



Currents

The Bi-monthly Newsletter of the Genesee Community Charter School

August 2005

Volume 5 No. 1

Guiding Principles Shape Our Work Together

The Genesee Community Charter School has developed quite a local and national reputation for our exceptionally strong, positive school culture and community. GCCS serves as a model school for Rochester City schools and ELOB schools around the country. In addition to sharing our effective academic program, GCCS demonstrates protocols and practices which help develop a nurturing, productive environment for students and staff.

The Expeditionary Learning design principles (visit www.elob.org or see our Family Handbook for details) describe our school's values and guide our instructional priorities. In addition, GCCS staff has developed its own set of guiding principles. These guiding principles are our staff's agreement about what we must do in order to work effectively together. All staff members commit to abiding by these guiding principles:

- Have purposeful gatherings
- Communicate respectfully and honestly
- Be mindful of differences
- Stay focused on the mission
- Honor promises, commitments and confidences
- Participate and contribute to your fullest potential
- Revise, reflect, revise some more

Our staff regularly revisits the meaning of our guiding principles. For example, we have defined "communicate respectfully and honestly" to mean:

At GCCS, we value the art of listening. We ask if we are not sure, we clarify if we are misunderstood, and we say what we mean and mean what we say. We go directly to the source to get the facts, and make no assumptions.

We speak up, speak for ourselves, and speak with our conscience. We speak in the first person, in a respectful tone, with a sense of humor, and with an open mind. We keep perspective and are willing to let things go. Cool feedback provides opportunities for growth. The words we choose convey respect and sensitivity, towards children, parents, and colleagues, but when our choice of words is inappropriate we apologize and make things right.

Honoring our agreement to communicate in this way has helped our staff to avoid misunderstandings, unfounded assumptions, and misguided actions.

Parents can strengthen our school community by engaging in these communication practices too. In particular, we encourage parents to speak for themselves, speak in the first person, and go directly to the source if there is a concern or question. If you have a question, please ask; if you have a concern, please speak up; if you have a suggestion, please step forward. Your support of our school is of utmost importance to us, and we want to ensure open communication lines between home and school. Please feel free to contact your child's teachers or the School Leader any time, and be sure to encourage other parents to do the same.

You are cordially
invited

To a "Welcome Parents" reception
Sponsored by the Family Association
Tuesday, September 13
6:30 – 8:00 p.m.
Eisenhart Ballroom

Babysitting is provided by the Family
Association (suggested donation \$2.00/child)

Family Association Directory

From 2004-05 – New Volunteers Needed for 2005-06!

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

First Grade

Pamela Black-Colton (244-5097), Diana Carter (473-1187), John Morgan (461-4471), Susan Proe (224-0536), Marisa Stike (254-0403), Yvonne Villareale (473-9318)

Second Grade

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

Third Grade

Gina Dodd (426-3356), Annette Ramos (244-1378), Marisa Stike (254-0403), Yvonne Villareale (473-9318)

Fourth Grade

Joanne DeMarle (328-5982), Jeanne Eckl (377-8957), Betsy Serapilio-Frank & John Frank (654-5958), Bill Howard (264-0253)

Fifth Grade

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

Sixth Grade

Alicia Ainsworth (262-5482), Cheryl Marshall (671-2961), Jim Shook (461-1438)

