

# COMPOST

The Parent Community Organization newsletter of Imagine Environmental Charter School **OCTOBER 2010** Vol. 3, Issue 1

## What's new?



### ECS MAKES IMPROVEMENTS, INSIDE AND OUT

BY REBECCA RANDALL + EMILY ESCALANTE

#### The Environmental Integrated Curriculum: Four Units Per Year

Our Environmental Charter School is starting off fall 2010 with many positive and exciting changes. One of these changes is in the "Environmental Integrated Curriculum" which is focusing this year on four units instead of five, as it had been for the last two years.

Ms. Laura Micco, Environmental Education Teacher, explains this curriculum as "the way teachers teach the units in the classroom. This is what makes the ECS experience unique. Students are able to learn necessary skills within the context of an environmental focus, and the curriculum allows students to make metacognitive connections between subjects, experience skills in a 'real world' context, and develop deeper level critical thinking skills...These units help to focus our instruction and give a starting point for planning environmental science based lessons and activities."

See **NEW**, page 2

### A letter from Jon

ECS Families:

Welcome to the 2010/2011 school year! The ECS staff had a productive and exciting summer. Our fourth grade teachers teamed with the University of Pittsburgh to develop an enhanced literacy program, our back lot received a face lift, and we received good news from the state in regards to our annual PSSA performance.



The University of Pittsburgh teamed together with ECS to help pilot a new literacy program better suited to our content integration focus. Our fourth grade team spent many additional hours through the summer engaged in professional development

See **JON**, page 8

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## NEW, from page 1

The units for all students K-5 are:

Local Living Habitats: A Study of All Living Things and Their Homes (Sept. —Nov. 1)

Designs, Dilemmas and Development: A Study of Human Interactions and the Built Environment (Nov. 1—Jan. 17)

Everything Up and Down: A Study of the Earth and Its Atmosphere (Jan. 17—March 28)

Cocoons, Cycles and Cultivation: A Study of Cycles of Change in the Environment (March 28 - June 6)

Having the units and the school calendar in sync, each unit will be longer, going from eight weeks to ten. The extra weeks ensure that classes will have more time with each topic of focus. The alignment with the academic year also allows for more parallel lesson planning across the disciplines. While the whole school concentrates on one area at a time, coordination between the grades becomes simpler. One unit per quarter literally helps "integrate" all of ECS's offerings with an environmental science focus.

### A new fellow

Also new this year is the creation of an

Environmental Fellowship. The Heinz Endowments generously supports our school by allowing Becky Craig to focus her time and energy on the environmental curriculum.

Craig writes, "The Environmental Fellowship is a new position at ECS designed to support teachers and enrich the Environmental Integration Curriculum (EIC). By collaborating with grade levels, researching and connecting with resources, and documenting the EIC in different classrooms, this position is focused on our schools strategic goal to provide students with a unique and environmentally focused curriculum. Specific foci for the 2010-2011 school year include: vertical planning (connect grades K-5), assessment creation, and overall documentation. The individual in the Environmental Fellowship position also chooses a focus project to research and apply to ECS. This year's project is on alternative assessment and process documentation. This will be reflected in more anecdotal student records (i.e. pictures, quotes, and observations) and processed-based displays reflecting how we learn at ECS. It will be exciting to see how this influences program development and allows teachers to implement more of this unique learning!"

### Fresh food news

John Lash tells us, "As many of our ECS families have noticed, there have been some improvements and changes to the 2010/11 lunch program. The most noteworthy of the improvements is the Environmental Charter School Lunch Partners Program, which formalized some of the professional relationships within the Pittsburgh food community. The Breadworks, Paragon, and Turner Dairy are some local businesses that we continue to patronize. The additions of Big Burrito, Right By Nature, and Buffalo Blues to the lunch menu not only add delicious and healthy options for our students, they also increase our local commitment and visibility within the Pittsburgh community."

"A couple of the major changes this year include a couple of exclusions (chocolate milk and Ranch dressing) and 300 major additions (reusable plastic trays in the cafeteria)."

"Based on the number of 8 oz. containers of chocolate milk sold last year, we will eliminate almost 2,000 pounds of sugar from the diets of ECS students this year. That's 5 1/2 pounds of sugar per student!"

"And after witnessing the abuses of Ranch dressing in the cafeteria (on pizza, on rice, on turkey sandwiches, and even straight out of the packet), I am confident that the decision to not offer Ranch (and its 9 grams of



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fat per serving) is justified.”

“The addition of reusable cafeteria trays has had an immediate and positive impact on the amount of trash created every day. And as we continue to grow the composting and recycling program, we move closer and closer to our goal of a zero-waste school lunch program.”

### Welcoming art

And if you’ve walked into the building at all you may have noticed a new mural in the works. As you enter ECS, our art teacher Shannon Merenstein’s beautiful design greets you on the right-hand wall.

Right now, the outlines for our new entryway mural have been created. The students are collecting small plastic pieces (caps, small toys, bread tags, anything you’d ordinarily toss) to fill in all of the shapes like a mosaic. Families can send these pieces in with their child. As the school year progresses, art classes will begin to adhere the pieces to the blue wall you see now. The mural is intended to represent our school’s connection to the local natural and built environment of our city. A year-long work in progress, it is the hope that every family will be able to contribute to the permanent mural mosaic! Contact Shannon Merenstein if you are interested

in helping to install the pieces (Shannon.Merenstein@limageschools.com).

### The “Stagebrary”

The stage in the auditorium is the new home of the library. Each week, students have the opportunity to peruse and check out books, while Ms. Fulton teaches library science skills.

