



Currents

The Bi-monthly Newsletter of the Genesee Community Charter School

December 2006

Volume 6 No. 3

Warm Words from a Site Seminar Guest

To Light a Fire

*Music wove through the day
Like soft, red silk thread
Which shimmered and glowed
And held the tapestry of learning together
While students went about their work
And teachers guided, encouraged,
Celebrated, learned
And made it happen, together.*

*I saw my own best long-held dreams
Embodied in the open faces
Of beautiful children
Singing together of hope and joy,
And caring adults selflessly working
To change the world,
One child at a time.*

*Tears rose unbidden to my eyes
From deep wells of longing
For this type of learning,
And years of dreaming and working
Toward a school like GENESSEE.*

*Now that I know it can be done,
I must discover how
To catch a spark in a bottle.
So I can carry it home and light a fire
In other places –
A fire that will flame and grow
As strong and warm as GENESSEE's.*

*-- written by Barbara Benson,
Expeditionary Learning School Designer
October, 2006*

Introducing our newest staff member

A warm welcome to Jennifer Woodworth, a new addition to our staff! Jennifer will join Michelle Henry in the River Room, and will assist with curriculum-related clerical tasks and assume other administrative support duties.

Jennifer recently returned to the Rochester area after living in Virginia for several years. She earned a Master's degree in Library Science at The College of William & Mary and received her Bachelor's degree in Psychology at Nazareth College. Most recently, Jennifer worked at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation as a development researcher. Jennifer also has experience tutoring children in reading.

You might reach Jennifer when you call GCCS; she will be assisting Maureen by answering the phones. Please join our staff in helping Jennifer feel welcome to the GCCS community.

A Busy December for the Family Association!

Tuesday, December 5, 6:30-8
Sankofa African Dance Group

Tuesday, December 19, 6:00-8
Family Pot-luck Social and Service Auction Fund-Raiser



Hope to see your family
at both events!

Family Association Directory

Board of Trustees Representatives

John Bernunzio (256-0722), Wendy Quarles (647-1667), Betsy Serapilio-Frank (654-5958),

Officers

Co-Chairs: Jim Carter (473-1187), Greg Cutt (339-9940), Lorraine Schild (244-1161)

Secretary: Jane Cherin (473-3481)

Treasurer: Julie Schnepf (256-0722)

Family Association Committee Chairs

Family Social Activities

John Quitter (787-0332)

Babysitting & Transportation

Mary Carol Taylor (458-9809)

Fund-Raising

Allison McGrath (482-0052)

Legislative Issues

Anne Lichtenstein (244-7373), Nevada Schickling (329-5751)

Outreach

Lorraine Schild (244-1161), Betsy Serapilio-Frank (654-5958)

Program

Diana Carter (473-1187), Hugh Brantley (328-3288)

Classroom Parent Volunteer Coordinators

Karen Braden (473-5303), Nikki Hogan (621-8731), Yvonne Villareale (473-9318)

Classroom Parent Volunteer Coordinators

Kindergarten

Alison Adams (217-1308), Natasha Beaman-Brown (467-3607), Pam Black-Colton (244-5097), Heather Downey-Gernon (865-6207), Colleen Fogarty (461-1156), Nicole Meyer (482-2566), Jamine Wilson (256-1566)

First Grade

Denise Anderson (244-8202), Colleen Charvella (244-8339), Vincent Graves (295-8512), Melody Nowlin (458-8557), Anne Punzi (242-8902), Darla Spafford-Davis (244-8437)

Second Grade

Allison Bosworth (385-5220), Jane Cherin (473-3481), Jeanne Eckl (377-8957), Rebecca Fuss (482-8963), Amy Wulforst (654-5681)

Third Grade

Noelle Ignatowski (781-0331), Sekile Johnson (395-8456), Jennifer Sanfilippo (442-5420), Margaret Velocci (647-0337), Eileen Wrona (288-3273)

Fourth Grade

Bridget McLaughlin (385-3105), Annette Ramos (244-1378), Lucretia Rashad (232-3476), Yvonne Villareale (473-9318)

Fifth Grade

Patty Gallivan (224-3704), Kathryn Goldfeder (381-5083), Sue Lloyd (966-4186), Pam Nichols (473-9528), Carol Sherwood (506-9132), Jen Wagner (244-7068)

