



**Essex Fells  
Foundation**  
for Educational  
Excellence

**A Personal  
Commitment  
to Public  
Education**

**Annual Report**  
**Fiscal Year July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020**

---

**Essex Fells School District  
102 Hawthorne Road  
Essex Fells, New Jersey 07021**

Dear Officers and Trustees of the Essex Fells Foundation for Educational Excellence,

I am writing this letter as a parent of one current and two former Essex Fells School students, and as a Board of Education Member for the past 6 and a half years. Over the years, the collaboration between the Essex Fells School administration, staff, parents and community members has provided the children with everything they need and more to be successful and well-rounded students. The parents' and town members generous financial support of the EFFEE allows for the addition of programs that would not otherwise exist for the students of Essex Fells School. Each spring, The Board of Education prepares the budget for the upcoming school year, utilizing town tax dollars. The reality is, the Board budget would not be able to afford many of our school's activities, without support that comes from the EFFEE.

In past years, the Foundation has funded the Variety Show, School Musical, Art Tech Show, Booknic, TREPS Marketplace, enrichment opportunities, study hall, field trips, clubs and assemblies just to name a few. These programs have been a huge asset to our students by providing them innovative and fun opportunities to grow. Last spring when the school had to switch to remote learning, the Foundation found creative ways to provide enrichment and assemblies virtually. This year the variety show, assemblies and field trips will be held virtually as well. We appreciate the Foundation's willingness to fund these activities so that our children can continue to have access to these opportunities, even with all the changes caused by the current health crisis. The Board has also received budget cuts from the State because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Foundation has expressed the intention to help bridge the technology gap this has caused. We are extremely grateful for the support.

At the end of August, the Foundation funded a social emotional grant providing the opportunity for the kids to visit the buildings with Ms. Santin. It allowed the children to experience the new look and feel of their school, so they could be prepared for the new year and all it will entail. It was very well attended and well received by the children. It was great to be able to have them in the building again after such a long absence.

The collaboration between the Foundation and the Board of Education is invaluable as innovative programs are imagined and strategized as how to best implement them. With the support of our community, our students have enjoyed high levels of achievement and that fact was recognized when our school received the National Blue Ribbon Award in 2016.

The Board of Education wants to thank the Essex Fells Foundation for Educational Excellence and the entire school community for all of their generous support in making the Essex Fells School such a special place for our children to learn and grow. We look forward to another successful school year.

Sincerely,

Kris N. Huegel  
President, Essex Fells Board of Education

P.O. Box 174  
Essex Fells, NJ 07021  
973-226-0505

Laura Z. D'Avella  
*President*

Greg Gardner  
*Vice-President-Finance*

Maya Autret  
*Vice-President-Grants*

Gemma Diaco  
*Secretary*

Eric Makovsky  
*Treasurer*

Vicki Caplan  
Lucinda Davis  
Robert Fink  
Annemarie Hochkeppel  
Barbara Luca  
Ken Monroe  
Ashley Moran  
Catherine Walsh  
Robin Wilson  
*Trustees*

**Ex-Officio**  
Michelle Gadaleta  
*Superintendent*

Kris Huegel  
*Board of Education*

Julie Piccoli  
*PTA President*

George Stanton  
Stephen Gray  
Carol LeCates  
Gerry Nolan  
Ellen Marie Peck  
Ned Stern  
Joanna Heaton  
Carol D'Alessandro  
Alexis Shaw  
Debra Tedesco  
Maggie O'Connor  
Tricia MacEvoy  
*Past Presidents*

September 2020

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The Trustees of the Essex Fells Foundation for Educational Excellence and I thank you for your continued generosity and support of the Essex Fells School (EFS).

We are all fortunate to live in such an incredibly philanthropic community. Superintendent/Principal Michelle Gadaleta, the school faculty and administration, the PTA, the Board of Education, and many members of the Essex Fells community come together to support our children's education, and we are grateful that they are our partners and allies in all that we do.

The last school year began with incredible momentum and programming that included rewarding educational grants for the students at EFS. The EFS community was excited to celebrate the Foundation's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a College Night-themed fundraiser in October 2019. Due to the success of this well-received event as well as the generosity of our community's donors, the Foundation was able to provide over \$50,000 in grants last year. From STEAM and Communication grants to Character Education and Arts & Culture grants, the Foundation plays an integral role in preserving the quality of excellence in education at EFS.

