



Currents

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Genesee Community Charter School

September 2001

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Building a Future

Welcome to the Genesee Community Charter School! Creating a school from scratch requires vision, planning, and patience! Genesee Community Charter School began in Spring, 1999 as a shared vision and slowly evolved into one of New York's most unique charter schools.

We are delighted and honored that you have chosen our school to play a central role in educating your child during these critical elementary years. We are committed to achieving the highest academic and character standards with our students, and we look forward to working with you to ensure each child's success.

Most of you have seen the school in its fully renovated glory! Our classrooms and office space are well equipped and appealingly decorated so that we may provide an inviting and stimulating learning environment for your child.

We are very grateful to Joe Graves and the RMSC Facilities Crew for their hard work in renovating the drab basement of the Gannett School of Science and Man into our beautiful, new school!

Family Association Meeting And Board of Trustees Election Planned

We're making strides to get our Family Association up and running, and to create family involvement in all areas of the school (see page 2).

The procedures for electing three parent representatives to the GCCS Board of Trustees will be explained at the September 19th Family Association meeting. Election of parents to the Board of Trustees will take place at the October 17th Family Association meeting.

If you are interested in running for a seat on the Board, please call Maureen Milke at 271-4552-ext. 460. An information questionnaire will be mailed to you.

Information about all the candidates will be sent home, and candidates will make brief statements prior to balloting on October 17th.

Be sure to contribute your voice to shaping GCCS's future by participating in Family Association meetings and elections.



Food Service Selected ABVI-Goodwill Ready to Serve

GCCS has worked long and hard to find the perfect partner to provide meal service to our school and we are pleased to announce that ABVI-Goodwill Food Service has been selected. They have worked closely with us to make sure that our concerns about nutrition, taste and variety were met. ABVI-Goodwill has been providing catering services to the Rochester Museum & Science Center for many years and came highly recommended.

Finding a company that was willing to provide meals "family style" (students will work cooperatively to serve each other) was not easy, but ABVI-Goodwill met our needs and provided a sample menu that includes foods such as Chicken a la King, beef and bean burritos, and baked ziti.

September menus have already been sent home. Please be sure to help your child select an entrée for each day, and return to school the menu with your child's name, grade, and circled choices. Lunch can be purchased by the week, month, or semester. Contact Maureen Milke at 271-4552 ext. 460 if you have questions.

Participate in Our Weekly School-Wide Community Circle!

Each Wednesday from 12:10-12:40, our students will gather for a school-wide community circle. Our Music teacher, Carrie Haymond-Hesketh, will lead children in song, movement, and story telling. On some Wednesdays, classes will present updates on the progress of their expeditions or will perform skits, songs, recitations, or reports.

Family members are welcome to join us for this special community time. Please sit around the perimeter of the Eisenhart Auditorium. Children who wish to sit with family members during the Community Circle will be released by teachers to join you after the class is settled. Children will be called back to their groups at the conclusion of Community Circle.

Dismissal on Wednesdays is at 1:00. If you wish to wait for your child after Community Circle, you are welcome to do so at our Wednesday dismissal point behind the Planetarium.

Classroom Wish List

Thanks to all of you who contributed items from the back-to-school materials lists! It's not too late to bring in tissues, notebook paper, crayons, softsoap, zip-top bags, pencils, snacks, and 35 mm film to donate for classroom use. Below is a wish list of other items we could put to good use. If you wish to donate one or more of these items, please send them to school with your child.

Thank you for your support!

Wish List

- Used tennis balls
- Polaroid "Joy" Camera film
- Box of 1.44 MB disks (pc format)
- Inkjet photo paper

Join the GCCS Family Association!

Many families have already asked how they can be more involved in our school community. One way is to join the Family Association. The first meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 19th from 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.

The Family Association is a key component of our school's philosophy of keeping families involved and informed. The Family Association also elects members to the School Based Planning Team, the shared-decision making management team of the school, and the Board of Trustees, which ensures the school's compliance with the charter granted by New York State.

The Family Association will also sponsor family education nights, fundraisers for the school, and other activities for the school community. We hope you will join us!

WHAT: Family Association Meeting

WHEN: 6:30 – 7:30 p.m.,

Wed., Sept. 19th

WHERE: Eisenhart Auditorium

Upcoming Dates to Remember

Sept. 3: Labor Day, No School

Sept. 5: First full day for Kindergarten class

Sept. 10: GCCS Board of Trustees Meeting

Sept. 16: GCCS Family Association Meeting

Oct. 8: GCCS Board of Trustees Meeting

Oct. 8-9: No School for Students

Oct. 17: Family Association Meeting, Election of Parent Representatives to Board of Trustees

Responsive Classroom Model Prepares Children to Work Together

Teachers are eager to begin their first Learning Expeditions (see page 4) and have planned wonderfully rich and engaging projects! But don't worry if your child doesn't start researching, performing, and building things during the first few weeks of school. In order to facilitate complex and collaborative project work, teachers must spend a great deal of time during the first six weeks developing a solid foundation of classroom routines and procedures. This is particularly true here at the Genesee Community Charter School, where ALL our children, teachers, and procedures are new!