Sixth Grade

Blanche Fox (235-1566), Angela Hudson (563-7825), Anne Lichtenstein (244-7373), Holly Merrill (224-8491), Karen Schneider (288-4726), Anne Spaulding (256-1444)

Upcoming Dates To Remember



- Dec. 5: Family Association Sankofa African Dance and Drum Group Performance 6:30-8 p.m. Eisenhart Auditorium
- Dec. 11: Board of Trustees Meeting 5:30 p.m. Cunningham House
- Dec. 14: Parent-Teacher Conferences 11:30 a.m. Dismissal Parent Information Session 7-9 p.m. Eisenhart Auditorium
- Dec. 19: Family Assoc. Pot Luck Social and Service Auction 6-8 p.m. Eisenhart Auditorium
- Dec. 21-
Jan. 1: Winter Recess School is Closed
- Jan. 2-3: Professional Development Days No School for Students
- Jan. 8: Board of Trustees Meeting 5:30 p.m. Cunningham House
- Jan. 15: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day School is Closed
- Jan. 16: Family Association Meeting 6:30-8 p.m. Eisenhart Ballroom
- Jan. 20: Parent Information Session 1-3 p.m. Eisenhart Auditorium
- Feb. 7: Parent Information Session 7-9 p.m. Eisenhart Auditorium
- Feb. 8: Enrollment Lottery for 07-08
- Feb. 12: Board of Trustees Meeting 5:30 p.m. Cunningham House
- Feb. 19: President's Day School is Closed
- Feb. 20-21: Professional Development Days No School for Students
- Feb. 22-23: YES! Students DO Have School!

BRRRR... HAVE YOU SENT IN

EXTRA MITTENS, HATS,

SNOWPANTS AND BOOTS YET?

A Gentle Reminder About Parking On the RMSC Campus



The RMSC is a busy place! It is our responsibility as members of the RMSC community to respect and abide by campus parking guidelines. In order to ensure children's safety and the sanity of the RMSC security staff, please:

- Park only in designated spaces in one of the three RMSC lots. For quick pick-ups, it is acceptable to park along the curb next to the herb garden.
- Refrain from parking along the sidewalk in front of the school.
- Refrain from parking in front of the red garage.
- Refrain from parking in the Doctor's Office lot to the south of the school.
- Abide by parking restrictions put in place for special events.

In addition, please remember that it is illegal to drive past school buses that have flashing lights, even when they are standing for arrival and dismissal.

Most importantly, please respond graciously when reminded of parking guidelines by the RMSC security staff. They do a huge service for GCCS by helping to keep traffic flowing safely. They must also ensure that RMSC facilities vehicles and emergency vehicles have continuous access to campus buildings. We ask that you politely comply with their requests to have vehicles moved.

Many thanks for helping us to be cooperative museum citizens and for helping keep our students safe.

Teaching the Art of Writing

At the Genesee Community Charter School, children are immersed in the writing process from their earliest years, learning to cultivate their thoughts and put them on paper. Writing is central to learning. It captures and communicates children's knowledge and their feelings, and can be both personal and public. Expository text contains information; poetry illustrates ideas; reflections convey insights. Business letters pose questions; journal entries express opinions; narratives weave together stories.

Writing knits itself into every academic discipline. As children learn to write, they also write to learn. Learning expeditions provide rich science and social studies content for students to write in all genres. Children use writing to articulate their mathematical thinking and their approaches to solving math problems.

We strive to prepare students to be writers with both technical skills and distinctive styles. They learn to observe formal conventions – shepherding their words with proper punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. Students also develop a sense of voice and style – opening with a compelling introduction, illuminating with a well-crafted metaphor, entertaining with a pleasing turn of phrase.



Teachers at GCCS use a wide range of resources and practices to guide students to become exemplary writers. They use the common

language of the 6+1 Writing Traits and have a shared understanding of how to teach the components of writing. The 6+1 Writing Traits are:

Conventions: spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, grammar, and usage;

Word Choice: use of descriptive language and subject-specific vocabulary;

Sentence Fluency: varied sentence structures and sentence beginnings, use of connecting words;

Organization: introduction, conclusion, sequencing, transitions;

Ideas: main idea, details, match to intended audience, quantity of writing;

Voice: tone, style, ability to provoke a response in the reader;

Presentation: handwriting, illustrations and graphics, visual appeal.