Upcoming Dates To Remember



- Aug. 31: First Day of School Grades 1-6
1:00 p.m. dismissal
- Sept. 1: Grades 1-6 1:00 p.m. dismissal
- Sept. 2: Grades 1-6 1:00 p.m. dismissal
- Sept. 5: Labor Day, School is Closed
- Sept. 6: Grades 1-6 3:00 p.m. dismissal
Kindergarten half-day sessions
- Sept. 7: 1st Full Day for Kindergarten
Community Circle 12:20-12:50 p.m.
1:00 p.m. dismissal (every Wed.)
- Sept. 13: Family Association Welcome Reception
6:30 p.m. Ballroom
- Sept. 19: Board of Trustees Meeting
5:30 p.m. Cunningham House
- Sept. 29: Picture Day
- Oct. 7: Professional Development Day
No School for Students
- Oct. 10: Columbus Day, School is Closed
- Oct. 17: Board of Trustees Meeting
5:30 p.m. Cunningham House
- Oct. 18: Family Association Meeting
6:00 p.m. Eisenhart Auditorium
- Oct. 26-28: ELOB Site Seminar
- Oct. 28: No School for Students
- Nov. 10: Odds Bodkin Storytelling Performance
7:00 p.m. Eisenhart Auditorium
- Nov. 11: Professional Development Day
No School for Students
- Nov. 14: Board of Trustees Meeting
5:30 p.m. Cunningham House



Planning Ahead

John McCutcheon Concert
Friday, March 31, 7:00 p.m.
Eisenhart Auditorium



This concert is a fundraiser for GCCS. Volunteers are needed to help organize the event. Please call Mary Lavin and Tom Slothower at 442-1277 for details. Really!



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. Children arriving after 8:15 a.m. are marked tardy
- 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 if you escort your child home
- notify your child's teachers if there is a change in drop-off or pick-up arrangements
- meet your child on the Eisenhart patio if you attend Community Circle on Wednesdays. Parents will exit Community Circle through the side exit of the Eisenhart Auditorium. For your child's safety, and our teachers' sanity, children will be dismissed with their classes.

Room Parents and Volunteers Needed

The Room Parent Volunteer Coordinators support classrooms in a multitude of ways each year. We would be grateful for your help! If you would like to serve as a Room Parent, please notify your classroom teachers or call Anne Lichtenstein (244-7373), Susan Proe (224-0536), Jeanne Eckl (377-8957), or Yvonne Villareale (473-9318). They will fill you in on the current plans for the year, and will be happy to solicit your ideas for family events and service!

The Family Association also needs volunteers to lead and serve on its committees. Come to the Welcome Reception on September 13 to find out how you can increase your involvement in your child's school.

Attendance Policy Reminder

We have a lot to offer our students at GCCS, and want every child to benefit from continuous, prompt attendance at school. Some absences and incidents of tardiness are excused and some are unexcused (see list below).

Please call the school each day that a child will be absent, tardy, or picked up early. Please note that in order to record absences as "excused," we must also receive a written note upon the child's return to school. Absences may be deemed "excused" only if the reason falls into the category of excused absences listed below.

Excused	Unexcused
Personal illness	Oversleeping
Death in the family	Missed bus
Impassable roads due to inclement weather	Family vacation
Religious observance	Hunting
Quarantine	Babysitting
Required court appearances	Hair cut
Attendance at health clinics	Shopping
	Any other reason which does not fall into the categories listed under "excused"

Students who arrive later than 8:15 a.m. are designated tardy. Please escort tardy students to the office and sign them in.

In the event that you decide to withdraw your child in order to enroll him or her in another school, we request that you notify us immediately. After an absence of three days without notification or explanation, we will deem your child to have withdrawn from GCCS.

Please maintain ongoing communication with your child's teachers about health or family situations that may negatively affect your child's consistent attendance in school. This will enable us to help your child deal with missed work and lessons more effectively.

A more complete version of our attendance policy may be found in the Family Handbook that was mailed home in August.





Save the date for this special Family event!

Odds Bodkin will visit GCCS in the Eisenhart Auditorium Thursday, Nov. 10. The New York Times calls Odds Bodkin “a consummate storyteller.” Bodkin’s repertoire ranges from a rollicking rock-and-roll version of “The Three Little Pigs” to a dramatic telling of the epic “The Odyssey.” His tales come from countries around the world, and he accompanies them on 12-string guitar, Celtic harp and other instruments.

