



Emerson Williams PTO Meeting Minutes

Monday, September 14th 2026
6:30 p.m.

Attendees:

Neela Thakur	Nicole Wante	Lauren Rhines
Katherine Patnaude	Lauren Damm	Katrina Ross
Derek Lata	Andrea Hernandez	Patricia Delmonte
Aime Lugo	Mindy Gold	Liz Keyes
Yuletzi Niedbala	Jessica Seaha	Sarah Cavener
Kerry Houle	Chelsea Griffin	Nadia Tracy
Claude Gibbs	Elesia Gibbs	Joella Thombs

Welcome:

- Call to order at 6:33pm
- Welcome to everyone and introductions of those in attendance
- QR code available to complete our PTO survey
- PTO membership challenge – the class with the highest percentage of sign-ups gets extra recess, for parents you are entered into a raffle for front row seats at the winter concert!

Treasurer Report: Katrina Ross

- Current balance reviewed up to today
- A lot of 6th grade bills got paid after our last PTO meeting in June
- \$12,000+ currently in the bank
- Operating at a deficit for this year as expected
- Made a few changes to line items on the budget (6th grade having their own line)
- If anyone needs to be reimbursed for something in the future for an event– you would complete a form and submit it to the treasurer

Principal Report: Neela Thakur

- Excited to see the big turnout for PTO meeting tonight. Even if you aren't able to attend every meeting, we would love to have parents attend whenever they are free or volunteer whenever they can throughout the year. It's also a great way to connect with school staff and other parents.
- PTO is always looking for new ideas for activities, events, and/or fundraisers
- There have been new positions created for this year:
 - One full time Kindergarten literacy paraprofessional (EW's has CT teacher certification)
 - One full time certified reading interventionist – supporting general education students who need additional reading support.
 - An additional full time special education teacher – went from 2 to 3
 - One is returning from maternity leave in November
 - A K-8 stem administrator for the school district (STEM – science, technology, engineering, and math)
 - K-8 humanities administrator for school district (reading, writing, and social studies)
 - A new literacy program for grades 5 and 6 (grades 5-8) called Wit and Wisdom
 - A new literacy program for K-4 called Bookworms (K-3 started this last year, now includes 4th grade)
 - A K-12 district audit to assess how we are currently helping our high needs learners (sped, ELL, free/reduced lunch) – The consulting firm is New Solutions K-12. Audit is

- occurring in the fall with a report coming out around November.
- A Birth to K audit to assess how we are currently supporting children and families before children enter Kindergarten. The consulting firm is called Partners for Educational Leadership.
- Outside Math Consultant hired to help improve math instruction Grade 5-9 districtwide
- Mindset – Neela’s Parent Book Club
- The Look for the Good Project – Schoolwide Gratitude Initiative/Campaign – This will take place in November for 2 weeks
- Community Brainstorming for EW’s 75th Anniversary which will take place in the 2027-2028 school year

Board of Education: Mindy Gold

- Just had their first meeting
 - Looked at districtwide data – strengths and opportunities districtwide
 - Visioning activity – Once they are in draft form, they will be available to share
- Mindy was also part of the referendum for the renovations for the elementary school, helps with WECC, is on the board for Childcare for CT, and is an EW parent.
- They are very focused on early literacy and interventions
- Feel free to reach out to Mindy at any time to ask questions about things that are going on

Teacher Report: None.

COMMITTEE UPDATES:

- Cheer Committee
 - Karla is our chair
 - Trick or Treat yourself in the teacher’s lounge for October
 - She is looking for volunteers to help her put it on: ideas or setting up
- **Community Outreach**
 - We are looking for a chair for this committee
 - Food drive for Wethersfield Food Pantry is occurring during the week of 9/28; a flyer will be coming soon
- **Looking for additional fundraisers for this year**
 - Looking for new ideas; how many fundraisers is manageable and not overwhelming?
 - Spirit wear
 - Possibly do a vendor fair with local businesses
 - Could we do an opt out of fundraiser option where you could make a donation instead of doing the fundraiser
 - Build a teddy bear?
 - Harlem Wizards – Lauren Rhines has been working on this; We can do this as a collective with other elementary schools. When spectators buy tickets, they select their elementary school to benefit.
 - Stripes Giblets for Crocs?
- **Color Run**
 - Looking to do this in the spring.
- **Trunk or Treat:** Nicole Wante & Sarah Cavener will chair this
 - Sign up to decorate a car or bring in candy to donate
- **Room Parents:**
 - **None for:**
 - K – Daniolos
 - 3 – Carrano
 - **Only 1 in:**
 - Hanlon, Kardys, Egan
 - Responsibilities for this are what you make it; It can include coordinating parents

coming in to complete crafts, gifts for teachers, and bringing in any supplies they may need. One room parent is good, but it can be nice to have a partner to work together with.

