



Emerson-Williams Elementary School PTO, LLC
 Meeting Minutes for
 Thursday, September 10, 2020 at 7:30 p.m. ET

Attendees

Anderson, Rebecca	Carvalho, Stephanie	Sousa, Christen	
Bouzko, Marta	George, Ruth	Struk, Autumn	
Bouzko, Serhie	Hernandez, Andrea	Smith, Shana	
Burlingame, Amy	Mattatall, Colleen	Thakur, Neela	
Caravella, Emily	Root, Elisa	Williams, Leslie	

Welcome

Rebecca Anderson/Leslie Williams

Call to order at 7:38 p.m.

- Rebecca welcomed and thanked all the teachers and parents for attending this meeting.
- Rebecca introduced herself and gave a little personal background about her family.
- Rebecca officially welcomed Leslie Williams to the PTO Board as 1st Year Co-President and some background on Leslie, her family, and experience with the PTO.
- Leslie thanked the teachers for all they do, especially with all the students at home. Leslie is happy to be a part of the EWPTO Board and her 'door is open.'

Secretary's Report

Open Position (Leslie Williams)

- Approval of 05/14/2020 meeting minutes was motioned by Autumn Struk. Seconded by Leslie Williams and approved.
- Approval of 06/04/2020 meeting minutes was motioned by Neela Thakur. Seconded by Elisa Root and approved.
- Attendance is taken virtually by your listed name in the Free Conference Call meeting.
- Thank-you cards from:
 - Courageous Conversations Committee: Rosalia, Brenda, Elisa, Pam, and Neela - for the multicultural books
 - Deb Byrne, Special Education Teacher – for the money to spend on students.
 - Maggie Gove, Grade 3 Teacher – for the money to replenish Kleenex supply.
 - Karen Jahne, Kindergarten Teacher – for the money for the classroom.
 - Ann-Marie Moore, Grade 3 Teacher – for the money to buy dry erase markers and pencils.
 - Jenn Kardys, Grade 5 Teacher – for the money to by class supplies.
 - Steph Laskowski, Elisa Root, Jamie Shoemaker, Grade 2 Teachers – for money for class materials.
- Renewed membership is needed to vote tonight for a new Secretary and Treasurer. Go to <https://www.ewpto.com/membership/> to register as a member in order to vote and make motions. It is all online now and there is also an optional way to use our PayPal link to make a voluntary membership donation on the membership page of the website.

Treasurer's Report

Open Position (Rebecca Anderson)

- It took approximately 6 weeks (July 15, 2020 through August 2020) for Rebecca Anderson and Leslie Williams to be added as authorized on the TD Bank account due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

- Currently, QuickBooks is not updated due to the hope for a new Treasurer to start off the year right from the beginning with recordkeeping. Therefore, updated budget unavailable.
- Copy of EWPTO approved budget for 2020-2021 provided virtually.
- TD Bank balance as of 09/10/2020 was \$18,389.07 with a pending incoming deposit of \$23.65.
- Rebecca thanked Amy Burlingame, Treasurer for the last 2 previous years, for all her hard work for EWPTO.
- Rebecca outlined all of the bank account debits and credits since Amy last reconciled QuickBooks, per the TD Bank statement dated July 10, 2020.
- EWPTO Venmo account disabled. Venmo is person to person and not person to non-profit. Venmo is only working with a select few of non-profits to establish this type of account availability. Until then, all electronic payments to EWPTO can be accepted via PayPal by searching treasurer@ewpto.com and switch to send money to friends to avoid fees.

