



Currents

The Bi-monthly Newsletter of the Genesee Community Charter School

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The Tricky Business of Discipline

Ask teachers what their least favorite part of teaching is, and they'll likely say "classroom management." Ask what's most important for student learning in school, and they'll likely repeat "classroom management." For learning to take place, classrooms must function smoothly, children must attend to the task at hand, and teachers and children must make quality work a priority. Creating a positive, productive environment for children to learn is a top priority for our staff. We strive to create clear expectations, efficient routines, and when necessary, consistent consequences for transgressions.

We use the Responsive Classroom approach to classroom management. This approach emphasizes classroom community, social problem-solving, and respectful, clear language. For more information about the Responsive Classroom approach, please visit www.responsiveclassroom.org.

Student discipline is sometimes fraught with complications. Teachers must consider students' (often conflicting!) versions of events in determining a course of action. At times, the best interests of one child must be balanced with the best interests of another child, or with the needs of the class as a whole. These are simply the ongoing demands of teaching, and are the kinds of judgments teachers in every school make hundreds of times a day. Teachers bring to bear their knowledge of individual children, child develop-

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Students Prepare to Lead



Who better to share GCCS's story than our own students? GCCS hosts many visitors – community members, parents of prospective students, elected officials, and educators from around the country. Students serve as ambassadors for the school during these visits and lead our guests on an informative tour of the school. Students describe their expeditions, explain how design principles fit into the daily life of school, and share their accomplishments over the past four years. Our students' commentary is the highlight of our guests' experience at the school.

Third through sixth graders were invited last month to apply to be tour guides for this year's visitors to GCCS. 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 role. Here's a sampling of what some of our thirty new guides wrote:

"I would like to be a tour guide for GCCS because I am proud of my school."

"I would like to improve on my speaking skills. Also I love showing people around our great school. The classes are always doing something exciting."

"I am good at meeting people and making friends. I can talk to adults and answer questions."

"I work well in crews by including everybody's ideas...I come up with my own ideas and I listen to what other students have to say."

"I'm forever working in a crew with different people. My skills for working in a crew are leadership, responsibility, patience, and always talking loud."

"I have a strong handshake and I am very friendly."

"When it is not my turn to talk, I do not talk."

"I think I would learn things, like different ways to present yourself to visitors (I already have a pleasant way!)"

"I would be a good tour guide because I'm friendly, and serious when it comes to my job."

"I think I would learn to be more confident in front of people."

"I have learned to plan my ideas into a tour. It is important to learn your part so you aren't clueless during a tour."

"[Last year] I learned that everything you say has to be based on what the guest is there for...you should try to say something meaningful and thoughtful about school."

"I have the skills to be a top-notch tour guide."

Indeed, these were top-notch applicants. They will make fine tour guides and will represent our school well.

Family Association Directory

Board of Trustees Representatives

Sara Bruzda (473-9736) Maureen McDonald (527-0824),
Teresa Snell (527-0070)

Officers

Co-Chairs: Tracy Smith (544-0577), Anne Spaulding (256-1444)

Secretary: Alice Carli (527-9632)

Treasurer: Julie Schnepf (256-0722)

Family Association Committee Chairs

Family Social Activities

John Quitter (787-0332)

Babysitting & Transportation

Volunteers Needed!

Fund-Raising

Mary Lavin & Tom Slothower (442-1277),

Jim & Diana Carter (473-1187)

Legislative Issues

Anne Lichtenstein (244-7373)



Classroom Parent Volunteer Coordinators

Kindergarten

Pamela Black-Colton (244-5097), Diana Carter (473-1187),
John Morgan (461-4471), Susan Proe (224-0536), Marisa
Stike (473-9318), Yvonne Villareale (473-9318)

First Grade

Laura Brewer (241-3034), Blanche Fox (288-9313),
Jennifer Sanfilippo, Nancy Weinstein (865-7714), Eileen
Wrona (288-3273)

Second Grade

Gina Dodd (426-3356), Annette Ramos (244-1378), Marisa
Stike (473-9318), Yvonne Villareale (473-9318)

Third Grade

Joanne DeMarle (328-5982), Jeanne Eckl (377-8957),
Betsy Serapilio-Frank & John Frank (654-5958), Bill
Howard (436-2573)

Fourth Grade

Faye Henri (244-1831), Sue Lederer (473-3929), Anne
Lichtenstein (244-7373), Susan Proe (224-0536), Anne
Spaulding (256-1444)

Fifth Grade

Alicia Ainsworth (262-5482), Cheryl Marshall (671-2961),
Debbie Ortenzi (533-2428), Jim Shook (461-1438), Teddi
Urriola (671-2961)

Sixth Grade

Paul Jonasse (461-1137), Mary Lavin (442-1277), Karen
Schneider (288-4726), Mary Terziani (328-3744)

Upcoming Dates To Remember



- Oct. 6: Curriculum Night Grades 2-6
Oct. 8: Professional Development Day
No School for Students
Oct. 11: School is Closed
9:00 a.m. Playground
Installation
Oct. 12: Curriculum Night K-1
Oct. 18: Board of Trustees Meeting
5:30 p.m. Cunningham House
Oct. 20: Family Association Meeting
6:30 p.m. Eisenhart Ballroom
Nov. 11: Professional Development Day
No School for Students
Nov. 15: Kindergarten, 1st Grade
Exhibitions
Students Required to Attend
Nov. 16: 3rd, 5th Grade Exhibitions
Students Required to Attend
Nov. 22-23: Professional Development Days
No School for Students
Nov. 24-26: School is Closed
Nov. 30: 2nd, 4th, 6th Grade Exhibitions
Students Required to Attend
Dec. 9: Parent-Teacher Conferences
11:30 a.m. Dismissal
Dec. 15: Family Association Social
6:00 p.m. Eisenhart Aud.