The unprecedented impact of COVID-19 unfortunately shortened and in some cases halted certain of the programs for which we would ordinarily provide grants to the school. Notwithstanding the stresses of the pandemic, however, the dedicated Trustees of the Foundation worked hand-in-hand with the school to pivot programming when possible to a virtual format while our students worked remotely in the spring.

During this past year, the Foundation supported many important initiatives. Specifically, the ever-popular fall Variety Show was an enormous success - jam packed with talent. The students enjoyed an Arts and Culture assembly by The New Jersey Ballet as well as Character Education assemblies by Gretchen Brutman (Character U) in the fall and Camfel Production's "Spreadkindness" on the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service. The energetic Brett Daniels Music Technology Assembly - delivered in a virtual format in May - provided a wonderful avenue for communication and connection for the students while simultaneously showcasing digital music production techniques.

This year's much-anticipated annual musical was *Beauty and the Beast*. EFS closed down due to the virus on the afternoon of what was to be our opening night. Fortunately, the students were able to perform for their schoolmates, faculty, and staff in a dress rehearsal, which in the end was their only performance—the show was live-streamed into the classrooms and professionally recorded. A silver lining through this stressful time was the biweekly Bengal Broadcasts that continued via the Broadcasting Club grant. Students worked with the teacher proctors via Zoom and filmed creative content that was streamed home to the entire school during morning announcements. The Bengal Broadcasts enabled the school to stay connected throughout the stresses of remote learning.

On behalf of the Foundation, I thank you for your support of this worthy organization and its mission. Please know that we are actively working to continue to provide a foundation for educational excellence within the current environment.

With gratitude,  
Laura Z. D'Avella  
President

## **Financial Summary** **July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020**

### **Income:**

Gifts Received	\$ 18,062.00
After School Enrichment	\$ 52,770.00
Fall Fundraiser	\$ 38,825.00
<b>Total Income:</b>	<b>\$109,657.00</b>

### **Expenses:**

#### **Grant Disbursements:**

Arts and Culture Grants	\$24,173.81
Character Education Grants	\$4,800.00
Communication Grants	\$6,500.00
Entrepreneurship Grants	\$2,500.00
STEAM Grants	\$3,842.29
Study Hall Grants	\$4,500.00
<b>Total Grant Disbursements:</b>	<b>\$46,316.10</b>

Afterschool Enrichment	\$26,107.85
Administrative Expenses	\$5,749.38
Fall Fundraiser Expenses	\$13,971.64

#### **Special Projects**

Stage Upgrade Initiative Sound Board	\$3,666.75
---	------------

<b>Total Expenses:</b>	<b>\$95,811.72</b>
------------------------	--------------------

<b>Net Proceeds for the Year:</b>	<b>\$13,845.28</b>
-----------------------------------	--------------------

<b>Fund Balance June 30, 2019:</b>	<b>\$51,948.18</b>
------------------------------------	--------------------

<b>Fund Balance June 30, 2020:</b>	<b>\$65,793.46</b>
------------------------------------	--------------------

## **Grants Approved**

### **Arts & Culture Grants**

**First Grade Book Nic -Hromoko/Brutman** – The Foundation approved an Arts & Culture grant, which helped first grade students conduct a Book Nic. Each student selected a book, created a small display about the book, and brought a food associated with the book to the event. Unfortunately, this program did not occur due to the pandemic.

#### **Annual School Musical — D. Banek**

The Foundation approved a grant to fund the annual school musical, which included participation from grades 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>. This year production was *Beauty & The Beast*. Scenery and tech was created and executed by EFS students as well.

#### **Poetry Club — J. Franzi**

The Foundation approved a grant request to fund Poetry Club that met during lunch/recess to explore poets' styles and writing of their own. Students in grades 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> created verses, styles, and artwork of their own. Unfortunately, the Poetry Club was cancelled due to the pandemic.

#### **Variety Show — N. Buonomo, J. Trogani**

The Foundation approved a grant request to fund the annual Variety Show with participants from grades 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>. Students show off their best talents either in a solo act or with a group: singing, dancing, comedy, gymnastics, and more! This event helps build student confidence through performing.

#### **Art Club — K. McNish & J. Trogani**

The Foundation approved a grant request to fund an Art Club for sixth graders to create an art present as a graduation gift to the school. This year the students created individual tiles to placed on the ceiling of the library.

#### **Book Club Grades 4<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> — D. Reynolds**

The Foundation approved a grant request to provide a maximum group of twenty students to participate in a weekly lunch book club for 10 weeks. Students were introduced to the writer's craft, especially character development and figurative language. Students had the opportunity to work on reading aloud with focus on specific prosodic features. Students wrote their own responses and generated examples of figurative language. The novel, *Poppy*, by Avi, was selected for the session.

