****

**Friends of Essex Elementary School Meeting Minutes**

**Feb 2, 2023 -- In-Person/Zoom meeting**

**Attendance:**

**In-person:** Betsy McKeen-President; Maggie Gleason - VP; Sheila McAdams - Principal; Heather Harrell - Treasurer; Bradley Cooke- Secretary; Teresa Woodman - 4th grade parent

**Via Zoom:** Rachel McInnis-Social Media Coordinator; Jessica Torcicollo - Grant Writer; Beth Prince-Kindergarten parent; Caroline Cardenas - 2nd grade parent; Beth Kelley - 1st grade teacher

**Welcome/Introductions:**

Maggie Gleason called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

**Welcome/remarks from Mrs. McAdams**

Mrs. McAdams shared that Global Play Day was a huge success. The first graders even wrote persuasive letters addressed to her to have another one this year. Since 1st grade is hosting the community meeting in April, Mrs. McAdams thinks it might be fun for the 1st graders to announce a second Play Day then.

The 5th grade play is underway and even the most reluctant kids are having a great time. Hopefully this excitement for whole-class participation will filter down to the 4th grade and they will be looking forward to their turn next year. The play will take place March 30, 31, and April 1.

Finally, Mrs. McAdams shared that the mid-year benchmark assessments (i-Ready) are wrapping up this week.

Maggie Gleason asked if there is still a staff shortage, and Mrs. McAdams confirmed that the sub list is very thin. Maggie suggested utilizing local college students, which is something EES is already doing.

***Other Key Topics brought up by Mrs. McAdams:***

* **The Playground -** Timeline is below. There is some concern about the plant plan as it may be too ambitious.



* **Community Survey -** A link will be sent out to targeted community members to gather input. This survey will include questions from the NEASC perspective as well. Mrs. McAdams will share this with FoEES too.
* **March Madness Book Bracket** - Books tie nicely with the school’s DEI work and represent perspectives by all people, cultures and races (picture books). Different schools across the country will all be logging, which will allow a broader conversation with students about how people from different areas of the country might have different opinions about books than we do. Mrs. McAdams will send Maggie Gleason the list of books needed, and she will reach out to Beverly Bookshop to get the ball rolling on obtaining these books for the school.
	+ Related to the school’s DEI initiatives, Mrs. McAdams shared that the staff recently made beaded bracelets to reflect the different experiences each individual has in the world (for example, one colored bead might represent a staff member's experience as a female, etc.) Staff then took those bracelets and looked at books to determine whether each book felt culturally relevant, sending the right messages, etc. If not, the school will be getting rid of them.
	+ In addition, Book Sources is an online opportunity where teachers can scan their books and learn about the protagonists, storylines, etc. to see if it aligns with school’s mission
	+ All of these efforts will enable EES to obtain some really wonderful books

**Remarks from Theresa Woodman, Co Chair of School Committee**

Theresa joined the meeting tonight in an effort to raise some awareness and invite engagement.

She shared that the School Committee will be enacting a correction this year with regard to how the school district has been funded in recent years. The district has been relying on reserve funds to offset expenses for the last four budget cycles; this has now snowballed. The correction will allow the district to no longer use reserve dollars which means there is roughly a $756,000 gap, as well as an open contract that needs to be funded in a different manner. The correction will also address cuts that were made that were not educationally sound (ex. 6th Grade Spanish).

The final budget vote will take place next Tuesday (2/7) at 6 pm, and Theresa is asking community members to join for the public comment portion of the meeting to share their thoughts about this big decision. She also noted that if anyone has questions to direct them to her or other school committee members.

Betsy McKeen suggested we post something on social media about this upcoming meeting. Beth Prince (Kindergarten parent) offered to write something up that can be posted.

**Enrichment Update**

Most classes have plans in place to use some of their enrichment budget this year.

