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**Friends of Essex Elementary School Meeting Minutes**

**November 3, 2022 -- In-Person/Zoom meeting**

**Attendance:**

**In-person:** Betsy McKeen-President, Rachel McInnis-Social Media Coordinator; Maggie Gleason-Vice President; Heather Harrell-Treasurer; Bradley Cooke -Secretary

**Via Zoom:** Beth Kelley - 1st grade teacher; Sheila McAdams - Principal; Dustin Arnold - Parent; Hilary Mattison - Enrichment Coordinator; Jessica Torcicollo- Grant Writer

**Welcome/Introductions:**

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

**Remarks from Mrs. McAdams, Principal**

Mrs. McAdams shared that it finally feels like a real school year and that kids and teachers alike have fallen into a nice rhythm. She noted that social dynamics are starting to pop up, as is normal, so the students are learning how to collaborate with one another and navigate social situations.

She shared that the next Community Meeting (aka All School Meeting) is slated for November 18th; they will then occur monthly. Different grade levels will take the lead each time and the greater community (including parents/families and local residents like those from the senior center) will also be invited.

As an aside, Maggie Gleason suggested we invite the Senior Center to help with the next book fair. Mrs. McAdams said she would connect with Kristin so that it goes in their next newsletter.

Mrs. McAdams shared that dismissal is going well with 4th and 5th graders coming out independently while the youngsters stay in the lunchroom. She explained that the 3rd graders will start to join the older kids to help with their transition the following fall.

Betsy McKeen asked Mrs. McAdams about the new lunch initiative for 4th and 5th graders. Sheila shared that lunchtime has been a very cliquey and difficult time of day for these age groups. Therefore, they are now mixing the tables up each month to encourage students to step out of their comfort zone and get to know other students in their grade. Luckily, there are no parents who have requested their child sit separately due to allergies so this new initiative is working well.

**Hoedown Update**

Ms. Kelley shared that the turnout was great and everyone was very excited. Around 200 people were in attendance and it raised $200 in donations. Betsy is going to track down where the $200 went. Gear sales that night also raised $60, making a total profit of $216 since the Kindergarten playdate.

Some notes for next year include: the 1 hour time limit was perfect and only serving apples and water worked well. Serving the food outside the cafeteria also kept the mess minimal. Lisa Shotwell assisted in running this event this year and will take it over fully in 2023.

**Enrichment**

The 3rd graders went on a walking tour to see the Essex scarecrows, and it was a big success.

Hilary Mattison shared that a contract was just signed with Acton Science Museum to run workshops for the Kindergarten and first grader classrooms. This is new for the 1st grade and a repeat event for Kindergarten.

Hilary shared that teachers are not submitting any requests so there is not much enrichment programming underway currently. She asked Ms. Kelley and Mrs. McAdams how she should encourage the staff to take advantage of their stipends without feeling like a pest. Ms. Kelley noted that teachers get a myriad of emails each day so many times things get buried, even after flagging them as important. She said that reminder emails are helpful and definitely not seen as pestering. Ms. McAdams also offered to post all enrichment information from Hilary onto the staff Google Classroom for easy access by teachers. Ms. McAdams questioned whether the enrichment budget should be lumped together rather than split among grade levels, to which Hillary explained why we transitioned away from that model.

**Grant Writing**

Jessica Toricollo resubmitted her request for the Cell Signaling Tech check and shared that this should be reissued shortly. There are two grants she plans to apply for this month, Institutions for Savings (due December) and the Essex Community Foundation grant. Her thought was for these to help fund Change is Simple but may pivot to funding Composer in Residence based on feedback from Ms. McAdams (see below\*)

Meanwhile, Jessica shared she is still looking for new opportunities (and waiting to hear back from Essex Cultural Council in hopes of recovering some of the costs for Daisy Nell).

\*Ms. McAdams chimed in saying that Cell Signaling already gives alot of money to CIS. She is therefore meeting with Cell Signaling, Memorial principal, and Nicole Cucuru to discuss them supporting CIS costs for both schools. As a result, we are holding off from pursuing any other funding for CIS until after this meeting.

**Treasurer update:**

Heather Harrel met with Jessica to clean up Friends of EES quickbooks. She has scanned and uploaded all invoices to quickbooks as well. It was suggested that we make teacher requests digital moving forward to cut down on the need for scanning paperwork. In the meantime, Jessica recommended an app that will scan and upload receipts directly to quickbooks. Paypal payments will also transfer automatically now, and Betsy is working on remaking a charity account for Venmo that is not directly connected to her personal account. Heather requested that teachers not order things directly from Amazon because there is then tax added to the bill. If teachers submit a wishlist instead, we can get the items tax exempt.