**Book Club Grades 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3rd — K. MacKenzie**

The Foundation approved two grant requests due to high demand for two sessions of a weekly book club for 10 weeks. The students met during lunch/recess on Fridays to read-aloud the book '*Bob*'. and partake in discussion and journaling.

**Arts & Crafts - K. McNish**

The Foundation approved a grant request to provide an arts & crafts program for K-3 students during their lunch period. They were given the opportunity to create anything they wanted with the materials provided. This allowed the students to explore materials that they often request to use but don't always get to use due to the parameters of the art curriculum.

**E-Library for Media Center – K. Trafford**

The Foundation approved a grant request to implement a new innovative program in the media center to add electronic books to the library's collection including the Playaway system and the Wonderbook.

**Sound Mixing Board – J. Trogani**

The Foundation approved a grant request to purchase a sound mixing board to use for all school events.

**Virtual Yoga Classes – M. Criscione**

The Foundation approved a grant request for ten 30-minute virtual yoga sessions held by Mrs. Criscione during school closure with separate sessions for grades K-2 and grades 3-6. The K-2 sessions practiced key yoga poses & flows and worked to reflect upon feelings that empower & unite imagination. The 3-6 Reflective Stretch included discussions on body & mind alignment, personal goal setting in fitness & health, tools for independent yoga practice, and support with managing daily obstacles in social and academic worlds.

**The New Jersey Ballet Company Assembly – M. Gadaleta**

The Foundation approved a grant request for the New Jersey Ballet Company to introduce, explain, and demonstrate the art of dance. The hour long multi-part presentation consisted of four components: Training the Dancer, Audience Participation, Excerpts from Company Repertoire, and a Q&A session.

## **Character Education Grants 2019—2020**

### **Fall Character Education Assembly — M. Gadaleta**

The Foundation approved a grant request for a Character Education assembly for K-6 students that took place the first week of school that embodied many of the highlighted aspects of the Vision 2020 theme for the school year. Gretchen Brutman presented a program on empowering kids to feel and do their best.

### **Winter Character Education Assembly — M. Gadaleta**

The Foundation approved a grant request for a Character Education assembly. Students in K – 6 grades participated in a Camfel Production called “Spreadkindness” that was presented on EFS’s Martin Luther King Day of Service.

### **Sixth Grade Sleepover — K. Codella**

The Foundation approved a grant request to fund the annual Sixth Grade Sleepover. This event is an important part of supporting students in developing strong foundations in their relationships through team building and group activities.

### **“Stories with Holes” — J. Whitman**

The Foundation approved a grant request to fund Stories with Holes for grades 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>. Stories with Holes are short stories that inspire imagination, increase cognitive functioning, and develop listening skills. They allow students to think in creative ways to find the answers to the riddle-like challenges in the activities. Students work together to find the missing part of the story.

### **Yearbook Club — S. Christopher**

The Foundation approved a grant request to continue Yearbook Club for the 6th Grade students as they work together to produce the yearbook.

### **Cyber Safety Assemblies – K. McNish**

The Foundation approved a grant request for 2 assembly programs to reinforce digital citizenship for 3<sup>rd</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> graders and parents of EFS. Unfortunately, this program was cancelled due to the pandemic.

## **Communications Grants**

### **Newspaper Club - K. MacKenzie - Shortened due to Pandemic**

The Foundation approved a grant request to fund the school newspaper. Students gathered to capture the relevant and interesting topics of their choice. Newspaper Club gives students in grades 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> another opportunity to share their voice with the EFS Community.

### **Postal Club — M. Truchel**

The Foundation approved a grant request for the EFS Postal .The club met before school once a week and was open to students in third grade. However, all of the EFS staff members and students were encouraged to use the Postal Club mail service to keep in touch with people in the school community. Club time focused on obtaining, sorting, organizing, and delivering mail. Unfortunately, the Postal Club was cancelled due to the pandemic.

### **Broadcasting Club — J. Castellano**

The Foundation approved a grant request for the Broadcasting Club. The students write, direct, and produce weekly segments, which air on bimonthly on Monday mornings during announcements. This club was able to continue virtually during the pandemic, which many students

## **Entrepreneurship Grants**

### **School Store — J. Whitman**

The Foundation approved a grant request to fund the Sixth Grade Student Store. This program allows students to develop communication and people skills as well as develop positive self-image.

