

# Letter from the Grade Level Representatives

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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/>.

## Notes from Wednesday, November 1, 2017

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ECS Faculty Attending: Jon McCann, Ashley Bergman, Mandy Cribbs, Maryssa McGuire, Andrea Szolna, Nikole Sheaffer

Parent Reps:

### Celebrations:

- Game of Survival in first grade presentations this week!
- Big Thank You for donation of Halloween Costumes for Upper School kids -- 12-15 students were able to take advantage of this great opportunity! 2-3 students at Lower School students were able to get a free costume!
- End of Quarter. Report cards coming out and asking for feedback about the new report card system.
- Music program information - Beginning Strings and Orchestra launched.
- Celebration about the number of ECS faculty and staff attend the Climate Reality Training.
- Annual Lower School Concert is coming up on December 7th!

### Asks from our Administration to the Parent Community:

- **Bus idling patrol team.** Are you a parent that cares passionately about our air quality? That believes in the power of small changes makes a difference? We are looking for a set of volunteers to patrol the bus pick up spaces once a week (or more) and celebrate or remind bus drivers that are following the law not to idle. More information? Contact [jon.mccann@ecspgh.org](mailto:jon.mccann@ecspgh.org)

## Notes:

### **Q. Can you talk about Harvest Feast this year?**

- A. This year harvest feast will be in the cafe, and volunteers will have a few selections to bring. Parents are encouraged to attend, and RSVP here to ensure we can include you in our planning for the day. This allows us to keep students safe, encourage more families to attend, and build equity for all.

### **Q. This year we had a hard time gathering volunteers for the Halloween parties this year. Is there an opportunity to think about this differently? (K/1)**

- A. Maybe it was an unusual occurrence this year? Second grade parties were on the 31st this year. There may have been more enthusiasm for this because it was stretched out. Something to consider for next year.

### **Q. Cross Country team had some students separated from the group at a practice. No follow up or procedure was in place to outreach to parents. Feeling upset that the students had an experience that students haven't been talked to. (K/1)**

- A. Ms. Bergman noted that she talked with Ms. Abeshouse and Ms. Coleman about this particular incident. Dr. Cribbs worked with Ms. Bianco and Ms. Abeshouse to review Crisis Management Procedures. Dr. Cribbs has reviewed procedures and protocols with the afterschool team, though that does not resolve this particular incident. *ECS is deeply regretful that this situation occurred, will work ensure families and students are supported. We will work diligently to ensure safety for our students is top priority for all of our after school sports and activities.*

**ACTION ITEM:** Ensure that all communications from coaches, athletic director are cc-d to the building leaders.

### **Q. The extended school year. Where are we in this process of cutting it back? (K/1)**

- A. We are likely not able to change this for the 2018-2019 school year. We are working to build our relationship with PPS to potentially make this updated ask in the 2019-2020 school year. We may be able to provide some alternative start dates, however, for our incoming kindergarteners for 2018.

### **Q. Is recess being taken away from students punitively? (2, 4) Taking recess away from students has been something that we thought was not**

- A. At Lower School, often students are doing a "reflection time" during this time, and the goal is to re-engage after this time. In some rare instances, and safety is a concern, then students are removed from recess. At the Upper School, it is often hard to find times to create a consequence. We don't want a kid to be missing activity or social every day, and we think about different ways to support a student. It might be a student is walked with a grown up, or have a lunch with a counselor, teacher. We are thinking about other options at this point. Students

have to exhibit the consequence multiple times before a consequence like this might happen. There are generally multiple connections with a students before a discipline referral happens. In most cases, we are working hard to have a connection that is individualized to that particular kids. At Upper we are also checking in with kids with We tailor ou

**ACTION ITEMS:** Ms. Bergman and Dr. Cribbs will add this conversation to the weekly staff meeting to ensure faculty have clear expectations. Ms. McGuire will bring this conversation to the Culture Committee.

**Q. Can you give us an update on chess?**

A. The organization ECS contracted with in the past had a teacher that was able to do after school clubs. He r and now the organization only offers lunchtime programming this calendar year. We discussed internally and with the org at length how to make this work, but could not come up with a solution at this time.

