



THE ETHICAL COMMUNITY CHARTER SCHOOL

SEPTEMBER 2009 NEWSLETTER

The Ethical Community Charter School:
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School Web site:
www.teccsjc.org

TECHNOLOGY

The time has come to say goodbye to the Yahoo Group we have all come to know and love so well. Now that we have our charter and the school is officially up and running, many of the documents and other information you would normally receive through the Yahoo Group service have been switched over to our new and improved Web site: www.teccsjc.org.

Marta Bergamini maintains the Principal's blog which is a great way to stay up-to-date with certain items that are going on at the school. This newsletter will eventually go from a paper form to a PDF version available on the web site as well. There are many other items available on the site, so please start utilizing it to keep yourself and your children up-to-date.

If you do not happen to own a computer or do not have computer access, please let the office know so that you may attain a hard copy version of newsletters and other items that normally appear on the site. If you do not receive e-mails from the school please make sure the office has your email address as well. Whenever items are posted on the site, an e-mail is usually sent to alert parents and faculty of the new item or entry.

There are many plans for the site, including a nurse's corner, classroom-specific pages that include photo galleries, teacher blogs, and podcasts of teachers reading to students. There are also plans to develop some remote learning tools. Many of these items need your help to get started. Please consider becoming a part of the FSA and help us make your child's school exceptionally extraordinary!

SPOTLIGHT

We know how important it is for you to know what is happening in your child's classroom, so each newsletter will contain a small spotlight on one of our teachers. Here you will get a brief snapshot of what is happening in the featured teacher's class, while also learning a bit about his or her background, educational philosophy, and plans for the school year. Although your child may not be in the spotlighted teacher's class this year, he or she may very well be in the future. This month's spotlight is Kindergarten teacher, Laura Alfano.

What made you decide to become a kindergarten teacher?

When I was in high school, I took a class where we participated in the pre-school (which was attached to our school). At the end of the year, the children put on a show for their families, as well as the families of the high school students. For the show, my teacher asked me to lead everything because I was always very involved when it came to singing songs and doing little plays. After the show was over, all of the children's parents and high school students' parents came up to me and told me that I absolutely had to go into teaching because I had such a great rapport with the children. This helped me realize that I wanted to teach children. It wasn't until I was placed in kindergarten for my student teaching in college that I realized that kindergarten was the grade for me.

What made you decide to take the job at TECCS?

I met Mrs. Bergamini at a career fair and I instantly felt that she was a principal who I could see myself working for. Her passion for charter schools and TECCS inspired me to learn more. It was then that I became interested in the mission of the school and its desire to help each and every child.

What is your favorite part of teaching kindergarten?

There are so many great aspects to teaching kindergarten. For me though, seeing the progression of the children from the beginning of the school year until the end is amazing. It is inspiring to know that I am a part of a child learning to read and write. Watching a child grow from someone who may only be able to recognize letters to a student who is reading and writing is such an incredible experience and it truly makes everything worthwhile.

Can you tell us something interesting about yourself that you would like to share with the children and parents of TECCS?

I have many different interests and talents that help me become a well-rounded teacher. I grew up playing sports (basketball, softball and soccer) and I am still a huge sports fan (especially when it comes to the Penn State Nittany Lions and the NY Giants)! I also love the arts. I grew up singing in choirs and performing in musicals. Broadway is one of my favorite places to go to! I love to incorporate singing into the classroom as well. Lastly, charity and community service is very important to me. I am involved with Penn State's philanthropy, called THON, a 46 hour dance marathon which raises money for pediatric cancer. Each year it raises millions of dollars (last year it actually broke 8 million!!). I have become very close to a few families who each have a different story when it comes to pediatric cancer. I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to dance in THON my junior year of college (we didn't actually have to dance...we just could not sit or sleep for 48 hours because I participated when it was for 48 hours). It was the most amazing and impacting experience of my life. I would love the opportunity to dance again as an alumni, so I will hopefully raise money again to make it possible!

What are some of the upcoming items on your agenda for the class?

I have so many ideas for this year! Obviously, teaching the students to read and write are high on my list, but there are many other activities I would love to take part in. In the past, I have done a weather fashion show which has been both fun and educational for my students, so I might have to continue that at TECCS.

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FSA

What is FSA?

TECCS was founded by parents who wanted an extraordinary education and a strong involvement in their child's education. The The Family School Association (FSA) committee is essentially the PTA for TECCS. The goal of FSA is to let you have a great impact on the success of your child's education.

According to the Michigan Department of Education, studies show:

The more intensely parents are involved, the more beneficial the achievement effects.