Fulton writes, “Over the summer, ECS Library moved to a new location: Center Stage. Although the new library space is less than conventional it has turned out to be quite functional. Every Friday students visit the library with their classrooms for book circulation and checkout one of ECS Library’s 6,000 titles. Moving the library was a lot of work this summer but the payoff comes every Friday when I have to remind students not to read while walking! The “Stagebrary” (as some have begun to call it) is also home to other media including DVDs, audio books and magazines. A team of staff members met over the summer to begin developing a special collection focused on “EIC Teacher Tools” to support our curriculum.”

Throughout the new school year Mrs. Fulton will continue to work on collection development and meeting the information needs of

our school community.

### Play space

If you’ve been to pick up your kids in the afternoons, you’ve probably also noticed the brand new fence and play surface in the back. There are a variety of colored boxes painted on the ground for a range of organized games during recess.

### On the web

One of the changes in progress that you can’t see is the renovation of our website. (We hear it’s due later this fall.) Some of the features in the works include: a new student resource page, up-to-date school calendars, grade-level information, the Wednesday Word, and possibly even homework assignments. The goal for the new website is that it will be easier to manage and update, enabling ECS to use a lot less paper.

### Last, but not least...

And, of course, the biggest change to school this fall is the addition of many new faces on staff. Please visit pages 8-9 of this newsletter to see our new ECS family tree and put some names to those faces!

**Cover photo of new pollinator garden by Kirsi Jansa.**

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# Urban EcoStewards: ambassadors to our parks

BY MIKE BENNETT

Frick Park has been an essential educational venue at ECS since the school's founding more than two years ago. Last spring, ECS parent Rebecca Reid decided that the time had come for us to "give something back to the park" that has helped to teach our children. When Rebecca inquired at the Frick Environmental Center about volunteer opportunities, they pointed her toward the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy's Urban EcoSteward program. Now she makes regular visits to the park, where she and other volunteers remove invasive non-native plant species, talk to passersby about the importance of caring for wild areas in our parks, and generally find an outlet for their ecological and civic-minded impulses.

In 2003, conversations among the Nine Mile Run Watershed Association, Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, and the Frick Environmental Center led to the inception of this unique program, in which trained volunteers work under the direction of an expert to care for a particular sensitive area in one of Pittsburgh's four major city parks: Frick, Schenley, Highland, and Riverview. Since its beginnings, the program has expanded to include the Grandview Scenic Byway, with the Mount Washington Civic Development Corporation and Allegheny Land Trust offering additional support. Currently 130 stewards care for 65 total acres of woodlands and wetlands in the city.

The site assigned to the ECS EcoStewards team sits along the Tranquil Trail in the shady hollows next to Fern Hollow Creek. As Urban EcoStewards, volunteers are obliged to complete two training sessions and visit the site a minimum of three times a year. In practice, the team is on site far more often, battling the Japanese knotweed that has crowded out native species over the last several years. EcoSteward training focuses on many strategies for caring for an area, especially recognizing and controlling invasive plants, and collecting and planting native seeds in order to tip the foliage balance back toward biodiversity.

According to Marijka Hecht of the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy (and former ECS board member), EcoSteward sites are chosen based on several factors, most importantly whether work has already been done to protect native plant species and manage



**The site assigned to the ECS EcoStewards team along the Tranquil Trail in Frick Park.**

healthy stream hydrology. ECS' site also needs special care because it is subject to heavy traffic, being along a section of trail that is especially popular with human and canine hikers; this places an extra burden on the plant life of the area.

From the Tranquil Trail along this site, you can see dogs frolicking in the water at Hot Dog Dam to the south, and the junction with the Homewood Trail to the north. Especially on a sunny day, cyclists and hikers pass by every few seconds; to avoid causing a bucolic traffic jam, you must step off the trail toward Fern Hollow Creek. The efforts of Rebecca and her fellow volunteers are evident by the many inch-thick stumps of knotweed, closely resembling bamboo shoots, crowding around the fallen logs which are loamy and half-composted. Risk the muddy, marshy ground closer to the creek itself and you will find new stands of knotweed that have grown up in the last few weeks and begun to flower, strings of small white blossoms suspended over broad, waxy heart-shaped leaves. The species is fighting a fierce rearguard action against the efforts of EcoStewards to

eradicate it.

Every year, each park's designated coordinator meets with EcoStewards to assess progress and set goals for the future. The future plans for Rebecca Reid's site in particular include more knotweed removal, as well as planting more native species in October to return the site to its natural state. Nearby, ECS itself has adopted another site, for students to care for the park that provides them with countless outdoor learning opportunities. The educational impact of the EcoSteward program is not limited to students' participation in caring for a site; as the program's brochure points out, an important EcoSteward responsibility is "spreading the word to passers-by about the value of these activities." By becoming ambassadors for the park's wild areas, students learn the importance of healthy, biodiverse parks to the entire community.

Students who accompany parents on EcoSteward visits to the ECS site often wander off to look for salamanders or other fauna around the site after spending a few minutes helping out. But by spending time in a particular area several times a year, and seeing first-hand that area's improvement, they absorb important lessons about the need to manage invasive species and bolster the success of native ones. Their plant-identification skills improve as well; after a visit to the ECS EcoSteward site with your child, you may be surprised to hear them identify garlic mustard or knotweed wherever you go around Pittsburgh.

It may sound as though our city parks are overrun with helpful volunteers caring for their assigned parcels, but even with 105 stewards assigned to 65 acres' worth of sites, Marijka says there are still nearly 1000 acres of wild parkland in need of attention. To get involved, visit [pittsburghparks.com/ues](http://pittsburghparks.com/ues) or call 412-682-7275 for more information. You can also be a part of the ECS EcoSteward team by contacting Rebecca Reid at 412-805-3910 or [rebeccareid@earthlink.net](mailto:rebeccareid@earthlink.net). Remember, EcoStewards are asked to commit to only two training sessions and three visits to their adopted site per year. With a minimal contribution in time and sweat, you can increase the health of a fragile area in the parks.

