

Letter from the Grade Level Representatives

Dear ECS Families and Faculty,

We wanted to let you know about a collaborative initiative amongst the school administration and Parent Community of ECS - the Grade Representatives Committee. This committee is comprised of school principals and volunteer representatives from each grade level.

The purpose of the Grade Reps program is to *collect trending concerns and feedback from each grade to share with the administration with an eye toward problem solving when needed*. We welcome your questions and concerns and look forward to addressing them during these monthly meetings. Feedback / notes will be shared through the room parents and can also be found online: <http://ecspco.org/volunteer/grade-representatives/>.

If you have a comment or concern to be presented, please feel free to reach out to one of the grade representatives below:

First Name	Last Name	Grade	Email
Wesley	Waldrup	K, 3 and 5	wwaldrup@gmail.com
Maria	Zibert	2,3	mzibert@verizon.net
Julie	Paris	1 and 2	julieparis6@gmail.com
Leslie	Aronson	1	lesliedara@gmail.com
Ellen	Ayoob	3 and 6	fudgebelly@gmail.com
Kate	Tunney	1 and 4	Ketunney@gmail.com
Carolyn	Hare	3 and 5	carolynkhare@gmail.com
Olivia	Wells	3 and 6	wells.oliviac@gmail.com
Jennifer	Balog	3, 5 and 6	jennifer@6nop.com
Marla	Ferreny	4 and 8	marla@ferreny.com
Sonia	Rathelot	5 and 8	sonia.rathelot@yahoo.com
Stacie	Parente	7	me@stacieleigh.com
Elena	Hilf	8	hilf@verizon.net

Notes from Friday, March 3, 2017

General/Celebrations:

- Thank you for working with i, Simon to resolve the issues that have continued to be an issue.
- Thank you for the weekly music (from Mr. R) and special information in the Friday Newsletters.
- Thank you to the intentional office hours by Ms. Robinson. This is a great time to touch base with her personally. We added these recurring times to the ECS shared calendar
- Thank you for increasing the personal comments on report cards -- they are much more personal and connected to the individual student.
- Thank you for making the *Monday Blast* concise and specific - a huge improvement to the Wednesday Word. Thank you also for the specific information about what students are learning in the *Friday Newsletters*. The parent community feels much more connected to what is happening in school.

ECS asks to Grade level Reps:

- Create a Survey/focus group of third grade parents and fourth grade parents about what might be needed for a thoughtful transition.
- Create a Survey/focus group 5th and 6th grade parents about what might be needed for a thoughtful transition.
- Please ask for parent volunteers to contact Nikole if interested in an participating in an advocacy role. We have a legislator event on 4/28 that we need volunteers interested in attending
- Looking support an afternoon club on Upper School Safety Patrol -- we need a few parent volunteers with clearances to support a club in the spring that would train kids for next year.
- Support and promote a service Days for Spring Cleaning - Tentative Date: April 29th @9:00 AM
- Donate New and slightly used hats and gloves for lower school - we will wash and store for next year!

Q: When will receive the calendar for next year?

A: Calendar will be coming next week in the Monday Blast (3/20) ; we reviewed the Pittsburgh Public Calendar to realign. See the [calendar here](#).

Q: What is the impact of expansion? When will we receive details?

A: ECS received approval by the Charter Appeal Board (CAB) in Harrisburg to extend its charter to include an additional K-8 and a 9-12, on February 21, 2017. This has been a 3 year process to get to this point, and we are taking each step carefully to ensure students and families are at the forefront of every decision. ECS will continue to “sure up” internal systems (capital investments in current facilities, more expansive human resources for staff,

enrollment/admissions/onboarding systems for new families, development and fundraising, revisions to the ECS compensation model, student data housing and reporting, and student athletics/extra-curricular programming) while also working to negotiate terms of an agreement and collaboration with PPS. Determination around location and financing to support growth will occur after internal systems are stabilized and negotiations are complete. As new information is available, we will continue to update parents. We are focusing on our flagship schools and ensuring that we are in best position to grow before making any steps.

Equity and Diversity Discussion.

How can we create events to involve and engage new families and build connections between existing families? How can we create events that build and expand our connections with families that haven't met or connect? Parents provided additional resources regarding diversity efforts in supporting expansion. We as a group discussed opportunities to onboard and connect with new families in new and different way. Parents suggested outreaching to the University of Pittsburgh report on social equity, potentially reaching out to them as a resource to build thoughtful connections to a broader audience.

Math Discussion. Is there data to show that the math program is building student growth?

Ms. Robinson shared data on ECS MAPs assessment for 6-8th grade. 83% of students have showed growth from the beginning of the year. We are looking for additional ways to bring in more application and project-based work in the future. 86% of students at the lower school made growth since the beginning of the year. Kids that are the struggling the most are making 20 and 30 point gains. The average increase for a student is around 10 points.

Additional Information on the MAPs

- **Q: What are the MAPS?**

A: MAP assessments are computer adaptive achievement tests in Mathematics and Reading (and science for grades 4 and 8).

- **Q: What are computer adaptive tests?**

A: The computer adjusts the difficulty of the questions so that each student takes a unique test. The difficulty of each question is based on how well the student has answered previous questions.

- **Q: What is the purpose of the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment?**

A: MAP is a norm-referenced measure of student growth over time. MAP assessments, joined with other data points, provide detailed, actionable data about where each child is on his or her unique learning path. MAP assessments differ from other data sources used by the HCPSS to inform instruction by being nationally normed, by tracking student progress throughout a year and across school years, and by being linked to software tools which can assist teachers and administrators in planning instruction.

- **What are the uses of MAP?**

A: MAP tests are based on a continuum of skills in Mathematics and Reading from low skill levels to high skill levels. MAP assessments help teachers identify the instructional level of the student and also provide context for determining where each student is performing in relation to local or state standards and national norms. MAP reports allow teachers to better target instruction based on students' strengths and needs.

