



# Currents

The Bimonthly Newsletter of the Genesee Community Charter School

April 2010

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## The Power of the Echo

Walk through the halls of GCCS, and you're sure to hear all kinds of echoes. Community Circle songs sung during a fourth grade morning meeting. The "me too" silent signal, learned in kindergarten, being used by sixth graders. The same *Responsive Classroom* management language spoken by kindergarten and third grade teachers. The historic event taught in the second grade curriculum revisited and extended in fourth grade.

The consistency of classroom practices and the spiraling nature of the curriculum are intentional elements of the GCCS program. Children thrive when expectations are clear and are shared by all members of the community. So, teachers make a concerted effort to create common structures and employ similar teaching and management strategies across grade levels. Children learn content and concepts best when they can connect new learning to familiar ideas. The GCCS curriculum is designed so that children continually refer back to previous experiences and research in order to make sense of more sophisticated and complex knowledge.

A particularly clear example is described on p. 5 of this issue of *Currents*. The third grade teachers explain how their Spring expedition harkens back to their class's second grade Fall expedition. These children will continue to hear these echoes – in fourth grade when they learn about the immigrants who made early Rochester their home, in fifth grade when they learn about the role of the Revolutionary War in the settlement of the Genesee Valley, and in sixth grade when they consider a contemporary local problem and propose solutions that honor their community's past while strengthening its future.

## GCCS Teachers Prepare for World Travel



Congratulations to Steve Lee-Davis and Spero Michailidis! Thanks to Fund for Teachers fellowships, these two GCCS teachers will set off on fabulous journeys this summer designed to enrich their background knowledge and deepen the curriculum that they teach.

Mr. Lee-Davis will travel to Italy to study Roman architecture and early public art. He will take a course in ancient architecture and will prepare a final project in the form of a layered timeline. Next year's sixth grade class will benefit from Mr. Lee-Davis's research as they investigate the role of early architecture and public art in the cultures of ancient civilizations.

Mr. Michailidis will travel to the Galapagos Islands to participate in research and perform volunteer work through an Ecuadorean conservation organization. He will create a non-fiction textbook featuring photography of indigenous island animals for his students to use during their Spring expedition next year.

Two of the nineteen fellowships awarded to Expeditionary Learning schools went to GCCS teachers, and eight other GCCS teachers have received grants in the past. For more information about the Fund for Teachers organization, visit their website at [www.fundforteachers.org](http://www.fundforteachers.org).

**Reminder!**

### An Important Parking Reminder:

**Please DO NOT park along the driveway in front of the Eisenhart Auditorium for ANY school event. Cars must be parked in marked parking spaces.**



## Family Association Directory

### *Board of Trustees Representatives*

Diana Carter (473-1187, [blueloon@rochester.rr.com](mailto:blueloon@rochester.rr.com))

LaShunda Echols-Smith (436-6219, [lashunda.smith@successfulpathways.com](mailto:lashunda.smith@successfulpathways.com))

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### *Officers*

**Co-Chairs:** Nikki Hogan (621-8731, [nhogan13@hotmail.com](mailto:nhogan13@hotmail.com))

Elvis Reyes (338-9012, [elvis.reyes@twcable.com](mailto:elvis.reyes@twcable.com))

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### *Family Association Committee Chairs*

#### **Family Social Activities**

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(298-5125, [betecd@yahoo.com](mailto:betecd@yahoo.com))

#### **Fund-Raising**

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#### **Legislative Issues**

Paul Hansen (698-5051, [phansen14620@gmail.com](mailto:phansen14620@gmail.com))

#### **Outreach**

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#### **Program**

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#### **Classroom Parent Volunteer Coordinators**

Wendy Walsh (244-4996, [wendyphoto@hotmail.com](mailto:wendyphoto@hotmail.com))

### *Classroom Parent Volunteer Coordinators*

#### **Kindergarten**

Nicole Meyer (482-2566, [nicolem@rochesterymca.org](mailto:nicolem@rochesterymca.org))

#### **First Grade**

Karen Braden (615-5200, [karen@mikaren.com](mailto:karen@mikaren.com))

