



Weston Education Enrichment
Fund Committee

To: Weston Public School Committee
From: Allison Abrams, WEEFC Chair
Date: June 5, 2017
Re: WEEFC Year-End Report 2016-2017

Our focus for the 2016-17 school year was to increase participation, increase awareness of WEEFC funded programs and to broaden our reach in the community. Our success in attaining these goals is evidenced by a 16% increase in donors, increased participation in WEEFC sponsored events, as well as, increased volunteerism. Despite the increase in auction revenue and participation from last year, our appeals did not manifest themselves in dollars raised as we fell short of 2015-16 revenues. We are confident that our expanded donor base will help us return to historical levels as we are encouraged that despite declining enrollment in our schools, WEEFC continues to expand the number of families supporting our cause. WEEFC continues to fund a variety of programming and enrichment activities to support the Weston Public Schools and remains committed to fundraising while increasing participation, volunteerism and knowledge about the programs funded through WEEFC dollars.

WEEFC's Year-End Results 2016-2017

Participation:

In September, WEEFC launched its annual appeal. Approximately 1500 letters were mailed to the parent community. During the fall, WEEFC followed up the appeal letter with several electronic solicitations. Additional help came from The Meslin Family who agreed to match all new donations and donation increases by High School families up to \$25,000. We also had two anonymous families match new donations and donation increases by Middle School families up to \$20,000. The Middle School and High School families stepped up to the challenge, and WEEFC was thrilled not only to receive the matching donation but also the increased amounts from all participating families. Finally, our December appeal letter was sent to all families from whom WEEFC had not yet received a donation.

Number of Donors

2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
304	327	390

Funds to Date:

Although overall donations ended slightly lower than we had hoped for, WEEFC was still able to make a substantial contribution to every school in Weston. We are proud to report that the number of donors, including many first time donors, increased by 16% this year even though the average donation amount

per family decreased from \$668 in FY2016 to \$625 in FY2017. Through all fundraising efforts WEEFC collected a total of \$249,138.50 compared with \$283,623 in FY2016. Nonetheless, this level of donation has allowed WEEFC to fund not only the core programming funded every year, but also a substantial number of new and creative programs within the schools. With the help of our Ambassadors, WEEFC continues to bolster efforts to communicate about WEEFC's role in the schools, its mission, and more specific information about grants approved for each school. Despite this, our appeal raised slightly less than last year. Fortunately, our auction net increased and we netted a little over \$42,000 from families at Woodland, Field and Country Schools while generating a general buzz about the work that WEEFC does and where and how the dollars are spent. We are confident that as our younger and/or newer families become more familiar with the programming funded with WEEFC dollars, they will increase their donations and become long term supporters of WEEFC.

Annual Fall and End of Year Appeals:	\$193,690
Spring Auction (net)	\$42,830.00
STAR Program:	\$5,585.00
Kids' Art Fundraiser	\$6,213.50
In Memoriam of Denise Price:	\$820.00
Total (through 6/1):	\$249,138.50

Annual Fundraisers:

All Hands In: Based on feedback from last year's auction attendees, we made significant changes to the event this year including a new venue, a shorter evening, and a new format. The elementary school parents expressed interest in having a fundraiser for just their schools. In reality, at our past auctions, a large majority of the attendees were our families with younger children. We decided to give this idea a try in hopes to build community amongst families at Country, Woodland and Field while giving people an opportunity to learn more about WEEFC. We were thrilled with the enthusiastic response to this year's new format. With the help of the art teachers, our Ambassadors, building principals and PTO Chairs at Country, Woodland and Field, we created unique, priceless pieces of art to be auctioned off on March 9, 2017. We had grade specific pieces as well as all-school, larger, pieces. The goal was to make this event accessible to as many parents as possible. We kept it in Weston and lowered the ticket price to \$50/person. We had over 250 people in attendance that evening with many parents bidding throughout the night on children's art. In addition to the artwork, we felt it was important to give everyone an opportunity to participate in the fundraising so we created Giving Trees for each school where parents could identify an area they wanted to support, at any level they felt comfortable. Prior to that evening, the building principals identified items they wanted funded by the Giving Tree. These items became part of a tree and parents could choose to fund items to aid Literacy, STEM or Classroom Equipment/Supplies. Netting \$42,000 for the three schools, this event was a huge success. With these donations, WEEFC was able to fund all the items on the principals' wish lists.

STAR Program: Response to this initiative continues to be positive, and families have embraced this opportunity to give special praise not only to classroom teachers but also to administrators, office staff, custodial staff and bus drivers. Prior to the departure of the Class of 2017, WEEFC targeted those parents in a special STAR campaign, encouraging them to recognize a deserving Weston School employee on behalf of their graduating senior. Additionally, WEEFC is currently highlighting the STAR program to all families as an opportunity to give a year-end gift for their teachers. Thus far, \$5585 from 30 donors has been received in STAR awards. This is about \$1800 more than this time last year. We expect additional awards to be purchased as year-end gifts.

