Emerson Williams PTO Meeting Minutes

Monday, November 9th 2026
6:30 p.m.

Attendees:

Neela Thakur	Nicole Wante	Katherine Patnaude
Lauren Damm	Liz Keyes	Bobbie Granato
Derek Lata	Andrea Hernandez	Amie Lugo
Kerry Houle	Jessica Seaha	

Welcome:

- Call to order at 6:32pm
- Welcome to everyone and introductions of those in attendance

Treasurer Report:

- Current balance reviewed
- Athletics is -$200 because of the yard goat tickets we put a deposit on
- We earned $2700 from Scholastic
- Creative Arts Council - $4.50 per student
- We adjusted the budget for the Poetry in Motion assembly that PTO gave money for
- There is a $900 donation for 6th grade committee that is restricted; to help students who cannot afford dues, etc.
- Creative Arts Council – money is set aside for this in the PTO account now

Principal Report: Neela Thakur

- The School of Distinction Award will be awarded at the BOE meeting tomorrow night. PTO families will be in attendance. This is Emerson-Williams' first time receiving this award
    - This award is focused on growth – recognizing us specifically for Math; top 10% of math growth in all of CT and in the top 10% for growth among “high need” students.
- Starting today and for next 2 weeks we are participating in the Look for the Good project. This will highlight the importance of gratitude: what it is and how it can make our lives better
    - We are hoping for kids to practice it and for parents/families to model this at home
    - There are 4 components: Gratitude wall, “you matter” cards (given to students and staff they see doing good in our school), writing a gratitude letter to someone special in their lives, and 3 spots on the floor (when you stop and stand on them, you can shout out something you are thankful for)
- Next Tuesday – Hosting a parent learning walk which includes joining Neela, curriculum specialist, and reading consultant to see 6 classrooms. This is for parents to see what elementary school education looks like and an opportunity to ask questions. There are 16 parents signed up to join.
- Next Wednesday will be the second session of the Growth Mindset book club
    - 20 parents have signed up total for the book club
    - 1 virtual meeting a month to discuss the book

Teacher Report: None.

COMMITTEE UPDATES:

- **Board of Ed:** Bobbie Granato
    - Very excited that we have 3 Schools of Distinction
- **Creative Arts:** Amie Lugo

    - First assembly booked for Dec 22nd – Science Center – Science of Suds
        - Looking into booking another show for April/May
- **Spirit wear:** Andrea Hernandez
    - Flyer should be ready by Friday for approval
    - Currently working on the website
    - Dates will be: 11/16 – 12/4
    - Delivery will be just before the Christmas break
- **Sports and Games:** Derek Lata
    - The profits from the **karate** class exceeded what was budgeted, even without a full class.
    - The **Athletica** game was on Oct 24th which brought in $165
    - **6th Grade Wolf Pack** game is coming up
        - Printed tickets will be dropped off this week at school
    - **Wolf Pack** game fundraiser: Friday March 19th
        - We will sell tickets for $25 ($5 goes to PTO) – allotted 150 tickets
        - Last year we sold close to 150 tickets
        - 2 Raffle opportunities: Bench warmer (12) and Zamboni rides (2)
        - Their mascot could come the Holiday Store
    - **Yard Goats: April 25th**
        - We will sell tickets for $20 each - alloted 50 tickets
        - Educator of the Game: Nominate Neela Thakur
- **Fundraisers:**
    - **Purse BINGO**: Thursday at 6pm
        - Currently at 26 sign-ups and more expected to come to the door
    - **Photo Fundraiser**
        - Photos should be back soon for those who participated
    - **Non-a-Thon**
        - You give a donation to opt out of participating in fundraisers for the year.
        - Lauren Damm will work on a flyer for that
- **6th Grade Committee**
    - There have been 2 activities so far – Capture the Flag and Pumpkin decorating
    - They have bought their class T-shirts
    - Working on collecting dues: at 42% participation so far
    - Lyman Orchard pie fundraiser has ended – Pie pick up with be on Thursday
        - For next year, we might consider doing a contest for who sells the most pies to increase participation
    - We have put a deposit down for the spring field trip to the ropes course

- **WSPC**
    - Superintendent announced that EW received Schools of Distinction by the Connecticut State Department of Education for the 2025–2026 academic year. Banners were made and will be unveiled at the BOE meeting with parents and staff from each school. Schools awarded are Highcrest, EW, and Hanmer. EW received recognition in Math growth.
    - AI policy will be put in place for teachers, currently only students have a policy. An AI vision statement will be created by BOE
    - Buses - a new contract was signed this year with the vendor so fines are given when buses merge or are late because that has been an issue in past years. The app is consistently delayed and the vendor acknowledges that and is working on it constantly.
    - School building updates are available on town council youtube channels and the best way to learn or be up to date on the new Highcrest. Traffic study is currently being done. March 2027 is set for 1st shovel. Redistricting studies are being done and

looking at 3 versions because we may get students returning from Corpus, Discovery, etc so everything is up in the air still.
    - Carissa Peckrul, town's youth and social services gave a presentation on the town's role with youth prevention and resources. She is the youth social worker for the town.
    - Town website has a monthly prevention newsletter under Youth Services, then WE HOPE, click on Prevention Newsletter.
    - 2027 anonymous survey (possibly in the fall) 7th - 12th grades are asked to participate and is very important info to gather because it helps the town get grants to help pay for programs, staff, resources, etc.
    - Recent survey shows that students are first exposed to vaping at 12 years old
    - DARE program will not get going again because Police Dept doesn't have the staff and DARE requires an officer to teach it to students. Another program is in the works to replace DARE called Healthy Habits. Since the age of exposure is trending younger, proactive steps are being discussed to bring awareness.
- **Picture Retakes:** Thursday, November 12th
- **Holiday Store: December date TBD**
    - Childcare will be available

ITEMS TO VOTE ON

1. October Meeting minutes –
    - Motioned to approve by Lauren Damm
    - Seconded by Neela
    - All in favor, minutes approved

Meeting called to close at 7:04pm