

Currents

The Bi-monthly Newsletter of the Genesee Community Charter School

April-June 2009

Volume 8 Nos. 5-6

Charter Renewal in State Ed Hands

On May 1, the staff of GCCS happily handed over to our State Education Department supervisors the 1500+ page copy of our application for our second charter renewal. By state law, each charter school must renew its charter every five years. Our current charter expires in July 2010 and the renewal will extend our charter term to 2015.



The renewal process was an intense undertaking. One portion of the application required us to write a retrospective report on the school's educational and fiscal soundness. We determined that the school remains fiscally healthy, has a full and stable enrollment, and is meeting or exceeding state learning standards in all areas. In examining our state test scores and comparing them with a variety of cohort schools, we discovered that GCCS consistently scores above the city, county, and state. Overall, our students scores are at or above schools in the BOCES I area (the eastern suburbs).

We have maintained a high level of fidelity to the philosophy, curriculum, and instructional methodology outlined in our charter. Our implementation of the Expeditionary Learning model has been exemplary, and we have put into practice the policies, professional development, and programmatic elements that we had envisioned five years ago.

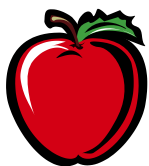
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Introducing our New Staff

We have a few staffing changes to announce for 2009-2010. We will be adding two new teaching assistants to replace Mrs. Khiosida, who is taking next year off to stay home with her new baby, and Mrs. Burgess, who is moving to Long Island.

Ms. Kralj, who is currently the teaching assistant in fifth grade, will be moving to second grade to join Mrs. Mason and Ms. Haley.

Jake Allen will join us as the teaching assistant in fourth grade with Ms. Cicero and Mr. Walpole. Mr. Allen is an artist who has been a stay-at-home father with his four-year-old son.



In addition to being a full-time parent, Mr. Allen has experience volunteering in preschool and elementary classrooms.

Theresa Fitzpatrick will join Ms. Fredericks and Mrs. Elahi in first grade. Mrs. Fitzpatrick has been a teaching assistant at the Strong Museum Preschool for two years. She has a degree in Art Education and experience as both an art teacher and day care provider.

Both of our new teaching assistants come very highly recommended, and we look forward to welcoming them to GCCS.

Mrs. Woodworth is also taking next year off to stay home with her new baby. We are in the process of finding her substitute.

Family Association Directory

Board of Trustees Representatives

Diana Carter (473-1187, blueloon@rochester.rr.com), LaShunda Smith (436-6219, lashunda.smith@successfulpathways.org), Dan Bell (544-0577, dbell@rochester.rr.com)

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 Ehmman (271-8147)

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



Family Association Committee Chairs

Family Social Activities

Nikki Hogan (621-8731)

Fund-Raising

Maria Kast (727-3481, mariatkast@gmail.com)

Legislative Issues

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

Outreach

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

Program

Diana Carter (473-1187, blueloon@rochester.rr.com)

Classroom Parent Volunteer Coordinators

Yvonne Villareale (473-9318, yvonne.villareale@frontiernet.net), Wendy Walsh (244-4996, wendyphoto@hotmail.com)

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

Rebecca Degro-Carbonel (266-8408, rdecarbonel22@frontiernet.net)

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



- June 9: Exhibition Nights Grades 1, 3
5:45 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.
Eisenhart Auditorium
Sixth Grade ARTWalk 2
Presentation
7:00 p.m. Bausch Auditorium
- June 10: Sixth Grade Passage
Presentations
Board of Trustees Annual Meeting
5:30 p.m. Cunningham House
- June 11: Parent-Teacher Conferences
11:30 a.m. Dismissal
Sixth Grade Passage
Presentations – No School for Sixth Graders
Exhibition Night for Grades 4, 5
- June 14: Family Picnic
1-5 p.m. Maplewood YMCA
- June 15: Exhibition Night Grade 2
- June 16: Sixth Grade Passage Dinner
6:00 p.m. Eisenhart Auditorium
- June 17: Last Day of School
Passage Ceremony
10:00 a.m. Eisenhart Auditorium

Important DATE!