For more information visit:

[ecsecostewards.blogspot.com](http://ecsecostewards.blogspot.com)

# We need your help!

While we at ECS have been lucky to have many wonderful volunteers help our school succeed, we can do better. We know that your time is valuable and sometimes it seems there isn't very much of it to go around. Fortunately, there are many, many ways that you can help our school, even when you can't be in the school building. We can always find a way to use your talents and skills. For example, you could:

## **WITH JUST A LITTLE TIME:**

- prepare materials for your child's classroom at home
- join us at monthly PCO meetings and share your thoughts about our school
- come in to help on our Saturday morning Fall and Spring clean-up days
- pick up supplies for a school event when you are already at the grocery store and send them in with your student
- bring in a baked good for a bake sale
- clean up after movie night

## **WITH A LITTLE MORE TIME:**

- volunteer at events like the Holiday Marketplace or Game Night
- be part of the New Family Welcome Team
- help maintain the bulletin boards at the school
- organize the lost and found
- join the Newsletter or Fundraising Committee

## **IF YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE A LOT OF TIME:**

- volunteer regularly in the library or classroom
- organize a committee (ex., Social Committee, Staff Appreciation Committee)
- plan and organize a scheduled event (ex., Gingerbread Night)

We encourage everyone to try and find a role here at ECS that fits with your time, interests and skills. Please contact [volunteer@ecspco.org](mailto:volunteer@ecspco.org) or return the Volunteer Interest Form (available in the school office) about how you can help the PCO support our school, or visit [ecspco.org](http://ecspco.org) for more information.

Thank you for helping to make ECS a wonderful school environment!

# A letter from Jon

LETTER, from page 1

in preparation. New smart boards installed over the summer break can be seen in classrooms throughout the building as we continue our commitment to integrating technology into daily instruction. Additionally, our library collection is now available to faculty and students online. Teachers and students can access text lists aligned by skill, environmental unit, or monthly character trait.

Please take the time to notice some subtle changes in the way our building looks. In an effort to move away from traditional student work displays visitors should begin to notice different and innovative methods of displaying student work. ECS has embraced the use of reused picture and window frames as a novel and eye catching way to highlight student generated work. This creative reuse negates the need for traditional display boards, lining paper, and store purchased borders. Less subtle building changes included the fencing and resurfacing of the playground area. Many of our students are convinced that all manner of games have been improved due to new lines and smooth surfaces! Our expansion efforts have continued throughout the summer. Upon advice from city planning officials additional traffic study work was initiated at the conclusion of the summer. We now look forward to the next exciting stages of this project. Please feel free to stop me in the hallways or call the school if you would like to discuss our expansion project in more detail.

Teaching and learning remains at the heart of our school. We are proud to announce that our 2009/2010 PSSA results showed 82% of our third and fourth grade students scored at the proficient and advanced level in mathematics. An impressive 86% of our third and fourth grade students scored at the advanced or proficient level in reading. While these global scores rank highly in comparison to neighboring elementary programs there remains room for improvement. For example, our aggregate attendance for the 2009/2010 school year, while above the NCLB target cut off, was less than the expected average of 95%. Consequently, we will be monitoring attendance closely this school year to ensure a more consistent daily attendance rate. Early improvements to our monitoring systems include the installation of a tardy desk in the main school hallway each morning. Parents can assist in our efforts by making sure inevitable absences are accompanied by a written excuse.

In conclusion, I would like to take another opportunity to welcome our new staff members to the ECS family! Those new staff members are Margaret Sinnott (1st grade), Sharon Voss (1st grade), Christy Purnell ( 5th grade), Deirdre Lynch (3rd Grade), Stephanie Franklin ( 4th grade), Jessica Maxwell, Sarah Maloney and Jen Bencho (Special Education) and Tom Pasquale (gym teacher). Our new faculty members join an existing staff team that have produced not only robust academic student outcomes but developed a school culture grounded in kindness, safety and respect. I look forward to another exciting, fun filled and successful school year!

# ECS Community Partner: Penn State

BY REBECCA RANDALL

One of the many exciting partnerships that ECS has cultivated this past year is with Nancy Knauss and the Master Gardeners program at Penn State. Ms. Knauss was formerly the Adult Education Coordinator at Phipps Conservatory and she now runs the Penn State program. The beautiful Living Laboratory Gardens at the front of the school were made possible by a collaboration between Penn State, the ECS Garden Club, and a generous donation by the PCO.

Masters students Troy Hottle and Jessica Horenstein took on ECS as their action project, meeting with Ms. Laura Micco over the course of six months to design and install the gardens. Through careful consideration, it was established that ECS needed a garden that would not just benefit the school, but also create a habitat for local living things. The Master Gardener students and ECS community decided to plant both a pollinator garden and an edible garden. The pollinating garden would not only provide food for pollinating species,

but also allow students a place to observe this crucial process up close. The edible garden was planted last year and this fall students have harvested potatoes, corn, beans and squash.

The partnership with Penn State is growing. This year, Nancy Knauss and Ms. Micco are starting a pilot program where the master gardening students can take a turn as teachers at the Living Lab. September 14th was the first visit, and students heard from a monarch butterfly expert and watched as monarchs were tagged and released from the school's own front yard. The program hopes to keep growing and building on what is already a strong tie to Penn State.

If you would like to help fund the gardens, you can make a donation to the PCO designated for the Garden Fund. The October PCO meeting will include a discussion on how the PCO can continue to support this project. Also, if you would like to join the ECS Garden Club or you would like to learn more, please check out the Garden Club blog at: [livinglaboratoryproject.blogspot](http://livinglaboratoryproject.blogspot).