Teachers introduce to this language to students early on, and each expedition emphasizes different writing traits. Teachers share clear learning targets with students and help them acquire the confidence and skills to assess their own writing, to explain their revisions, and to give and receive feedback with their peers.

Student writing provides a window to their thinking. One of the greatest gifts we can give to our students is the ability to express themselves in writing with depth, clarity, and polish. We are committed to preparing our students to shine as young authors.



City Grows

During this time period, Rochester blossoms from a flour-producing mill town to a bustling city with a wide range of businesses and industries. Chief among them were the nursery industry, carriages, gears, shoe and clothing industries, color lithographic businesses, and the beginnings of Kodak and Bausch & Lomb. Rochester's economic landscape was shaped by new forms of transportation, westward expansion, and an influx of immigrants from Europe and migrants from the American south. New people contributed new ideas, skills, and a growing workforce. Each of our winter expeditions examines issues of work and leisure with special attention to the opportunities and the social problems that confronted a growing city.

Kindergarten – Playing Along

Why do people play? Did my great-grandparents, grandparents, and parents play? Did they play the same way I do? What toys and games have been the most important in the last 100 years? The kindergarten class will explore answers to these questions throughout this expedition.

Fieldwork at Strong Museum will guide students through a look at toys and play over time, beginning in the late 1800's until modern times. Through interviews and surveys, students will gather data about how parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents played and how children play today.

As a result of their research, the class will make a video presentation to the National Selection Committee in which we nominate toys for their consideration to be inducted into the Toy Hall of Fame. Each child will also become an expert on one toy already in the Toy Hall of Fame. They will create note cards featuring drawings and text about their toys.



1st Grade – Every Picture Tells a Story

First grade students will see Rochester grow through the lens of a camera. They will study old photographs and take their own pictures to discover what changed as the city grew. They will focus on how three specific infrastructures – water and sewage, roads and bridges, and electricity – improve life for people in a city. Students will learn how the camera and film business developed in Rochester at the same time that these city infrastructures were expanding. Students will work with a photography mentor to find their own perspectives and will create a photo book that documents infrastructures in Rochester.



2nd Grade – Flour City to Flower City: An Expedition on Growth and Change

Second graders will explore the concepts of growth and change through the historic lens of Rochester's economic shift from "Flour City" to "Flower City." Students will learn how the city capitalized on the climate conditions, knowledge of farming, and an emerging printing industry to develop nurseries to produce, market, and sell seeds for profit. They will examine the relationship between climate and plant growth, delving into the water cycle and seasonal cycles and how they affect growth. Students will also focus on the parts of seeds and flowers, photosynthesis, and reproduction.



Students will participate in research at a local nursery and conservatory, visit with experts, and conduct in-class work with the scientific method. They will synthesize their learning by creating a seed catalogue designed to educate readers on Rochester's "Flower City" Heritage as well as effective techniques for planting and growing.

3rd Grade – Growing Through Time: Rochester as the Flower City

As the success of the canal transformed Rochester from a village to a city, new industries began to take root. One of these was the nursery industry, a synergy of immigrant knowledge, manufacturing, printing, and local climate. As railroad expansion pushed flour production west, new products gained prominence in Rochester's economy.

During this expedition 3rd Graders will explore the growth of local seed companies and how land use changed. They will focus on how weather conditions change, how it is measured and reported within a climate. Students will identify the cycles within plants, weather, and economies. This knowledge will be accumulated, sorted, and represented in an Atlas of Rochester's Land Use Over Time, focusing on the Flower City and including echoes of land use from previous expeditons.



5th Grade – The Land of Opportunity

Why did people come to America? Why did immigrants settle in Rochester? The fifth grade will look at local businesses of long ago and the effects of those businesses on the economy, work force, and population. Students will explore the experiences of immigrants in the past as well as today.

As a service to the community, each student will interview an immigrant who lives in the Rochester area, then pay tribute to that individual by writing his or her biography. The biography will focus on the individual's homeland, journey to Rochester, and life in America today, and will include photographed and sketched portraits. A music and dance presentation will accompany the presentation of the biographies.

The expedition will conclude with a case study of a garment factory in New York City, giving the students an in-depth experience into the working conditions and the strategies used by progressive reformers. Fieldwork will focus on both immigration and industrialization near the turn of the twentieth century.



