



Currents

The Bimonthly Newsletter of the Genesee Community Charter School

February 2007

Volume 6 No. 4

Students Share Their Own Stories



You might find an additional person attending your parent-teacher conference this year – your child! A new initiative at GCCS is “student-led conferences.” During these conferences, students take the lead in describing their academic and social progress, sharing samples of their work, and setting forth a plan to address their challenges. It is our goal to help children be more reflective about their work and more accountable for their performance.

Teachers prepare students in many ways to lead conferences. They go through their portfolios and select work that highlights strengths, needs, and growth. They plan the agenda together and role play how the conference might proceed.

Some 2nd Grade students had their first experience with student-led conferences in December. “My mom was really astonished about having the kids talk with the teachers at the conference,” remarked Olivia. Jonah commented, “Last year they would close the divider and go on the other side, and all I would hear is a bunch of laughs. This year I knew what they were talking about.” Webster agreed that it is more comfort-

able to be at the conference, “It makes me feel nervous when I’m not there because they might be talking about something bad. It’s more fun to be there because they can ask you questions.”

In addition to feeling more “in the loop,” these students also noted progress in their work by contrasting samples from September and December. “I noticed that my handwriting got a lot better,” Lydia stated.

Students develop greater ability to recognize their own accomplishments and needs as they accrue experience leading parent conferences. They also learn to reflect on themselves as writers, scientists, historians, mathematicians, and community activists.

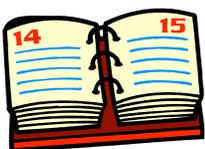
Students also gain a clearer understanding and stronger ownership of personal learning goals. They appreciate that they are part of a team – working alongside parents and teachers – to improve their academic work and to address social challenges. We hope that the experience will lead to improved communication and performance for all students.

Intent to Return Due March 14

The deadline for **INTENT TO RETURN** forms is **Wednesday, March 14 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 in mid-February. If you don’t receive a form by February 28, 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.



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



- Feb. 7: Parent Information Session
7-9 p.m. Eisenhart Auditorium
- Feb. 8: Enrollment Lottery for 07-08
- Feb. 11: Family Talent Show 3-5 p.m.
Eisenhart Auditorium
- Feb. 12: Board of Trustees Meeting
5:30 p.m. Cunningham House
- Feb. 19: President's Day
School is Closed
- Feb. 20: Professional Development Day
No School for Students
- Feb. 21-23: YES! Students DO Have
School!
- Feb. 26: Family Association Meeting
6:30-8 p.m. 4th Grade Classroom
- Mar. 5-9: Grades 3-5 NYS Math Exam
- Mar. 8: Family Talent Show Rehearsal
- Mar. 11: Family Talent Show
- Mar. 12-16: Grade 6 NYS Math Exam
- Mar. 12: Board of Trustees Meeting
5:30 p.m. Cunningham House
- Mar. 13: Exhibition Night Grades 1, 3
- Mar. 15: Exhibition Night Grades 2, 4
- Mar. 19: Exhibition Night Grades K, 6
- Mar. 21-23: Teachers Attending EL National
Conference – No School for
Students
- Mar. 27: Family Association Meeting
6:30 – 8 Eisenhart Ballroom
- Apr. 5: Parent-Teacher Conferences
11:30 a.m. Dismissal
- Apr. 6-13: Spring Recess

Reminder:

No School for Students
Wednesday-Friday, March 21-23
All Teachers Will Be Attending
and Presenting at the
Expeditionary Learning
National Conference
in Portland, Maine

Service Auction Raises Big Bucks



The annual December Family Pot Luck Social had a new twist this year, which raised the stakes for family involvement and fun. Members of the GCCS community and staff donated a wide range of services that were sold off during a hotly competitive – and sometimes rowdy – auction. The highly coveted items included a henna tattoo party, a massage, home repairs, a day at a horse barn, a guided bird-watching excursion, private swimming lessons, and gourmet meals. The event raised close to \$3,000, which will be used to fund Family Association events and to renovate the kitchen in the Eisenhart Basement.

Many thanks to the parents who organized the social event and auction, and heartfelt gratitude to parents who donated services or bid on items. Lots of bidders walked away empty-handed, so think ahead to a service you might be able to donate next year. The Family Association and school will greatly benefit when you put your hidden and not-so-hidden talents on the auction block.

