



Currents

The Bimonthly Newsletter of the Genesee Community Charter School

February 2009

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What Have We Learned About Spelling?



The GCCS staff has taken on spelling as one of this year's focus areas with the goal of improving our spelling instruction. We want students to be accomplished writers, and this includes having control over the conventions of punctuation, grammar, and spelling. We have been researching the science of spelling and various approaches to evaluating and teaching spelling skills. Here's a summary of what we've learned so far:

- Accurate spelling allows for the clear and effective communication of ideas.
- Researchers agree that there are developmental stages for spelling which range from making random marks on paper to using complex structures of sounds and letters. Understanding the continuum of spelling development helps teachers evaluate children's spelling abilities and target instruction to move children to the next level.
- The goal of spelling instruction is to help children incorporate correct spellings into their writing, NOT to ensure high scores on weekly spelling tests.
- Teaching spelling involves more than the memorization of lists of words. Useful

activities help children develop an understanding of spelling patterns in an orderly, sensible progression.

- Children do have to memorize spellings of words that do not follow standard rules. Some programs recommend providing children with a list of "no excuses" words that must be spelled correctly at all times.
- Spelling programs vary widely in their organization. Some have highly structured lesson plans with word lists and weekly tests. Others provide a variety of tools for teachers to use to design lessons based on their knowledge of children's strengths and needs.
- Spelling assessment should include a variety of measures. Pre-tests help teachers determine children's spelling levels. Student writing should be evaluated to identify patterns of errors and mastery. Weekly tests are recommended by some programs and are discouraged by others.

The staff's next task is to evaluate four different resources/programs: *Words Their Way*,

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Intent to Return Due March 18

The deadline for **INTENT TO RETURN** forms is **Wednesday, March 18 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, 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

Diana Carter (473-1187, blueloon@rochester.rr.com), LaShunda Echols-Smith (436-6219, lashunda.smith@successfulpathways.org), Wendy Quarles (647-1667, wquarles@buffalo.edu)

Officers

Co-Chairs: Jamine Wilson (256-1566, jgwilson30@hotmail.com), Bill Gargan (461-0855, wgargan@monroecounty.gov)

Secretary: Maria Kast (727-3481, mariatkast@gmail.com), Ann Ehmann (271-8147)

Treasurer: Andre Spenard (820-6639, hammerheadconsulting.com)

Family Association Committee Chairs

Family Social Activities

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Fund-Raising

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Legislative Issues

Eric Anderson (436-5136, eazy521@gmail.com)

Outreach

Kate Kressman-Kehoe (442-6942, kressmann@frontiernet.net)

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Classroom Parent Volunteer Coordinators

Lead Parents

Kindergarten

Karen Braden (615-5200, karen@mikaren.com)

First Grade

Kate Kressman-Kehoe (442-6942, kressmann@frontiernet.net)

Second Grade

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Third Grade

Nikki Hogan (621-8731, hoganshideaway@hotmail.com)

Fourth Grade

Liz Conheady (442-7048, econheady@msn.com)

Fifth Grade

Denise Anderson (244-8202, tommya31323@frontiernet.net)

Sixth Grade

Yvonne Villareale (4739318, yvonne.villareale@frontiernet.net)

Upcoming Dates To Remember



- Feb. 4: Parent Information Session
7-9 p.m. Eisenhart Basement
- Feb. 5: Enrollment Lottery
9:00 a.m. Computer Lab
- Feb. 11: Board of Trustees Meeting
5:30 p.m. Cunningham House
- Feb. 16: President's Day
School is Closed
- Feb. 17-18: Professional Development Days
No School for Students
- Feb. 19-20: School is OPEN
- Feb. 28: Dining For Dollars Family
Association Fund-Raiser
- Mar. 2-6: NYS Math Exam Grades 3-5
- Mar. 9-13: NYS Math Exam Grade 6
- Mar. 11: Board of Trustees Meeting
5:30 p.m. Cunningham House
- Mar. 18: Intent To Return Forms Due
- Mar. 19-20: Professional Development Days
No School for Students
- Mar. 21: Family Dance Party
6-8 p.m. Eisenhart Auditorium
- Mar. 26: Parent Teacher Conferences
11:30 Dismissal
- Apr. 4: Saturday Parent Work Day
9 a.m.-1 p.m.
- Apr. 10: Professional Development Day
No School for Students