Principal's Remarks

Ms. Neela Thakur

- She hopes we're all doing ok. Bottom line teachers and staff are so incredibly happy to be reconnected with students. Being reconnected is such an amazing feeling after such a long time of disconnect. It's not been easy, but Neela is very proud of her staff.
- Ms. Thakur discussed topics from their staff meeting on 9/9/2020.
 - Things that are going well or better than expected.
 - Morning arrival time has been going so well in terms of procedure and social emotional level. Four different entrances, half the number of students and, staggered arrival times has helped. The staff was expecting to see some worried, distraught, or emotional students, but they haven't seen too much of it. Students have been positive and have had an upbeat attitude.
 - Staff thought their connection to remote learners would be bizarre and strange, but they are finding that they are already connecting to the full-time remote learners. Staff is happy to see those students excited and engaged and feel connected to the in-school learners.
 - Collaboration with grade level team mates is going great with the staff supporting one another.
 - Fire drill the prior day went really well even with masks and social distancing. All students did an amazing job, even the Kindergartners.
 - Staff is pleasantly surprised with the 21% of E-W full-time remote learners (and parents too) that are excited and engaged.
 - Things not going well or are funky.
 - Staff has fully embraced the growth mindset knowing that things will get better as we go. Staff is doing great and you can't tell when you walk into the class.
 - Concept of balancing in person learners and remote learners on the big screen – staff is pulling it off, but it's incredibly difficult. Teachers are feeling very tied to desk/chair/Chromebook to engage with both types of learners. Unable to walk around the classroom and still be seen by the remote learners. Definitely an adjustment.
 - Teachers need to project their voice so that kids in the back of the class can hear the teacher through the face mask. It's different than when they used to be on the carpet reading a book and could do different inflections, including whispering. Kids are having a hard time hearing them.
 - Grades K-2 Teachers are finding technology incredibly difficult for the students. Students are not as independent at home. All households are different. There's a huge variance – some kids have a parent seated with them the entire day; they are connected and engaged and can work out tech issues. However, there are others without an adult resource by their side. For those kids, technology is a problem for them and it is difficult for these younger students to maneuver through Google Meet/Classroom and Seesaw.
 - Air flow discussion with the fans blowing – it is very loud and it makes it so very difficult to hear, especially through the mask. The most difficult is inside the gymnasium as there is a huge fan in the gym. Mrs. Dalke, P. E. Teacher, is using a microphone system so the remote learners can hear and she can hear them, but the students inside the gym she cannot hear those students. For now, it's ok as she takes the in-school students outside weather permitting and can answer questions at that point. However, when weather gets bad, that will be an issue.
 - There are concerns around teacher internal struggles with the amount of daily screen time students have. This is the mode of teaching now and much of what is given for work is

technology based, but much of what they do is staring at a screen. There is so much more they want to be doing with the kids but feel they are trapped by the screen. Even for the in-school students, teachers are trying to build a sense of classroom community. Google Meets help, but that also creates more screen time.

- Neela said those are honest reflections from staff and as time goes on those opinions may change. She asked for parent feedback and questions as well. Several parents expressed thanks to all the teachers and staff for all they have been doing for the students and compliments were given for several teachers. There was surprise over the issue of wearing the mask seems to be a non-issue for students for the most part. It was also brought up that there are situations of in school learners in and the balance between number of boys vs. girls. Neela expressed based on alphabet, cohorts, and number of full -time remote and some situations happened where there is 1 boy or 1 girl. Switching Cohorts are available in certain circumstances. Cohorts are changing daily and many that have been full-time remote are changing to hybrid.
- Wednesdays are remote school days, full time working day for teachers and teachers are remote from home, but it may vary by teacher – can include individual and small group instruction, choice board, focus on full-time remote learners too. Wednesdays are catch up days for student work too. There may be morning meetings too. Parent meetings and collaboration time for teacher colleagues, and professional development will all occur on Wednesdays too.