Students and families will have a chance to hear him for free during the school day. At 7 p.m., Odds Bodkin will perform an entirely different program for the public and GCCS community. Admission will be charged to help pay for his evening appearance. Details on both performances will be announced later, but please think about volunteering to help with this event. For more information, contact Diana and Jim Carter at blueloon@rochester.rr.com or 473-1187.

Back to the Beginning

We’re starting our two-year curriculum cycle this fall with an exploration of Prehistoric times. Each class’s first expedition will focus on a different aspect of Prehistory, with investigations ranging from dinosaurs and fossils to theories about the universe’s origin. Exhibitions will culminate the three months of study with stellar products and performances created by each class.



Kindergarten – Digging for Clues

What is a story? How does a scientist discover the story of a fossil? How do we share the earth’s story with others? These guiding questions will lead the Kindergarten class on their journey through their first expedition.

Students will begin the year immersed in literature. They will discover exciting characters and places as they examine many types of stories. A special focus on puppetry will help bring stories to life. Students will also tell their own stories through writing, speaking, and dramatization.

Students will then become scientists, learning the stories of the earth and its first living creatures. They will examine fossils, conduct scientific research, participate in fieldwork, and talk to experts. They will use their findings to help them create a puppet which looks and moves like an ancient sea creature.

A puppet opera will culminate the expedition. Students will relate the story of the earth and its earliest creatures through puppetry, movement, and music.

1st Grade – Puppstory (Puppets and Prehistory)

Throughout their Puppstory expedition, 1st Graders will explore answers to the following questions, “What lived here (around Rochester) long ago?” “How do we know?” “How can fossils be clues to the past?” The expedition will consist of in-depth investigations of living things, using specific local fossil finds. These investigations will focus on three time periods of prehistory: the Warm Seas (Retsof fossils), Dinosaur Times (Nyack footprint), and the Ice Age (Farview Mastodon). Children will work in crews to research a living thing from each time period. Each child will create a book about prehistoric life and work with their crews to make a puppet representing the animal they researched. During their exhibition, students will use puppets to dramatize early life on earth and the process of fossil formation.





2nd Grade – Meet Carl

For nearly forty years, Carl has opened our eyes to Rochester's night sky, helping us to explore the seasons, the moon, the solar system, and beyond. He has shared cutting edge astronomy with audiences and taught us how to make sense of what we are. Carl is, of course, the Strasenburgh Planetarium's star projector.

By understanding Carl's role in scientific inquiry and education, 2nd Graders will explore the astronomical phenomena we often take for granted. They will learn how to make detailed observations, use the tools and methods of scientists, conduct experiments, and report their conclusions. They will explore how perspectives in astronomy have changed over time because of the work of key scientists and reflect on how their own changing ideas and perspectives offer us with a window to understanding the heavens above.

Throughout the expedition, 2nd Graders will make the most of our school's exceptional location on the RMSC campus. They will benefit from regular visits to the planetarium and access to the expertise of the RMSC's astronomer. Students will create a sky show for the planetarium to represent what they learn about the forces of gravity, magnetism, motion, light, and time.

3rd Grade – Time to Find the First Fish



How can we tell how old something is? How do we measure time? How do scientists think the earth began? These questions will guide the 3rd Grade's work this fall. To answer them, they will go in depth into three related topics: time, the solar system, and origin theories.

Students will kick off the expedition with a close examination of a fossil fish (echoes of last spring's salmon expedition!). Then students will learn about tools that allow us to measure time – brief moments and l-o-o-o-ng periods. They will examine fish scales, tree rings, and mastodon tusk rings as well as more familiar measurement tools like clocks and calendars.

As students study the calendar, they will explore the reason for seasons and for night and day, looking to the solar system to see how planets are centered around the sun and move in particular patterns.

Finally, the class will examine the idea of a theory, and investigate origin theories that are put forward by scientists.

Students will work in crews to create children's science magazines that will teach others about what they have learned. Each child will publish a nonfiction article and another piece (interview, cartoon, puzzle, game, or poem) in the science magazine.