Grants:

As of June 1, WEEFC has awarded 55 grants totaling \$157,517 during this school year. This number of approved grants and the total awarded is less than last year's 116 grants totaling \$247,660. However, the numbers do not tell the entire story. In this number of grants awarded there are three large grants awarded to Country, Woodland and Field for items on the Giving Trees at the March 9th event. There were multiple items ranging from technology to little libraries to classroom toolkits. We are happy to report that some of the reoccurring grants have now been embedded in the curriculum and we did not see those requests. Lastly, we did not offer Inspiration Grants this year since we found that some schools were already planning on submitting larger grants. For example, we knew we were funding an iLab space at Country and going to be asked for funding for June Academy and for funding to enhance the Library Commons at the High School. We had just installed white erase boards in some Middle School math classrooms and funded the iLab (*The Hatch*) at Woodland. With that said, we are ready for an increase in grants next year! With one last meeting to go, it is likely that the number of grants awarded will increase before year-end. Despite the decreased number of grants, there were many new grants that accompanied our recurring ones. Some new grants that were funded included the MS Robotics Club, drones at the High School, The iLab at Country, A Symposium on Forced Migration at the High School, a Mass Audubon Naturalist visiting fourth grade, Project Based Learning in the Middle School and June Academy at the High School. The recurring programs included Wordfest, grants supporting the drama program, Creative Arts programming, Land's Sake programs, and several Museum of Science programs. A complete list of grants benefitting students this year is attached.

Ben Sandalls Author: WEEFC is privileged to be the beneficiary of funds from the Ben Sandalls Memorial Fund. Over many years, the Ben Sandalls Memorial Fund has made it possible to host special authors and illustrators impacting students from kindergarten through twelfth grade. The generous gift given by the Sandalls family to honor the memory of their son, Ben, has allowed WEEFC, through the Wordfest program, to bring many memorable guests including Lois Lowry, Tracy Kidder, Kate Klise, Steven Kellogg and many more.

This year, the High School welcomed Sonia Nazario, an award winning journalist, to speak to students about her book, *Enrique's Journey*, a story about a boy from Honduras and his plight to find his mother in the United States. Ms. Nazario was engaging and witty as she talked to the students about

immigration, racial discrimination, U.S. foreign policy, and other issues. In addition to speaking in an assembly format with the 9th and 10th graders and then the 11th and 12th graders, she circulated to a few history classrooms where she continued the dialogue.

Communications:

Constant Contact: WEEFC continues to use Constant Contact to target specific groups. We sent emails to schools and or grades with pictures of programming funded by WEEFC. This tactic was well received as it was information that was pertinent and presented with visual appeal. It is our continued hope that this focused communication strategy will give parents a better understanding of what WEEFC means to the schools and help WEEFC generate additional revenue.

PTO Directory: We are most grateful to the PTO for allowing WEEFC to once again include a page in the PTO Directory this year. This provided WEEFC an incredible opportunity for increased visibility in hundreds of households of PTO members.

Twitter: WEEFC and faculty continue to utilize social media to share information with families about our role in the schools. Parents can follow @WEEFC on Twitter to see photos and get news about how their contributions are being put to work in the Weston Public Schools.

Goals and Looking Forward:

Improve Communication: Communication is the key, and we are constantly searching for new ways to help parents understand WEEFC and its role in the schools. Messaging from WEEFC helps and it was hopeful to see more faculty members become involved in sharing WEEFC's impact in their classrooms. Our Ambassadors at Country, Woodland and Field have worked with teachers and administration in each building to communicate more specifically to parents about WEEFC grants benefitting the students in each school. We are continuing this new initiative next year. We have also talked about bringing back the WEEFC newsletter, as a once a year publication, starting next year.

Volunteer Recruitment: As always, WEEFC will continue to strive to increase volunteer participation. We were thrilled with the expanding number of young parents willing to help with our March Event and other fundraisers this year. We had interest from six people for our open Board positions of which three wrote letters of intent. We made great strides this year, but will continue to seek new, active volunteers.

Finally, I would like to thank the countless volunteers whose dedication and time enabled us to continue our support of the Weston Schools. First, our Elementary School Ambassadors, Kelly D'Amato, Ashley Hanser and Meredith Taylor helped define the role of this new position in their schools as they advocated on behalf of WEEFC to help our younger families understand how WEEFC impacts the schools. Thank you to the many people who helped to make our March, *All Hands In*, event such a success, both financially and as a community raiser. We would not had this success without our Ambassadors along with Kate Dickie, Kait Whitworth, Aida Adrain, Kate Hall, Mackenzie Domb, Juliana Kaden, Anna Berger, the PTO Chairs at Woodland, Country and Field as well as the art teachers at those schools, Chris Fehl, Dana Lanciliotti, Colleen Lucas and Emily Pestone. They all worked tirelessly to make this year's event a memorable one. Key PTO members contributing to WEEFC's success include

President, Alix Campbell and incoming President, Attia Linnard, as well as Wordfest Coordinator – Kristin Barbieri, Creative Arts Council Chair – Michelle Callanan and her committee, Science and Math Council Co-Chairs – Grace Yang, Jill Tanzi and Leila Hooper and their committee. I would like to also extend special thanks to Greg Augustine and Margie Ross for their work on our database and communications to parents and to our Treasurer – Cara McGrath and WEEFriends Treasurer and WEEFC Secretary – Margie Ross, and School Committee Liaison – John Henry and also to Janet Bohlin, Patty Ferguson, Anne Keyes, Ashley Lopes and Donna Garlisi for all of their help throughout the year.

Lastly, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to our Board for their incredible energy and commitment to WEEFC.

Respectfully Submitted:

Allison Abrams, Chair

Greg Augustine

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John Henry, School Committee Liaison