As stated earlier, requests are coming in slowly. Mrs. McAdams requested that all requests go through her office prior to going to FriendsofEES as several purchases that have been made/requested should actually fall under the school budget (for example the ukuleles for Mr. Carpenter). She clarified that requests that happen year after year like this should be a part of the school budget. Betsy suggested we require all requests be due to the main office a week ahead of our monthly Friends of EES meetings. That being said, Betsy emphasized that if a staff member is submitting something time-sensitive, we can strategize on how best to handle in that particular case that this extra step in the process doesn’t prevent enrichment activities happening for our children.

**Teacher Appreciation Lunch**

The first is scheduled for November 9th. Rachel McInnis is helping 4th and 5th grade parents with set up starting at 9:30 am. There will also be a cart at drop off to help receive dishes.

**Community Read**

The books are in, but not distributed. Ms. McAdams shared that this will likely take place during the short week of Thanksgiving. She is going to check in with Rachelle Russo about the Hoover Fund stickers that usually go inside the books.

**Restaurant Night**

First one will take place at CK Pearl on the 15th. Rachel will be making a big social media post about upcoming events (messy art night, restaurant night, etc.) and then will follow up with individual posts.

**Winter Warm Up - whole month of December**

Last year Maggie Gleason worked with Hannah Harlow at Beverly Bookshop to offer teachers a way to request new books to warm up their classroom libraries. Staff members submitted a wishlist on google sheets that was shared with families so that their holiday gifts could be books instead of mugs/candles/chachkies.

Mrs. McAdams shared that there is also a push for families to contribute to the Bobby Decker Foundation in lieu of teacher gifts. She is going to take both ideas back to staff to decide whether we pursue the Warm Up together with these donations, or someone keep them separate.

**Messy Art Night**

This is scheduled for Nov 18th. Jade Gideon, Natasha Taylor, Elle Woulfe, and Jessica Hammon will all help to run it. Betsy reached out to them but hasn’t heard back. Previously the timing of 5:30 - 7:30 has worked well and it takes place in just the cafeteria with round tables and brown paper on the floor. There is no book far occurring this November but it is already booked for NEXT fall to coincide with 2023 Hoedown.

**Gear Sale**

We will be holding an old gear sale (we ordered $500 worth and have sold $216). All Essex Elementary school gear through jungle inc. We picked out all the stuff just waiting for Jungle to publish it, but it needs to close by Nov 28th to make the holiday deadline.

**Playground update**

There is $8900 left in beautification project funds. Mrs. McAdams gave a plant list to Corliss Brothers who will be pricing out their spring costs. Ms. McAdams would love to do a spring plant and make it a community event similar to the front of the school. She is in conversations with the superintendent about naming the playground. Things are temporarily held up as Manchester is opposed to naming their new playgrounds. Mrs. McAdams shared that she hoped there will be a big community celebration, ribbon cutting, and naming this spring.

There was a brief mention of asking the high schoolers / Essex Tech / local carpenter to help make a sign for the new playground with a new name.

**Appeals**

The family appeals went out today. There were also three business appeals in our mailbox today, and Mrs. McAdams suspects there may be more on her desk. Betsy has custom stickers (thanks to Destiny Creeden) for the businesses that have already contributed this year. She and Maggie Gleason will distribute these along with thank you notes. Betsy will also add a banner to the Friends of EES website with shout outs to our sponsors. Finally, Rachel will start to include sponsor highlight posts on social media.

**Parent Questions for Mrs. McAdams**

A question was raised about RTI at Essex Elementary this year. Sheila explained that the school has transitioned to using the MTSS system of support which does much less pulling out that RTI and keeps students in the classroom. She noted that Title 1 has also kicked in for grades 1 & 2. She also shared that students have been assessed using iReady and teachers are looking at this data now. She recommended parents ask about these things at the upcoming conferences.

Another question was regarding Nutrislice. Sheila shared that she will be meeting with them shortly about the issues with the app menu not matching what is actually being served. She also clarified that lunch is still free UNLESS a child requests a second main dish. Seconds on fruit and veggies are still free. Sheila encouraged parents to send her an email with their concerns so hse can share this when she meets with the providers. On her list are also breakfast offerings and healthier lunch options. A concern about serving size for a kindergartener vs a 5th grader was also shared.

Finally, a parent request was made to design and add something that appeals to the older students at the playground. Examples include a chin up bar or ninja warrior course. Sheila noted that teachers of these older grades have made similar requests and it is on her radar. The hope is that CIS will be funded and this will loosen up some funding for additions like this.

Maggie Gleason made a motion to adjourn, and Betsy McKeen seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 8:48 pm.

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**Next meeting: Thursday Dec 1, 2022 at 7:30 pm in person and on Zoom.**