

December 8, 2016

PCO Meeting

Christy Fitzpatrick-Burns introduced the graduates and thanked them for coming.

ECS grads attended from Woodland Hills, City Charter (City High), CAPA, Allderdice, SciTech, and Obama, spanning 9-10th grades.

Christy asked about the transition from ECS to high school considering the close knit environment of ECS.

Response (WH) - ECS is small. Woodlands Hills opened my eyes to adulthood and the real world.

Response (CAPA) - it wasn't shocking to go from ECS since the class sizes aren't that small, but new faces were overwhelming. But you will have to deal with that your whole life. I transitioned well after a few weeks. There were a lot of people I didn't know. I felt out of place but that would be normal in any environment.

Response (Obama) - I had friends in my new school, but also kids I didn't know. It was very different than ECS. The first day was hard, learning a new school.

Response – It wasn't that hard for me. City Charter was organized and I stayed out of the drama.

Response (WH) – I went in with an open-mind and it wasn't too bad. If you keep your grades up and keep a good attitude it will work out.

Sci Tech is intense, fast-paced and ECS wasn't. I didn't know anyone and that was hard. It took me awhile to adjust to a new learning environment and teaching. But I'm used to it now.

Allderdice- it's up to you as a student. The transition isn't bad and you get used to it. If you don't care or put forth the effort than you might not do well.

Allderdice- it was huge but if you find the right people you will be happy and it will help you academically.

WH- At ECS you make strong bonds with student and teachers but in high school you fend for your own. You might be close to some teachers but it's not the same as the teachers at ECS. I don't feel that way in high school because there are so many teachers. I'm used to it now and adjusted to that.

Christy- that might be a product of high school in general. Kids in other middle schools may feel more of a bond with teachers than in high school.

Question – are you in team sports? Was it challenging?

Answer (WH) – I'm in softball, tennis and ruffle. It was hard to get involved because I wasn't used to seeking out the information myself. I made sure I got the right information. It depends on the school and team. High school teams are more relaxed than a club sport.

Obama – I play soccer. You get to know people quickly. I was included and it helped me get to know kids in other grades and schools. There were a lot of beginners, who have never played sports before.

Allderdice - Depends on the sport. Allderdice takes basketball and soccer seriously. You can't really play as a beginner. But the other sports would be easier for beginner level students.

WH - It's important to get involved in sports and clubs, it helped me connect with sports leaders and club leaders and I made most friends this way.

City High – the first few weeks I was uneasy. The school is downtown and that was hectic commuting. The transition at first was rocky but it is fine now. There aren't any sports. There are clubs.

CAPA – joining a club is a good way to transition to the environment. It's a nice community.

Question – what's the size of the schools?

Allderdice – large

WH – it's pretty big

City High – fairly large

CAPA – fairly small

Question – ECS has a unique way of learning and teaching, did ECS prepare you academically for high school? And was it difficult to adjust to a conventional way of learning?

SciTech – it's an advanced school and it was very different. In 10th grade you choose a Science that you concentrate it through 12th grade. For Science it was advanced. I was caught up in math but not English.

WH – I was over prepared. I took all honors classes and had little homework freshman year. I was extra prepared for math and science. English was rocky as first but I caught on.

City High – it's similar to ECS. Class-wise I knew a lot but history and English I had more work.

WH – math-wise I was prepared. Civics – I didn't feel prepared. English I was not. I didn't have a lot of grammar at ECS.

Obama – at ECS the curriculum is more project based and team work. It's not in high school.

Question – you didn't have text books at ECS, was that hard to start using them in high school?

WH – text books aren't for everybody. I'm more hands-on and don't see the benefits of it. But I'm getting used to it. I have to work hard to get everything done. It's a big adjustment.

CAPA – taking notes from text books was hard and the amount of homework was hard. But the critical thinking I used at ECS was beneficial. It would have been harder to learn critical thinking than to learn how to take notes.

Allderdice – ECS didn't prepare me studying-wise, for tests. I wasn't prepared for that.

