



Currents

The Bimonthly Newsletter of the Genesee Community Charter School

February 2005

Volume 4 No. 4

Success Breeds Success

The closing of two of Rochester's charter schools sparks concern among all of us who care about the accessibility of public school choice in our community. The opportunity for families to choose among a variety of options – with different philosophies, approaches, instructional programs, and services – is one of the principal benefits of charter legislation. Another advantage is the autonomy charter schools have to make fiscal, personnel, programmatic, and organizational decisions that are responsive to student needs and consistently support the core values of the school.

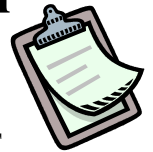
Our school's charter was enthusiastically renewed for another five years during the December meeting of the New York State Board of Regents. Our academic performance, parental involvement and satisfaction, and strong school culture make GCCS one of the finest charter schools in the state. Many factors have contributed to GCCS's success: a solid instructional program, a highly talented and stable faculty; rich opportunities for professional learning; and a cohesive, consistent school culture, to name a few.

We know our success is due in no small way to the commitment of the families of our students. GCCS parents have consciously chosen this type of school for their children. They work tirelessly to support student learning by volunteering at school, monitoring homework, coming to school events and conferences, and maintaining high expectations for academics and behavior.

And success breeds success. We continue to attract families who are dedicated to finding the best possible learning environment for their children. Our reputation has grown in this community through word of mouth and positive press.

We wish Rochester's newest charter school – the Urban Choice Charter School, scheduled to open in September – all the best in breeding its own successes. Rochester needs more high quality public school choices, and our children deserve them.

Intent to Return Due March 23



The deadline for **INTENT TO RETURN** forms is **Wednesday, March 23 by 3:00 p.m.** All current students who plan to attend GCCS next year must return a form to school in order to hold their spaces. Forms will be sent home in the mail late this week. If you don't received a form by March 7, please call Maureen Milke at 271-4552 ext. 460.

We have many anxious families of children at all grade levels on our waiting list. Unreserved spaces will be offered to new families. Please note that in order to be fair to all our families and applicants, *we strictly observe deadlines.*

Don't lose your child's space! Be sure to send your **INTENT TO RETURN** form back to school before the deadline.

City Grows Exhibitions

Kindergarten, 1st Grade, 2nd Grade
March 15

4th Grade, 5th Grade
March 16

3rd Grade
March 17

6th Grade
March 21

Check Backpack Mail for
Times and Locations



*All students are
required to attend.*

Family Association Directory

Board of Trustees Representatives

Sara Bruzda (473-9736) Jemeul Johnson

(719-8610), 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

Mary Haberberger ((473-0394), Mary Carol Taylor (458-9809)

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



- Mar. 9: Family Association Meeting
Bill Phillips Presentation
6:30-8:00 p.m. Ballroom
- Mar. 14: Board of Trustees Meeting
5:30 p.m. Cunningham House
- Mar. 23: INTENT TO RETURN DUE
- Mar. 25: Professional Development Day
No School for Students
- Mar. 29: Parent-Teacher Conferences
11:30 a.m. Dismissal
- Apr. 11: Board of Trustees Meeting
5:30 p.m. Cunningham House
- Apr. 18-22: Spring Recess
School is Closed
- May 9: Board of Trustees Meeting
5:30 p.m. Cunningham House
- May 27: Professional Development Day
No School for Students
- May 30: Memorial Day
School is Closed
- June 5: Family Association Picnic
Maplewood YMCA
- June 9: Parent-Teacher Conferences
11:30 a.m. Dismissal
- June 13: Board of Trustees Meeting
5:30 p.m. Cunningham House
- June 21: Passage Reception for 6th
Graders (Tentative)
6:30 p.m. Ballroom
- June 22: Last Day of School
Passage Ceremony 11:30 a.m.
(Tickets Required)

TODAY □ TOMORROW
EXPEDITION DATES
KINDERGARTEN □ 1ST GRADE:
WED □ JUNE □
2ND □ 3RD □ 4TH GRADES: THURS □ JUNE
□
5TH □ 6TH □ 7TH □ 8TH GRADES: MON □
JUNE □



Family Association Meeting

Wednesday, March 9

6:30 p.m.

Eisenhart Ballroom

Special Guest Speaker – Bill Phillips
from the *New York State Charter Schools Association*

Childcare available.

Watch backpack mail for registration.

Looping Back to the Future

The Spring's expeditions conclude our school's second full circle through the six historical time periods of our curriculum. Classes will embark on explorations of "Today and Tomorrow" in the Rochester region with connections across the globe. The curriculum emphasizes the natural world in Kindergarten through Grade 3, and focuses on city planning and development in Grades 4 and 5. Grade 6 will investigate forms and sources of energy past, present, and future.