Cornstalks from the edible garden in front of ECS. Photo by Kirsj Jansa.

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# Getting to know... **Legume Bistro**

{ In each issue, we will ask local business owners these five questions so that we may connect more meaningfully to our community. }

**Name:** Sarah and Trevett Hooper, owners of Legume

**Address:** 1113 South Braddock Avenue, Edgewood PA 15218

**Phone:** 412-371-1815

**Website:** www.legumbistro.com

**Hours:** Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday 5:30-9pm; Friday and Saturday 5 -10pm

## **1. What inspired you to start your business?**

I think for Sarah and I we always knew we would open a restaurant together. It wasn't a matter of "if" as much as "when." Owning a business really suits our personalities.

## **2. What is your favorite thing about your space?**

Our favorite things about Legume's space are the tin ceilings and the tile floors. We think they are beautiful. Unfortunately, they also make the space very loud which is an issue for some of our guests. We installed "sound clouds" which helps take the edge off, but it is still loud.

## **3. What is the most surprising thing you've learned about running your own business?**

I am surprised at how well Legume has been received by people from all over Pittsburgh. Our original goal was to be a neighborhood restaurant that served the people of Regent Square, but we really draw from all over the city.

## **4. What is one thing that keeps people coming back?**

I think one of the things that keeps people coming back to Legume is the quality of the food we serve. I don't mean just the way we cook here, but rather the inherent quality of the raw ingredients we start with. Our food is easy to digest and is nourishing. It also happens to taste very good, which has more to do with the farms we get our food from than anything special we do to it. I think people come back because on some level they know the food is good for them.

Another thing that keeps people coming back is our fabulous staff in front of the house. Servers tend to stay for a long time at Legume and so they get to know the customers. Bigger restaurants use big brother-esque computer programs that keep track of customer information such as food preferences, what tables they like and dislike, etc. We are small enough that we can take care of our regulars without tracking them. When customers we've gotten to know come in, the whole staff knows what they need to do to take care of them. It is very genuine and beautiful.

## **5. In what ways might you like to make a connection to the ECS community?**

We would like to see more kids at Legume. I think our food is especially good for kids because I think it is important for kids to taste what really fresh, quality foods taste like. This isn't to say that families don't cook wonderful food at home too, but at Legume we are very lucky to work with a

high percentage of wonderful, very fresh ingredients that home cooks don't always have the time to gather. Also, everything is made from scratch and we never use any processed ingredients or anything like that. My nieces who are supposedly picky eaters eat things at Legume they would never eat anywhere else.



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**William Tracey**  
Fifth Grade  
Lead Teacher



**Mandy Kull**  
Fifth Grade Teacher



**Christy Purnell**  
Fifth Grade Teacher



**Julie Brunner**  
Fifth Grade  
Team Teacher



**Vanessa Kettering**  
E-Day  
Art Education



**Paige Wiegman**  
E-Day Team



**Andrea Chiotti**  
E-Day Team



**Amy Bi...**  
E-Day D...



**Jerome Szpila**  
Fourth Grade  
Team Teacher



**Hilary Buttenfield**  
Third Grade  
Team Teacher



**Melanie Cowherd**  
Third Grade  
Lead Teacher



**Becky Brunger**  
Third Grade  
Teacher

**Deirdre Lynch**  
Third Grade  
Teacher



**Joe  
Burke**  
Fourth  
Grade  
Teacher



**Stephanie  
Franklin**  
Fourth Grade  
Teacher



**Andrea  
Stewart**  
Fourth Grade  
Lead Teacher



**Heather Dessell**  
First Grade Teacher



**Sarah Maloney**  
First Grade Team Teacher



**Rachel Sica**  
Second Grade  
Teacher



**Diane Karichko**  
Second Grade  
Lead Teacher



**Amy Lassiter**  
Second Grade  
Teacher

**Margaret C. Sinnott**  
First Grade Teacher



**Jen Mars**  
First Grade Lead Teacher



**Sharon Leavitt, RN**  
School Nurse



**Katie Dattilo**  
Student Service  
Coordinator

**Katie Weaver**  
Kindergarten  
Team  
Teacher



**Danielle Meyer**  
Kindergarten  
Lead Teacher



**Melissa  
Raimondo Morris**  
Kindergarten  
Lead Teacher

**Nikole Brugnoli  
Sheaffer**  
Environmental  
Education  
Coordinator



**Kristen Priganc**  
Vice Principal



**Jon McCann**  
Principal

# ECS FAMILY TREE 2010-11

**anco**  
Deputy Director

**Kristan Abeshouse**  
E-Day Program Director

**Tisa Schuit**  
Title 1  
Reading  
Specialist

**Jesse Handron**  
Child Study  
Team Leader

**Tameka Thompson**  
Personal Care Aide &  
E-Day Staff

**Elizabeth Hanis**  
Gifted Coordinator 2-5

**Lynn Murray**  
Title 1  
Math Specialist

**Wes Horst**  
Personal Care Aide &  
E-Day Staff

**Jennifer Bencho**  
Special Education  
Inclusion  
Teacher

**Donna Payne**  
Literacy Specialist/  
ARC Coordinator

**Jessica  
Maxwell**  
Special  
Education  
3-4

**John Lash**  
Food Service  
Director

**Ashley  
Frye**  
Special  
Education K-2

**Jackie Fulton**  
Library Media  
Specialist

**Julie Seitz Allman**  
School Counselor

**Sarah Speer**  
Second Grade  
Team Teacher

**Jamie Root**  
Culinary Coordinator  
and Transportation  
Coordinator

**Tom  
Pasquale**  
Physical  
Education  
Teacher

**Chelsea Young**  
Environmental  
Education Team Teacher

**Shannon Merenstien**  
Art Teacher

**Martin Reidell**  
Music Teacher

**Becky Craig**  
Environmental Fellow

**Laura Micco**  
Environmental  
Education Teacher

# 3 Days at McKeever: A Journal Through the Eyes of Three 4th Graders

BY ELIZABETH HANIS

Some students were excited, some students were scared, some students were nervous, some students never spent three days away from home without their families, and some student's lives were changed forever by a 4th grade end of the year field trip last June at McKeever. Join three 4th grade students as they share a personal journal of their adventures, their opinions, and their favorite part of the trip.

