



Currents

The Bi-monthly Newsletter of the Genesee Community Charter School

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Sixth Graders Set Their Own Course for Learning

At GCCS, sixth grade is a capstone year, providing an important culmination and application of what students have learned during their years in elementary school. With a rich background in local history and our community's global connections, students are well-prepared to take the lead in investigating and offering solutions to community problems. It is our goal to help students learn to be contributing, positive community activists as they continue to refine and extend their academic and social skills.

For the first time, our sixth grade class has taken an active role in determining its course of study for the remainder of the year. Students began this task last summer by creating a scrapbook of hot topics affecting Rochester that were making news. When school began, students compared their findings and formed an "uber list" of all the topics they had identified. Over the next several weeks, the class conducted fieldwork, listened to guest experts, and read many reports and articles about the state of the city. They refined and whittled down the list throughout the fall. The class also studied six case study cities from around the world to find out if Rochester's challenges are universal, and if other cities have found solutions that we might emulate. Finally, the class voted and selected its top four topics: childhood obesity, the declining global (and local) bee population, violence in schools, and rejuvenation of the High Falls area.

School staff had determined six critical elements of an effective sixth grade topic, and the class was now challenged to explore how each of their final four met the criteria. Each crew was assigned one of the elements:

- ✓ The topic must have ancient roots that would allow students to learn about global ancient civilizations;

-continued on p. 3

Investigating *Investigations*

We've finally received all of our new *Investigations* math materials, and have made the switch from the old edition to the new one. The new edition includes some changes in both format and content.

The most noticeable change is that the new program includes a paperback student workbook. Teachers used to have to copy these activity sheets for classwork and home learning. Now students are able to tear these pages out of their consumable workbooks. There is also a hardcover student resource book that contains math reference material, explanations of math concepts. Students will use these books in class during instruction and independent work.

The updated program includes more opportunities for student practice of math skills and additional focus on time, measurement, and money. There are online connections for both students and teachers. Teachers will send home instructions for accessing online resources.

There are also changes that make the program more accessible and easier to use for teachers. Objectives for lessons, units, and grade levels are more explicit, and the program makes it clearer how each day's work fits into the larger scope and sequence of the math curriculum. There is a clearer alignment with the NYS Learning Standards, with information about what skills and concepts need to be covered before each March's exam. The program also offers additional suggestions for challenging students who have mastered content and for supporting students who haven't yet reached mastery.

The changes in the new edition follow five years of research supported by the National Science Foundation. We believe the updated program will allow us to better meet a wide range of student needs while continuing to emphasize students' mathematical exploration, thinking, and understanding.



Family Association Directory

Board of Trustees Representatives

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Family Social Activities

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Anne Punzi (242-8902)

Legislative Issues

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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 – Lead Parents

Kindergarten

Kate Kressman-Kehoe (442-6942)

First Grade

Wendy Walsh (244-4996)

Second Grade

Denise Anderson (244-8202)

Third Grade

Betsy Serapilio-Frank (654-5958)

Fourth Grade

Eileen Wrona (288-3273)

Fifth Grade

Yvonne Villareale (473-9318)

Sixth Grade

Jeanne Eckl (377-8957)



Upcoming Dates To Remember



- Dec. 10: Board of Trustees Meeting
5:30 p.m. Cunningham House
- Dec. 13: Parent-Teacher Conferences
11:30 a.m. Dismissal
Parent Information Session
7:00-9:00 p.m. Eisenhart Aud.
- Dec. 18: Family Association Potluck
Social and Service Auction
6:00 p.m. Eisenhart Auditorium
- Dec. 24 -
Jan. 2: Winter Recess
School is Closed
- Jan. 3-4: Professional Development Days
No School for Students
- Jan. 14: Board of Trustees Meeting
5:30 p.m. Cunningham House
- Jan. 15: Family Association Meeting
6:30-8 p.m. Eisenhart Ballroom
- Jan. 21: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
School is Closed
- Jan. 26: Saturday Parent Work Day
9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.
Parent Information Session
1:00-3:00 p.m. Eisenhart Aud.
- Jan. 30-31: EL Site Seminar
- Feb. 1: EL Site Seminar
School is Closed
- Feb. 6: Parent Information Session
7:00-9:00 p.m. Eisenhart Aud.
- Feb. 7: Enrollment Lottery
9:00 a.m. Computer Lab
- Feb. 9: Winter Family Social
3:00 p.m. Cobbs Hill