Allderdice – if you really want to learn you will pick it up easily, it's a big change but manageable. Critical thinking helped at ECS. It's good to have a mix. I was at ECS for 8 years and for 4 years I'll have a different way of learning, so I will be well-rounded.

City Charter – it's a lot online. You get your own laptop and you get to keep it after four years.

Question – how does that year-round calendar work at City Charter?

Answer- it's different. They have trimesters. You get three weeks off in between. You lose less information than you would in the summer.

Answer – we're on winter break and it's weird because my other friends are still in school. And I'll go until July. We get August off.

Question – what's homework load like?

WH – Freshman year it was very little. A few worksheets a night. This year I'm pounded, about 3-4 hours a night. AP, Chem and Trig are all a lot of work. The workload is a lot but I'm committed and get it done.

SciTech – 3-4 hrs/night

CAPA – 1-1.5/night

City Charter – 2 hours a week

City Charter – 2 hours/night

Obama – 4 hours/night

SciTech – Pitt offers a lot of activities for students since we're in Oakland. We can go to the Pitt lab.

Question – any disadvantages coming from ECS? Is there anything you wish you would have learned at ECS?

Obama – combination locks.

SciTech – late work, we could slide at ECS. Not in high school. Note taking, social skills since it was a smaller school.

WH – there are so many people and I was used to knowing everyone in my grade at ECS. It was a disadvantage because I had less people to hang out with. I have more variety of people at WH.

CAPA – we didn't have to study for big tests at ECS. We got very specific study guides, but not in high school. I have to learn how to study.

WH – teachers hold your hands more at ECS. At ECS they remind you more to get things done and study.

WH - ECS taught me how to learn and WH is teaching me how to study.

City High – ECS didn't teach me time management. My classes at ECS weren't very long, but at City High they are and I had trouble sitting through long classes.

SciTech – public transportation is difficult and kind of scary. But it's a privilege now to go out after school and hang out with my friends and not have to rely on a school bus.

Question – is SciTech 70% boys?

Answer – it doesn't feel different. There's a lot of diversity in the school. I didn't realize it was 70% boys.

Question - How's the lunch program?

Answers –

SciTech – the lunches are gross.

City Charter – the lunches are good, they're comparable to ECS. There's a chef there. It's \$3.00 a meal. They're good quality.

WH – ECS is gourmet compared to WH lunches

CAPA – they aren't the best but they aren't bad. You can choose. It's different the lunches at ECS were fancy. Meals are free.

WH – breakfast, lunch and snacks are all free for everyone. They aren't bad. They aren't gourmet like ECS, but it's quality food.

Obama and Allderdice – all meals are free.

Comment – all Pgh city high school lunches are free.

Question – does your school require a foreign language?

Obama – we have several languages.

SciTech- just Spanish is offered. But not for freshman.

City High – they offer Spanish and French.

WH – you're required to have two years of a language. Options are French and Spanish.

Allderdice – Spanish is the worst class I take. It's so different from anything else I learn. It's extremely hard.

CAPA – French and Spanish. It was confusing at first but they start you off basic. I didn't feel behind.

Obama – we're taking a trip to Barcelona.

What's your class size?

Obama – 20-30, depends on the class.

WH – around 30 per class

WH – 25-30

City High – around 60, electives are smaller

CAPA – around 30

Allderdice – it varies depending on the class. Could be as small as 10, or as large as 30.

Allderdice – same, 10 to 25.

Question – what do you miss about ECS?

Answers – friends, teachers, only having three classes. Less homework, knowing people and where to go, the school itself. Relationships with teachers. Going outside. Hiking. The community. The group work. Knowing everyone – even the nurse.

Comment – at City High each grade is separated and you don't see other grades. You can only go on the floor for your grade.

Question – could ECS do something as alumni to help keep you engaged and connected to the school?

Answer – I'd be willing to tutor or come back to help.

Question – would it benefit you to come back and be part of the community?

Answer – a reunion would be nice.

Comment – ECS is trying to start a database of alumni.