- **Sports and Games: Derek Lata**
 - Karate – This will run for 4 consecutive weeks after school:
 - October 27th – Nov 24th
 - Flyer needed to be sent home
 - 100% of proceeds go to the PTO
 - This year they are allowing 40 students to sign up (if all filled \$1900 for PTO)
 - Graduation is Dec 4th at their studio in Newington
 - They will offer another session in the spring too
 - **Need a parent volunteer**
 - Possibly Emily Lata
- **6th Grade Field Trip to Hartford Wolf Pack** – November 16th 11am -1:15pm
 - School Days game
 - This will cost \$12 per ticket and they need 67 tickets with teachers
 - Coordinating with 6th grade teachers and committee
- **Hartford Wolf Pack**
 - Game in March
 - Working with Colleen Mello (music coordinator) to have student play a song of choice during intermission or national anthem at the start of the game.
 - Could potentially get other students to wave the big flag on the ice (maybe as part of a raffle?)
 - Raffle opportunity to ride the Zamboni
 - Raffle opportunity to watch warm ups from the bench
 - Can also buy tickets in bulk for a reduce price to a chosen game
- **Yard Goats Fundraiser Idea**
 - Only a portion of the proceeds go to PTO
 - April 25th, May 16th, May 23rd, June 6th are potential dates which are all Sundays; Will look at calendar to ensure it doesn't overlap with other town/school events.
- **Uconn Games, Hartford Athletica are other potential ticket sales**
- **Spirit wear –**
 - Possible vintage graphics for adults and hats
 - Discussions around keeping the EW store open or have the sale 2 times a year (Oct and Feb/March)
 - October 19th (unconfirmed date) the spirit wear store will be open for 3 weeks – with delivery being right before Thanksgiving
- **6th grade committee**
 - Lyman Orchard fundraiser – October 2nd through October 16th with a delivery date of November 12th.
- **Book Fair – Joella Thombs**
 - Sept 28th – October 1st
 - Monday is wish list day in school
 - Tuesday is school shopping
 - Wed/Thurs is afterschool shopping
 - Joella will plan out a raffle at the book fair for those who bring in canned goods
 - Last year we used \$200 of scholastic dollars for students in need – All agreed we would use that again this year.
 - Currently have a balance of \$2,000 of scholastic dollars
 - We could also use the dollars to buy larger items and use them for raffles or other activities throughout the year

- Currently we are looking good with volunteers, but can always use more if anyone is interested.
- Thursday, October 1st we need help breaking down the book fair– 6:15-7pm
- Also, Friday, September 25th will need help with set up – afterschool
- **Parent Council**
 - 1st Thursday each month at noon
 - Sit with superintendent, hear any updates, ask questions
 - Joella is the EW rep
 - BOE update – new board of Ed member Phil Davidson
 - Superintendent and BOE will be relooking at the strategic plan – you can email the ed rep if you have any questions or concerns
- **BIPOC** – will remeet in October
 - Fair will be in April
 - They will be fundraising
- **WSPC** hosting **movie night at the Cove** – September 18th
 - There will be bounce houses, an ice cream truck, tables of activities, etc.
 - There is a Facebook page for WSPC if you want to check out any activities or updates.
- **Walk, Bike, Roll to school day:** Wednesday October 7th
 - Looking to Liz Keyes to help run
 - In the past there has been a walking school bus around Dale Road
 - Looking for someone to lead another group of walkers in another part of town
- **Picture Day** – Monday October 5th
 - Doing the entire school body on the same day and they will try to take in consideration having kids get their pictures taken before lunch, recess, gym, etc.
 - There will be a picture retake day too

NEW BUSINESS

- **Dinner on the lawn** was last week
 - The lost and found tag sale went well
 - Reach out to town services about not driving up the back path
- **Poetry in Motion** request by Neela Thakur
 - For 2 assemblies – Hip hop group \$3500 on November 20th
 - PTO will look at the budget and see if there are funds to provide a portion or the entire amount and vote on it during the October meeting
- **3rd Grade field trip**
 - Joella Thombs brought up concern that last year 2nd graders had their field trip revoked due to bad behavior. Wanted to make sure that they will get to go on a field trip this year. Neela reported that she will work with the 3rd grade team.

ITEMS TO VOTE ON

1. June Meeting minutes
 - a. Motioned to approve by Liz Keyes
 - b. Seconded by Lauren Damm
 - c. All in favor, minutes approved

Meeting called to close at 7:56pm