**Do we have your e-mail
address? To receive
school e-mail, please
send your e-mail
address to
Lwing@GCCSchool.org**

EARLY PEOPLE/ WOODLAND PEOPLES EXHIBITION DATES



**THURSDAY, MARCH 13 – K, 4TH
MONDAY, MARCH 17 – 1ST, 5TH
TUESDAY, MARCH 18 – 2ND, 3RD, 6TH**

Sixth Grade (continued from p. 1)

- ✓ The topic must have local importance and contemporary global connections;
- ✓ The topic must have strong science content;
- ✓ The topic must have a legitimate authentic audience in the community possibilities for a do-able, tangible, final product;
- ✓ The topic must allow possibilities for students to conduct original research
- ✓ The topic should have possibilities for 5K race connections.

Crews then researched each of the final four topics in light of these components. They prepared presentations to highlight how well each of the topics met these criteria.

On exhibition night, students presented their findings to a panel of school, community,

and Expeditionary Learning representatives. The excitement in the auditorium built as the justification for each topic was explained and the panel withdrew to deliberate. After about twenty minutes of thoughtful conversation, the panel returned to the auditorium to make the big announcement. To learn the panel's decision, see p. 5.

Students have learned a great deal already this year, most importantly how intertwined are all of the challenges facing a community. Look for great things to come from this class's next two expeditions as they investigate their compelling topic, explore potential causes, and prepare proposals for community-based solutions.

WEATHER BULLETIN!

PLEASE READ FOR IMPORTANT SCHOOL CLOSING INFORMATION

GCCS will be OPEN on Wednesday and Thursday, January 30 and 31, even if the Rochester City School District is closed for inclement weather. We have over 100 guests traveling to Rochester for our Expeditionary Learning Site Seminar, and we want them to be able to see the school in action, so we need our children here!

Of course, if roads are impassable and there is a declared State of Emergency, we will close. Please tune into WROC Channel 8 on those mornings for the most up-to-date information. We will also activate the school phone tree and post the latest information on our website (www.GCCSchool.org).

If the City School District closes on any day this winter for cold temperatures, GCCS may remain open, especially if we have run out of snow days. Please check WROC Channel 8 and/or the GCCS website for our status on those days.

If the City School District is closed, buses will NOT run. If you cannot transport your child to school and need transportation, we will be happy to arrange it. Please send the information below to school, and we will pass it along to Room Parent Volunteers. They will contact you to let you know who will be transporting your child.

Yes, I need transportation for my child on days the City School District buses do not run:

Parent Name _____

Child(ren)'s Name _____

Grade Level(s) _____ Bus Route # _____ Phone _____

Address _____



Early People/Woodland Peoples

During this time period, students develop a deeper understanding of human history as well as cultural respect, sensitivity, and understanding. With the help of the RMSC, Ganondagan, and area archeologists and experts, students study early people and native people who made the Genesee Valley their home. They examine the relationship between natural resources, geography, climate, daily life, and cultural traditions. Students learn to bring many resources to bear when interpreting the lives and beliefs of others, and are encouraged to dismiss stereotypes that often characterize the representation of native peoples. We work in consultation with the Native community in preparing and teaching this content.

Kindergarten – Corn and The Seneca

This expedition will start with a visit to the Kindergarten class from their friend, The Great Stone. Students will then travel to the village of Ganondagan where a basket of Seneca artifacts will be waiting. Through research, experts and field studies, Kindergartners will discover that the artifacts all have one thing in common – corn. Students will learn about the importance of corn in Seneca culture in three main areas – as food, to fulfill other needs and wants, and in beliefs and traditions. In crews, students will work towards making a product designed to teach preschoolers about the three main areas. Throughout this expedition, Kindergartners will focus on the design principle of Service and Compassion as they work toward teaching preschoolers about the Seneca people. At the end of the expedition, the preschoolers will be invited to our class for a celebration where the food crew will cook them corn snacks, the needs and wants crew will present the corn husk mat they made and the storytelling crew will share their stories.



