

ESPO Meeting Notes ***November 9, 2016***

1. **Welcome Remarks and Introductions:** Elizabeth Caswell and John Huber
 - ESPO Chair, Elizabeth Caswell, welcomed everyone to the meeting.
 - John Huber, Head of School, also welcomed the meeting attendees. John shared a few comments related to the Presidential Election, which had occurred the previous day. Political diversity needs to be embraced, as well as other forms of diversity. Teachers and staff will continue to make sure everyone feels supported. Nothing changes our Emerson mission. John is very thankful for the Emerson faculty and community.

2. **Coordinating Committee Reports**
 - a. **Budget review:** Annie Bruienne
 - Annie passed out the latest update of the ESPO income and expense budget. Overall, our income and expenses are on track with the budget.
 - Pizza Lunch income is \$19,337 to date. This is about 50% of our expected revenue for the year, so we are on track. Expenses are at \$2,273. We expect to raise a total profit of \$17,000-\$19,000 from Pizza Lunch for the whole year. Pizza lunch profits all go towards supporting ESPO events and towards gifts to the school.
 - Annie reported that the Back to School Picnic and Halloween Carnival expenses were under budget so far.
 - We are working on saving \$22,000 in a separate budget for next year's initial expenses.
 - Please ask Annie any questions you may have about the budget!
 - b. **Pizza Lunch:** Diana Rooks (through Elizabeth Caswell) and Maria Bichakjian—Elizabeth reported that the ordering side of Pizza Lunch is going well. We have smoothly transitioned into another year. There were many changes, but everyone is getting what they ordered. Thanks to Diana and Maria for accommodating all of the changes. Maria shared that everyone is welcome at Pizza Lunch. Please give Maria a call or text if you haven't signed up yet and you aren't able to get on the Pizza Lunch Signup Genius. There are always lots of ESPO jobs for people to do.
 - c. **Lost and Found:** Anja Lehmann--The Coordinating Committee is looking into how we can help the school with Lost and Found. Anja is reviewing various design options to assist with beautification of the fishbowl and find practical solutions for all users. Will keep everyone updated on plans.
 - d. **Bulletin Board:** Elizabeth Caswell--The Coordinating Committee is also working on an ESPO Bulletin Board, as part of our renewed commitment to communication. Maria B. has volunteered to help with the bulletin board. Please let Elizabeth know if you want to help with the bulletin board efforts.

3. Event Chair Reports

- a. **Teacher Conference Dinners:** Lori Pearson—All went well and the teachers really appreciated the food. Please pick up your dishes in fishbowl.
- b. **Halloween:** Christine Kim—Thank you to all of the amazing volunteers. It was a very special day! We had a great turnout and everything went smoothly!
- c. **Book Fair:** Katherine Arst and Kristen Loszewski
 - Exciting program for the evening is being put together. The Book Fair will include our children singing and entertaining us. There will also be guest authors.
 - 25% of the Book Fair proceeds go to the Emerson library. You can reserve books at Nicola's before the Book Fair. If you can't come to the Book Fair, you can make purchases the week after the Book Fair. Purchases can include gift cards.
 - We are still in need of volunteers, especially for the refreshment area.
 - Further communication will be coming from specials teachers and school emails (including schedule, Signup Genius, and nutrition info for all of the food that will be served).
- d. **Bake Sale**—Maria Bichakjian and Jeanne Cooper
 - This year's Bake Sale is focused on being comfortable, safe and inclusive.
 - Bake sale items are requested to be made without peanuts and tree nuts. We will also be accepting store bought specialty goods that are more accessible for children with allergies.
 - There will be a separate bake for your own children with additional items that are more accessible for children with allergies. Shani Horn will staff the table. She has extensive experience with food allergens and sensitivities.
 - We will be selling cakes, pies, and other goods for Thanksgiving. There will also be juice and water available.
 - Kids will be coming to the Bake Sale with their classes during the day. Items will be priced affordably for children.
 - A note will be going out in the newsletter explaining the changes and giving suggestions for recipes and nut-free goods. Parents can also bring in goods for their own children to purchase.