**Q. There have been a lot of issues with transportation this year. Is there a way to create a texting tree, an email list serve or something to help communications get to families for delayed buses.**

A. We recognize this is a challenge, and we are working to understand how we can create lists to more easily contact families in the case of a delayed bus.

**ACTION ITEM:** Building leaders are working with office managers and Mr. Hoffman to see if eSchool+ can create email lists for each bus route.

**Q. Beautification update.**

A. We are posting an RFQ for a Landscape Architect to complete the last additional pieces to our permit application and are on track to have the permit issued by January. Once the permit is issued, we can order the equipment (lead time 8 weeks) and break ground on the project in the Spring. In the background, we are working with Bartlett Tree Experts and Allegheny County Conservation District for site prep, specifically addressing soil conditions and prepping our trees for construction.

**Q. Expansion Update**

A. [Here is the latest update.](#) Another update will be provided before winter break, and include some additional timelines and ways to engage in the next phase of work.

**Q. PCO Guidelines on Facebook. They are working!**

A. Continue to work to support these guidelines with posters -- it is getting questions answered from the right folks. Thank you!

**Q. Would it be beneficial to teachers to get the PCO to get room parents?**

- A. We can get some feedback on that! Principals will continue to look into this and note any rooms that still need supports

**Q. PSSA schools went out. Is this something that you will be talking about as a school? You sent out two letters in the past, and we are wondering what this means going forward?**

- A. Mr. McCann noted that we are right in the mix with the top schools in city. We've made growth in our math scores, and that is a reflection of our new math curriculum. We are also looking at the data really closely and knowing where our strengths are and where we can grow. This year, 54.8% of our students in grades 3-8 scored proficient or advanced on the mathematics exam. The growth our students made exceeded the standard of growth set for our school as measured by PVAAS. Our focus in math is on differentiation practices and reinforcing our use of small group instruction to support students. We are confident in our math team and their use of data to drive both their classroom and Prime/Me Time instruction. We continue to track student growth on benchmark assessments and are looking to continue the upward trend in student achievement data.

**Q. How can 4th grade parents - or any grade - find access to missing assignments and a missing grades, and be supportive immediately, rather than waiting for a pattern to emerge? When are teachers reaching out to parents when something comes up?**

- A. We are in a transition at the Upper School from using Schoology to ESchool+. When the Home Access Center becomes available to parents in the Spring, it will be the place to find grades and missing assignments. Right now, teachers will contact you if students have missing assignments. Also, please feel free to email teachers if you're uncertain about grades or to check if your student is turning assignments in. Finally, the weekly newsletter provides important information about what students are working on and when it is due.

**Q. Feeling a little out of touch with the science content in 4th grade EL. Is there a way to include a bit of clarification or evening assignment that we can connect to?**

- A. We utilize the Next Generation Science Standards in our planning for Environmental Literacy and Science in grades K-8. The standards help us create Driving Questions for each unit of study. Students work throughout the unit to answer this big idea question and connect to the content. In 4th grade our students are working to answer the question: "How can we, as junior botanists, catalog and communicate about the trees in Frick Park?". Our culminating activity for this unit / question is on December 7th. Please attend if you are available. Another great way to see what we are up to is to attend one of our long hikes. Also, each week, you can find information about the unit and upcoming assignments in the grade level newsletters. If you have any questions about a

specific assignment or project, please reach out to your student's EL or Science teacher.

**Q. There is some requests for Middle School Social and an 8th grade dance. Are these on the docket at all for this year?**

- A. Our GSSU and Stand Together teams are currently in the planning stages for the first middle school evening social event. The dance will be held on December 1st. Permission slips have been distributed. We want to make sure the event is as inclusive as it can be, so the group of students is thinking about how best to encourage all students to participate.

**Q. Math de-tracking update.**

- A. We had unprecedented number of students take the Algebra keystone, and all students in 8th grade are graduating with completion of Algebra. 75% scored proficient or advanced; 53 students took the exam. Prime Time is still supporting students as well. Differentiation is actively happening in students' math classroom. Differentiation looks different in the Upper School -- teachers will do a pre-assessment, and determine what they know and don't know, and then create a classroom that reflects student needs. Some students will head to a teacher after the mini-lesson, some will head to a different station, and the groups are flexible from unit to unit. This is developmentally responsive and individualized to the student.