

ESPO Meeting Notes

Tuesday, September 20, 2016

1. **Welcome Remarks & Introductions:** Elizabeth Caswell
 - ESPO Chair, Elizabeth Caswell, welcomed everyone to the first ESPO meeting of the 2016-2017 school year.
 - Elizabeth shared the ESPO goals with the group: engage parents, create a sense of community, organize activities and events to benefit Emerson children, and fundraise to support the school.
 - Elizabeth encouraged everyone to volunteer and get involved in some way—it is very rewarding!

2. **Introduction of the 2016-2017 ESPO Coordinating Committee:** Elizabeth Caswell

3. **Coordinating Committee Reports**
 - a. **Budget Review:** ESPO Treasurer, Annie Bruienne, provided an overview of the 2016-2017 budget.
 - To develop the budget, Annie looks at the projected ESPO income and determines how we can best support students and the school. Most ESPO income comes from pizza lunch (\$39,000) and annual dues (\$6,000). Always open to feedback about what is needed.
 - Annie reviewed the major expense categories: Welcome Back picnic, pizza expenses, Halloween carnival, Teacher Appreciation lunch, Field Day, Emerson cares, Passport to the World, and enrichment activities. Overall our expenses will align with income.
 - Please feel free to ask Annie questions about the budget any time.
 - b. **Chair Report:** Elizabeth highlighted ways we have been using ESPO fundraising dollars: 1) AIC – ESPO was one of the lead donors of the AIC and four new rooms in the Middle School. ESPO committed \$100,000 to structure improvements. 2) ESPO provides gifts for teacher appreciation every year. Last year's gifts: oven for school, paint for Middle School murals, and a Buddy Bench for playground.
 - c. **Pizza Lunch:** Diana Rooks, Maria Bichakjian
 - Pizza lunch responsibilities have been divided into pizza ordering and volunteering.
 - We are working hard with the Business Office to resolve issues with orders.
 - Maria gave an overview of pizza lunch and products, including Domino's cheese and pepperoni pizza (middle school only), milk, carrots, ice cream and popsicles.
 - Middle School students will be helping serve pizza this year.
 - Need more pizza volunteers. Email pizzalunch@emersonschools.org.
 - Let us know if you want to help with volunteer role next year.

4. **Introduction of Event Chairs:** Elizabeth Caswell

5. **Event Chair Reports**

- a. **Welcome Coffee:** Maria Bichakjian—It was a fun event! It was great to meet new families and see old friends.
- b. **Back to School Picnic:** Michelle Weaver—Thanks to everyone who helped. We had 370 people in attendance. This was Emerson's 3rd Welcome Back Picnic, and it was very successful.
- c. **Teacher Conference Dinners:** Lori Pearson—Sign-up will be coming soon. Teachers work very hard during the conferences and they really appreciate the food.
- d. **Halloween:** Christine Kim – Halloween carnival and parade will be on October 28. This is one of the most fun events of the year. There are lots of opportunities to volunteer. We have a parade, assembly and then a carnival (booths, games, haunted house, scavenger hunt, and activities). Wraps up around 11:50 a.m. and then the kids go back to classrooms. FYI, Kindergarteners need an adult to walk around with their kids. Teachers will be in communication with families about details for the day.
- e. **Book Fair:** Katherine Arst, Kristen Loszewski – Yearly Book Fair is held offsite, in coordination with Nicola's and Emerson librarian Linda Lakshminarayanan. Great opportunity to shop for books. There are wish lists for teachers. It is a great Emerson community event, and includes performances by school musicians and various groups. More information to follow.
- f. **Bake Sale:** Maria Bichakjian, Jeanne Cooper – Will be held November 22, the Tuesday before Thanksgiving Day, coordinates with Grandfriends Day. Need a lot of parents to donate baked goods and help run the event. Very fun event.
- g. **Passport to the World:** Jennifer Ratliff-Moss – This event will be on April 21 and celebrates the diversity at our school. This is a big event that is held every 3 years. Everyone is asked to bring a dish to share. Kids will have passport to take around. Tables represent different countries. Kids collect stamps from different countries. There is entertainment as well.

6. **Introduction of Committee Chairs:** Please let Elizabeth Caswell know if you have questions about any events on the calendar.

