



Currents

The Bi-monthly Newsletter of the Genesee Community Charter School

June 2004

Volume 3 No. 6

The Rich Get Richer...



and the poor get poorer. So goes the verse from Matthew (XXV:29). Aside from its religious message, the saying also applies to children's reading, and the issue of summer setback.

According to researchers, the concept of "Matthew effects" refers to the consequences of positive early experiences upon children's later experiences. For example, children who read well, read more. As they read more, they become better at reading, and so they enjoy it more, and consequently read more. Children who struggle with reading don't enjoy reading, so they read less. Less reading equals less practice, which means these children continue to fall behind. They simply don't read enough to propel themselves to read better.

The issue becomes especially problematic during the summer months when children are not in a school environment where they read on a daily basis. In one study, children of varying reading abilities made substantially similar gains during the school year. However, a difference of seven months of ability widened to two years, seven months by the end of 6th Grade. Summer setback accounted for upwards of 80% of the reading achievement differences.

Matthew effects also apply to children's knowledge bases. Children who have more and richer background experiences have a larger knowledge base. The larger knowledge base allows the child to acquire even more expertise at a faster rate. One's knowledge base affects

(continued on p. 3)

Introducing Our Newest Colleagues

Welcome to our new faculty members! After conducting more than 50 interviews, we have selected three highly qualified people to fill our vacancies. Our selection process is quite rigorous; each finalist participates in several interviews, writes a sample expedition plan, conducts a demonstration lesson, and spends time observing at the school. We are delighted to have chosen these three individuals, each of whom brings a wealth of experience and talent to GCCS.

Kate Daniels will be joining our faculty as one of our new 6th Grade teachers. Kate is a specialist in science, and taught Grades 2-3 for four years in New Jersey. She has recently relocated to Rochester with her family. Kate is certified in elementary education and Russian.

Mary Hetland comes to us from the Greece Central School District. She has 18 years teaching experience and is a certified special education teacher with specialization in Asperger's and Autism disorders. Mary will join Kate in teaching 6th Grade.

We were saddened to learn that Ann Looby, who has been with us for two years, has decided to return to her former teaching position in Rush-Henrietta. Ann has made great contributions to GCCS, especially in the area of literacy education.

We are pleased to have found Mary Kay Bellwood to take Ann's place. Mary Kay will teach 4th Grade next year. She has nine years teaching experience in the Rochester City School District.



(continued on p. 2)

Family Association Picnic!



The Family Association picnic is a great time to come together as a school community. This year's event will be held Sunday, June 13, rain or shine, at the Maplewood YMCA, 25

Driving Park Avenue. The picnic begins at 1:30 p.m. with fun, food, and games. Lunch will be served from 2-4 p.m. and the indoor pool will be open from 3-5 p.m. The grounds boast a new playground, and the Family Association will provide the moon jump as well. Lots of fun and friendship to be had by all!

Please bring a dish to pass, sunscreen, swim suits, towels, lawn chairs, blankets, and safe lawn games. Tableware, beverages, hamburgers, hot dogs, and veggie burgers will be provided.

The Family Association requests a \$5 donation per family. Please send in an envelope marked with your name, the number attending, and the name of the dish you'll be bringing.

Many thanks to the Family Association Social Committee and volunteers for planning this wonderful event for our school.

Yes, It's Coming!

The official date for the playground installation is Saturday, September 11, 9:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. The playground company will send a supervisor, and our parents will provide the strength and talent to install our beautiful new playground.

All adult help is welcome, whether for an hour or the whole day. Please watch for additional details in the August issue of *Currents*.

What: Playground Installation

When: Saturday, September 11
9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Who: All adults welcome

Where: Behind the Eisenhart Auditorium



Newest Colleagues (continued from p. 1)

Mary Kay is a special ed certified teacher and she has achieved National Board of Professional Teaching Standards certification. Mary Kay is currently part-time director of the RCSD Special Education Training & Resource Center and part-time special ed consultant teacher at School No. 16.

You'll have a chance to meet our new staff members at the Family Open House on Thursday, August 26 from 6-7:30 p.m.

Upcoming Dates To Remember



- June 13: Family Association Picnic
1:30-6 p.m. Maplewood YMCA
- June 14: Board of Trustees Meeting
5:30 p.m. Cunningham House
- June 16: K, 1st Grade Exhibition Night
6:15-7:15 p.m. Eisenhart Auditorium
2nd Grade Exhibition
6:30-7:30 p.m. Ballroom
- June 17: 3rd and 5th Grades Exhibition Night
6:15-7:45 p.m. Eisenhart Auditorium
- June 18: 4th Grade Exhibition Night
6-9 p.m. Eisenhart Auditorium
- June 18: Re-enrollment Information Forms Due
- June 19: Christine Lavin Playground Benefit
Concert, 7 p.m. Eisenhart Auditorium
- June 23: Last Day of School
11 a.m.-1 p.m. Passage Ceremony
- Aug. 26: Family Open House 6:00-7:30 p.m.
- Sept. 1: First Day of School Grades 1-6
1:00 p.m. dismissal
- Sept. 2: Grades 1-6 1:00 p.m. dismissal
- Sept. 3: Grades 1-6 1:00 p.m. dismissal
- Sept. 6: Labor Day, School is Closed
- Sept. 7: Grades 1-6 3:00 p.m. dismissal
Kindergarten half-day sessions
- Sept. 8: 1st Full Day for Kindergarten
Community Circle 12:20-12:50 p.m.
1:00 p.m. dismissal (Every
Wednesday)

GCCS Receives 1st State Dissemination Grant

The New York State Education Department has awarded GCCS a two-year grant to facilitate efforts to disseminate our model and practices. The grant will enable us to conduct a yearly Demonstration Site Seminar, host educators from several area schools on an ongoing basis, and spread our success through professional presentations and articles.