4. Committee Chair Reports

- a. **Emerson Cares:** Abbie Lawrence-Jacobson. This committee supports community members in challenging situations or with major life changes. We recently gave new parent Matt Nolan baby books from Nicola's.
- b. **Box Tops:** Dana DeBord. We need a new volunteer to lead the Box Top efforts. Please see Elizabeth if you are interested.

5. Emerson Development

- a. **Annual Fund**—Beth Anderson thanked everyone for their support. Last year we had 75% parent participation. Letters will be in the mail next week for this year's efforts. You can make a pledge for 2017.

- b. **Auction**—Lorna Hildebrandt announced the auction leadership and committee leads. Subcommittee meetings are coming up shortly. Please let Lorna know if you are interested in helping in any way!

6. New Business

- Maria asked whether there was budget available to thank staff around the Thanksgiving holiday. Elizabeth responded that this was a good idea. We will look into setting some money aside in the budget for next year.

Head of School Remarks, John Huber

John introduced our two guest speakers, Emerson Librarian Linda Lakshminarayanan and retired Emerson Music teacher Judy Barthwell. The speakers presented: "Talking With Your Child About Diversity."

John shared that an Emerson school-wide goal is diversity. Diversity is not only an ISACS recommendation, but also the right and good thing to do. One piece of achieving this goal is having a strong connection with our families. Discussing race with our children can strengthen these connections.

John felt Linda and Judy could provide excellent perspectives on talking with our children about diversity. As our librarian, Linda knows many amazing books about diversity. Judy started an Emerson after-school program for students of color.

Judy spoke first and shared some of her background and experiences at Emerson. Judy came to Emerson in 2002, after retiring from working in the public schools. She was part of an Emerson diversity committee. Initially, this committee was very broad in its approach and it was hard to get things done. Judy was interested in coordinating diversity into the Emerson curriculum (looking deeper into world cultures in Art, Music, Library, and Computers). They also created the Passport to the World event, which uses the parent and teacher community to represent different cultures. Judy, Linda and other teachers and administrators have in the past few years attended the NAIS PoCC (People of Color Conference), which deals with complex issues of diversity and equity.

Judy helped start the Kaleidoscope group at Emerson. The group was initially organized to give African-American children a chance to get together, as they were often split up in different classrooms. This group attracted other students, and it has now expanded to be open to everyone.

Judy shared a definition of diversity: quantifiable differences among people. She also shared a handout with definitions of other terms associated with diversity issues.

Linda shared ideas and recommendations about how books can help us understand and talk about diversity: “books provide a mirror *and* a window into other cultures.” Linda made a list of recommended books, including suggestions for kids and adults. Reading these books can help us understand our feelings and biases.

For people who are “different” in our culture, few books exist. Linda highlighted the work of Gene Luan Yang, a Chinese-American writer of graphic fiction. He talks about the importance of connections – connections not only with people who are similar to us, but with those who may be quite different. Linda challenged everyone to read a book about a character that looks different from and lives differently than him/her.

All families can check out Emerson library books! Meeting attendees were encouraged to take Judy and Linda’s handouts on diversity definitions and book recommendations. Emerson School is continuing its work towards equity and justice all of the time, not just with special programs.

Questions for Linda and Judy:

- Some children don’t have a vocabulary or understanding of prejudice and discrimination. How can we talk to children about these issues? Linda encourages us to be honest. Talk to kids about it and admit that we all have prejudices and biases.
- How do we talk to kids about violence in our world? It is difficult to cope with, especially for kids already dealing with anxiety. Linda shared feedback from a recent conference she attended. It is important to make kids feel safe. We can acknowledge that there are unsafe things in the world. But we need to help our children have faith that we are working on these issues. Encourage children to do their small bit to make things better.
- It is also important to talk to faculty about these issues. Teachers need to be able to talk about these issues helpfully in class.
- Judy recommended a book titled *Blind Spot: Hidden Biases of Good People*. The book delivers the message that in order to learn, we have to categorize information. Don’t feel guilty for having biases. Step away for a while when it gets overwhelming. But keep coming back to these issues.
- Be as transparent as possible. We are our children’s best examples of how to handle diversity issues.

Next Meeting Date: January 18, 2017

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