PTO Teacher Liaison

Ms. Elisa Root, Grade 2 Teacher

- Teachers missed seeing the kids and parents and it's nice to be back meeting with the PTO and supporting one another.
- Teachers want to thank parents for your flexibility, patience, and support. Parents have been wonderful and it shows we don't give up, we're a team, and we're all modeling the growth mindset.
- Thank you for the Gaga Ball Pit and we are so excited for when we get the chance to learn to use it and to play. Faculty is just as excited as the kids!
- Thank you for the nice sweet treats to welcome teachers back to school. It was very kind and appreciated.
- E-W Staff Changes
 - Long-Term Subs in place:
 - For Art: Joy Houlder is supporting Mrs. Richard's classes – WPS is working to get her an email address and a link for her to go remote.
 - Kindergarten: We welcome Melissa Sanford as our new Kindergarten Teacher who has Kathy Clark, our Reading Tutor, supporting her class.
 - Grade 1: Michelle Boyd has Brenda McLaughlin, our Reading Consultant, supporting her class.
 - Grade 5: Emily Woods has Jen Errickson, our Reading Tutor, supporting her class.
 - Grade 6: Mrs. Reynolds
 - New Staff
 - Kathleen Maffuid is our new school Nurse.
 - We have a 2nd building sub. We do have Ms. Cord back this year, but we also have Mr. Joe DiNardi starting off this year. The kids are familiar with him as a long time sub.
 - We have 2 new lunch aides Bethany Scata and Salinas Pullino.
 - We also have the amazing return of Karen Jahne as our Reading Tutor. We're all so excited.
- Important Reminders from the Teachers:
 - When bringing materials back and forth from school to remote and back. Be sure they have all their materials and are ready. Especially fully charged chrome books.
 - Towels or small blanket is important for sitting outside to eat.
 - Water bottles are so important as kids cannot go to the water fountain to drink, only to fill their water bottle. There have been kids that have said they are so thirsty when they forget their water bottle.
- Teachers are excited about virtual open house on Wednesday, 9/16 and Thursday 9/17. Check your grade level meet time(s) and there are also Unified Arts (UA) Teachers and support staff that might be available on a different night.

New Business Reminder: No New Business added to current New Business list.

Committee Reports:

General Committee Information

Rebecca Anderson

- Rebecca and Leslie met with Neela this summer to discuss limitations due to the pandemic and general overview of how things will be running from a PTO perspective.
 - No outside visitors are allowed in the building for any reason until further notice,
 - No in-person events are being promoted between students and parents and guardians; however, touchless fundraisers are 100% ok.
 - All communication from EWPTO is digital this year. If you only have a work email and are not permitted to use it for anything but work, we recommend you obtain another free email such as Yahoo, Gmail or Hotmail.
 - The following Committees and their activities are on hold due to the pandemic until we are notified otherwise by Neela:
 - Welcome Back Luncheon
 - Birthday Board
 - Kindergarten Helpers
 - Copy Crew
 - Dinner on the Lawn
 - School Pictures
 - Holiday Store
 - Vendor Fair
 - Enrichment aka (High Tech/High Touch)
 - Color Run/Tiger Trot
 - Thank you to all those who have volunteered so far to chair Committees! We still need Committee Chairs for our remaining active Committees. You can sign up at ewpto.com found under the 'What We Do' section; click Committees, then scroll through until you find the Committee you want and click sign-up for Committee.
 - Address Directory
 - Room Parents
 - Candles (formally Yankee Candle)
 - Apparel (local vendor is set up)
 - Book Fair (vendor is set up)
 - 6th Grade Committee
 - Nominations are open and we still need a Secretary and Treasurer. Rebecca asked that if anyone wishes to vote tonight on Secretary or Treasurer position to submit their online membership request to have voting rights. You can nominate yourself or a friend anytime during the meeting. Neela volunteered to take nominations/count votes.
- **Book Fair** **Open Position (Rebecca Anderson)**
 - Scholastic doesn't offer virtual book fair with cash profit, only Scholastic Dollars.
 - The Board found a wonderful company, Fantastic Book Fairs, out of Massachusetts that provides cash profit and scheduled with them. They have a nice selection of Spanish books too.
 - Virtual Book Fair will run 09/24/2020 through 10/4/2020.
 - Shipping will be \$3.95-\$5.95 depending on order size.
 - Profit is 10-22% depending on total sales.
 - We need a Chairperson for Book Fair to advertise it, work on Teacher Book Wish Lists, and handle questions.
- **Box Tops** **Open Position (Rebecca Anderson)**
 - We need a Chairperson for Box Tops.
 - Profit so far is \$31.50 against a projected \$300 profit for the year. This lower amount than usual is due to scanning of the receipts from the new Box Tops app.