The more parents participate in schooling, in a sustained way, at every level -- in advocacy, decision-making and oversight roles, as fundraisers and boosters, as volunteers and paraprofessionals, and as home teachers -- the better for student achievement. (<http://www.nyspirc.org/pdf/What%20Research%20Says%20About%20Parent%20Involvement.pdf>)

FSA is the organization through which a parent can become involved and help not just with the success of the school but with the overall success of your child as well. Please consider joining one or more of the following committees:

Class Parents / Hospitality (Contact: TBA)

- * Establishes the emergency phone chain
- * Coordinates with staff classroom events
- * Coordinates with Principal and Executive Secretary school events

Lunch (Contact: TBA)

- * Solicits and coordinates schedule of volunteers for daily lunch supervision

Print and Publications (Contact: Donna LaStella- donna528@optonline.net)

- * Drafts FSA Newsletter

Outreach / Public Relations (Contact: TBA)

- * Communicates with the community

Programs and Assemblies (Contact: Wilton Fontenette- whfontenette@mac.com)

- * Researches, views and communicates to Principal potential programs to enhance curriculum

The more involved you are, the more you help plan and join in school events, the more your children can reach important goals for learning and success.

The FSA would like to welcome their new President, Bess Morrison. She is going to help get these committees up and running. Please come to our first FSA meeting to learn more about your child's school and becoming a part of their community.



TECCS in The News:

Check out the great article about The Ethical Community Charter School at: http://www.nj.com/hudson/index.ssf/2009/08/new_jersey_city_charter_school.html

Another article gives a great example why your choice for TECCS is a great choice: http://www.nj.com/hudson/index.ssf/2009/09/jersey_city_school_officials_c.html

Board Member and Founding Parent, Ann Wallace was featured, discussing TECCS, in a documentary called The Cartel (<http://www.thecartelmovie.com/>) on education in NJ. The film premiered in May at the Hoboken Film Festival and has won a few awards. People interested in the more political side of the school's history--and about education in New Jersey in general--might be interested in seeing the film.

School Hot Lunches:

The school will soon be able to offer our children hot lunches. Whether you are on a reduced rate or regular rate lunch the school would prefer checks over cash for lunch (and the afterschool program) for record keeping purposes. On a good note we will soon be able to pay online for these services online.

Getting in Touch With Parents:

The office doesn't know yet who has computer access nor do they know if they have everyone on the parents@teccsjc.org account. The office is in the process of creating a data base of all parents. Please make sure your information is current and up-to-date with the office. Future editions of the FSA newsletter will be emailed to parents and available on the web site. If you do not have an email address or computer access we will make sure you receive a hard copy.

Future Enrollment:

If you happen to know of any families interested in applying to TECCS, please inform them that we are still accepting applications for this year's waiting list. We will also hold our annual lottery for 2010-2011 enrollment in January. Open houses will be held November through January for new families who are interested in applying.

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

I cannot believe that the school year is here, my son started Kindergarten, and Ethical Community is now a vibrant active school filled with excited children, enthusiastic teachers, and a warm and caring administration and support staff. I remember so clearly the first informational meeting my husband and I attended, almost a year ago, and how impressed we were by all of the people who had worked so hard to make this dream a reality, and the philosophy of education which they were all so dedicated to instilling in this new school.

No school exists in a vacuum, and the support of its families is invaluable. Our Family School Association is starting the year with several committees already up and running, a few which are organized but not functioning as of yet, and one or two which still need to be added. Thank you to everyone who has already been working on the committees, and if you have not yet signed up for one, I encourage you to get involved. If you are reading this, you can see what wonderful work the Print and Publications Committee has already accomplished, and if you were at any of the get-togethers this summer, you saw what a great job the events committee has done. We will need to get the Fundraising Committee moving quickly, and a By-Laws Committee organized as well.

One committee that has already begun working is the Lunch Committee, but they need help. If every parent were willing to help with lunch just once a month, we would have the extra help we need. I know that many of you work full-time and it is impossible, but I also know that like myself, many of you have flexible schedules and a couple of hours a month is not too much to ask.

Another place where we will need help is the FSA itself. We need officers for the organization, including a Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. The Vice President will work closely with me in the day to day organization of the group. The Secretary will be responsible for taking minutes of the meetings and help keep us organized. The Treasurer will help create a budget for the group, maintain all of the financial books, and most likely have input on the Fundraising Committee. If you or someone you know is interested in one of these positions, please feel free to email me as soon as possible.

Lastly, I would like to thank all of the people who have been working so hard for so long to create this school from nothing. From the Board of Trustees whose vision is now real, and the Founding Parents, who knew there had to be a better choice in Jersey City, to our Principal Marta Bergamini and her wonderful faculty and staff, I applaud you and thank you. To all who have been working hard in the Events and Technology committees, you have been invaluable. And most importantly, to all of you, the families of Ethical Community, we thank you for sharing your time and energy, and most importantly, your children.

I am looking forward to meeting and working with all of you.

With great optimism,

Bess Morrison
bess.morrison@teccsjc.org

Our first FSA meeting will be held **TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6** at 7:15pm at the school.

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There is a rumor that you are going to apply for a grant for a rooftop garden, can you describe any plans you might have as of right now? (I know you haven't started this yet, but just to give the parents a general idea.

As far as the rooftop garden is concerned, safety is our number one concern. The first thing we will be asking for in the grant is a fence surrounding the entire roof that will be high enough to protect all of our students. Then we will look into how we will set up the entire garden and what we may want to grow. We are hoping to incorporate it into science lessons so the students will be able to see how things grow.

