



Currents

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Genesee Community Charter School

December 2001

Volume 1, Number 2

Prehistory *Ends* with a Big Bang

Three months after our grand opening, GCCS's students dramatized, created, sang, recited, and displayed what they'd learned as we concluded our inaugural expedition. Culminating projects required students to merge content and skills as they researched and prepared their exhibitions.

Kindergarten and 1st Grade children studied "Stories" – the elements of stories, their stories, and the earth's story. Kindergarteners performed a musical play to depict the story of early animal life on earth. 1st Graders created a living museum – complete with ticket booth and security cameras – to display their autobiographies and early life dioramas. 1st Graders also performed an interpretive dance about the characters in the earth's story.

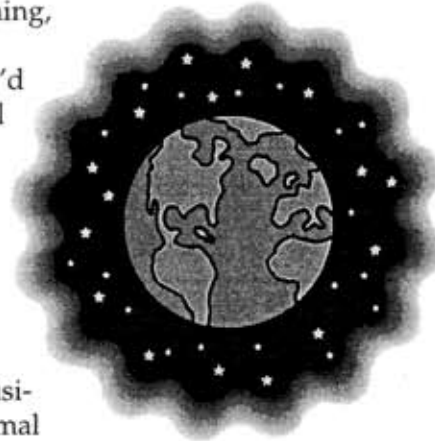
2nd and 3rd Graders investigated "Beginnings," from the origin of the universe to the creation of our school. Their Planetarium sky show was a multi-media event which showcased students' representations of galaxies, the solar system, the early earth, the ice age, and the history of our school.

The exhibitions were an exhilarating display of what we have accomplished at GCCS in our first three months. It was great to see families turn out in such force to share these special evenings with their children and us.

So what did students learn during the course of the expedition? Yes, they learned a bit about space, something about dinosaurs and early sea life; they applied and improved their reading, writing, and oral speaking skills. But so much of what they learned can't be quantified in the usual ways.

Students learned the meaning of working in a "crew." They learned to plan, to consider multiple ideas, and to compromise to reach solutions. They found out that there is a vast amount of information that can be gained outside the four walls of their classrooms, and that there are many experts beyond their teachers. They learned to cope with unfamiliar tasks and challenging expectations. They learned to critique their individual and group efforts and to reflect on their performance. These habits will be an important part of every GCCS expedition.

Many thanks to the parents who gave their time to work with small groups during the final preparations: Skip Bruzda, Diana Carter, Liz Cope, Eileen & Paul Holloway, Peter Keenan, Mary Lavin, Maureen McDonald, Tom Slothower, and Heidi Zinkand.



Striving Toward Our Vision

The school was abuzz with activity during the last two weeks of our Prehistory Expedition. What an inspiring view of Expeditionary Learning and our teachers and children in action! Children moved through the campus with such purpose and excitement as they visited the museum and planetarium, interviewed experts, created multimedia presentations, rehearsed musical accompaniments, put the finishing touches on artwork, practiced chants and skits, and constructed models. And of course, every project involved extensive reading, writing, research and cooperative group work.

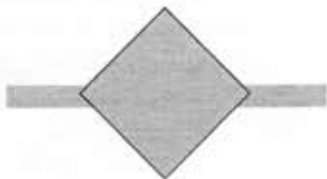
As fine as this expedition was, we know it is only the beginning. We are striving to integrate all the academic disciplines into each project, to incorporate the ELOB design principles into every aspect of our work, and to push each child to take risks and feel the sense of satisfaction that comes from challenge and accomplishment. We are amazed at the thought of what children will be able to achieve together after having been our students for three to six years.

Stay tuned. The best is yet to come.

Notice Familiar Faces?

Take a look at the "Explora-zone" banner that is currently hanging in front of the Rochester Museum & Science Center. Anyone look familiar? They're our students – Nicoya Jones (3rd), Nathan Klein (3rd) and Emma Marshall (2nd)! RMSC needed children to model, and these three eagerly stepped before the camera. Their pictures will appear on posters and in promotional literature advertising RMSC's newest exhibit.