Each loop (K-1, 2-3, and 4-5) completes a circuit of our six historical time periods every two years. The whole school studies the same time period at the same time, with topics of investigation increasing in complexity and sophistication as children advance through the grades. The 6th Grade studies the big concepts of environment, work, and social and political power in the U.S. and in river systems around the world.

Music: Nurturing Future Composers

GCCS students are going to make our second, semi-annual compact disc! And this time the CD will feature original compositions created by the children in kindergarten through sixth grade. If this sounds ambitious to you, then we agree! How will the students learn to write music? Why is composing important? What will be the themes of these songs? When will the CD be made?

In early June, students will record their music in the Bausch Auditorium on our museum campus. The original compositions will be inspired by the specific nature of each expedition. Animals, birdsong and our natural environment will determine the style of songs written by K, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd graders. 4th, 5th, and 6th Graders will examine the nature of jazz and the power of voice. Ultimately they will create unique compositions that highlight complex melodic and rhythmic relationships within the musical ensemble.

A different approach to teaching composition will be taken based on the age level of the students. However, when creating music, everyone will touch upon the importance of musical ideas such as rhythm, tempo, and melody that shape a quality composition. Each class will have an "anchor" song as a model to help them hear musical ideas created by great composers throughout history.



Today & Tomorrow in the Visual Arts

In the time period Today and Tomorrow, our students will examine the effects of Rochester's growing population and development on our urban river landscape and community culture. Student roles in the visual arts will be as observer, analyst, and communicator.

Students in Kindergarten through 3rd Grade will be asking, "How do people keep the environment safe for every living thing?" Birds, Barn Owls, and Salmon represent our investigations into animal habitats, adaptations, classification, and the concept of endangered species. Animal representations throughout art history will inform and inspire our work. Our students will continue work with observational drawing skills in field journals. Animal shapes, textures, colors, and motions will be documented and analyzed for final projects in painting and sculpture.

Community voices in Rochester will drive the expeditions of 4th and 5th Graders. Our students will create work through photojournalism to tell visual stories of city planning, the County Zoo expansion, consumerism, political decision-making and collective power. The resulting video and Hyper-Studio productions will involve students in capturing their own images, visual analysis, editing, and presentation.

The 6th Grade expedition will be powered (!) by the subject of energy. The resulting "Energy Expo" will include visual demonstrations of energy forms. The role of energy in contemporary sculpture will be explored.

Physical Expedition: Challenging Mind & Body



In Physical Expedition, students in Kindergarten through 3rd Grade will spend the first half of the expedition studying the movements of the animals central to their classroom expeditions. Exploring the use of weight, effort, and time in creative movements will help children understand the significance and functions of the body. Students will create movement stories about an animal they are studying.

In the second half of the expedition, Kindergarten – 3rd Grade will experience cooperative games and team challenges that build endurance and strength. Activities will challenge students with environmental changes, use of equipment, and group problem solving.

Grades 4-6 will spend the first half of the expedition exploring the dance form hip-hop. They will look at the origins of hip-hop and its impact on present-day culture both locally and globally.

During the second half of the expedition, 4th and 5th Graders will explore Rochester's city parks and the various games and sports that can be played there, including tennis, Frisbee, and basketball.

6th Graders will spend the second half of the expedition working on track and field events. They will explore the science of the human body – how it works and how to keep it healthy – through these events.

Kindergarten – For The Birds

Throughout the "For the Birds" expedition, kindergarteners will search for answers to the questions "What do birds need?" "What gets in the way of what birds need?" and "How can we help get what birds need?" Classroom activities and field studies will help students find out which birds live in a variety of local habitats including the pond, the woodlands, and the swamp. In order to give local birds what they need to thrive, the class will create a habitat composed of organically grown plants, nesting boxes, and a water feature. The kindergarteners will also establish and maintain a school-wide composting program.



First Grade – Run River Run

First Graders will continue to explore the city of Rochester as they ask the guiding question “what happens to the natural world as the city grows?” Students will study the Genesee River and the plants and animals along the river. Through this study, 1st Graders will discover how plants and animals depend on each other and their physical environment. While studying the river, students will also look for signs of positive and/or negative human impact on the natural world. Students will become experts on animal and plant life as they research and gather notes from local experts and non-fiction texts. Students will create sculptures to represent river animals from cement and found objects. They will also create informational plaques describing the animals, food sources, and the effects of a changing environment. Sculptures will be displayed as part of a river walk exhibit designed to teach community members about the river’s animal and plant life.