1st Grade – Seasons of the Seneca



Through generating questions about Seneca artifacts, students will discover how the Seneca people used the natural world to meet their needs 500 years ago, the roles of men, women, and children in the Seneca village, and how roles in the Seneca village changes with the seasons. Through a series of field studies to the RMSC, Ganondagan, Helmer Nature Center and interviews with guest experts, the class will learn about Seneca life and the importance of the natural world to the Seneca in meeting their needs. Students will focus on the changes in daily life of the Seneca throughout the changing seasons. Students will create a written journal from the point of view of a man, woman, or child in a Seneca longhouse village. As a final product, students will take part in a dramatization depicting the day in the life of a Seneca longhouse village during one of the four seasons.

2nd Grade – An Artifact Story

During this expedition, 2nd graders will be studying the Native Americans of six different geographic regions of North America. The expedition will begin by looking at our own classroom culture and the artifacts that represent our culture. Students will then explore artifacts from the six different regions, which will help tell the story of the people in that region and their culture. The artifacts will demonstrate how the geographic location of a group of people influences the development of their culture. Students will visit the RMSC multiple times to examine and sketch an artifact from one of the regions. The students will investigate different aspects of the each culture including transportation, shelter, food, clothing, and beliefs. Children will tell the story of his/her artifact through sketching and poetry and will work with a crew to tell the story of the Native people the crew is studying. Oral traditions play a major role in the culture of Native people. Throughout the expedition, students will look at stories from the Native people and how the stories are a defining part of their culture.



3rd Grade – Location, Location, Location!

North America is a vast continent with regions representing a wide variety of climates, terrain, and natural resources. While even now, the way of life of people in any region within North America is affected by the physical environment in which they live, this was especially true for early native peoples.

Archaeological evidence and traditional stories can help students learn how early native people survived. Students will work in crews to investigate the climate, natural resources, and geography of six major regions of North America. They will examine stories and artifacts of the people who lived there prior to 1600, and they will draw conclusions about how people lived their daily lives. In parallel, students will learn how museum displays can teach about important topics, and how docents can help people interpret those displays. For exhibition night, each crew will be responsible for designing and carrying out a docent-led experience that will teach visitors how the survival, culture, and traditions of early native peoples in the region they studied was shaped by their environment.



4th Grade – Leaving Traces

In the *Leaving Traces* expedition, fourth grade archaeologists will critically examine scientific theories of early people. Specific archaeological finds – both historical and current – will shed light on the question, “How do we know what we know about early people?” Case studies of fascinating fossils will help fourth graders understand how scientists develop theories, and how certain discoveries can cause those within the scientific community to re-think their own ideas. Students will explore significant discoveries with a cast of characters that includes Lucy (*Australopithecus afarensis*), the Java Man (*Homo erectus*), the Hobbit (*Homo floresiensis*), and the Kennewick Man (*Homo sapiens*). The young



anthropologists will also analyze modern-day controversies around early people of the Americas along with traces of modern culture. The fourth grade journalists will share “all their learning that’s fit to print” with guests at Exhibition Night in March.

5th Grade – Being Human/ Human Being



Although we take it for granted, the human body is a remarkably complex thing. But is it simply our form that makes us human? Our brains? Or is it the combination of form and function?

During this expedition, the students will discover the unique features of their own bodies and look to the past for clues as to how we’ve come to be the way we are. Students will look at how our bodies, brains, and abilities evolved over time and how scientists have pieced together the story of our species. Students will learn how the fossil record has provided scientists with the means to show change and how scientific theories are crafted when evidence is not available. The movement of humans across the globe will provide opportunities for students to become detectives and make sense of artifacts that show how the earliest settlers of the Americas took control of the Natural World to establish agriculture, community and culture. Students will take their learning and create their own stories that explore the cause effect relationship between environment and evolution, and how the choices early people made helped advance the story of humanity.