Students Re-Live Journey to the Land of Opportunity



You step off the boat and desperately hope that your papers are in order. You're jostled in line up to the medical inspectors' stations and you pray that they don't find eye problems or head lice or notice your slight limp. A chalk mark is put on your coat, and you begin to worry that you won't make it through. Then your number is called and you face the immigration officer and try to answer all kinds of questions about your family, your skills, your financial situation, and your future plans. A stamp is placed on your inspection card, and you hear the long-awaited words, "Welcome to America!"

A scene from a movie, a PBS special? No, this vignette describes the experiences of 4th and 5th Grade students and their chaperones during their recent visit to Ellis Island. Students were treated to a simulation of the immigration process endured by thousands of newcomers to America, helping students to understand more fully immigrants' hopes, fears, and dreams.

Students also visited the Tenement Museum on the Lower East Side. They toured several tenement rooms and learned from guides and re-enactors how immigrants carved out their new lives in spite of sometimes difficult living conditions.

The field study included a stop in Lowell, Massachusetts, the "birthplace" of the industrial revolution in America. Students explored the Boott Cotton Mills Museum, which featured a guided tour through a working cotton mill, a girls' boarding house, and related museum displays.

The field study was packed with learning opportunities – even the charter bus was a classroom where students read background material, wrote reflections, and viewed documentaries. However, they packed in a little fun too; they admired the city from atop the Empire State Building and enjoyed a sunny morning gliding across the ice at Central Park's Wollman Ice Rink. A weekend of rest was all these students needed to dive back into their expeditions in their classrooms with all their newly acquired information.

Connections Needed for "Reshaping Rochester" Race

Do you know anyone in the t-shirt industry? Anyone who owns or works in a Sports or health-related business? A marketing specialist? Our 6th Grade class is looking for connections to help organize and supply their (First Annual?) "Reshaping Rochester" Race. The target participants for the race, which will take place Saturday, June 2 from 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon, are children ages 9-16 around Monroe County. The race is intended to give children a physical goal to strive for, while at the same time building awareness of the Grasso-Zimmer plan to re-water the Erie Canal downtown. If you know of a potential donor or sponsor for the race please call Lisa O'Malley at 271-4552 ext. 463.



Family Talent Show

The lights beckon! The overture begins! The curtain rises! Time to take the stage with your talented children and strut your stuff!

Last year's first-ever GCCS Family Talent Show sparkled with performances such as a mother-daughter dance act, father-son comedy routine, family skit, and neighborhood chorus line. Join in the fun! Get together with your children, add in grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, and stir up a whole lot of great entertainment. The Family Talent Show will be held Sunday, March 11 from 3:00 – 5:00 p.m. A rehearsal will be held Thursday, March 8. Watch backpack mail for more details.



GCCS Teachers Share Talents at EL National Conference

GCCS teachers are delighted to be able to attend the Expeditionary Learning National Conference *en masse* this year. They will travel via charter bus to Portland, Maine from March 21-24 to participate in – and lead – a variety of professional development workshops. All of GCCS's teachers submitted proposals to present, and all were accepted. They will lead sessions on teaching literacy, building classroom culture, incorporating music into classroom routines, expressing learning through movement, developing staff guiding principles, performing community service, and teaching with artifacts. Teachers will also attend workshops led by other EL educators, visit another EL school, and experience a day-long "slice" of an exemplary expedition. The event will be a wonderful professional opportunity for all our teachers.

Wanted: Your Photo CD's!

Have you taken digital photos of a field study, class activity, or exhibition night this year? Might you be willing to share?



If so, please send in a cd labeled with a date and grade level to the office. We maintain archives of photos for Passage Ceremonies, 6th Grade Passages, and other presentations and would love to expand our collection. Photos of individuals, groups, and student work are all greatly appreciated. Thank you!



SNOW DAY MAKE-UP

**Students WILL
have school**

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21

8:00 A.M. - 1:00 P.M.

**City School District
will provide
transportation for
City residents**

Introducing Our Newest Staff Member...

A warm welcome to Kate Haley, who is serving as a long-term substitute for the remainder of the school year. Ms. Haley is subbing for Mr. Michailidis in 4th Grade. Mr. Michailidis has moved to 2nd Grade to cover for Mrs. Fishman while she is on maternity leave.

Ms. Haley has a Master's Degree in Childhood and Special Education from Roberts Wesleyan College. She has worked at Strong Museum, has taught at Hillside Children's Center as a Behavior Specialist, and has substitute taught at GCCS. She has also studied abroad in Ireland, and has a background in Communications and Sociology. We're delighted to have Ms. Haley bring her many strengths to our 4th Graders.