Be sure to check out Explora-zone – fun for the whole family on the RMSC second floor.



Classroom Wish List

We're always in need of a few items to keep classrooms equipped, children fed, and our rooms clean. 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

Boxes of snack items (pretzels, animal crackers, etc.)

Polaroid "Joycam" film

Slide film

Paper towels

Inkjet photo paper

Second and Third Grade Tour Guides Lead the Way

GCCS receives many visitors including interested community members, reporters, and State Education Department supervisors, to name a few. Who better to share the GCCS story with them than our own students?

In September, 2nd and 3rd Graders were invited to apply to be part of the "Tour Guide Crew." Interested students wrote letters explaining why they wanted to be tour guides, what strengths they would bring to the task, and what they thought they would learn from taking on this new role. Twenty-five students applied and 15 were chosen by their teachers and classmates to become tour guides. Our first crew comprises Camille Ball, Sara Dill, Shanell Glover, Sterling Johnson, Emma Marshall, Alexandria Mewborn, Vontrase Osborne, Ryan O'Malley, Klara Owens, Nahoma Presburg, Eric Quitter, Molly Snell-Larch, Jennifer Son, Elliot Williams, and Kennethea Wilson.

Tour Guides brainstormed what they would need to know, and then set out to learn the history of the school, the ELOB design principles, the layout of the school, and the content of each class's expedition. They practiced speaking loudly and clearly, making introductions, answering questions, and concluding tours.

To date, tour guides have led approximately ten tours, and were featured on RNews. The reporter and camera operator from RNews were kind enough to sit with tour guides afterward to give them feedback, which led to some important revisions to the process.

"I learned that cooperating with other people is sometimes hard, but also very fun. I learned a lot about our school. We also had to learn how to make eye contact and speak clearly to people who are very important to our school," said Klara Owens, "Being a tour guide is a big responsibility." We look forward to finding many ways to prepare GCCS students to be leaders in our school.

Room Parent Volunteer Coordinators Facilitate Family Service

Many thanks to our Room Parents, who are doing a great job coordinating parent participation in the daily life of GCCS. Room Parents are:

- ♦ **Kindergarten:** James Carter (473-1187)
- ♦ **First Grade:** Gina & Stuart Dodd (426-3356), Anne Lichtenstein (244-7373), Anne Spaulding (461-5356), Susan Proe (224-0536)
- ♦ **Second Grade:** Debbie Ortenzi (482-7642), Maggie Torres (454-2659), Teddi Urriola (671-2961)
- ♦ **Third Grade:** Teresa Johnson (328-4273), Mary Lavin (442-1277), Teresa Snell (527-0070), Maureen McDonald (527-0824)

Please call your Room Parent if you'd like to sign up to assist with lunch, classroom projects, or field studies. We need your help!

Introducing the Parent Representatives to the GCCS Board of Trustees

Three parents were elected to the GCCS Board of Trustees during the October Family Association meeting.

- ♦ **Tom Klein** (315-986-8887), father of Nathan (3rd grade), will serve a three-year term. Tom is committed to the engaging, hands-on program GCCS offers. Tom works for Xerox and lives in Gananda.
- ♦ **Paul Holloway** (224-0044), father of Jennifer (2nd grade) and Emma (1st grade), will serve a two-year term. Paul chose GCCS because of its educational philosophy and the resources of the science museum. Paul, an attorney, lives in Rochester.
- ♦ **Tara Miller** (581-1308), mother of Jessica (1st grade), will serve a one-year term. Her experience with home-schooling helped her appreciate the hard work involved in teaching. Tara works as a long-term care nurse and lives in Rochester.

Many parents have asked about school pictures. School pictures will be taken this winter. We are looking for a photographer who will bring some creativity to the task!

Community Circle A Highlight of Each Week

Better bring your tissue – there's often not a dry eye in the Eisenhart Auditorium during GCCS's Community Circle gatherings. Led by our spectacular music teacher, Carrie Haymond-Hesketh, our school community joins in song, story, and movement each Wednesday at 12:10 p.m.

