Nature Center

Free events can be organized for your group of ten or more participants throughout the Winter season. Topics include: Signing & Stories (environmental tales read with the practice of sign language); Winter Additions (making "edible" ornaments and placing them along the nature trails to help active wildlife); Natural Art (share your talents drawing and painting nature subjects); and Natural History walks (tours and interpretive hikes on the parks trails). Contact Tammy Watychowicz for information at 724-733-4618.

Your {Green} Home: Fighting the Chills

BY CHRISTY BURNS

We strive to keep our digital thermostat set no higher than 67 degrees during the day and 64 at night so it is always rather jarring when the gas bill comes and is through the roof. Seemingly, if we were to replace our aging boiler it would rectify this situation, especially if we were to opt for a high efficiency model.

It brings to mind another question though. How much of our gas bill is due to the aging boiler and how much of it is due to our improperly sealed building? If they aren't already obvious, you need to find occurrences of air leakage in the exterior walls and windows of your home before you can tackle sealing them.

Simply light an incense stick and take it around the room closely following the exterior walls. Any movement of the smoke towards the wall is an indication of air leakage. Most often you will find these leaks around the perimeters of windows and doors

and near outlets or wall switches. In short, look for areas where two building materials meet. Once you have identified target areas, here are some ways to seal those leaks:

- **Install insulating sealers behind your outlets and switch plates.** These are pieces of foam that accommodate switches or outlet openings. They are very inexpensive and easy to install.
- **Always make sure to caulk or weatherstrip around windows and doors.** Obviously any cracks or holes you discover should be caulked. They are not always easy to see or find but the incense trick should help with this.
- **“Draft Stoppers” are simple, cheap and effective.** To get the kids involved in the fun, google it for instructions to make your own!
- **If you have radiator heat like we do, you can buy a reflective bubble**

product that can be cut to size. Place it on the wall behind your radiator using self-stick tape or Velcro. (This will allow for easy removal when the weather is warm again.) This technique is thought to reflect heat back into the room so it isn't losing it through the wall.

- **If your fireplace is non-operable, install a chimney balloon.** This is inserted above or below the damper and then inflated.
- **Install window shrink wrap.** I know it isn't pretty but if you need help with your air leaks, it definitely works.

Some additional ideas that don't necessarily apply to eliminating air leaks are to install a programmable thermostat, blanket your water heater (especially if your basement is unheated) and well, find a nice warm sweater to wear in your home. It worked for Mr. Rogers! *For more information, e-mail fitzburns@one80res.com.*



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Celebrate ECS in Song **HOLIDAY** concerts

Mrs Riston, Mr Reidell, and the students of ECS, have put together four spectacular holiday concerts.

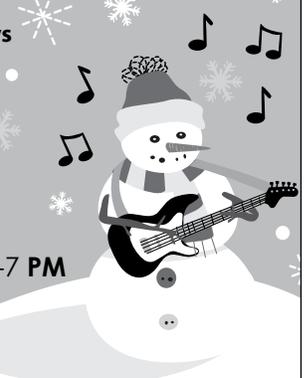
Come celebrate the holidays and the season, in song!

K-1 DEC 3 6-7 PM

2-3 DEC 5 6-7 PM

4-5 DEC 10 6-7 PM

6-7 & STRING DEC 12 6-7 PM



All concerts will be held in the
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Student Voices

Selections from ECS 7th Grade Students

BY MICHELLE KING

This fall, 7th grade students participated in a “Campaigning for Election” project that addressed two timely questions: (1) How do campaigns appeal to the electorate? and (2) How do we elect the President of the United States?

In answering these questions, they explored their own views and biases and learned about the electoral process. Students were then asked to reflect on the project by writing an op-ed piece that answered the questions “What have you learned about the elections and campaigns?” and “Why are educated citizens important to the health of a democracy?”

Shown here are a few of their poster projects and writing excerpts.

How can a person love a candidate so much but know absolutely nothing about them? Do yourself a favor and research a candidate before you love, hate, or vote for them.

-Leah Simpson

We need to educate our society more to keep the health of our democracy. Many people don't care much about politics. This leads to people voting because of things such as looks or age, not their beliefs and what they will do for our country. If more Americans were concerned about politics, then we wouldn't have to worry about getting a bad president. How do you vote?

-Ariana Chernyshev

When asked to pick one statement that best represented their opinions on a specific issue, here's what the majority of students chose:

On the Economy: We should reform the nation's tax code by closing loopholes for millionaires and billionaires. This involves cutting corporate tax rates and using the tax code to reward companies that pursue innovation and invest in America.

On Education: Our most important educational priorities should be to expand financial aid for college students and double the number of federally-funded work-study jobs over the next five years.

On Energy: We should invest in clean, renewable sources of energy, especially solar and wind-power.