### **Stock Market Club — S. Christopher/J. Castellano**

The Foundation approved a grant request to fund a stock market club for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grader students held during lunch time once a week for three months. The club teaches students the important aspects of economics, investing, and personal finance with the goal of preparing them for financially independent futures. The students are given a virtual dollar amount and set up portfolios, selecting stocks to purchase and monitor thought the length of the club. Guest speakers are also brought in to discuss investing strategies. The portfolio that makes the most amount of money receives a prize.

## **STEAM Grants**

### **Keyboarding Club — J. Castellano**

The Foundation approved a grant request to fund a new Keyboarding Club which focused on proper finger placement while typing and typing speed. The club met during lunch and was open to grades 3<sup>rd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup>.

### **Cross Curricular Project – M. Craveiro**

The Foundation approved a grant request to provide supplies for the 5<sup>th</sup> grades to create maps that will depict their understanding of the interdependence between organisms in ecosystems around the world. This cross-curricular project will culminate in the form of a walk-through museum exhibit.

### **Brent Daniels Music Technology Assembly – M. Gadaleta**

The Foundation approved a grant request to fund a STEAM assembly by musical producer, composer, & sound designer. Although originally planned to be live at the school, the assembly was able to be performed virtually during the school closure.

## **Study Hall Grants**

### **Study Hall**

The Foundation approved a grant request to continue funding Study Hall for the 2019-2020 school year. Study Hall provides a time for students in Grades 4<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> to work ahead on homework, make up schoolwork they are unable to complete during class time, and/or study for upcoming tests and quizzes.

**The Essex Fells Foundation for Educational Excellence thanks the following patrons\* for their generosity and continued support during the 2019 – 2020 fiscal year (July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020):**

Lionel and Maya Autret  
Elaine Brier  
Robert and Eileen Butler  
Michael and Joyce Candido  
Elie and Corinne Chakhtoura  
Anthony and Brenda Cioce  
Richard Coulter and Julie Morgan  
Arianne Criqui  
Colin and Paige Daniels  
Bernard and Elaine D'Avella  
Bernard and Laura D'Avella  
Michael and Gemma Diaco  
Ian and Alisa Eagle  
EFS Teachers Association  
Jordan and Lindsey Farkas  
Rob and Beth Fink  
Chris and Audrey Franzblau  
Jason and Susie Freda  
The Laurie and Thomas Fusco Family Charitable Fund  
Lazzlo and Wendy Fuzesi  
Michelle Gadaletta  
Brian and Allison Gaffney  
Greg and Tina Gardner  
Josephine and John Holland  
Curt and Kris Huegel  
Travis and Peggy Hutchinson  
The Kearney Family Charitable Trust  
Richard and Joan Kilcoyne  
John and Kelly King  
Carol King and Bevan Watt  
Pat and Dennis Lacognata  
The Lavezzo Family  
Jay and Sandra Levy  
Jonathan and Barbara Luca  
Kelly and Eric Makovsky  
Anita Malanka  
Kenneth and Kathy Monroe  
The Moran Family Gift Fund  
Gabriel and Heidi Naranjo

Kristin Pak  
Stacy Schlosser  
Geoffrey and Kim Schmidt  
Todd and Anne Marie Scolnick  
Keith and Kate Stefanczyk  
George Stanton  
Frederick and Meghan Storz  
H. Carl Sturcke  
John and Collene Toth  
Anthony and Michele Trapasso  
Matthew Voliva  
Catherine and John Walsh  
Allison and Charles White  
Greg Woods  
Todd and Stephanie Wozniak  
Frank and Loretta Zupa

**The Essex Fells Foundation would also like to thank the following College Night Fundraiser sponsors, auction donors and auction winners\*:**

AirGroup  
Carella, Byrne, Cecchi, Olstein, Brody & Agnello, P.C.  
Kerry and Andrew Criqui  
Essex Fells Police Department  
FLEETWASH  
Lucinda and Ed Davis  
Marie and Frank Giantomasi  
Annemarie and Mike Hochkeppel  
KB Electric  
Keller Williams – John Haydu  
Caragh and Brian Lavoie  
Christine and Paul Lembo  
Barbara and Jon Luca  
Lyons McConnell Architecture Construction  
New Jersey Devils  
Dolores and Antonio Seabra  
Schumacher Auto Group  
Melissa and Michael Slomienski

---

\*This list has been prepared with great care. However, despite our sincere efforts to avoid omissions we know they can occur. If any omissions are noted, we hope you will accept our apology and advise us of the error by emailing [info@effee.org](mailto:info@effee.org)