Highlights have included student solo instrumental performances, class presentations, demonstrations of student-created musical instruments, and an introduction to the ELOB design principles. Parents even got into the act on "Wacky

Wednesday" as they tried to play Orff instruments and keep up with Ms. Haymond and the "Seven Hump Wump" chant.

Parents and visitors are welcome to join us! Come to the Eisenhart Auditorium every Wednesday from 12:10 – 12:40 to share this special time with your child and our school community.



Join a GCCS Family Association Committee!

Volunteers have come forward to serve as Officers and Committee Chairs of the Family Association. They are:

Association Officers

Co-chairs:

Dan DeMarle (K) – 328-5982
Dennis Peel (3rd) – 223-4530

Secretary:

Cheryl Marshall (2nd)
244-9095

Treasurer:

Charles Reaves (2nd) – 436-3862

Committee Chairs

Family Social Activities:

Erin Kohler (1st) – 254-3815

Fund-Raising:

Barb and Tom Klein (3rd)
315-986-8887

Extracurricular Activities:

Liz Cope (3rd) – 352-9733

Food Service:

Sue Lederer (1st) – 473-3929

Communications:

Carol Bonnewell (1st)
647-1932

Student Book Publishing:

Marcy Berger (K, 3rd)
271-3549

Babysitting & Transportation:

VACANT

Volunteer needed!

Our school and these ambitious folks need your help! Please call the school (271-4552 ext. 460) to join a committee. Call today!

The Family Feast for GCCS

December 19 at 6:30 pm

Following the Family Association meeting at 6pm

It's time for some fun
We're planning a dinner
And want you to come

We will all bring a dish
Laugh and play games
We need to get together
To learn all your names

So PLEASE come and join us
Come one and come all
On Wednesday the nineteenth
Let's have a ball!

We ask that you bring your favorite family dish for the course that is assigned to your child's grade level. If you have more than one child you can pick the grade level you wish to bring for.

Kindergarten- appetizers 1st grade- main dish
2nd grade- side dish 3rd grade- dessert

Please return the bottom portion by Friday, December 7

Child's name _____ grade _____
How many adults? _____ children _____
What dish will you bring? _____

Second and Third Graders Enjoy a Night Under The Stars

What a night! As part of their expedition on the beginnings of our universe, 2nd and 3rd Graders spent an eventful night at the Strasenburgh Planetarium.

Students engaged in many activities during the evening. They worked in cooperative groups to assemble glow-in-the-dark constellations on the museum floor, which they viewed from the mezzanine balcony above. They created skits and made crafts. They trooped up to the observatory for an amazing opportunity to gaze at Saturn through the telescope. They closed the evening with a show in the star theater, although word has it that many participants couldn't quite stay awake that late! The event concluded a restful(?) night's sleep on the floor in the Planetarium lobby.

The teachers and students are grateful to the parent chaperones and the RMSC for their help making this event educational and a lot of fun!



Early People/ Woodland Peoples Expedition Begins

Teachers spent two professional development days before Thanksgiving sketching out their plans for the next expedition. This expedition will span the period of time between early people and the Native Americans' first contact with explorers and settlers.

The kindergarten and 1st grade will focus their studies on the Iroquois people. They'll investigate family and community roles and the relationship between the pre-contact Iroquois and local natural resources.

2nd and 3rd graders will explore the cultures and traditions of Native Peoples around North America. Their expedition will focus on the interrelationship between geography, climate, natural resources and the pre-contact Indians who lived across the continent.

Our location on the RMSC campus couldn't be better. The museum has rich collections, informative exhibits, and experts that classes will use extensively during their research. Be on the lookout for us to announce our mid-March exhibition!

Waiting Games

A couple more ideas to help you stretch your child's mind while you pass the time... This issue's games focus on vocabulary and meanings:

Fill in the Blank

Suggest the beginnings of sentences and see how many ways your child can think of to complete them. "Cut your _____." "Polish the _____." "Don't touch the _____." "Widen the _____." "My neighbor is going to _____."