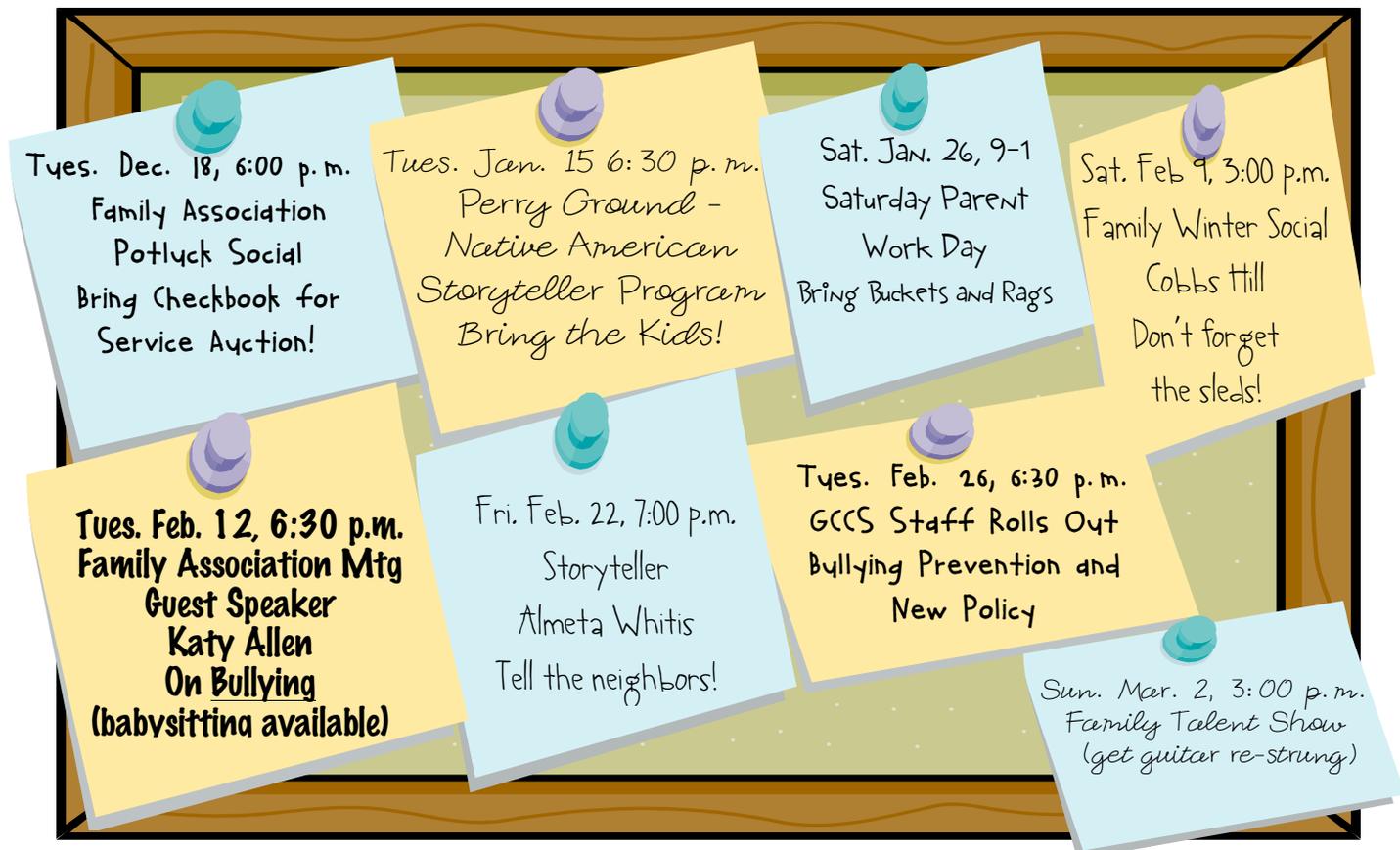
6th Grade – Dissecting a Hive of Knowledge



Things are really BUZZING in Sixth Grade! Throughout the next two expeditions, students will focus their learning around Colony Collapse Disorder. Before they can dive into this complex concept, students will spend the next twelve weeks “dissecting” (both literally and figuratively) information about bees, plants, and their history and evolution. Students will celebrate the bee’s long history by learning forms of poetry and writing odes, sonnets, cinquains, and other poems. They will also examine the social nature of bees. Finally, students will work with several local beekeepers and the Hansen Nature Center to help develop a more engaging exhibit for visitors.

Family Association Bulletin Board of Upcoming Events

This Winter Season is a busy one for the Family Association! Mark your calendars for these Parent and Family Events and watch for more details in Backpack Mail.



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 13, 7-9 p.m.

Saturday, January 26, 1-3 p.m.

Wednesday, February 6, 7-9 p.m.



Applications for enrollment will be available at these sessions. The enrollment lottery will be conducted Thursday, February 7 at 9:00 a.m. in the Computer Lab.

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.

Sibling Applications Due January 25

Sibling applications will be sent to our current families through the mail in early January, and will be due on January 25, 2008. 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 7.