Second Grade – Gone Fishin’

What difference can one person make in the life of a species; a river; the world around us? What adaptations do animals make in order to survive in different places around the world?

In this final expedition of 2nd Grade, the class will look closely at the life of Seth Green, the Father of Fish Culture. Seth Green was born in a log cabin near the Genesee River in 1817. He was the son of a farmer and at an early age Seth worked the farm, growing wheat. He soon developed a love of hunting and fishing from his Seneca friends. He especially enjoyed observing fish. Gradually he began to notice that as female salmon cast their spawn, other fish ate as much of it as they could find. He became engrossed in the idea that there must be a way to maximize the number of new fish that are hatched. After much experimentation, he developed the artificial propagation technique.

Students will investigate the Genesee River biome, the life cycle of the salmon, and adaptations the species has undergone to survive in various parts of the world. They will synthesize the information they learn by writing a picture book biography of Seth Green.



Third Grade – Birds, Beaks, and Biomes: An Expedition about Animal Adaptation and Survival

We take for granted the flitting and flights of fancy of the birds in our yards, our parks, and our environment. However, bird species are on a decline and some species in Western New York have become so rare they are on the Concerned Species List. One of these species, the Barn Owl, will provide the focus of 3rd Grade’s final expedition of the year as they investigate how birds adapt and survive in our world.

Students will first investigate the nature of habitat by exploring their backyard and schoolyard habitats as well as diverse habitats in our region. This will provide a jumping off point to explore global biomes and habitats and the unique ability of birds, particularly the Barn Owl, to adapt to such diverse environments. The class will then examine the attributes of birds and their place in the animal kingdom. Students will become familiar with the adaptations of birds and how they rely on their unique features for survival. They will study the reasons some species migrate while others do not, and investigate the lives of bird species around the world. Finally, they will explore the role birds have played in our cultural lives for thousands of years and view our responsibility to the Natural World through new eyes.



Fourth Grade – Bringing Voices Together

Our final expedition of the year will examine Rochester today, and the different individuals, organizations, and institutions that interact and make decisions. How do citizens' voices shape the city? What brings about change in our community? How do ideas move through organizations and systems of government? These questions will guide our exploration of several "hot topics" within our community, such as the Fast Ferry and Zoo expansion. Students will attend field studies, listen to guest speakers, and perform interviews, as they examine the different issues, perspectives, and *voices* within our community. Students will produce a multi-media photojournal presentation to document what they learn about the power of voices in a community.

Fifth Grade – The Art of Arguing

It's no surprise that our 5th Graders have strong opinions. Their next expedition will capitalize on their natural inclination toward debate. Through an in-depth study of current hot topics in Rochester, they will learn to mold their arguing talents into effective skills of persuasion. Initially they will explore several current issues our community is facing including the city school closings (charter and public), the ferry service resuming, and the zoo expansion debate. After a general discussion the class will focus on the zoo expansion as a central issue. The students will study both sides of the debate, the current status of the issue and the projected future plans.

The students will create Hyperstudio CDs exploring alternate perspectives on the zoo expansion to offer to members of the community who would like to learn more about this issue. Finally, at the end of June they will hold a live debate in which the class will discuss the expansion in front of an audience.

The class will also study environments and body systems. One of the Seneca Park Zoo's elephants, Genny C, is currently pregnant, drawing a real connection between the land use issue and the science content! Initially, students will learn about the elephant's body systems and then draw comparisons to human body systems. The environmental needs of animals (starting with the elephant) will be paralleled with the needs (and wants) of humans. The study of the zoo animals' metabolism and space needs, enclosure sizes, acreage of the Seneca Park and such will lead them into the mathematical concepts of area, perimeter, volume and surface area as well as calculations with large numbers. With all these elements in place, this culminating expedition, arguably, will be our most engaging and cohesive one yet!



Sixth Grade – Does Energy Matter?

Our energetic Sixth Graders will really be charged up about their Spring expedition! They will investigate energy and renewable sources of energy, with a look at primary sources of energy used locally and in the river communities they are studying. Through a series of hands-on explorations, they will identify different types of energy and the properties that make each type unique. They'll explore the pros and cons of renewable and nonrenewable sources of energy, including the environmental impact of different types of energy. Students will also discover how their day-to-day decisions about energy consumption affect the amount of energy available now and for citizens of the future.



Plans are underway for 6th Graders to travel to a coalmine and hydro-electric dam in Pennsylvania OR to automotive design and manufacturing sites in Detroit to conduct research on renewable and non-renewable energy sources.

Exhibition night will celebrate student learning with an Energy Expo. Students will display and demonstrate the results of their experiments, models, and research.