#### **Second Grade**

Brenda Wonder (271-0294, [wondelveccchio@hotmail.com](mailto:wondelveccchio@hotmail.com))

#### **Third Grade**

Gale Lynch (454-3295, [galelynch@frontiernet.net](mailto:galelynch@frontiernet.net))

#### **Fourth Grade**

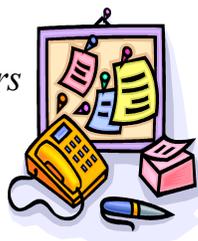
Denise Anderson (244-8202, [tommya31323@frontiernet.net](mailto:tommya31323@frontiernet.net))

#### **Fifth Grade**

Pam Black-Colton (244-5097, [pb14610@yahoo.com](mailto:pb14610@yahoo.com))

#### **Sixth Grade**

Eileen Wrona (734-1160, [enchantedrosegarden@hotmail.com](mailto:enchantedrosegarden@hotmail.com))



## Upcoming Dates To Remember

To Do:

- Apr. 19-23: Spring Recess  
School is Closed
- May 8: Family Dance Party  
7:00 p.m.
- May 12: Board of Trustees Meeting  
5:30 p.m. Cunningham House
- May 16: Operation KidFit 5K Race for Kids  
9:00 a.m. Genesee Valley Park
- May 20: Family Association Meeting  
6:30-8:00 p.m.
- May 22: Dining for Dollars Fundraiser
- May 27: Staff Appreciation Luncheon
- May 28: Professional Development Day  
No School for Students
- May 31: Memorial Day  
School is Closed
- June 10: Parent-Teacher Conferences  
11:30 a.m. Dismissal
- June 22: 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Passage Reception  
6:00-9:00 p.m.  
Eisenhart Auditorium
- June 23: Last Day of School  
10:00 a.m. Passage Ceremony  
11:30 a.m. Dismissal

## INDIANS/EXPLORERS/SETTLERS EXHIBITION NIGHTS

Tues., June 8 – K, 6<sup>th</sup> Grade

Mon., June 14 – 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> Grades

Tues., June 15 – 4<sup>th</sup> Grade

Wed., June 16 –  
1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> Grades



## GCCS Board Adopts Background Clearance Policy

At its April meeting, the GCCS Board of Trustees adopted a policy to guide the school in conducting criminal background checks on volunteers and chaperones. The policy defines types of GCCS volunteers and chaperones, and requires the following:

Overnight Chaperones and Regular Volunteers (those who volunteer more than five days per year):

- chaperone certification training completed every three years
- background check completed once; background check will be updated if there is any reason to suspect that the information may have changed
- signed volunteer policy acknowledgment on file

Day Chaperones:

- chaperone certification training completed every three years
- signed volunteer policy acknowledgment on file

Occasional Volunteers or Visitors (those who volunteer fewer than five days per year):

- signed volunteer policy acknowledgment on file

Drivers:

- DMV records check completed annually
- chaperone certification training completed every three years
- signed volunteer policy acknowledgment on file

The policy also stipulates that “based on practice, not policy, offenses involving children, violence, the threat of violence, or any crime of a sexual nature suggest automatic disqualification of individuals from regular volunteering or serving as an overnight chaperone. However, there may be circumstances involved with such crimes that would allow exceptions to be made for volunteer involvement. Other offenses will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the School Leader.”

The volunteer policy acknowledgment has been sent home as part of each child’s enrollment packet. Chaperone certification training will be offered three times per year; dates will be announced in the summer “welcome back” letter.

Many thanks to the parents who attended Family Association meetings to help shape the policy and to those who provided feedback on earlier drafts.

## GCCS Alumni Set Kansas City Afire



Five GCCS alumni, who are now in tenth grade, delivered the keynote presentation at the Expeditionary Learning National Conference in February to a packed house of almost 800 educators. With incredible poise and passion, these young people presented their sixth grade project in which they investigated the merits of the Grasso-Zimmer proposal to rewater the Erie Canal downtown. They described their in-class research, work with guest experts, fieldwork to four cities with thriving downtown waterways, and their culminating presentation to Mayor Duffy.

