

The ECC PTA would like to thank the 174 families who participated in the Fall Survey. Surveys like these are created so that all members of a group have a vital role in relevant issues and decisions. This survey was particularly important in that it was posed at a time of the year when we can actually make adjustments to ongoing programs. Already we have compiled your results and started making a few necessary changes. We feel that the survey results are also an excellent communication tool. While we cannot personally address every comment, we do wish to provide additional information about issues that appear to be of more interest and/or require more clarification. It is our hope for you to literally see your voice in action. To give you a better idea about this process, as well as how your thoughts line up with other ECC families, we have condensed the survey results for your review:

ECC PTA: We are happy to report that approximately 90% of our school is either very satisfied or satisfied with the ECC PTA. The same percentage of respondents reported that they believe that our children are offered a wide variety of quality enrichment programs. 90% believe that ECC PTA does a good job supporting its teachers and staff and 93% think ECC PTA supports our children effectively. (Communication, fundraising, decision making and community spirit were also rated favorably.) Many good suggestions were given to improve various aspects of the PTA and all were considered. Most notably, some families indicated that they didn't have enough exposure to the PTA to make a decision and/or did not understand the distinction between programs run by the administration and those run by the PTA. These are fair responses and we hope to better delineate our roles through enhanced communication; however, it goes without saying that the PTA and administration work hand to hand to ensure the best educational experience possible for our children.

Programs: Of the various programs offered at ECC, those focusing on the core basics (i.e. Math, Science, Technology, and Language Arts) rated the highest at 98%. Physical Education (96%), Fine Arts (93%), as well as Health & Safety (93%) were also highly rated. In addition, many families indicated that they would like to see more of the following programs: science, language arts, writing, academic competitions, technology, health, music, performing arts, foreign languages, social skills and community awareness.

Responses such as these provide our PTA board with a good general direction in which to focus our attention. Throughout the course of the year, we receive various solicitations in the form of grant proposals, program opportunities, etc. Your answers help us sift through those requests and determine which possibilities will be the most valuable to our school community. Based on your feedback, we will continue to focus our attention on developing programs related to the core basics. At the same time, several comments expressed the importance of variety. With this thought in mind, we hope to keep an eye out for a few interesting opportunities outside our main scope of interest. A good example of this was our "Jumping Jack" event. While it was not academic in nature, it presented an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to promote good values, as well as increase community spirit. It required very little resources and had a tremendous impact on the school.

So far this year, ECC has added six new programs. The responses and comments you gave are especially important as they help steer these program into a positive direction that benefit the entire school:

- "Caught Being Good Cards" was rated as one of the more popular new programs.
- Book Drive was the rated the most favorably of all the new programs. Families especially enjoyed participating in a charitable program that was simple, effective and yet did not take away vital resources from our own school. We look forward to hosting another book drive.
- Family Art Night was generated as a result of our spring survey last year in hopes of augmenting our current art program, as well as offering an academic based social event. It is noted that advertising did not sufficiently reach all families and we will look for better ways to increase communication regarding all programs (both new and existing) across the board.
- School Pool was not rated as favorably as others. However we never expected it to start out strong since the point of this program is to encourage families to walk, ride or roll to school more often. The very essence of it is a work in progress. However, we will look into way to make it more accessible to a larger portion of the school. At the same time, we do realize that this program is not feasible and/or appealing to every ECC family. Out of respect to those families, this program should be simply considered as a fun, healthy option. We still feel that it is an asset to our community. It does not require any monetary funding and it is a good educational tool on many levels.
- Welcome Committee was rated very favorably, but not many families were aware of its existence. There also was some confusion about its purpose. In a nutshell, the welcome committee is simply a sheet of contact information that was advertised in ENews, posted on the website, as well as distributed to new families at the New Family Social and first General PTA meeting. The thought behind it was to provide a way for new families to contact more experienced families if and when questions should arise. As a fledging program, we will explore additional ways for families to be welcomed to ECC and/or feel informed about ongoing events. While nearly impossible to personally greet every family at a school our size, board members will be at Panera on Nov. 14 & 15 from 8:00 - 9:00 a.m. to answer questions and/or provide information about the PTA and/or ECC itself. We hope this provides us with an opportunity to make the school board more approachable, as well as allow all families to feel included in its activities. If well received, we will hold other informal meetings in the future.

Fundraisers: Once again, this section was reviewed carefully since fundraising and money are such personal decisions. Not surprisingly, the majority of you expressed an appreciation for the reduced number of fundraisers. It is also not surprising that your preferences were split almost down the middle between the option to give a one-time annual donation (45%) and the option to participate in fundraisers along with a giving a small, initial donation (46%). With your wishes in mind, the ECC PTA will continue these two options to ensure all families have an opportunity to donate in a way that is comfortable for their budget. We also intend to keep our commitment of only offering five core fundraisers this year. However, based on your feedback, some changes and/or substitutions might be implemented this year to better serve the community as a whole:

- Book Fair: Most families indicated that the main reason they participate in the book fair was to support ECC. However, others added that the book selection was not wide enough to appeal to all age groups and/or reading levels. With your thoughts in mind, the ECC PTA has already starting exploring a few ways that might help to enhance the quality of the event. Although in essence this is a third party fundraisers (i.e. a portion of the profits go toward ECC), we recognize the value of promoting good reading habits at school and a convenient, inexpensive way in which to purchase books. For this reason, the ECC PTA would like to continue to offer a book fair to our families and hopes to explore the best way possible to do so.