- We still have outstanding clipped Box Tops floating around in households and we should find a way to collect them in a safe manner. Any ideas for this to happen, please send them to boxtops.committee@ewpto.com.
- **Membership** **Rebecca Anderson**
 - We have updated the Membership form to be 100% touchless on the website at <https://www.ewpto.com/membership/>. It also has an embedded link to our PayPal account for voluntary donations.
- **Nominations** **Open Position (Rebecca Anderson)**
 - Nominations can be made from the floor verbally at any time until nominations are motioned closed and can also be emailed during the meeting to nominations@ewpto.com or placed in the meeting chat.
- **Spiritwear** **Open Position (Rebecca Anderson)**
 - Vendor is booked. We need a Chair for Spiritwear Committee.
 - We are using Yours Personally LLC and you can check them out at <https://www.yourspersonallyllc.com/>. This is the same vendor who did the 6th Grade t-shirts from last year. She is also a local small shop business owner.
 - All sales are virtual via an online store with direct ship to the families.
- **Website** **Open Position (Leslie Williams/Rebecca Anderson)**
 - We have made a few changes, most notably to the Membership Online Form
 - Donation link to EWPTO's PayPal. You can print a tax-deductible receipt from a desktop computer right from your PayPal account.
 - New Parent section of site updated. Teacher names/grades updated in sign up forms such as Directory and Room Parents.
 - If you see anything that we missed or that needs an update, email webmaster@ewpto.com
 - We are looking for someone to be the new Webmaster. If interested, send us an email. Not a huge time commitment and we only have limited Wordpress experience.
- **WSPC** **Colleen Mattatall**
 - Meeting was held last week after school started. Mr. Emmett talked about the beginning of the school year and how the kids are doing well and kids are wearing masks.
 - Hybrid model is scheduled for 2 months, Oct/Nov and he is working closely with the CT Health District. Meetings weekly to check in on infection rate.
 - Past 8-10 weeks, no deaths in Wethersfield due to Covid-19. Covid-19 cases are really low.
 - Challenge highlighted was building sub pool. Increased number of building subs so this year we have 23 building subs, last year only 7. This has helped.
 - Looking to add bus monitors. Now there are only 4 monitors. Very few students riding the bus. One bus, possibly for E-W, arrived at school with no kids to unload. Mr. Emmett is concerned about buses as they are video monitored and he can see kids are removing masks on the bus. He wants to make sure that the drivers are focused on driving. Bus monitors will take care of mask issues.
 - Mr. Emmett talked about the free lunch program, visitor limitation, portables up at Highcrest Elementary School are open.
 - A parent asked at what point would the Wethersfield move to full time distance learning based on the Covid-19 infection rate? Mr. Emmett said mostly he's looking at the local data for Wethersfield. They get nervous when it goes over 1%. Wethersfield has a total of 282 Covid-19 cases and no deaths in town for the last 8-10 weeks. Comfortable with those numbers now, but they monitor them frequently.
 - Lots of questions asked by those at the meeting, but none specific to E-W, except that the WSPC is considering decreasing their annual fee charged from \$75 to either \$40-\$50 that would be a cost savings to the PTO's. Once that's decided at the next meeting, WSPC will notify all the PTO Treasurers.

Old Business

1. **Gaga Ball Pit** – It has been installed by Jack Kulpa as part of his Eagle Scout project. He finally got permission from the town in late August. He and his crew of other Eagle Scouts candidates

were installing the Gaga Ball Pit. It looks really nice in school colors royal blue and orange. The 10 balls purchased for Gaga Ball Pit, which are not inflated, along with the extra screws and assembly instructions, are in the PTO closet for storage. There was some extra floor mat material left over and we donated to E-W and gave to Jimmy Discenza, our Custodian for use/storage. ADA gate requires a lock so that the gate won't get damaged. We still need reach out to the town for a lock with a universal key to be used. This way all lawn care and custodians will have the key. The Kulpa Family had stored it in their house for about 4 months and then moved it to the school storage unit and then about a month later got permission to install it. The question was raised as to use and learning how to play. Due to Covid-19, kids cannot use it yet, but when allowed, they will work with Mrs. Dalke, teachers, Lunch Aides, and students to be sure everyone knows how to use it and the rules.