They also reflected back on their years at GCCS and the huge impact that the sixth grade project had on their development as students and community activists. “Genesee gave me such a profound appreciation for my education and involvement in my own community,” said one of the students, “Expeditionary Learning taught me how to think critically, speak effectively, act professionally, and work communally.” “You don’t really value what you have ’til it’s gone,” said another, “It has taken four years to for us to truly appreciate the significance of a bunch of twelve year olds potentially shaping our city’s future.”

Scott Hartl, President of Expeditionary Learning Schools, reported that many conference participants deemed our alumni’s presentation the best keynote speech in the history of the organization. The presentation can be viewed online at [www.elschools.org](http://www.elschools.org). Look for the link in the lower right corner of the home page.

These students’ had the unique experience of being able to describe their work for a national audience, but the experience of participating in such a meaningful sixth grade project is shared by all of our students.

## Indians/Explorers/Settlers

Our third expedition of the year began in mid-March. The content focuses on the time period between 1450 and 1825, when European explorers and settlers were beginning to make their way to the Genesee Valley. Younger students' expeditions focus on the lives of those who chose to make the wilderness of Western New York their home and their relationships with the resources and the people they found when they arrived. Older students will investigate artifacts, documents, and people from the Revolutionary War period. Sixth graders will culminate their year by preparing their recommendations for the new RMSC health exhibit.



### Kindergarten – Settling In

Kindergarteners will examine the answers to the following questions: Why did people move to and settle in Rochester? What did settlers use to meet their needs?

Throughout the Expedition, students will prepare to live a day in the life of a settler by determining the needs for the trip, training for a long walk and preparing the food and goods needed for survival. Children will write letters to family members describing what they've done to settle into Rochester, and extend an invitation for the family member to join them.

A culminating field study/Exhibition Night will simulate a day in the life of a settler. On this day, students will hike to a settlement, and spend the day preparing meals and crafts for the comfort and "survival" of their expected families. Families will join the class for dinner, learn the process of preparing everyday items used by the settlers, and take part in a celebration of the new settlement.

### First Grade – Weave Me a Story

This expedition focuses on settler life in Rochester during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century. To begin, students will visit the RMSC "At the Western Door" exhibit to ask questions and research how European explorers and settlers traded with the Seneca. Students will then meet with an expert from Ganondagan to find out more about what happened to the Seneca people following European arrival.

Students will continue their study of weaving which they began in the previous expedition. They will be introduced to the use of a foot treadle loom.

Students will research early Rochesterian Orringh Stone, studying life in early Rochester through the lenses of tools, family, natural world, comfort, survival, and "how-to." Each crew will produce a quilt square and poem that documents their learning. Quilt squares will be sewn together to reveal the story of Orringh Stone and Early Rochester.



### 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade – A River Runs Through Us

This expedition will focus on the seven settlements of early Rochester. Students will visit local landmarks to help them visualize what daily life was like for the settlers. A local historian will guide the class on a bus tour of the locations of the first seven settlements. Through learning experiences, field studies and research, students will become experts on important factors that came together to make Rochester a village on the verge of blossoming into a city. The students will create a self-guided tour book of the settlements. In order to write about their settlements, they will consider what the land was like during that time period, what drew people to that spot on the Genesee River, what jobs people had at that settlement and whether or not the settlement was successful. A culminating activity will be an overnight camping trip at Webster Park, during which the students will simulate the daily life of the early Genesee Valley settlers.



### 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade – Before the Boom

At the beginning of their Second Grade year, this class learned how wheat farms, mills, and the Erie Canal caused Rochester to become the first Boomtown, growing from 330 people to over 4700 in less than 10 years! So what was Rochester like “Before the Boom”? This is what we are seeking to uncover during this Expedition as we come full circle in the study of the six time periods over two years.

Third Graders will use primary source documents, including journal entries, early village directories, and documents advertising lands for sale. Each student will visit the present-day site of three of the first seven settlements along the Genesee River and meet with an historian to learn about the people who lived there. Partnering these experiences with information gleaned from secondary sources, students will create a profile for a realistic historical fiction character. From their character’s perspective, they will write journal entries and letters. In addition they will compile a variety of artifacts that represent their character’s experience moving from established communities along the east coast, journeying to their settlement in the wilderness along the Genesee, arriving, and establishing a new life.