7. **Committee Chair Reports**

- a. **Emerson Cares:** Abbie Lawrence-Jacobson. Emerson Cares supports Emerson kids and the Emerson community. This includes welcoming new faculty, providing gifts for retiring faculty, and other special events (babies, weddings). Also involves behind the scenes work to help families facing difficult situations (meals, transportation).

- b. **Anti-Idling:** Caroline Begola: Encourages everyone to turn off vehicle in school parking lot while waiting for kids. If anyone has new ideas for Caroline, please let her know.
 - c. **Box Tops:** Dana DeBord – Emerson collects Box Tops and Labels for Education to get money and points for school. There is a clear plastic cube in the fish bowl area for Box Top collection. Watch for special Box Top promotions from stores. Also have collection sheets on Emerson website to help tabulate Box Tops before turning in.
8. **Emerson Development:** Lorna Hildebrandt, Julie Seagraves and Beth Anderson. Emerson has two main fundraisers to support the school, Annual Fund and the Emerson Auction. Tuition does not cover all of the schools costs.
- a. **Annual Fund** -- 75% participation last year, new record. Hope to do that again this year. Can support the Annual Fund in honor of someone. Please share stories with Julie about how Emerson has made an impact.
 - b. **Auction** – Friday, March 10 at Barton Hills. It is a very fun evening. Starting to work on volunteer positions and committees. Would love to have everyone involved. Raised over \$207,000 last year.

9. New Business

10. Adjournment

Head of School Remarks, John Huber

- John shared that the school year is off to a great start. The first day of school Welcome Coffee and Back to School Picnic set the tone for our community.
- Annual Fund—continue to see outstanding support from our faculty and board. Faculty, staff and board have given at 100% level for years.
- John provided an overview of last year’s goals:
 - Fiscal growth—Annual Fund.
 - Growth of Emerson financial aid—distribute about \$430,000 for families in financial need (about 11% of our population last year. Amount of financial aid has grown this year).
 - Risk Analysis—multi-year process. Focused on “student risk” last year. Moving into other areas of risk this year.
 - Developing partnerships with the University of Michigan. Last year we worked on passion projects.
- This year’s goals are:
 - Fiscal responsibility, enrollment growth and marketing.
 - Diversity—developing 3-5 year plan as part of ISACS (Independent School Association of the Central States).
 - Risk—continuing to review areas of risk that the school faces.
 - Leadership development—we have eleven new employees and a dozen employees moving to new jobs. We are helping support staff in their new roles, leadership and development.
 - End of Board’s 5-year strategic plan—looking forward to new goals.

- Please come to Grade-Level Coffees. John gets helpful feedback from families on many issues (e.g., Curriculum Night changes). New parents, please attend the New Parent Coffee as well.
- Bus transportation—has been challenging this year. We are frustrated by the service provided by Ann Arbor public schools (less service than last year). John is talking to the transportation organization to try to get the service to Emerson improved.
- Looking at school day start and end times. Asking questions, such as, do we have enough time to get done what we need to get done in middle school? Giving these topics careful and considerable thought.
- Calendar – we are keeping mid-winter break this year. Still considering what we will do next year.
- “Looking Ahead to High School” program coming up on Tuesday, October 4. Andy Zimmer will lead the program, which is focused on 7th and 8th grade families. He will discuss the wide array of options out there after 8th grade. Andy will also address the high school placement process and associated timing. This program came out of feedback at parent coffees.
- Also, there will be upcoming communication with families about transitioning to middle school.
- John highlighted a recent NPR article that reviewed a study about the K-8 education model. This model gives middle school kids the opportunity to be “top dogs.”
- John shared his goal to continue having meaningful speakers participate in ESPO meetings. He received positive feedback about last year’s speakers. John is considering several speakers for this year, including Roger Lauer and Liz May. Additionally, he is interested in getting speakers focused on technology and challenges facing boys.
- John asked what topics we would like to hear from speakers. There was interest in the following topics:
 - Film, “The Mask You Live In” about boys and societal pressures on boys.
 - Michael Thompson—talks about boys.
 - Andy Zimmer—biochemical changes in adolescence.
 - Talking to kids about diversity, issues in the news, how to talk to your kids about racial diversity and LGBTQ diversity.
 - Changing the game—young kids in sports and athletics.
 - Carrie Berkley—great talk last year, would be good to have her back.
 - Please email John with any other ideas for future speakers.

Next Meeting Date: Wednesday, November 9, 8:30am

Speaker: Watch the newsletter for information on a featured speaker.