4th Grade – Common Threads

How does immigration influence society? How has technology changed our world? How have people's ideas changed our city? These are some of the questions guiding 4th Grade's second expedition of the year.



The expedition will begin with an examination of U.S. immigration during the early 1900's, including a 4-day field study to New York City and Lowell, Massachusetts. As students visit Ellis Island and the Lower East Side of Manhattan, simulations, reenactments, and guided lessons and tours will provide them with rich experiences and genuine understandings of immigrant life and tenement living. They will then explore a working textile factory/museum in Lowell, Massachusetts, and examine the connections between child labor and the beginning of the labor movement in America.

For the second half of the expedition, students will learn about the many important inventions and businesses that began in Rochester, and the role of immigrants as entrepreneurs and laborers. Students will conduct individual research projects on the evolution of these endeavors, the people behind them, and legacies they have left behind.

6th Grade – Learning From the Past: Uncovering the Flow of Ancient Civilizations

Students will recognize common threads in developing early civilizations and will explore how canals enabled the rise of early cities. Students will gain background knowledge on the historical significance of canals through the study of Mesopotamia and the ancient city of Petra. Their work will connect with the proposed revitalization of the old Erie Canal bed in downtown Rochester. The class's final product will be a living museum, complete with artifacts, in which ancient characters come to life to share information about Mesopotamia and its rise as a civilization. An exhibit guide will provide background information on artifacts and scenery from 9000 to 500 B.C.



Sibling Applications Due January 26



Sibling applications will be sent to our current families through the mail in early January, and will be due on January 26, 2006. If you have a child entering kindergarten or another grade level, please submit the sibling application in order to ensure him or her a space. Late applications will be entered in our regular lottery, which will be held February 8.

Parent Information Sessions Scheduled for New Applicants

Know any families interested in sending their children to GCCS? Please encourage them to attend one of our Parent Information Sessions so that they may learn the details of our school's program and philosophy, and determine if GCCS is a good fit for their child. These sessions will be held in the Eisenhart Auditorium on:

Thursday, December 14, 7-9 p.m.
Saturday, January 20, 1-3 p.m.
Wednesday, February 7, 7-9 p.m.

Applications for enrollment will be available at these sessions. The enrollment lottery will be conducted Thursday, February 8 at 9:00 a.m.

Students already enrolled at GCCS do not need to re-apply, but will receive an Intent To Return form in April. This form must be filled out at that time to hold your child's space for the 07-08 school year.

Hans Tours Spain

Have you met Hans, our resident researcher from Switzerland? Ms. Haymond brought Hans back with her after she studied at the Orff Institute in Salzburg, Austria, and Hans has been busy at GCCS ever since. He has studied what "wacky" means during "Wacky Wednesday" Community Circles, he has introduced students to the workings of simple machines, and he has presented to students the relationship between math and music.

Mrs. O'Malley and Dr. Wing were delighted to include Hans in their recent trip to Spain. Hans toured the Spanish countryside with them, exploring sights in Toledo, Avila, Segovia, and Madrid. Then he traveled with them to Zaragoza to help them present Expeditionary Learning to approximately 60 educators from Spain. These educators are interested in some of the current education reforms and models being used in other countries, and they invited representatives from the U.S., Sweden, and Great Britain to define these models and how they are implemented in schools.

Hans helped Mrs. O'Malley and Dr. Wing describe each step of an expedition at GCCS, including the planning process, the guiding questions and learning targets, in-class activities, fieldwork, final products, exhibitions, and assessments. Participants examined photographs, final products, documents, and other artifacts with Hans's guidance. Reviews of Hans's, Mrs. O'Malley's, and Dr. Wing's presentation were very positive, and their Spanish hosts commented many times that they hope this is the beginning of an ongoing collegial relationship. Hans hopes so, he would love other opportunities to practice his Spanish!

While in Spain, Hans admired the incredible architecture, tried a small variety of Spanish cuisine (he is a very fussy eater), and enjoyed learning the rich history of the country. Ask your child more about Hans's adventures; he shared lots of details during a recent Community Circle!



Hans views the ancient Roman aqueduct in Segovia, Spain



Hans and his new friend Pilar enjoy the beautiful gardens outside the Palacio Real in Madrid, Spain