*First Day
of School*

*Wed., Sept. 2
For Grades 1-6*

*Kindergarten Screenings
by Appointment*

Charter Renewal

(continued from p. 1)

The second part of the application included a detailed description of the school's plans for the next charter term, including the scope and content of the educational program, governance and management structures, budgets, and facilities. No substantive changes were made to the charter. We plan to continue our current curriculum, policies, and structures, and will continue to use the Expeditionary Learning model.

The biggest addition we made was to the assessment section. We are targeting improvements in our ability to gather and document focused academic performance data on individual students. While the New York State exams provide us with a useful snapshot of student performance and facilitate statewide comparisons, they do not give teachers timely, skill-specific, focused data that is useful in informing day-to-day grouping and instruction. We are planning to implement a few new assessment methods that will allow us to track all students' growth over time in reading, writing, and math, and will provide us with detailed information about areas of strength and weakness for students who are struggling. More information about these measures will be sent home in September.

The State Education Department will now send our application for renewal to its reviewers, and we await their comments and requests for clarification or revision. We will submit a revised copy of the plan, and the Regents will vote on our renewal at or before their December, 2009 meeting.

Passage Ceremony Marks End of Year

This year's Passage Ceremony will be held Wednesday, June 17 at 10:00 a.m. This annual event provides students, staff, and parents an opportunity to celebrate a wonderful year and look forward – just a little – to the year ahead.

Due to space limitations, we must restrict the audience to two guests per family. Tickets are required and have already been sent home via U.S. mail. Please note that GCCS alumni are welcome but they must have a ticket to attend, and must sit with a parent during the ceremony.



Dismissal will take place immediately following the ceremony.

Volunteers Needed for Family Association Roles!

Many thanks to the parents who have filled the following positions:

Co-Chairs: Nikki Hogan and Elvis Reyes

Secretary: Rebecca Degro-Carbonel

Treasurer: Andre Spenard

***Social Committee Chair:* Volunteer Needed**

Fund-Raising Chair: Maria Kast

***Legislative Issues Chair:* Volunteer Needed**

Program Committee Chair: Diana Carter

Outreach Committee Chair: Kate Kressman-Kehoe

Parent Volunteer Coordinators: Wendy Walsh, Yvonne Villareale

Please call Nikki Hogan at 621-8732 for more information or if you are willing to step up and fill one of these important positions.

Thank you!

Today & Tomorrow

The spring's expeditions conclude our school's two-year curriculum cycle through six historical time periods. Classes are completing their explorations of "Today and Tomorrow" in the Rochester region with connections across the globe. The curriculum emphasizes the natural world in Kindergarten through Grade 5. Grade 6 has focused on the built environment, and is preparing a presentation for the planners and stakeholders of ARTWalk 2.

Kindergarten – In-NEST-igations



Kindergarten began this expedition when they found a mysterious nest at Mendon Ponds Park. They asked, "Who made it? What materials were used, and what is the nest for?" First, students observed the nest carefully, then they researched about nests. They also spoke to animal experts.

The class broadened its exploration to include different animals from local habitats, learning about each by studying the animal's nest. Through a series of in-est-igations, kindergarteners discovered what each animal's habitat is, which materials are used to make its nest, what the nest is used for, and what special adaptations help the animal construct its nest. They used their knowledge of animals to compile data and create graphs to represent their learning. Students also wrote poetry about their animals, wove nests, and created movement representations of local animals in their habitats.

1st Grade – In Our Own Backyard

Over the last two years, first graders have discovered how Rochester has changed from a warm sea to a village to the city we see today. Students have learned how the natural world has changed as time passed and more and more people came to live here. In this final expedition of a two-year loop, first graders looked into our own backyards to find out what happened to the natural world as the city grew.

Students studied local habitats and the plants and animals that live there. They uncovered the special features of animals that have helped them to survive in their habitats. They also did extensive research to find little-known facts about the animals that live in this city with us. Students were proud to share what they have learned by creating a calendar that highlights Rochester's local habitats. The calendar also features some local habitat "heroes" who have taken extra care of the natural world, right here in our own backyards of Rochester.

