

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, April 7, 2017

General/Celebrations:

- We had a great third quarter! Parents are excited about the increase in comments on the report cards.
- Communications between ECS and parents continues to be better than from years past.

ECS asks to Grade level Reps:

- ECS is looking for a parent representative to assist in coordinating playdates for newly accepted families. Workload would include determining dates, times, and writing brief announcements/communications to be pushed out through our SchoolMint online platform (contact Christine.Adams@ecspgh.org or nikole.sheaffer@ecspgh.org if you can help!)

Questions and Answers:

Q: Are there any changes are planned for a gifted program at school?

A: ECS supports gifted students in an inclusive setting: providing differentiated instruction within the classroom (advanced books clubs, supplemental materials, etc.), extension activities during advanced literacy and math ME/PRIME times, and opportunities for students to pursue their own lines of inquiry and interest through independent projects and/or local events. We have some exciting things in the works! We are currently in the process of developing extension activities that correspond with each Eureka module which will allow students to dive deeper into an already robust curriculum. We are also solidifying PRIME/ME time units to add consistency from year to year. For example, each year the enrichment literacy PRIME time in 4th grade will include an introductory unit on Shakespeare and in 5th grade will include a unit on producing Radio Drama.

Q: Do you have an estimated date for starting and completing construction of phase 1?

A: Playground Update:

- Full site plan & application for the project to be submitted to the city planning office by May 1st.
- We have a scheduled date with the city for a public hearing on the project, June 8th at 9:30 a.m.
- Once approved for zoning, (this decision can take up to 45 days), we will proceed to the permitting process (which can take another 15-45 days) our

estimated start date for the project is beginning the landscaping component in July and the installation of the playground equipment by August/September

Q: How has the Chief Development Officer position been working for the school? Are there any reports about non-PCO fundraising for the past year?

A: ECS is working with a short term contract consultant to sure up systems and prepare a request for proposal for a more longer contract moving forward. We are also looking at how to coordinate PCO fundraising and general ECS fundraising to reduce donor fatigue!

Q: Move Up Day: The results of the survey from parents for move-up day?

Summary of the discussion: Andrea and Beth sent out a survey to grade level newsletters on Friday to ask for feedback regarding move up days. Our parent team also provided surveys to parents in 3rd and 4th grade. Most results came from rising 3rd grade. Parents voiced concerns that the Upper School feels and functions differently, and wonder how to prepare their child (and themselves) better for this transition. Andrea and Beth are working with ECS Coaches and teachers to streamline systems and build awareness about the differences in this transition. Parents noted that questions like: *How much autonomy can we expect from a 9 year old? What is realistic in how students move from much hand holding to independence in the classroom? How can we as parents support students in this developmentally challenging time from dependence to more independence in their academic identity?*

Q: Can ECS provide a fall event to provide an overview of the 6-8 program - similar to how we recruit for kindergarten? What does the educational philosophy of middle school look like? This is a missed opportunity to onboarding families to the ECS vision? How can you show that systems thinking and relationships are core components as an asset to your program?

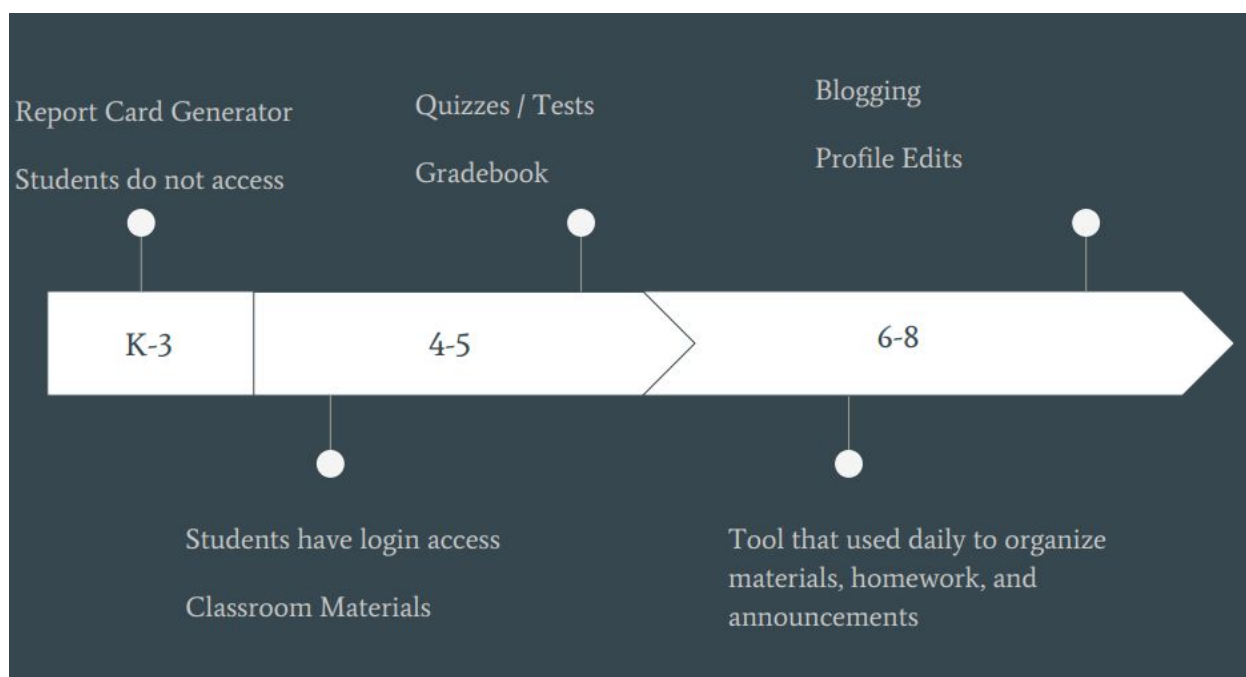
A. We love this feedback! Given this fantastic idea, Christine Adams and Nikole Sheaffer are working on a plan to do a fall event (2017) targeting our 5th grade families internally, and any external families that are interested in the middle grades experience at ECS. Look for a published date and time for information events later this summer.