- Restaurant Nights: As a whole, restaurant nights are rated very favorably. 76% of families indicated that they appreciated the flexibility of offering more than one Restaurant Night per event and the same percentage liked the fact that they can support ECC through purchasing a meal at a local restaurant. In fact more families indicated that if given the choice, they would prefer more restaurant nights rather than less. One reoccurring complaint regarding the event was the crowds and/or perceived long waits at the featured restaurant(s). We are hopeful this problem will be reduced as a result of the multiple dates offered per event. We also will take note of trying to offer more events that offer take-out and/or delivery. By doing so, we hope we will continue to make Restaurant Nights a positive experience for all.
- EPI: While not a fundraiser, the ECC PTA has offered this program as a service in the past; however we did not offer EPI at all this year. While some felt that EPI was both convenient and easy, the vast majority commented on the desire to purchase and/or personally pick out individual school supplies. Based on your feedback, we do not feel that offering EPI as either a service or a fundraiser is a good use of PTA resources.
- Open House Art Sale: While this was not an official survey question, many families offered their opinions about this program in the comment section. We received some positive comments, but many others expressed that they did not like the fact that they felt "obligated" to purchase their children's artwork. In respect to your opinions, we are re-evaluating this program. Please know that your opinions matter and we are exploring the best way to ensure that the spring fundraiser is something that is both profitable to the school and well-received by the community at large. Your feedback allows us to explore the best options in terms of keeping with your wishes, as well as addressing the school's needs. More information will follow shortly after we have had a chance to review all the information at hand.

Communication: Overall, communication received favorable responses from our families. Approximately 94% regard the ENews as an important communication tool; less families use the PTA website, and yet about half the school perceive the information found on our webpage as valuable. Based on previous survey results, it was our intention to reformat both sites by defining them as individual tools, while at the same time use them in conjunction with the other. The ENews is intended to provide concise, yet valuable information. It serves to reference (and link to) more detailed information that is regularly posted on the website (including Health & Safety tips, the President's letter and legislation updates).

A large percentage (76%) appreciate informational emails from Room Parents; however, there was some mixed feedback in terms of the consistency of this form of communication. We will look into additional ways to improve continuity and quality.

One of the biggest sources of confusion came from the new addition of our Facebook page. The ECC PTA introduced this page as an additional layer of communication. It was not created to replace the current forms of communication nor was it intended to convince families to join social media sites. It is simply meant to be an additional way to receive information for those who choose to use Facebook in their daily lives. Those that use Facebook rated it favorably and we would like to continue to use it in this capacity.

PTA Meetings: The overwhelming consensus for a parent education event in conjunction to the November General Meeting was either computer safety and/or parenting issues. Because the ECC PTA hosts an annual parenting series through Fred Becker ("How To Raise Responsible Children" will be presented at Capri Elementary at 6:30 on Nov. 16th), we are looking into securing a guest speaker on Internet safety for our Nov. 14th meeting.

You may find the agenda for this meeting (as well as all PTA General Meetings) on the PTA website the week prior to the meeting. While, meetings and the agenda are advertised in the ENews; we will look into other ways of informing families about future PTA meetings per your request. One suggestion was to use an email blast; we will send a reminder email a few days before our November 14th meeting.

The ECC PTA also acknowledges that there are many families that either cannot or do not wish to attend the General Meetings. We respect your wishes but do think it is important to let families know that these meetings are one of the most efficient ways to explain proposed plans, disseminate information, as well as receive valuable input from its members. For those families unable to attend, we will look into ways to summarize and distribute pertinent information. The second best source of receiving similar information is through reading the Thursday ENews editions regularly.

Volunteering: Everyone agrees (95%) that our children receive a higher quality of education because of parent support at school and the vast majority (78%) feel that they play a vital role in that fact. We were pleased to learn that more than half of our families feel they volunteer just the right amount at school. In addition, 26% wish that they could volunteer more at school and only 3% feel that they volunteer too much on campus. Whether you are volunteering on a daily basis or help out only a few times a year, the ECC PTA would like to thank those families that generously volunteer their time, energy and talents. All of the programs that we proudly offer would not be possible without your support and involvement. We also would like families to know that we realize that not everyone has a schedule that allows them to volunteer during school hours. Please know there are many ways to become involved in your child(ren)'s education experience. You can join the PTA, participate in fundraisers, and/or simply stay up-to-date on the many activities, issues and events offered at ECC.

With this thought in mind, we are pleased to note that overall, our school views the ECC PTA in a favorable light and many good suggestions for improvement were given across the board. We feel that it is important to let you all know that we take surveys such as these very seriously. As a PTA board, we are a small group of volunteers charged with making decisions and organizing events according to the needs and desires of our entire school community. We cannot effectively do our job without knowing all of your thoughts and opinions. While positive feedback is appreciated, we also need constructive suggestions to make necessary changes. Thank you to everyone who participated and helped us do our jobs. We listened to your responses and hope to represent them well throughout the remainder of the school year.

Warmly,
Katrina Young
ECC PTA President