

Sept 29, 2014 PCO Meeting

Christy Fitzpatrick Burns (PCO moderator) read the mission statement.

Christy introduced herself and explained her background. She thanked the new families for coming to the meeting.

Justin Aglio, Upper School Principal introduced himself and gave his background. He announced that the Upper School will be featured on WQAD in the spring. He announced that there is a Get Outside Campaign at the Upper School and the students will be going outside for various classes and the teachers are logging the time outdoors. He informed the families that he wants to keep the line of communication open between the school and families. He plans to attend every PCO meeting.

Christy noted that the environment in general at the Upper School is wonderful. She also noted that both schools will hold a parent/principal coffee every month. And that communication is a two-way street and these coffees are a great way to have an open conversation about concerns, school happenings and initiatives.

Christy announced that parents are welcome to come into school anytime to have lunch with their kids.

Christy introduced Jon McCann, CEO at ECS and explained that he will speak about budget cuts and the Amendment to the Charter. Jon thanked the families for choosing ECS as their school of choice. He welcomed Justin to the school.

Budgets- Jon explained that the Government cut \$500,000 (or 5%) of the school's budget. The administration went through the budget, line by line to review and determine where cuts would be made. He was pleased to announce that ECS did not lose any faculty. One of the cuts that were made was bussing for field trips this year. They are also looking into a different retirement packages for new teachers. Another way that they are looking to save costs is by purchasing both buildings. They currently rent but for long-term sustainability they would like to own both buildings. They're hoping to purchase the Upper School by next year, which will save them between 30-35K/month. They're also looking into purchasing the Lower School. The Upper School is owned by a real estate investment firm and the Lower School is owned by a local developer.

This year ECS will focus on fundraising, particularly from endowments. They want to continue the competency-based growth incentive for teachers. They're currently working with a consultant to help them find a Development Officer to help with these efforts.

Expansion Project – the amendment was denied in July to expand to a high school and start another K-8 in the city. The K-8 was denied because the building they wanted to use wasn't available and wasn't adjacent to a park. The high school was denied because "there weren't enough specifics around curriculum" and the proposal didn't represent enough diversity (including special needs).

Currently they're looking at the East Liberty and Bloomfield/Garfield areas. More than likely the building that they find won't be ready to use, it will need to be built. ECS is looking into the philanthropic

community to fund the K-8 school. Next steps, the amendment will be split and resubmitted on Nov. 1, 2014. Once submitted to PPS Board, it will sit with them for three months, then pushed to the Common Pleas Court and then to the Charter Appeals Board.

For the high school, they're pushing the amendment to Universities and other experts for review. They'll resubmit the amendment in Jan, 2015 to the PPS Board, and then it will go to the state level. They're still looking at the Energy Innovation Center. The high school will be very unique. The city of Pittsburgh needs world class public schools. ECS is not necessarily the answer but we can be part of the movement.

Christy announced that the Catalyst Committee will be meeting soon and will update the PCO as necessary.

Volunteers for Lunch & Recess - Christy announced that both schools are in need of volunteers for recess and the Lower School needs extra help at lunch. With the budget cuts, we are down one helper in the Lower School cafeteria. Any help at either school would be very much appreciated. Anytime between 10:30am – 1pm. No skills or experience is necessary. You do not need clearances for lunch duty but you do for recess. Email Christy if you are interested - parents@ecspco.org

Committee Updates – Beth Lott announced that there are sign ups in the hall if anyone is interested in volunteering on a committee. There are a lot of small jobs and tasks that you can do at home.

Fall Festival – Jennifer Balog announced that they have a lot of activities planned for the Fall Festival including a Giant Pumpkin contest (guess the weight), roving art cart, scavenger hunt and much more. They are in need of bakers for the bake sale.

Beth announced that if anyone has ideas for events to let her or Christy know and they can help put a Committee together.

Board Update – Molly Bennett (PCO Board Rep) – Molly informed everyone that at the last two Board Meetings they reviewed the budget and amendment (the items that Jon discussed tonight). They have a retreat coming up and they'll discuss the five year strategic plan for the school. She also announced that the Board meetings take place at the Upper School Café at 6:30 on the third Wednesday of every month and they're open to the public. A question was posed by a parent about who serves on the Board, Molly said that there are a variety of people, including architects, school teachers, ECS parents and even people that have no affiliation with ECS but are supporters of the school. The Board is looking for a new chair. Molly also announced that the meeting notes should be on the school's website.

Mini Grants – Christy explained that the PCO has an allotted amount of money to put towards mini grants for teachers, staff and parents that apply. The Mini Grant Committee grants money for these projects and votes using a rubric system.

Marcie Milletary from the Mini Grant Committee announced that they received 10 applications for grants this period. As a side note she informed everyone that the Committee doesn't fund field trips.

1. Literacy teachers - Improvement of literacy outcomes at the Lower School. Materials can be used inside and out - \$182.90
2. Olweus Program – video modeling - \$150
3. Creative Free Play – 3rd grade – materials used for 15 minute breaks for 3rd graders (magic mud, Kanex, Legos) – 3 grants at \$150 each since they were three separate applications.
4. Imagination Playground – rent blocks. \$125 for one month of blocks

And four not funded:

1. Legos
2. My Geography, My World
3. Pebbles to fill in between garden pavers at the LS (amount was not provided)
4. 6th grade field trip to the Carnegie Museum's RACE exhibit (not reviewed by the committee since it's a field trip)

Two parents showed interest in funding projects themselves and suggested that the applications that aren't approved be given to the parent community incase other families would like to fund a project. The PCO Executive Committee will discuss this further at their next meeting and determine the best way to inform parents about unfunded projects and teachers wish lists.

A parent made a motion for the PCO to fund all five mini grants. Another parent seconded the motion. Everyone was in favor.

Christy informed everyone that the first ten minutes of all of the meetings will be spent mingling.

Christy reviewed upcoming events.

Christy reviewed the Treasurer's report.