Teachers learned about the Responsive Classroom Model during their summer professional development time, and are preparing to use these techniques to introduce classroom materials, develop rules, and build a feeling of classroom community. If you would like more information about the Responsive Classroom, check out their website at www.responsiveclassroom.org.

Half Days Selected for Parent Conferences

Students at GCCS will have a half-day of school on three days this year so that we may hold Personal Education Plan meetings (PEP Talks) and Progress Report conferences:

- **Thursday, December 13, 2001**
- **Thursday, March 21, 2002**
- **Thursday, June 13, 2002**

Students will be dismissed at 11:30 on these three days. Teachers will contact you well in advance to schedule conferences.

Progress reports will either be distributed at the conferences or will be mailed home on December 14, March 22, and June 27.

Look for more information about PEPs and Progress Reports this fall.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures Reviewed

- In order to ensure children's continual supervision and safety, we ask that you please:
- be sure that your child arrives at school promptly at 8:00 a.m. and is picked up promptly at 3:00 p.m. (1:00 p.m. on Wednesdays)
 - park in one of the RMSC lots and **not** on the driveway in front of the school building
 - leave your child at the Eisenhart patio or at the classroom door if you escort your child to school
 - pick up your child from the Eisenhart patio (or behind the Planetarium on Wednesdays) if you escort your child home
 - notify your child's teachers if there is a change in drop-off or pick-up arrangements

Waiting Games

Stuck in traffic? Standing in a long line at the grocery store? Dentist delayed for another 20 minutes? We all know how to play "I Spy," but when that wears thin, try filling your child's time with these brain-building games!

This issue's games will help your child understand that words are made out of parts – both syllables and sounds. This skill helps children figure out unknown words when they read, and helps them break words apart when they spell.

Clap-it-out:

Give your child a word and ask her to clap once for each "part" (syllable). Say the word and clap at the same time. Can you clap out "baby" (two claps)? How about "hippopotamus" (5 claps)? Start with one- and two-syllable words and work up to supercalifragilisticexpialidocious!

Broken Words:

Say a word one sound at a time and see if your child can mentally glue the sounds back together and figure out the mystery word. Chop up a word and say (sounds, not letters) "s-t-o-p." Can he put the sounds together and say "stop?" This game is a challenge for grown-ups too – it's hard to speak just one sound at a time!

K-1 Children Investigate the “Story” in “Prehistory”

Do I have a story? Do we have a story? Does our earth have a story? K-1's first expedition into Prehistory in our region is designed around the concept of a story.

Students will be encouraged to wonder about things... to understand that everything has a story and to be excited about and prepared to uncover that story.

During the first half of the expedition, classes will be spending time exploring elements of a story. They will be working with our art, music, theater, and P.E. teachers to see and express a story in a variety of ways. Students will share the story of themselves through self-portraits, their names, and timelines, among other means of self-expression.

During the last half of the expedition, classes will be searching for the answers to a variety of questions, including “Does our Earth have a story?” and “How do we know the story of the Earth if we weren't there to witness it?” Classes will look at the layers of the earth, dig for fossils, and work with the museum and a paleontologist to answer those questions. The first grade will summarize and share their results through a “living museum” in their classroom, while the kindergarteners will design and perform a play.

A New Model of Music Education

For the past 9 years our Music teacher taught in public and private schools where music was covered once or twice a week for 30-minute segments. In most schools, the students leave their own classrooms to come to a separate music room. We believe that this structure promotes music as an isolated subject, yet children benefit from having music placed in the context of the larger picture and connected to the other topics they study throughout the year.

The students at GCCS will have a variety of musical experiences throughout the week. Singing, moving, playing and listening to music will be an integral part of the curriculum, and the music teacher will come into classrooms to nurture its existence. Whether it is a reading lesson, a math lesson, or an expedition to find fossils, music will play a role. Children will also have an opportunity to play a multitude of different percussion instruments, and will be able to utilize them in both small and large group settings.

Grades 2 & 3 Shoot for the Stars in their Prehistory Learning Expedition on “Beginnings”

When people look into the night sky, they wonder where things come from and ask questions. Second and third grade teachers will use the natural curiosity of their students to research their questions about their place in space. The expedition will begin with the documentation of the creation of our school, and then broaden to the beginnings of our planet and universe.

Students can look forward to an “overnight under the stars” at the planetarium and fieldwork in collaboration with local astronomy experts. For a culminating project, students will produce and perform a sky show at the planetarium. Watch for announcements about Family Astronomy Night!

The Role of Art at GCCS

The role of art in our school is to nurture in students a sense of wonder, which leads to individual understanding of the world around them. Through art, students use their knowledge of subject matter in creative activities that allow them to rename the world on their own terms. For our students, art is a form of empowerment, a new way of seeing. Art allows them to develop a deeper understanding of what they're studying, get into the habit of taking risks, and build community. By using art to document their journeys in becoming independent thinkers and creative problem solvers, children's artistic expression becomes a public testament.

Children will have ample opportunities to exercise and improve their skills in observing, narrating, and visually recording what they have learned. Art will be woven into field studies to the Memorial Art Gallery, the Strasenburgh Planetarium, and the Lower Falls as well as into daily classroom activities.