

Nov 24, 2014 PCO Meeting

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

Nikole Sheaffer – Guest Speaker- Standardized Testing & Curriculum at ECS

Nikole explained that ECS has been around since 2008. Charter schools are different from other public schools because they're progressive, research based, innovative, and offer something that hasn't been offered before.

Scale of innovation. What makes ECS different? The curriculum, the design evolves consistently.

Guiding Principles –

Catalyst- we're innovators in public education.

Character- we're dedicated to making the world a better place.

Collaboration – We believe that respectful, transparent, and reflective dialogue among our community.

Commitment – We are a dedicated community of passionate leaders who are committed to redefining ecological literacy. Our education model endorses an interdisciplinary view of complex environmental systems.

ECS measure- embracing learning and measurable growth.

Three core areas:

1. Knowing- critical thinking. (Content)
2. Direct doings. (Skills and experiences)
3. Being- (Ideas, Values, and Attributes). When a student faces an obstacle they will demonstrate creativity and perseverance to rise to the challenges.

Systems – make teachers love their work.

Governance – work with Government agencies

Space- Materials that are green and healthy.

Nikole pointed out that we don't have all of the answers and we make mistakes. We go and see what other schools are doing, including cutting edge initiatives.

We have a number of coaches from design to science, math and literacy. The coaches meet with Nikole every other week. They also jump in and help to support in the classrooms.

Parent Question – I have a concern about the lack of communication.

Nikole- we try to give the best information that we have. We want to be 80% there before we give out information. We're working with a group of CMU students on how we can better communicate.

Parent comment – we would rather hear that you're working to improve rather than no word at all.

Parent Question- how are our students that left for 9th grade doing?

Nikole- we heard preliminary feedback that they were not prepared for the culture of traditional schools, not prepared to sit for lectures and take notes.

Parent comment – my child and other Woodland Hills kids are very well prepared for Science.

Mr. McCann – my 9th grader has trouble sitting for 45 minutes and he found that the teachers are less engaged.

Parent comment –It’s discouraging to hear that we aren’t preparing kids for high school. I have a 9th grader at Alderdice and he’s doing fabulous. He can engage with teachers and can have conversations with adults. He also does well in project based environments.

Parent comment – can we get feedback from the high schools that the kids moved on to?

Nikole- maybe, it might be difficult but we may be able to go to the school counselors.

Parent comment- I read the Weds Word and Facebook but I would rather hear from the school. I’m worried about a well-rounded child and learning the basics, such as the state capitols.

Nikole – Content and facts are built into the curriculum and we’re selective.

Melanie – We focus on the thinking process. We want to create engaging experiences and shift standards, not memorize capitols.

PSAA’s- these are aligned with Common Core. This year is the first year that the PSAA tested Common Core standards. ECS needs to teach reason through content not just regurgitate facts. Not teach drill and kill. Regarding test scores- a metric between 70-80 is a good score, it’s a number and we aren’t prepping for the test. Our school’s test scores have grown.

Parent comment – I don’t feel like there is lack in communication, I feel like there are several places to get information.

Parent comment – It would be nice to have a smoother transition from ECS to high school. For example, transcripts, Keystone tests.

Nikole- we’re learning from last year, which was the first year we had an 8th grade class. Hoping it’s smoother this year.

Board of Trustees update – Molly didn’t go to the meeting last month and the minutes aren’t up yet. Two topics discussed were the sale of the school. ECS wants to purchase the Upper School building. The other topics were an initiative to focus on poverty stricken areas for admissions.

Mini Grants – Kate – there was only one application this time around. We’ve only spent \$1,200 and we have \$4,000 for the year. The application this time is for a hands-free component to iPads for \$159.66. It will be used for presenting on the wall for experiments in 6th grade science. We recommend that we approve the grant. A motion was made and seconded to approve the mini grant. The grant was approved.

Christy mentioned that we need to get the word out more about mini grants. Perhaps we could get the word out at the next staff planning day. The principals could announce it.

Committee Updates- the Fair Trade Market is coming up.

The Gingerbread House event is coming up and we need volunteers and shoppers.

Reminder about the Amazon link for fundraising, use the link not the Smile. There is an ECS PCO code on the email address. Target- you only have to sign up once, it carries over from year to year.