## Day 1: by Philippa Zang

Two hours later, our bus arrived at McKeever. We were immediately directed to our cabins, and after unpacking our luggage,



and scoping out our newest surroundings, we picked our bunk beds. Then, we went to our meeting area to be assigned to groups. There were four groups who had the following names; White Pines, Chickadees,

Turkey Vultures, and Fireflies. Afterwards, we had a tour of the grounds and went to lunch. My group, the White Pines, sat upon our Sit A Pons and we talked about the Munch Line. Later that night, we had a night hike to get to the campfire, and a woman taught us Indian chanting songs. It was hard to fall asleep that night because it was so exciting to have other people sleep above you in bunks laughing loudly about a story regarding a tortoise and a princess.

## Day 2: by Leah Simpson

I woke up on day two feeling excitement rush through my veins. It was a new day, and I knew they would have exciting things for us to do. I wondered what would happen today because yesterday was pretty crazy. My group, the Chickadees, had breakfast,



and then we went to our meeting area, and then we talked about the days events. We did a Spec Trail, Munch Line Monitor, and we did time capsules. We ate lunch, and then we had recess. We did a Connection Inspection of specs, and then we followed Em's trail. We ate dinner, then we had a Game Show run by the 4th grade teachers. Mr. Tracey was Pierre the judge, Ms. Stewart was Miss Husa Medusa the score keeper. Miss Shaler was Taco Baco. Ms. Schaeffer was Piggy Wiggy the judge. Ms. Micco was Jazzy Sparkle the host. During the game show, the students were pulled from the audience for a secret. Which I can't reveal the secret because 4th graders may go to McKeever this year. Mr. McCann sang *Bessy's Gotta Give* with a bunch of people. When I went to bed I felt tired, and I was scared from the owls hooting in the night hike. It was so black, and I couldn't even see in front of me, I used Jaylynn's head as a guide in the dark.

## Day 3: by Sam Sigler

When I woke up, I was excited to see my parents later that evening. This was the first time I was without them for three days! I missed my Mom's cooking. First, we had breakfast, then we made nature stories with things from nature. Next, we had our last lunch at McKeever and we packed away our stuff, and left for ECS!



The three adventurers agreed that the Game Show was their favorite part about their trip. They left on day three with new friends, new stories, and new memories to share with their family and friends. They are excited to see what secrets will be revealed to them, now as 5th graders, when they return to McKeever.

**Above: Student photos by Arianna Chernyshev. At right: Photos by Mr. Tracey, captions by Owen McCann.**



**Josh Wins First Place For "Best Prepared" Camper!**



**Students are excited that Mrs. Sheaffer wakes them up at 6am for a Nature Hike! "Isn't this fantastic, the smell of nature in the morning?"**



**Mr. McCann tries to "investigate" if this tray contains lunch or is it a Science project?**

# What's **going on** here? (LOCAL FUN FOR YOUR FAMILY)

Friday, October 15 - Sunday, October 17

## **Green Home & Living Show**

From simple solutions for reducing energy bills, to the latest "green" solutions for home, family and business, you'll find it all at The Pittsburgh Green Home & Living Show. Shop over 500 eco-exhibits, while gathering information and inspiration from a variety of speakers, activities and special events.

Visit the Pittsburgh Green Home & Living Show at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center to save money, save energy & make a difference in our community!

For times and admission details, visit: [www.greenhomeandlivingshows.com](http://www.greenhomeandlivingshows.com)

Friday, October 15

## **Allegheny Observatory Tour**

Turn your attention to the sky during a free tour at the historic observatory in Riverview Park. Enjoy a short slide or film presentation followed by a walking tour of the building, which ends at the Fitz-Clark refractor. On clear nights, view celestial objects within the telescope's range.

8-10 pm. Reservations required. Call 412.321.2400 for reservations between 1 and 5pm, Monday through Friday. See [www.pitt.edu/~aobsvtry/tours.html](http://www.pitt.edu/~aobsvtry/tours.html) for details.

Saturday, October 16

## **The Schmutz Co. Papermation Workshop**

Join The Schmutz Company (artists Dave English and Don Orkoskey) at the Children's Museum to create your own animated short film using stop-motion animation techniques and simple paper. Then bring your friends to see your short film's moment on the silver screen at Sunday's screening of visitor-created papermation!

1 pm - 3 pm

Sign up in The Curiosity Lab the day of the workshop for a 30 minute slot working one on one with the artists. Space is limited.

Friday, October 22

## **Make a Glass Pumpkin @ Pittsburgh Glass Center**

Perfect for Halloween and Thanksgiving! Make your own glass pumpkin. This is our most popular Make-It-Now workshop. These events feature family focused hands-on glass activities for all ages. It is an opportunity to try glass making "on the spot" in 20 minutes or less. No experience required.

Ages 10 and above. 3 - 10pm. Cost: \$25. Call ahead because time slots fill up fast. 412-365-2145 ext. 201.

Saturday, October 23

## **Jack-o-'Lantern Walk**

Bring the whole family to join Venture Outdoors on this easy, early evening walk through Philips Park, located in the Hilltop neighborhood of Carrick. As the sun sets, we'll decorate jack-o-lanterns to bring home! Perfect for children of all ages.