New Business

1. Vote for Officers – Open Positions: Secretary and Treasurer

- a. Neela announced we currently have 1 volunteer for Secretary, Stephanie Carvalho. We have no volunteers for Treasurer.
- b. Final request for nominations was offered after requesting nominations several times throughout the meeting. Hearing no additional nominations, the nominations were closed for open positions.
- c. Stephanie gave some background about herself, her family, and her career in Social Work, and her passion to help the kids.
- d. Rebecca offered last call for nominations for either open position and there are none. She then closed nominations.
- e. PTO Members voted Stephanie Carvalho in as EWPTO Secretary. Congratulations!
- f. EWPTO Board still needs a Treasurer.

2. New Fundraisers

- a. **Core Club** - An app-based subscription service that debits the subscriber's bank account monthly at a minimum of \$2.99 as a donation to EWPTO. Plans are also available at \$4.99 and \$9.99 and the amount can be changed or cancelled at any time with no penalty.
 - i. It is a no fundraiser fundraiser, set it and forget it. Donations in lower increments over the course of a longer period.
 - ii. Begins 10/04/2020 with an open-end date. Auto renews unless cancelled.
 - iii. We need someone to run the fundraiser.
 - iv. Until we have someone else to run it, any questions, please email Rebecca Anderson at 2yrpres@ewpto.com
 - v. Profit split is 30/70 split. EWPTO gets 70% profit and the parent company of Core Club receives 30%.
 - vi. If one family subscribes at the minimum amount, they will have donated by the end of the school year a total of \$26-30 if starting in October/November timeframe. We keep \$18-21.
- b. **Kringle Candle (former vendor Yankee Candle)** - With the impact of COVID-19, Yankee Candle has ceased their fundraising section of their business. We needed to look elsewhere to fill this gap and we have scheduled the Kringle Candle Company. Founded in 2009, Kringle Candle Company is located down the street from Yankee Candle and is owned and operated by Michael Kittredge III, the son of the founder of Yankee Candle.
 - i. Virtual fundraiser will be held 10/25/2020 through 11/12/2020
 - ii. Budgeted profit is \$250 for candles. Profit is 40% of all online sales.
 - iii. Standard shipping rates apply; orders of \$75 or more qualify for free shipping.
 - iv. App available for use as well.
- c. **Shop with Scrip** - This program is an online and app-based Gift Card program. Gift cards are purchased at face value. A percentage of that gift card is given back to EWPTO. The company makes their money by charging a nominal fee on each transaction. Cards can be

ordered as ecards that are sent directly to your inbox or can be ordered as physical gift cards in bulk orders that are usually placed once per month on a predetermined day and sent to the Board to deliver to you. Profits are automatically deposited into the PTO bank account the same way as Amazon Smile. Some notable companies that are supported are; Stop & Shop, Amazon, Wal-Mart, Buffalo Wild Wings, the Gap, Panera, and Disney.

- i. App is called Raise Right
- ii. Began 07/29/2020 and is open ended.
- iii. Currently we have profited \$23.65 from Leslie Williams testing it for about a month buying gift cards to use for her everyday purchases.
- iv. Nominal fee - .15 cents per bank account linked transaction, \$2.25 for each credit/debit card transaction. You can buy multiple gift cards from multiple stores all on one transaction.
- v. If about 170 E-W families roughly ½ participated, we could profit up to \$4000 per month. Even if only ¼ of our E-W families participated, we could profit up to \$2000.

Old Business

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Open Forum:

1. **Holiday Store** – Shana Smith requested research be done for a virtual Holiday Store. The Board will check out what is available and send her the information.
2. **6th Grade Committee** – Autumn Struk advised that Stephanie Conashevick texted her and will volunteer to chair 6th Grade Committee.

Closing Remarks

Rebecca Anderson/Leslie Williams

- o Thank you for being flexible with our meeting time tonight at 7:30 p.m.
- o Thank you and welcome to Stephanie for volunteering for the Secretary position.
- o Thank you to teachers, staff, and parents for all your participation in EWPTO. We appreciate you!

Adjourn: 9:20 p.m.

Next PTO Meeting 10/08/2020

Meeting Link: <https://www.freeconferencecall.com/wall/2yrpres5> Online Meeting ID: 2yrpres5

Call-in Number: +1 (602)-580-9324

Access Code*: 5944553

Tiger Topic submissions are due by the Sunday after the PTO meeting.

Email to: tigertopics@ewpto.com