Add challenge! Pass the sentence back and forth, adding a detail each time. For example: "Don't touch the vase." "Don't touch the antique vase." "Don't touch the antique porcelain vase." "Don't touch the priceless antique porcelain vase." "Don't touch the priceless antique porcelain vase I inherited from my great-grandmother!"

Synonym Sticklers

Build that vocabulary! Ask children to think of words that mean the same as:

- | | | |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| * Fast | * Heavy | * Above |
| * Box | * Picture | * Time |
| * Elegant | * Curtain | * Amazing |
| * Plant | * Work | |

Present children with a mixture of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Can you think of a word that means the same as challenge?

If Will Snow . . . Won't it?

Yes it will, eventually. Soon we'll be asking you to send in a set of winter outerwear for your child(ren) to keep at school. This will ensure that all children are prepared to play outside daily, when weather permits.

Boots Snowpants
Hat Mittens

Parent Information Sessions for Prospective GCCS Applicants

Know any families interested in GCCS? Invite them to attend a Parent Information session on one of the following dates:

- ◆ Tuesday, December 11, 7-9 p.m. in the RMSC Bausch Auditorium
- ◆ Thursday, January 17, 7-9 p.m. in the Eisenhart Auditorium
- ◆ Saturday, January 26, 1-3 p.m. in the Eisenhart Auditorium

Informational literature and applications will be available at these meetings. The deadline for applications for the 2002-2003 school year is February 1, 2002.

Current families will be contacted in January to reserve spaces for siblings. Siblings will be automatically enrolled if space permits, but applications are required.

Family Association Meeting and Potluck Celebration Planned

Watch for more information to come about our first Family Social event! The Family Association meeting will be held Wednesday, December 19 from 6:00 – 6:30 p.m. (Babysitting will be available for the meeting portion of the program). Following the meeting, families will join together to share holiday traditions and dishes as we celebrate our diverse heritages and customs.

A flier will be sent home with children within the next week. Please plan to join us. We look forward to strengthening our school community by sharing this special season with you.

Upcoming Dates to Remember

December 10: Board of Trustees Meeting, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

December 13: Parent Conferences – Half Day of School for Students (11:30 a.m. dismissal)

December 19: Family Association Meeting and Social Gathering, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

December 22 – January 6: Holiday Break. No School for Students – School Reopens Monday, January 7

January 14: Board of Trustees Meeting, 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.

January 16: Family Association Meeting, 6:30 – 7:30 p.m.

February 1: Application Deadline for Siblings and New Students

Third Graders Plan Service for Kindergarteners

For kindergarteners, the transition after lunch was the toughest. A group of caring 3rd graders took on the challenge of planning a way to ease kindergarteners to the next part of their day.

Nekethia Lawhorn, Cory Peters, Ian Slothower, Jordan Smith, and Hannah Snell-Larch observed kindergarteners, wrote to the kindergarten teachers offering help, and then planned a service called the "Kindergarten Book Crew."

At the conclusion of the lunch period, crews of 3rd Graders appear in the kindergarten classroom armed with picture books they have selected and practiced. Kindergarten children gather in small groups around each 3rd Grader for the special treat of being read to by an older classmate.

"The planning was fun because I got to work together with some kids I never worked with before," said Hannah Snell-Larch, "I notice that when you read to the kindergarteners, they're very calm. I think they really needed us." "This is the *best* idea!" added Keri Kijowski, kindergarten teacher, "Our students are thrilled to have the attention of the 'big' kids, and the book time really helps them settle in for the afternoon's activities."

Based on their experiences during the "trial week," the Planning Crew prepared a list of Tips for Readers to share with their classmates. "Our class has to work on speaking clearly and loudly," reflected Cory Peters, "We also have to hold the book so the kindergarteners can see the pictures while we're reading." Crews of 3rd Graders will rotate throughout the year to provide this special service to their kindergarten friends.