Cost is \$5 per person.  
Location: Phillips Park  
Time: 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM

Thursday, October 28

## **Healthy Yard Workshop**

Let the Parks Conservancy teach you options for slowing storm water and improving water quality in your yard. Learn the basics of building a rain garden, picking a location, calculating size, and identifying the right materials. Cost is \$20, including a light dinner, a native plant, and a book about rain gardens. Space is limited, so RSVP today.

Schenley Park Cafe and Visitor Center, 5:30 - 8:00pm

Friday, October 29

## **Halloween Happenings @ Phipps**

Bring the kids in costume and enjoy a variety of Halloween activities throughout the Conservatory.

4-8 pm Free with paid admission.

Saturday, November 6

## **CarKids: Wheel Power**

Join in a hunt through our antique cars and carriages for tall wheels, short wheels, wheels of wire, and wheels of wood. Can you guess how many wheels there are?

11 - 11:45 am. Includes take-home activity. For kids ages 4-8. Free event.

Saturday, November 13

## **Native Plant and Sustainability Conference**

The Native Plant and Sustainability Conference is an annual event designed for all who appreciate native plants and sustainable landscape management but want to learn more. At the Conference, experts share their knowledge on a variety of topics, including landscape design, great native plants, sustainable practices, plant and wildlife ecology and the natural history of Pennsylvania.

Phipps Conservatory, 9 am - 3:15 pm

Sunday, November 28

## **Preparing Perennials for Winter**

Learn how to prepare your perennials for winter.

Phipps Conservatory, 1:30 pm

Sunday, November 28

## **Black 'n Gold Scavenger Hunt**

Venture Outdoors helps us find our Pittsburgh pride! You'll learn to use hand-held GPS (Global Positioning Satellite) units to locate your treasures. Each find will have a Pittsburgh or Black 'n Gold theme!

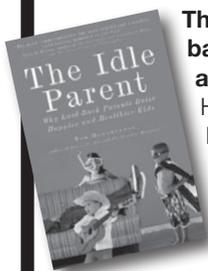
Location: Mellon Park  
Time: 2:00 PM - 3:30 PM  
Cost: \$5 per person

# { The Book Nook }

## PARENTS

Throughout the year, comPOST will focus on parenting and environmentally-related books for parents, teachers, and ECS community members. The descriptions below are not opinion pieces by an ECS parent; they are excerpts from the book covers or other product descriptions. All four books have been reviewed by major print and online media, so we encourage you to take a look at those reviews before purchasing. Shop at amazon.com through the PCO website at /ecspco.org/pco\_blog/pco-fundraisers.html and support our school. Or check your local library.

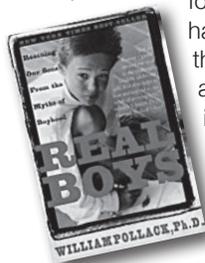
### Parenting



**The Idle Parent: Why Laid-back Parents Raise Happier and Healthier Kids**, by Tom Hodgkinson (Published by Penguin, New York, 2009).

“According to Tom Hodgkinson, in our quest to give our kids everything, we fail to give them the two things they need most: the space and time to grow up self-reliant, confident, happy, and free. In this smart and hilarious book, he urges us to stop worrying and instead start nurturing the natural instincts (children have) toward creativity and independence.” (Taken from the back cover of the book.)

**Real Boys: Rescuing Our Sons from the Myths of Boyhood** (a New York Times Best Seller), by Dr. William Pollack (published by Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1998). “...Real Boys explores... why so many



boys are sad, lonely or confused although they may appear tough, cheerful, and confident. Pollack challenges conventional expectations about manhood and masculinity that encourages parents to treat boys as little men, raising them through a toughening process that drives their

true emotions underground.” (Taken from the back cover of the book.)

### The Environment

**Lonely Planet Code Green: Experiences of a Lifetime**, by Kerry Lorimer (published by Lonely Planet,



2006). “Code Green is an alert to the need for change in the way we travel. It draws together almost 100 responsible travel experiences from across the planet, from budget backpacking to serious luxury, all linked by three defining principles: tread lightly on the environment; immerse yourself in the culture; and have a positive economic benefit for the local community.” (Description taken from amazon - if you want to purchase this book, amazon does not stock it but check your local library to see if they have it.)

**Food Inc.: A Participant Guide: How Industrial Food is Making Us Sicker, Fatter, and Poorer-And What You Can Do About It**, by Participant

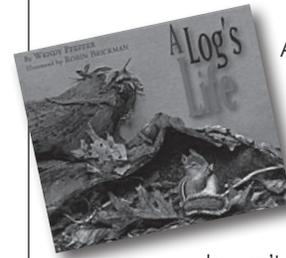
Media & Karl Weber, editors (published by PublicAffairs, 2009). “Aided by expert commentators such as Michael Pollan and Eric Schlosser, the book poses questions such as: Where has my food come from, and who has processed it? What are the giant agribusinesses and what stake do they have in maintaining the status quo of food production and consumption? How can I feed my family healthy foods affordably?” (Taken from amazon.com – also available in DVD)



And just for fun, check out for yourself: **Outliers: Stories of Success**, by Malcolm Gladwell, and **The Tyranny of Email: The Four-Thousand-Year Journey to Your Inbox**, by John Freeman

## KIDS

Ms. Fulton welcomes everyone back to ECS for the 2010-2011 school year! Please, let her know at [jaclyn.fulton@imagineschools.com](mailto:jaclyn.fulton@imagineschools.com) if you have any time to volunteer in the library.