On Healthcare: Universal health care coverage means more affordable premiums and lower costs because people will focus more on preventive care and avoid expensive emergency care.

On Debt: We should cap federal government spending at below 20 percent of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

About politicians, I think they should work together. Barack Obama clearly said he would enjoy working with Mitt Romney to help America. We will do better working together. We get more ideas and input when politicians work together.

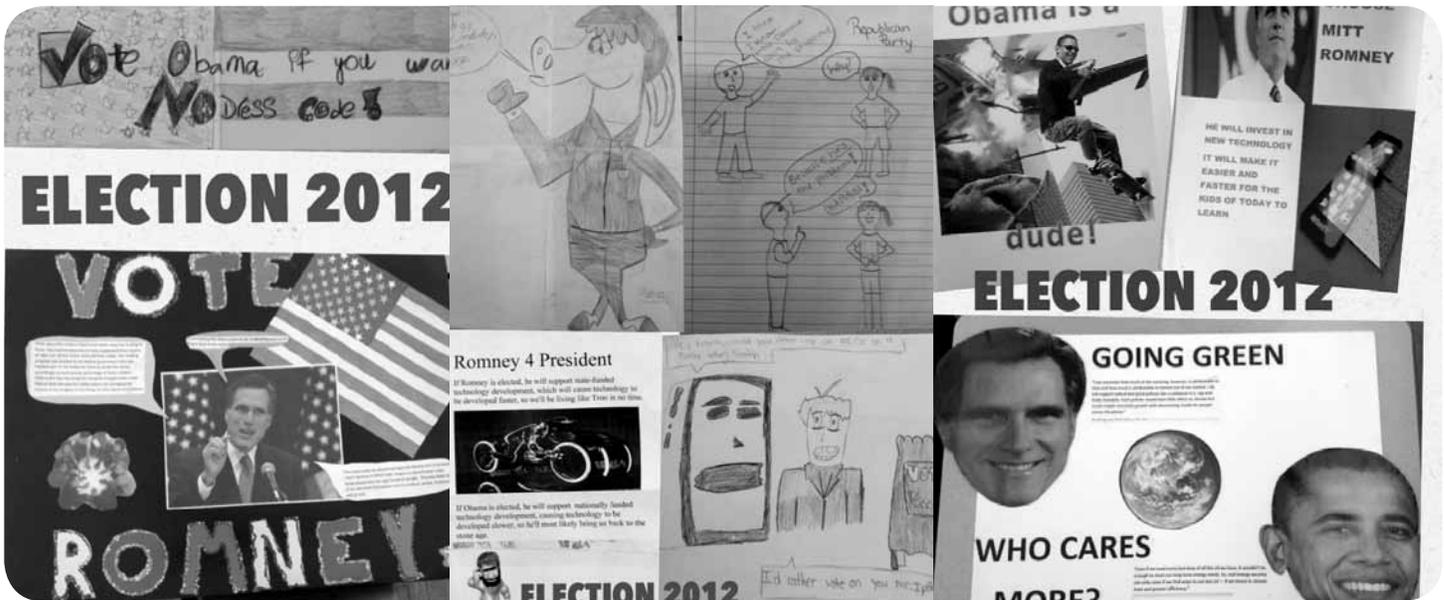
-Ben Sinder

The biggest thing that I learned would have to be that your stance on politics or the current election can ruin your relationship with somebody. It is astonishing how seriously individuals take someone disagreeing with them in the slightest when it comes to politics.

-Catherine Robinson

Some people might vote based upon friends' beliefs because you might hear good things about one candidate and not the other. They also could be mad if you don't share the same beliefs, but really you should have your opinion and only yours.

-Julia Zelinsky



5

QUESTIONS FROM AN ECS STUDENT

Get to know an ECS community member better through 5 questions from one of our students.



This month, 4th-grader Rocco Turano interviewed Upper School Administrative Assistant Natasha Dombroski.

I interviewed Natasha because kids know her as the person you drop off your cell phone to and she is always in the office but we do not know much about her.

Do you have any pets, and what are their names? I have a dog named Sophie.

Did you ever play sports, or do you play any now? I played volleyball in high school, but nothing right now.

What genre of music do you listen to most? I like ALL kinds of music-- but not heavy metal or techno.

What is your most favorite holiday and why? I like Halloween because when I was little, my mom always threw a big Halloween party and she, my sister, and I would decorate. I also love free candy!

If you could take a vacation anywhere you wanted, what specific place would you go? Italy! My uncle is in the military and he has been a lot of places in the world. He said that Italy is very beautiful.

ComPOST is taking submissions from students who would like to interview one of their favorite staff members. If your child is interested in interviewing a teacher or staff member for the next issue of ComPOST, please e-mail Becky Randall at 5questions@ecspco.org.

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