* Kindergarten and 1st had the Acton Science Museum come to school and still have $500 left in each of their budgets
* 2nd grade went to Woodman’s
* 3rd grade has 3 or 4 field trips scheduled to several museums as well as an Essex River Cruise hopefully this spring
* 4th grade is planning to go to the MOS and host the NE Aquarium travel program
* 5th grade will go to Greenscapes in June
	+ Sheila also noted their trip to the Freedom Trail as part of the 5th grade end of year celebration week
	+ It was discussed whether FoEES funds should be used toward 5th grade celebration activities since historically this has not been the case
	+ FoEES is considering setting aside a set amount per head for 5th graders from our budget to help fund these special events
	+ This seems to align with the town’s community / everybody chip’s in approach to everything

We will now have electronic forms for staff to complete for enrichment opportunities:

1. Field Trip Request Form is through the front office
2. \*Stipend Request form (this will have an option to select “reimbursement requests” or “purchase for me” requests)
3. \*Funding Request form (for above and beyond stipend money)

\*The latter two forms begin as one form online and then prompt staff members to select stipend or funding requests.

\*Notification emails will be sent to FoEES President, VP and Treasurer as well as Sheila McAdams

**Grant Writing Update**

Jessica Torcicollo submitted fund documentation for Daisy Nell. This should take 6-8 weeks for reimbursement to come through. Jessica also has some grants she’s applying for in April.

Mrs. McAdams noted that EES will be looking to fund Composer in Residence differently from now on, and not put that on FoEES. It will likely go in the curriculum budget. However, Daisy Nell cannot go in budget for curriculum since she is a consultant for the school. Mrs. McAdams will be finding funding for her program differently as well.

**Polar Plunge**

It was a lot of fun and raised $902! Mr. Barnett and Patty Roundy were wonderful staff representatives.

**Messy Art Night**

Elle Woulfe has put a lot of effort toward this night and it is sure to be a success!

**Book Fair**

Date will be March 15-17. Book Fairs are already set for next year. Scholastic will be Oct 19-20 and Beverly Bookshop will occur in March of 2024. Samantha Silag will be ordering a bunch of books from Scholastic and teachers will be invited to “shop” for their classrooms.

**Restaurant Night**

Scheduled to take place at The Farm in March. Caitlin Cann is waiting on dates.

**Staff Appreciation**

The next lunch is March 15th and will be sponsored by K and 1. Amanda DesRoisers has an email prepped and ready to be sent out.

We need to find a parent volunteer to lead the weeklong Teacher Appreciation Week this year. Hillary M. has the week all mapped out and is happy to hand over the reigns for the week of May 1st - 5th. Appreciation Lunch that week will be sponsored by Grades 2 & 3.

**Stem Night - Friday April 7**

Fifteen vendors that are all set and there is potential for 15 more. Next year this event may look different and be district-wide due to Cell-Signaling offering to fund.

**Business Appeal**

Ashley Fuel made another contribution! We will want to send another business appeal out in the spring. Planning to use the March meeting to pick a date for mailing.

**Staff Stipend Use**

* Hennessey - OT - Amazon wish list was placed
* Russo - using $200 for kindergarten shelving (reimbursement)
* Macneil - $100 for flexible seating

**Staff Funding Requests**

* Sheila McAdams - Playground equipment - $350 dollars for 4th and 5th graders (FoEES board voted to approve this request tonight)

**Treasurer Update**

Tax season is coming up. Heather Harrell plans to reach out to Jeff to do our taxes once again.

**Remarks from Beth Kelley, 1st grade teacher**

Ms. Kelley shared her thanks for funding the Acton Discovery Museum visit.

She shared that the kindergarten is looking to schedule a trip to the new Children's Museum in Peabody.

Maggie Gleason recommended that 2nd grade teachers consider a trip to the Boston Library’s mapping exhibit. They could potentially use our bus credit for transportation.

**Beth Prince, K parent**

Beth was curious if the school utilizes Terracycle as a fundraiser. Mrs. McAdams shared that the district’s Green Team is already getting funding for recycling but is curious to hear if Terracycle takes used markers. It was suggested that Crayola will take these for us and that the Green Team can manage that. Mrs. McAdams will reach out to the Business office about getting bins going for Ecosmiths which will take textiles in exchange for school funds.

Betsy McKeen made a motion to adjourn, and Maggie Geleason seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:24 pm. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Next meeting: Thursday March 2, 2023 at 7:30 pm in person and on Zoom.**