REMINDERS:

Please send in free/reduced lunch applications, even if you are not applying, just send it in blank except for child's name and write "not applying". The form is on the website. Lunch menus for October coming soon!

IMPORTANT: We are missing the yellow transfer slips from some students. If you haven't obtained your transfer card from their local public school, please do so soon. Monday, Sept 21 TECCS is closed but Jersey City schools are open, it might be a good day to get them. It's very important for each student to obtain a transfer card, even if they never attended Jersey City schools, all our funding depends on it.

The Public Library Bookmobile will be visiting us every two weeks. Please complete the application that is being sent home for your child to get a library card.

Future FSA Newsletters:

The Newsletter will be distributed monthly, the first week of every month.

If you would like to submit an article or notice for the newsletter, the deadline to do so is the 25th of the prior month.

First FSA Meeting:

Mark your calendars.

The first FSA meeting will be held Tuesday October 6, at 7:15pm at the school

Important Dates:

Friday, September 18: Open House for Prospective Students, 9:30am - 10:30am

Monday, September 21: No School

Saturday, September 26: Board of Trustees Meeting, 9:30am at the School

Thursday, October 1: Back to School Night, 6:30pm - 7:30pm at the School

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6th:

FSA Meeting, 7:15pm at the school

A BIG THANK YOU

Submitted by Board Member and Founding Parent, Edward Goodall

Several committees have been working hard in the months leading up to the opening of the school.

- The first group was the Parent Founders who made clear the need for an ethically based charter school in Jersey City. This group wrote and revised the charter, presented it in Trenton and then did so again after it was turned down for what seemed petty reasons. Later, members of that group coordinated enrollment, publicity, and garnered support in the community. They had been working as far back 2006.
- The Board of Trustees has steered the opening of the school since December 2008. Under their leadership, several other committees have been formed and the head of school was hired.
- The first committee was the Facilities Committee. They had the responsibility of turning a drab forgotten school into a beautiful learning environment. The committee guided the work, but so many parents came to raise a brush and meet their new peers, and they deserve thanks. Everyone's response to the color scheme has been enthusiastic. Parents worked for many hours on Wednesday evenings and Saturdays between March and July to get the school looking so bright and cheery.
- From this facilities work, parents with backgrounds in technology were found. Over time, they were brought together. The impact of the Technology Committee on the school cannot be overstated. The technological systems (phone, security, computer network, e-mail and document sharing) are excellent and will be expanded easily as the school grows. As we have older grades enrolled, the systems will allow us to develop a cutting edge technology program, and be another area for which we are known.
- As more parents saw the need to become involved in the school, an excellent team of fund-raisers and events planners came together. The Events Committee saw ways to raise money and to use the match so generously offered by an anonymous donor. Their work led to the parties that everyone was invited to and many attended. Through their efforts, about \$34,000 was raised. With the match of \$25,000, this means that Ethical Community had an opening day fund of nearly \$60,000! This level of fund-raising was unexpected. Then, a surprise donation of \$100,000 from the TECCS Foundation really helped after the cuts to charter schools made by the state of New Jersey. The cuts had meant that where we had hoped for six classroom assistants, we had two. Some of these funds have allowed us to have six assistants as promised!
- Finally, many of you have benefited from the work of the small and dedicated Bus Committee. Their work and attention to detail (and contract negotiations) is impressive!

The parents who helped in any way to get the school ready deserve thanks from everyone in the school community. Charter schools rely on parent involvement and donations to improve the school, and to build community in the school. We hope you see the benefits of volunteering and either continue or make the commitment to start helping with your children's school.

THE LEAD PROGRAM...

Submitted by Board Member and Founding Parent, Edward Goodall

Excellent TECCS Continues until Six (and before school too!)

Snack (healthy of course) and circle time start the afternoon for a merry group of children in the LEAD before/after school program. Newcomers are welcomed, group promises renewed, and squirmy-wormy, the LEAD mascot, passed around. In the afternoon the children spend their time in structured activities including gym, reading, painting, and group projects (including leadership games). Three times a week, Teaching Artists come to spend time working on individual and group projects with the children. Specialist teachers teach Drama and Theater Games that will culminate in a performance, a Photography class where they will learn how to take pictures and create a scrapbook, and our Creative Arts class - taught by a visual artist whose own work has been exhibited in galleries and museums throughout Northern New Jersey - is inspiring. TECCS parents love this program. One says, "It is wonderful to have my son at LEAD. I am happy that his needs are being taken care of in a stimulating environment. Whatever time I go for pick up, he is busy in the gym, busy painting, busy in a group activity and happy and engaged with his peers and wonderful adults. He comes home tired, but not exhausted."

The after school - LEAD - program at TECCS brings exemplary after-school care practice to Ethical Community. This is not the after school program you might be used to from other schools. If you are interested please e-mail Sarah Glisky: sglisky@starr-inc.org.