Q: How do we transition from kids having teachers support at every turn to students needing to check in on Schoology daily? Are there ways to build some consistency and expectations across classrooms?

A. Andrea Szolna, ECS Upper School Counselor, and the instructional coaches will add “executive functioning” as an agenda item to support teachers and student in transition.

Q: There is still significant Schoology implementation inconsistency across teachers and grades. Can each grade and specific department clarify their expectations?

A. ECS is working hard to think about the consistency of implementation of Schoology within grade levels. The graphic below shows the progression of how we utilize this tool in our K-8 program (originally shared at the beginning of the year, this also lives on our website with additional informational resources, [here](#). Please reach out



directly to your grade level team leader (the person that emails the newsletter to families) for more clarification of Schoology guidelines and expectations at specific grade levels.

Q: ECS is working hard to keep kids in school before resorting to suspension. We appreciate this! What disciplinary actions happen when students have verbal altercation or hate speech happens in the school setting? What is the policy at ECS? How do we support inclusivity in our policies?

A: Andrea Szolna, ECS Upper School Counselor, spoke of the importance of community response around the larger issue. We are working to grow in our follow-up to community and make this a priority as different challenges arise.

From Jaleah Robinson: Mediations and/or reconciliation meetings are a useful tool in situations between a small number of students. This process provides a structure for students to collect their thoughts in writing and then share their perspective and needs with the other involved party. In the event that discriminatory words or actions affect the larger community, an administrator or teacher may also hold a meeting with a homebase or grade level. We do our best to take steps to show support to the targeted student and his or her family, and disciplinary actions may include letters of apology, loss of social and/or technology privileges, parent conferences, and suspension. In my experience thus far with students that express oppressive language, there's almost always an education piece that is lacking. It may be an uncomfortable conversation for the student, but it's important for me that I inform them of a word's historical context, connotation, and implications. It's also important that they hear directly from me that hate speech is unwelcomed in our school and reports of continued use will result in a punitive consequence.

Q. How is empathy embedded into curriculum or in the classroom activities? Are there examples that it is being integrated (outside of counselor lessons) into what is happening in the classroom?

A. Kindergarten and first grade discovery block practices mindfulness and work on many interpersonal skills during this time. During regular classroom activities in K-3 as well as during classroom meetings and Olweus meetings empathy and other related skills are taught directly and indirectly.

Q. The perception of the 4th grade punishment of assigned seating feels like it is an unfair whole group punishment.

A. *From Fourth Grade Team:* Fourth graders having assigned seats at lunch is not a punishment. We have assigned seats for a few reasons. The first is that the fourth grade, when given the opportunity to choose their own seats, are not inclusive. We repeatedly challenged the fourth grade to include all of their peers and invite others to sit with them, but still some students are left feeling like they do not have a table in which to sit. In addition, students were not meeting basic cafe expectations (staying in their seat, cleaning up their space, and being respectful to others). This was leading to the natural consequence of reduced social time for the whole group, since the grade level could not eat and clean up in the allotted time. With assigned seats, all fourth grade students are included and all students are enjoying the entire social time.

Q. Are report cards times changed?

A. We need the two week window to be able to get them processed and out. Report cards will be issued on 4/17.

Q. How is data being used to identify weaknesses in the system?

A. The CEO (Jon McCann) and the Data and Accountability Director (Dwight Laufman) review formative data in math classes across all grade levels on a monthly basis. This allows them to see from a systems view the impact of the mathematics curriculum as well as general trends in the curriculum and instructional practices across the mathematics department. This “process evaluation” approach involves both looking at school wide student data and series of non-evaluative classroom observations over the course of the year. Observations are conducted to better understand curriculum implementation in the model, the fidelity to standards-based instruction, and are the scope and sequence being implemented across the system. This high-level look at our program helps ECS to reflect, to adjust, and recognize overall strengths and challenges.