Q: Can there be another event that helps math for parents? Maybe a workshop or “learning math like a 5th grader?”

A: We are working with our instructional coaches to think about evening events to provide better insight into our curriculum. If you have ideas or suggestions on what you would like to see from these events, please bring them to our Grade Level Rep meeting in April. We will do our best to incorporate your needs into our planning for next year.

Q: TEACHER SPOTLIGHT: Fourth Grade Math. Math seems really challenging this year. What are resources parents can use to better support students at home? What makes this year so much harder than previous years?

A: From Ms. Rogers and Mr. Linnelli - We frequently see students begin to grapple with math more intensely in fourth and fifth grades. Many of the concepts are similar to those learned in earlier grades, but problems involve higher orders of complexity. For example, now multiplication and division computations take the form of 2 digit by 2 digit multiplication and 3 digit by 1 digit division. Solving these problems not only requires strong number sense, but also stamina and organization.

Additionally, we have a new curriculum---Eureka Math--which really pushes students to solve even more difficult problems, especially word problems. The problems have multiple steps and require students to be a careful and critical readers. If a student struggles in reading, they will likely struggle with some components of math as well.

We know that this is a challenging transition for students! Moving from 3rd to 4th grade is challenging year academically for students. Please look for the helpful links and resources we provide with each unit we teach in the Friday newsletter. We are always willing to answer questions, and feel free to drop us an email if we can give you more specific information about your child or about the math experience! Wendi.Rogers@ecspgh.org and Frank.Linnelli@ecspgh.org

Q: TEACHER SPOTLIGHT: Third Grade Literacy. What is the structure and format of the literacy program of third grade? Are there events that the third grade is planning to showcase with families? Is there a chance to see their writing? Is there a writer's notebook that has grown with the kids for the kids over time?

A: From Ms. Turocy and Ms. Karel - In the third grade we start out our units immersing ourselves in the unit topic and we follow each unit of study with a writing project. For every writing project students go through the writing process of idea generation, planning, drafting, revising, editing and publishing. We send home all the components of the writing process at

once when the project is over. Students help each other with revising and editing as well as receiving feedback from teachers. So far we did an author study of Patricia Polacco and her fiction books, and followed that unit with learning to write summaries of stories. Following our study of fantasy stories, students wrote their own fantasy stories and celebrated publishing them by sharing them with students from different third grade homerooms. Currently, we are going through the writing process to learn how to write opinion and informative nonfiction essays. We are very excited to invite families to help us celebrate the end of our poetry unit in quarter four, when the students will reflect upon valuable lessons they learned at the lower school and use their knowledge of poetry to help them create memorable songs, poems or raps that can be used to teach future ECS students. If you have any other questions, feel free to reach out to us at anytime!

jessica.turocy@ecspgh.org and tessa.karel@ecspgh.org

Q: TEACHER SPOTLIGHT: Upper School Music Program. Question: What does the music program look like at the Upper School?

A: From Mr. McCaskey

In 6th and 7th grade Music Exploratory, I have been sharing my love for guitar. Although music theory is important, this guitar course focuses on the love of music and exploring the fun associated with playing. Our course also provides a space for everyone to share our favorite songs and artists with each other, and expanding our musical horizons. Please feel free to reach out to Brendan.McCaskey@ecspgh.org for more information about the music exploratory course.

A: From Ms. Robinson; Ms. Gross is currently out of town

Ms. Gross teaches general music in 4th and 5th grades as part of a three day specials rotation. Students explore varying music genres, music, history, and are introduced to basic singing and instrumentation techniques. Ms. Gross also provides weekly small group lessons for all band and orchestra instruments, and students' talents are showcased in our Fall and Spring concerts. Orchestra and Band are currently divided into sections (beginner and intermediate Band and Orchestra, and an advanced Orchestra) based on student ability. Interested in learning more? Reach out to abby.gross@ecspgh.org for more information!

Q: What is the transition plan for Third Grade to Fourth Grade?

A: We will be completing a move up day for students and parents, but we are working on an updated plan to improve it to support the transition. Grade level parent representatives will conduct a survey and/or focus groups to gather data to share with building leaders to better inform the experience. This will be information shared for the transition from fifth to sixth grade.

Q: Are there optional activities that are available (at Upper School) that more students might be interested in? Can these be sent to weekly newsletters so families/guardians know about them?

A: From Ms. Lendyak-Peters

There are interesting projects and programs, based both in ECS and in our broader community, that pop up throughout the year. In an effort to reach as many students as possible, I will begin

to supplement the grade level Friday newsletters with information regarding these exciting opportunities. Reach out to me with any questions! Rachel.Peters@ecspgh.org

Q: Can we establish a Safety Patrol Program?

A: We are looking for some volunteers to help launch a safety patrol program potentially during the Fall Club sessions. Interested? Email kristan.abeshouse@ecspgh.org and jaleah.robinson@ecspgh.org to begin this process.

Q: When will students know of who they have in the next loop? Can we get some additional information about how transition to next loops occurs (for example, 1st to 2nd?)

A: Typically students find out who they will have the following year in the August mailing packet. The start of each year always begins with community building, this is more evident in the new loops.

**Q: How can we create a greater “sense of community” within our parent community?
Can we create some PCO events that are intentional about building community?**

A: The group discussed developing a parent liaison, as well as other types of activities or events to build a more inclusive involvement of families. Parents/guardians are encouraged to share thoughts and ideas with the grade level parent reps to bring to the group.

Q: Will Lower School families have a chance to see or view the “music videos” created by students?

A: Third grade will begin their video projects after the concert, and I will have them available for the families to view when they are finished.