4th Grade – Time Travel Along the Genesee

The 4th Grade's fall expedition will take them to the source of the Genesee River in Gold, Pennsylvania and to other geologic sites in search of answers to the following questions: How has our region been shaped over time? What geological evidence shows the earth's history? How can geological evidence of the past help us predict geological events of the future?

As students journey northward along the Genesee, they will gather data, record observations, make inferences, and form hypotheses about the river's formation. Other field studies will take the class to the tallest waterfall in New York, a local park that was formed by glaciers, a trail that takes them back four million years, and other exciting places.

To culminate the expedition, our young scientists and authors will each compose a 16-page book that brings to life their journey through the river's past, present, and future.





5th Grade – The Genesee: Carving into the Past

Upstate New York is rich with geologic features, evidence, and local experts, all of which will be utilized as 5th Grade examines the earth's ancient history. The Genesee River, in particular, will provide a unique lens through which to examine and learn about our region's prehistoric past. Through various forms of inquiry, field studies, research, and collaboration, students will explore topics such as river formation, rocks and minerals, and the glaciers of the last Ice Age. Students will also come to appreciate the concept of geologic time as they learn about erosion, continental drift, fossil formation, and other processes that occur over thousands and millions of years.

In the creation of their final product, students will build on the film-making skills they began to develop last spring. The class will work with a professional documentary film-maker to produce a video documentary about the geologic history of the Genesee River.

6th Grade – Filling in History?

6th Graders are embarking on a monumental year-long project that may help shape our city's future. They'll be actively investigating the pros and cons of a new proposal to revitalize downtown Rochester. Students are charged with becoming experts on the proposed plan to re-water – rather than fill in – the Erie Canal in downtown Rochester. They'll spend the year researching all aspects of the project and preparing a presentation for city officials.

The first step is to develop an understanding of the historical roles and significance of canals. During their fall expedition, students will learn about common threads in early civilizations and will explore how canals enabled the rise of early cities in ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, China Rome, and the MesoAmerican culture. To portray what they have learned, students will create and dramatize scenes from ancient Egyptian culture and will write a playbill that includes information about the history of canals around the world.



Integrating the Arts



As in the past, the arts will be integrated into every classroom expedition as vehicles for both learning and expression. Our fall expeditions are rich with compelling words and concepts – orbit, meander, change, time, gravity, erosion, and many more.

Dance, music, and visual arts will be used to represent these words and concepts. A school-wide drum circle during our October Site Seminar will reveal the ways in which students have reflected the content of their expeditions in music, rhythm, dance, and art.

Drum circle is a powerful and universal way to build community. By becoming participants in our drum circle, our ELOB visitors can share our values of creativity, collaboration, and self-discovery, and help them envision possibilities for their own school communities.

Painless Fundraising

Hopefully, by the time you read this, someone will have jumped for joy at the thought of raising money for the GCCS Family Association. To help out that person or people, here are a few painless, and even penniless, things you can do to start earning money for the school.

- 1) Save your Box Tops for Education. These little labels off foodstuffs earn 10 cents each for our school. There's a box to collect them in Mrs. Milke's office.
- 2) Save your Labels for Education, on Campbell's Soups and other products. There's a box to collect them in Mrs. Milke's office.
- 3) Register at the Box Tops for Education website. If you do a lot of on-line shopping and you're willing to

stop at the Box Tops site before each purchase, you can send between 1 and 5 percent of your purchase price to the school.

- 4) Get a new credit card, such as the one Box Tops offers or the one at Target. Each card offers a cash-back percentage to the school. (OK, this one does mean you sacrifice a bonus you might otherwise earn for yourself on another card.)

Last year, Tops Friendly Markets discontinued its program of granting cash for cash register receipts. So please DO NOT collect any more of these. If you hear of any more incentive programs like these, please notify the new head of the Family Association's fundraising committee.