**A Log's Life** (2007)

written by Wendy Pfeffer

illustrated by Robin Brickman

Even if you haven't spent much time thinking about logs, this book will bring them firmly to mind! Three-dimensional watercolor-on-paper illustrations add life and movement to the simple yet elegant text. Young children will be captivated by the detail of full-page illustrations while older readers will be inspired by the text to move outdoors and look for real logs to explore. This is a great non-fiction book to pair with a stroll through the trails of Frick Park.

### Technology Updates

ECS Library's catalog is now available to search from home! Simply go to <http://library.environmentalcharterschool.org/> and click on “Environmental Charter School” in blue. From here you can explore our collection using various search methods or choose the “Destiny Quest” option located on the left side toolbar to see “What's New” and “What's Hot” in the collection, as well as to find resources, such as the Advanced Reading Challenge lists.

Exciting things are always happening at the ECS library. Stay in the know about library news, events and special projects at <http://ecs-wheeledlibrary.wikispaces.com/>. The library also maintains a twitter @ECSLibrary and a Facebook page (search ECS Library).

# Get Fresh: Seasonal recipes from Jamie Root, Culinary Coordinator

There are two amazing fruits that are in season right now. You can get them at your farmers market, in your CSAs and at your grocery store. They are the watermelon and the tomato. They are two of my favorite foods to prepare. They both come in a variety of colors – so if you feel like it you can match your entrees or eat these as such.



## Watermelon Salad

*This is not a dessert! But you will definitely want another helping of it.*

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 ripe watermelon (either cut into chunks, or steaks)
- Crumbled feta cheese
- Olive oil – (I like to use extra virgin)
- Balsamic Vinegar reduction
- Salt and Pepper
- Arugula or other light mixed greens

### PREPARATION:

Cut the watermelon to your desired look – I like the “steak” – which is where you cut the watermelon into slabs instead of cubes. Place in the center of your plate, sprinkle with the feta, and drizzle with both the olive oil and the balsamic reduction. Salt and pepper to taste, remember that the feta is slightly salty, take the greens, mix them in a bowl with some of the vinegar and oil, salt and pepper; place them on top of the watermelon. Enjoy!

## Heirloom Tomato Salad

*This salad is so similar to the watermelon salad that they should go together.*

### INGREDIENTS:

- 2-3 heirloom tomatoes per person (I like the platter look)
- Crumbled feta cheese
- Balsamic reduction
- Olive oil
- Salt and Pepper
- Arugula

### PREPARATION:

This is the same basic preparation as the watermelon salad, but with tomatoes. I like to use heirloom tomatoes for many reasons, but the best part about them is that they come in so many colors – red, yellow, green, rainbow – the possibilities and the beauty is endless. You can’t go wrong supporting local farmers either.

### Balsamic Reduction:

Very easy – just take some quality balsamic vinegar and simmer it until it reduces by at least half. Cool and place into a container that you can drizzle out of.



## Who needs cash? We've got the barter system!

Starting next month, we will start a “Barter Board” section on the PCO’s message board. Parents and kids can post things they are interested in trading. You can offer child care, used toys, cooked meals, carpooling, dog-walking, and whatever else you have in your attic, basement or skill set! Join the frenzy at [ecspco.proboards.com](http://ecspco.proboards.com)!

# Take a hike! (With a Field Guide)

BY AMY BIANCO

*This will be the first installment of a series of hikes experienced by yours truly with you and the kids in mind. I'm planning on checking out new territory and then reporting back some of the highlights I've experienced. The plan is to offer an interesting overview of some local hikes (within an hour of the school) you may want to take the kiddos on. Some you may know, some you may not. At the very least I hope this article serves to be entertaining.*

I decided to start close to home, in our neighboring Frick Park. I've never been to the southern part of the park and was curious to see how far I could get following Nine Mile Run. Looking at the Frick Park Map, it actually looked possible to make it all the way to the Monongahela River which I figured I'd be able to pull off before E-Day that afternoon.

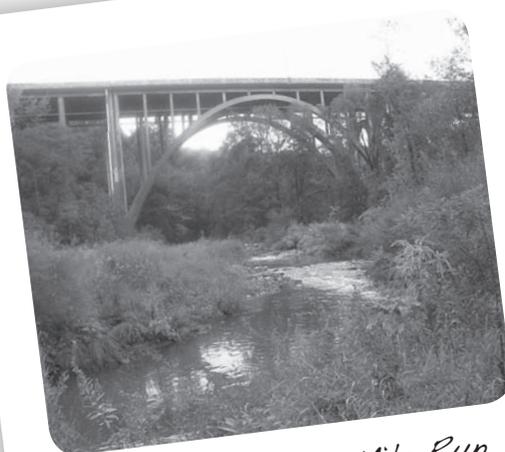
I started at the parking lot near the East End Fitness Center off of Braddock and jumped onto Braddock Trail. I was immediately welcomed by the chirping of titmice and cardinals. It was a rainy afternoon and Nine Mile Run was gushing to my left, contained in a concrete channel. As the path ascended, the sound of the water blended in with the hiss of traffic of 376. I turned my attention to some of my favorite late-summer happenings: aster, goldenrod, and stag horn sumac. They make a wonderful palette of colors together. This trail is like most others in Frick Park. It's wide, graveled, and well-maintained, an easy hike for all ages.

A bit further along, the trail gradually descended to meet with the creek again. The concrete channel disappeared to allow a more natural landscape. Eventually, the path forked. I took the left (Nine Mile Run) trail. Not far along Nine Mile Run trail, a small trail opened into the weeds on the left. It was narrow and tight, but outlined in Belgium block. It looked fun, plus, it was right on top of the creek so I followed it allowing goldenrod and willow to brush my arms and face. There were many opportunities to go right up to the water. This trail

was so cool! There were sturdy wooden walkways and foot bridges to keep you above what was probably very soggy ground. I found myself in the middle of a flat flood plain surrounded by water-loving trees and tall wildflowers. There was a chorus of happy insects hidden from view, but so close and loud! Eventually this small trail hooked back up with Braddock Trail, just past the soccer field.