Village to City Exhibitions

Kindergarten & 1st Grade:

Monday, Nov. 15

3rd & 5th Grades: Tuesday, Nov. 16
2nd, 4th & 6th Grades: Tuesday, Nov. 30

Specific Times and Locations To Be Announced



*All students are
required to attend.*

Discipline (continued from p. 1)

ment, school philosophy, and classroom expectations when they resolve the small and large issues that crop up throughout the day.

Not every infraction is communicated to parents. But some discipline issues, when continuous or severe, require the involvement of families to help address them. For example, GCCS maintains a zero tolerance policy toward *any* form of aggressive physical contact. If a child commits an act of physical contact, parents are called and children are either sent home or suspended from school. Consequences are determined based on children's past behaviors.

Parents are often concerned about the outcomes for other children involved in an incident. Please note that out of respect for the confidentiality of all our students and families, we will not share with you the consequences administered to other children. We try very hard to be fair and consistent because that is how children learn to trust us and learn what we expect of them. We understand that it is tremendously difficult for parents to be called to school for a discipline issue. Please be assured that we want to work as a team with parents, and that we inform you of management issues to keep communication lines open and to help children achieve their best in school.

Our approach to classroom management helps children learn to treat one another with social justice and develop skills in advocating for themselves. While some problems may be solved

quickly with teacher intervention, the quick fix does not always result in the best outcome. It is often more appropriate – and better for children – to help them think through issues and arrive at solutions. Rather than simply controlling children, we teach them to control themselves. It is a long but worthwhile process.



Classroom management at GCCS is very strong. We have few major discipline issues in the course of a year. This doesn't mean our school is always quiet and peaceful! Our classrooms are sometimes silent and still, sometimes humming and lively, and sometimes active and noisy. The tone of the classroom is intended to match the nature of the activity. Teachers address infractions along the way in the manner best calculated to help children learn appropriate behavior while not bringing learning to a halt for the rest of the class.

Each summer we send two or three staff members for additional Responsive Classroom Training. During our professional development staff meetings, we work to improve our understanding of child development and classroom management. Because it is such a crucial part of teaching, we continually strive to improve our skills.

For more details about the GCCS discipline policy, please see the Family Handbook or ask for a copy of the Caring Community Commitment that parents and children sign as part of the enrollment or re-enrollment process.



Winter Weather Is Coming!



And the need for boots and warm outerwear will soon be upon us! Please be sure your child is equipped with boots, hats, mittens, and snowpants every day. We request that a hat and a spare pair of boots, mittens and snowpants be left at school for the winter season. Children need to be well-prepared for outdoor recess and field studies every day.



Please send into school labeled with your child's name:

- ✓ **Boots**
- ✓ **Hat**
- ✓ **Mittens**
- ✓ **Snowpants**



Third graders experience life on the raging canal

With voices raised in song, eyes peeled to take in the sights, and pencils poised for note-taking, our third grade class journeyed down the Erie Canal during their first overnight field study. Students traveled on the *Sam Patch* from Pittsford to the Montezuma Swamp. They spent the night on the boat, then hopped aboard a bus for the rest of the drive to the Erie Canal Museum in Syracuse.



It was a glorious trip! Students gathered a great deal of information about life on the canal during the 1800's from Captain Eric, Palmyra historian Bonnie Hayes, Canal Museum exhibits, and readings students completed along the way. Students also sketched and painted the landscape, wildlife, and canal during their excursion.

"Our students really got a feel for the adventure – and tight quarters – of living on the canal," said teacher Melissa Conklin. Teacher Chris Dolgos added, "This trip proved to be great first-hand research for our class. They'll be able to incorporate all that they learned into the scripts and scenery they create for their final production."

We have a playground!
(well, almost...)



Many thanks to the 35 parents who helped measure, dig, assemble, cement, and perform other playground construction tasks! The completion of the playground has been delayed by some missing pieces, but the installers will return Oct. 11-12 to finish the job. Peek around the Goodman St. side of the building next week to behold our beautiful new play space!

Family Association Meeting
and
Election of a Parent Member
to the GCCS Board of Trustees

Wednesday, October 20
6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

Parents interested in running for the Board position should call Tracy Smith at 544-0577 and be prepared to speak at the October 20 meeting. The election will be held immediately following candidates' statements.

And finally...

Family Potluck Supper and Community Circle!

Wednesday, December 15, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Eisenhart Auditorium

Watch for details in backpack mail!