The development of these characters and the challenge to make them as realistic as possible becomes the lens for the research on what life in Rochester was like “Before the Boom!”

### 4<sup>th</sup> Grade – We the People

Fourth graders will study the American Revolution as the transformation of 13 colonies into the United States of America. They will examine how language, the choices people made, and historic events shaped the beginnings of our nation. The class, split in half, with travel to either Boston or Philadelphia. Students will have a responsibility for sharing their questions and learning with each other, and will work to determine what information is compelling enough to warrant further study. Artifacts representing the Revolution will be shared in a performance for exhibition night.



### 5<sup>th</sup> Grade – Democracy by Design

What can the life of a single person tell us about the creation of a nation?

During the final expedition of the year, fifth graders will explore the life of either Paul Revere or Benjamin Franklin, and the circumstances that made these once-proud British colonists become enemies of England. More importantly, students will learn that the ideals that inspired these patriots echo today, through our system of government and the documents that helped create it. From Boston’s North End to the streets of Philadelphia, students will discover the many talents of these patriots and the amazing timeline of events onto which their lives are woven. The students’ research into the lives and times of Ben Franklin and Paul Revere will be showcased in a series of dramatic readings from multiple genres, capturing the essence of the American Experiment.

### 6<sup>th</sup> Grade – Fit by Design

In the final expedition sixth graders will tie together their year-long study of health. Students will embark on a rigorous investigation of museum exhibit design and create potential plans for the RMSC to use in their new health exhibit. They will travel to four cities and learn about how museums around the country create and support successful exhibits. Then, they will continue to work with local experts to create their proposal for the museum’s exhibit, including floor plans and 3-D models that will be supported with a written document explaining the four major aspects of each idea: content, design, in-house programming, and outreach programming.

Students will integrate math into their designs through area, perimeter, scale, and measurement. They will also gain valuable interviewing and note taking skills while collecting data from local experts.

Ultimately, students will gain a new, deeper understanding of the process of creating a health exhibit, as well as the community benefits and the economic factors. They will share their information with the community during their exhibition night and will present their work to the stakeholders at the RMSC.



Register Your Child for  
**Operation KidFit**  
**5K Run for Kids**  
 Ages 8-18

Hosted by the GCCS 6<sup>th</sup> Grade

Sunday, May 16  
 Genesee Valley Park  
 9:00 a.m. Registration  
 10:00 a.m. Race Begins

Call 271-4552 ext. 463 or  
 download registration forms at  
[www.GCCSchool.org](http://www.GCCSchool.org)  
 (on homepage under "school news")

Are you interested in serving as a Parent  
 Representative on the  
 GCCS Board of Trustees?

Election of New Parent Board Member  
 At the May Family Association Meeting  
 Thursday, May 20  
 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

Please come prepared to make a statement about  
 your background and reasons for  
 your interest in serving

Input for the next  
 Family Association Newsletter  
 is due in early May.

Please contact editor Melody Altamura at  
 271-7191, [maltamura1@gmail.com](mailto:maltamura1@gmail.com)

Put on your dancing shoes  
 for the

## Family Dance Party

Learn settler dances, line dances  
 and enjoy an evening of music,  
 movement and fun!

**Saturday, May 8**

6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Eisenhart Auditorium



Please bring a dessert  
 Or snack to share

Do you enjoy **COOKING**  
 or do you prefer **EATING**?  
 Do you like sharing **DESSERT, LIVE MUSIC,**  
**AND DANCING** with friends and family?

Mark your calendars for the  
**“Dining for Dollars”**  
**Family Association**  
**Fund-Raiser**  
**Saturday May 22**

Host a Dinner Party for Other GCCS Parents  
 OR  
 Make a Donation and Attend One of the  
 Dinner Parties Being Hosted.

Then Meet Back at School for  
 Dessert, Music, and Dancing!

Watch Backpack Mail  
 for More Information