Staying along the creek, I took a muddy foot trail that went off to the left and came to a continuous wooden walkway that passed through a stand of stoic cattails. 376 was getting close again, but now it was way high up. The trail came out to Commercial Street where 376 loomed overhead like a thunderous cathedral. At this point, one could take Deer Creek Trail to the right. There is also a parking lot here. I wanted to cross the street and continue my adventure to witness Nine Mile Run emptying onto the great Mon, but at this point, I risked being late to E-Day and walked back the way I had come. The entire trip was about 45 minutes.

Thanks to Google Earth, I realized that I was still about a mile and a half from the Mon when I stopped at Commercial Street. I guess this hike is to be continued for another day! I would definitely recommend this hike to families. I think it would make an awesome autumn outing!



*Hiking along Nine Mile Run wetlands.*



## E-Day Hits the Ground Running

BY AMY BIANCO  
AFTER SCHOOL DEPUTY DIRECTOR

Extended Day (E-Day) would like to welcome all of our old and NEW students to the after school program! Our program has been going strong for more than 2 years now and with the same returning staff it's like a happy family. Most of our roster consists of returning students from year to year so we've watched many of the kids grow up right before our eyes! To keep up with all this growth, E-Day has divided the kids into 3 groups: K and 1st grade, 2nd and 3rd, 4th and 5th grades. The groups stick together during the week going to planned activities and lessons. Kindergarten and 1st grade enjoy lots of play and toy time with an art day and a science lesson day. 2nd and 3rd graders have silent reading and homework time giving them a chance to unwind after a long day. They also get an art day and science lesson day. For our mature 4th and 5th graders, we offer a choice of activities. They may opt in to the art and science lesson if it strikes their fancy, or they may join other kids for free play. Their homework time is a little longer and more self-directed. All the E-Day kids congregate twice a week for Movie and Playground Day which gives everyone a chance to hang out. We're talkin' 55 kids! WOW!

We are all looking forward to another fun-filled year of loose teeth, outdoor discoveries, and wonderful artwork! Not to mention visits from the Sierra Club, the ARL Wildlife Center, and the Mushroom Club!

If you are interested in enrolling your child in Extended Day please contact Kristan, our Director: [kristan.abeshouse@imagin-eschools.com](mailto:kristan.abeshouse@imagin-eschools.com). For more information check out the school's website under the E-Day tab or give us a call at 412-247-7970 x002.

*A New Resource in  
the Neighborhood!*

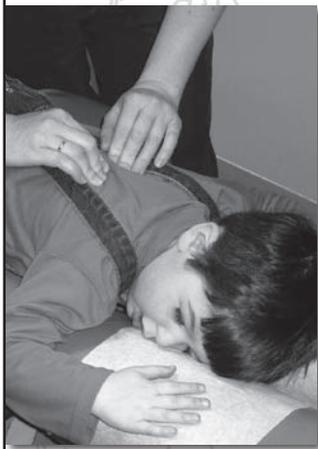
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[www.neighborhoodrealtyservices.com](http://www.neighborhoodrealtyservices.com)

# 5 QUESTIONS

Get to know an ECS community member better through 5 fun questions...this month, **Margaret Sinnott, First Grade**



**1. What would be a perfect Pittsburgh day for you?**

Perfect day in Pittsburgh happened last February, when we got over 2 feet of snow and the sun came out. I love to snow ski and it was perfect.

**2. If you could have a super-power, what would it be and why?**

If I could have a super power, it would be the ability to let all students succeed in reading, writing, and math.

**3. What is your favorite spot in Frick Park?**

My favorite spot in Frick Park are all the trails in the woods. I love being in the woods.

**4. What is the weirdest food you've ever eaten?**

The weirdest food I've ever eaten is probably some cheese my father got from Switzerland where he grew up, it was very smelly.

**5. What is your favorite thing about teaching?**

My favorite thing about teaching is when the "light bulb" is turned on, on one of my students. When they "get it."

**ECS is changing its enrollment dates for the 2011/2012 School Year**  
**Open Enrollment: November 1 – February 14**  
**Re-Enrollment: January 3 – 18**  
**Lottery: February 25**

# comPOST

To contact us, email: [newsletter@ecspco.org](mailto:newsletter@ecspco.org)

CONTRIBUTORS:

- |                 |                 |                |
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| Joe Davis       | Ailish Luedde   |                |
| Emily Escalante | Rebecca Randall |                |

comPOST is printed on 100% recycled paper. 

## Advertise in comPOST

The Parent Community Organization newsletter of Imagine Environmental Charter School is distributed to every family attending ECS in addition to many Partner Organizations and a broad range of community support groups. ComPOST is also available online at [www.environmentalcharterschool.org/](http://www.environmentalcharterschool.org/)

**Insertion Fees:**

|                                    |       |
|------------------------------------|-------|
| 1/8 pg (3 5/8" w x 2 3/8" h) ..... | \$18  |
| 1/4 pg (3 5/8" w x 4 7/8" h) ..... | \$30  |
| 1/2 pg (7 1/2" w x 4 7/8" h) ..... | \$55  |
| full pg (7 1/2" w x 10" h) .....   | \$100 |

**Deadlines:**

All materials are due the 1st of each month for publication in the next month's issue.

**Submission Guides:**

Preferred ad format: high-resolution, press-optimized PDF file. Acceptable formats: InDesign, Quark, Photoshop and Illustrator. For a small fee, we will design your ad!

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