City Grows Exhibition Dates

Tues., Mar. 10: K, 3rd Grade

Thurs., Mar. 12: 2nd Grade

Mon., Mar. 16: 1st, 5th Grades

Tues., Mar. 17: 4th, 6th Grades

All students required to attend

Spelling (continued from p. 1)

Spelling Connections, Sitton Spelling, and Word Matters. We will distill the essential practices of each and will determine which suits the school's philosophy and our students' strengths and needs the best. We will also conduct pilot tests of the programs in classrooms.

By the end of the school year, we will make a decision about the approach to spelling instruction that will be adopted consistently throughout the school.

Watch for an upcoming issue of *Currents* to reveal our findings and decisions.



Fourth & Fifth Graders Live the Immigrant Experience



Fourth and fifth graders traveled to New York City to experience the hopes and challenges faced by thousands of Americans who crossed oceans to begin a new life. These students are studying the period of the industrial revolution and the waves of immigration that brought a mix of cultures and traditions to the U.S.

A day at Ellis Island brought to life the process of immigration. Students were assigned identities of actual 19th and 20th century immigrants, and they went through the same type of inspections, medical checks, and interviews that their real-life counterparts faced. Some had to deal with the despair of deportation while others celebrated the opportunities their new homeland promised. Then students visited the Lower East Side and learned about the conditions and struggles of tenement life.

Fifth graders also visited Lowell, Massachusetts, where they explored the working conditions in textile mills and the resulting protests, strikes, and labor laws. Fourth Graders attended a naturalization ceremony and interviewed the presiding judge about the importance of immigration in the building of our country. They also toured Chinatown, Harlem, Little Italy, and other neighborhoods settled by different ethnic groups. A trip to the top of the Empire State Building and ice skating in Central Park completed students' New York experience.

The notes and reflections students wrote throughout the field study will be invaluable in the months to come as students continue to examine this important period in history.

Put on your dancing shoes
for the

Family Dance Party

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

Saturday, March 21

6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Eisenhart Auditorium



Do you have the talent of **COOKING GOOD FOOD**, or do you just enjoy **EATING GOOD FOOD**?
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 February 28th



How It Works: Host a Dinner Party for Other GCCS Parents OR Make a \$25 Donation and Attend One of the Dinner Parties Being Hosted. Meet Back at School for Dessert, Music, and Dancing!

Watch Backpack Mail for More Information



**Don't Miss
This Year's
Performance
Extravaganza!
The Family Talent
Show**

**Sunday, May 3, 2:00 p.m.
Eisenhart Auditorium**

Please bring a canned good
to donate to a local food bank



**Saturday Parent
Work Day**

**Saturday, April 4
9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.**

**Bring buckets, rags,
and elbow grease,
and come make your
child's classroom sparkle!**

Parents Needed to Volunteer at RMSC!

Tough economic times can be especially devastating to our local cultural institutions, and our own Rochester Museum & Science Center is no exception. In order to make ends meet, the museum recently reduced its workforce and eliminated all its floor staff. Floor staff supervise the dinosaur dig, run the simulator, and walk through the exhibits to ensure that guests are having a safe and enjoyable visit. Every museum employee – curators, designers, administrators – is putting in additional hours to cover floor duties, but more volunteers are needed.



Would you be able to volunteer several hours per month to work as a floor staff member? Volunteers are needed on weekdays as well as weekends. Training will be provided, and hours will be scheduled in advance.

Please tear off the sign-up sheet below and send it back to school with your child. A representative from the museum will contact you soon.

What: Floor Staff Volunteers Needed

Who: GCCS Parents

Why: Recent down-sizing due to difficult economic situation

When: 4-5 hours per month

_____ Yes, I am interested in more information about volunteering at RMSC.

Name _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Best Time To Reach Me _____

Children's Names _____

Please return this portion to GCCS by Friday, February 27. Thank you!