It is an honor to receive such a vote of confidence from the State. We look forward to sharing the Expeditionary Learning model, our curriculum framework, our expedition planning process, and elements of our school's culture – traditions, routines, family involvement, classroom management methods, and the integration of special subjects.

The Rich Get Richer (continued from p. 1)

one's vocabulary, reading and listening comprehension, problem solving ability, and a host of other skills.

Parents can enact simple strategies to ensure that their children don't lose during the summer months. **Most importantly, set aside at least 30 minutes every day for quiet reading time.** Children can read books that are slightly easier than those they read at school, and still benefit from the additional practice they receive. Children should also listen to books read aloud to them. These selections might be slightly harder than books children can read themselves. Children will benefit from the more complex stories and vocabulary they'll hear.

Taking children to museums, parks, the zoo, concerts, and other events; talking to them about what they're seeing and learning; and having children keep a summer journal will help increase their background knowledge, writing skills, and vocabulary.

A stimulating summer break will help enrich the learning for all our children and will put them in good stead to pick up where they left off when school starts in the fall.



Coming Soon!
Christine Lavin

Playground Benefit Concert

When: Saturday, June 19
7:00 p.m. – Meet-the-Artist
Wine & Cheese Reception
8:00 p.m. – Concert

Where: Eisenhart Auditorium

Tickets on Sale Now at the
RMSC Reception Desk
\$17 in advance
\$20 at the door



Support Our Playground by Bringing
Your Family and Friends!

Donations Needed for Raffle Baskets by June 14

The Family Association will raffle six lovely themed baskets to raise additional funds during the playground benefit concert. We need your help! Please donate an item to be included in the basket:

Kindergarten: Dessert-making Supplies
1st Grade: Coffee-related Items
2nd Grade: Knitting Supplies
3rd Grade: Books and Reading Materials
4th Grade: Gift Certificates to Area Merchants
5th Grade: Wine & Accessories

This is a great way to pitch in and support the concert and playground! Just send the item in to school and the Raffle Committee will prepare the baskets for the June 19th event. Thank you for your generosity!



Passage Ceremony Celebrates Another Wonderful Year



Our annual Passage Ceremony will be held on June 23, 2004 from 11:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. (note time correction from April's *Currents*). Each year, the Passage Ceremony brings families, students, and staff together in reflection and celebration. Highlights of this year's ceremony will include student performances and a slide show. In addition, each class will present a meaningful gift to the grade level

below, and teachers who will not be looping with their classes will pass on their students to next year's teachers, complete with wise words of advice based on their experiences.

Limited space makes it necessary for us to restrict the number of family members that can attend the ceremony. Next week, two tickets will be sent home per family. Please, we ask that you respect our space constraints and limit your family attendance.

Summer – A Time For Staff To S-T-R-E-T-C-H!

Summer is a good time for educators to regroup and rejuvenate, but for GCCS staff, revitalization doesn't just happen poolside. Many of our staff members are taking the opportunity to learn new teaching skills and take on challenges. Keri Kijowski, Spero Michailidis, Melissa Conklin, and Peter Hilling will attend *Investigations* math training offered by the U of R. Carrie Haymond, with a grant from Expeditionary Learning, will take an Orff Music course in Salzburg, Austria. Peter Hilling and Mary Kay Bellwood will attend Responsive Classroom training in Greenfield, Massachusetts, and Becki Bishop will attend a seminar on Guided Reading. Michelle Ericson and Spero Michailidis will travel to Portland, Maine for an ELOB summit on technology in expeditions, and Kate Daniels and Mary Hetland will go to Boston for a summit on student-authored books. Lisa O'Malley and Sarah Morell will challenge themselves during a grueling weeklong whitewater canoeing trip held by Outward Bound. Our students will greatly benefit from the skills and knowledge acquired by our staff during these rich professional development opportunities.

A Word to the Wise About Backpacks



This is our annual appeal for families to consider during their back-to-school shopping: Please select regular, old fashioned, wheel-less backpacks for your children. We have found that wheeled backpacks pose several safety and storage problems, and we are trying to eliminate these backpacks from use at GCCS.

We would also appreciate if you would select a backpack that is more modest in size. Some backpacks resemble overnight luggage more than they do book bags! A smaller backpack is more than adequate for your child to carry necessary items to and from school.

Back-to-School Supply List

We would greatly appreciate it if each student could donate the following items to his/her classroom community next year:

- ✓ 2 boxes of Puffs or Kleenex
- ✓ 2 bottles of Softsoap (pump kind)
- ✓ 1 box sandwich-sized Hefty one-zip bags
- ✓ 1 box gallon-sized Hefty one-zip bags
- ✓ 2 large packages graham crackers, animal crackers, goldfish crackers, or pretzels (teachers will request additional snacks throughout the year as the need arises)
- ✓ 1 dozen No. 2 pencils
- ✓ 1 box Dixie cups
- ✓ 3 glue sticks or bottles of Elmer's glue

All donations are voluntary. Thank you so much for your generosity!