



Dear Westford Elementary School Families,

Have you noticed that Time seems to move at warp speed? The holidays are long gone & the New Year is well underway. Slowing down and finding time for reflection and thankfulness is always a good thing. Maybe you heard, maybe you didn't, but after almost 20 years of supporting the Westford elementary schools with funding and programming, Westford Elementary PTO (WEPTO) underwent significant restructuring in 2015 and is a much leaner organization. WEPTO began transitioning away from a large, town wide PTO incorporating and supporting ALL elementary schools, and moved to six small, individual, school-based PTOs. This fall, the schools took the PTO reigns and are now responsible for their own fundraising, budgets, and programming. However, WEPTO is still the umbrella 501c3 organization handling the accounting for all 6 schools.

The schools' PTOs are embracing the opportunity to create their own organization that reflects their school's unique personality. The smaller PTOs provide for school-based decision-making and create more manageable volunteer opportunities. The schools' PTOs are having collaborative meetings with the principals, vice principals, sister-schools and of course teachers as they try to determine how to best develop their individual organizations and foster a relationship with their sister-school. They are excited to bring funding directly into their school. Not only will this funding be used to bring quality educational programs to the students, but also, PTOs are hoping to use it to make their teachers' and specialists' wish lists come true. Wishes include: dinosaur fossils, cameras for stop action movies, math cards, supplies for field day, a playground shed, bean bags for library & iPads in every classroom. Wouldn't it be fun to make dreams come true?

The schools' PTOs started this inaugural year with a modest fundraising goal: continue the tradition of bringing two popular arts & enrichment program to each grade. Happily, every school met this goal! Of course, they want to do more! PTOs are hoping to bring more support to their teachers and school staff. This could be in the form of a mini-grant program or a large annual fundraiser aimed at achieving a specific goal or another school specific endeavor.

This year most schools' used the *Invest in Your Child* direct donation fundraising campaign to support their budgets. The schools averaged a 28% participation rate (see results below). PTOs are thinking about new and/or sister-school fundraising events for the spring, such as carnivals or silent auctions.

So, in the first few months school PTOs have been trying to determine how to best serve the community that they are so fond of, that gives our children such a great foundation for life. There have been budget reviews, letterhead contests, web site development (underway), teacher mini-grant programs (in process), sister school dances, closets overflowing with donated supplies, all the while new processes and procedures are being implemented and lots of energized conversations are being had. It is a year of Patience, Togetherness & (new found) Organization.

It is a year in which thankfulness goes a long way. Nothing could be done without the generosity of our community. We are thankful for every donation that has been given to: *Invest in Your Child*, the Book Fair, Teacher Conference Dinner, school stores, Halloween Carnivals & Dances, to name a few. We are thankful for the time that has been spent volunteering at an event or contributing artwork, bulletin boards, writing newsletters, writing thank you letters, cutting box tops, donating a pair of shoes or offering a new idea. There is no doubt that parent participation continues to play an integral role in the excellence and community spirit of Westford schools. Thank you for that.

Participation Results of the *Invest In Your Child* fundraiser through mid-December. Final reporting in spring:

<i>Total No. Students/School</i>		
Abbot	387 Students	37% participation
Crisafulli	366 Students	20% participation
Day	374 Students	24% participation
Miller	326 Students	26% participation
Nabnasset	350 Students	36% participation
Robinson	266 Students	29% participation

Best wishes -- Betsy Metters: WEPTO treasurer, Kim Koehr & Kerry Shyjan: co-presidents