Calendars are available for purchase through the first grade teachers or the River Room. \$5 from the sale of each calendar will go to local environmental organizations so they can continue their work!

2nd Grade – A Stroll Through Seneca Park

During the last expedition of the year, second graders were immersed in the animal kingdom. They sorted animal figures and learned how scientists classify and group all the animals in the world. Crews cared for and researched six different animals, each crew focusing on a different group (mammal, reptile, bird, amphibian, fish, and invertebrate arachnid).

Students then researched a local animal that lives in Seneca Park. Throughout the expedition, field studies, guest experts, and hands-on experiences supported learning targets around the biomes of the world, animal habitats, life cycles, and the food web. Students also focused on how adaptations help animals survive in their environment. Their final product, a book titled *A Stroll Through Seneca Park*, will teach the reader through descriptive poetry and student illustrations about the animal they researched.



3rd Grade – Time For Change



The students started this expedition by researching the world's biomes. They were put into biome crews. Then, they receive a letter from the "Butterfly Guys" at Strong

Museum of Play asking for their help to educate young visitors of Dancing Wings Butterfly Garden about butterflies in an interesting way. The students researched six different varieties of butterflies from their biome. They made multiple visits to the butterfly garden at Strong Museum and had the opportunity to meet with entomologists there. They studied three different mentor texts in order to write a storybook of their own. The students wrote, illustrated, and designed the layout of their book, and prepared to read their books to young children at Strong Museum.

4th Grade – Winds of Change

Students in fourth grade were deeply involved in the current topic of energy use. Early in the expedition they traveled to several locations to learn first hand about hydropower in the Genesee River and wind power at the Maple Ridge Wind farm. They debated the merits of traditional energy sources (such as coal or oil) and alternate energy sources (such as wind or biomass). During classroom discussions, the students investigated ethical and economic implications of each form of energy. In spite of differences of opinion, students worked collaboratively to create a movie to document their learning of this immense and important topic. Understanding the value of our resources as part of a community, students worked to educate others about the consequences of our current energy use, and ways to practice conservation.



5th Grade – Testing the Waters

The fifth grade class began building background knowledge in March by reading Democrat & Chronicle articles about local water quality issues. Students learned that excess phosphorous was getting into the water. How?

Jana Penders of the Water Education Collaborative came in and explained many sources of nonpoint source pollution, or "people pollution," like overfertilizing and neglecting to clean up pet feces. The class went to seven locations along Round Pond Creek to collect quantitative and qualitative data, which they carefully analyzed back at school.

The class presented its preliminary findings to the Monroe County Stormwater Coalition, and will be sharing their completed scientific research paper on Exhibition Night.

6th Grade – Public Art Works

The sixth grade class began their spring expedition knowing that they had an enormous task to accomplish - to gather information on best practices for public art in order to prepare recommendations for ARTWalk 2. They split into small groups and visited four cities – Seattle, Philadelphia, Minneapolis, and the Greater D.C. area – where they met with city officials, artists, non-profit arts organizations, and stakeholders.

The students also began investigating a broad topic of public art around the world today. After looking at many examples, the class was able to categorize types of public art and some influential artists working in the field of public art today.

Upon returning to Rochester the class continued to research the connections of public art to their city. They researched local government through the lens of public art and, in particular, tracked the stimulus money from the Federal



government to the ARTWalk 2 "shovel ready" project. Finally, students put the pieces together into a final report and presented their public art recommendations to the ARTWalk planning team and Neighborhood of the Arts stakeholders. Students' views were also featured on the NPR program *Studio 360*.



Family Association Picnic

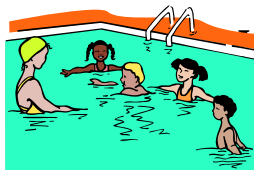


Sunday, June 14 1:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Maplewood YMCA

Swimming, Crafts, Games, Face Painting, and More!

Please bring a dish to pass



Hot dogs, hamburgers, veggie burgers
and drinks provided



Watch backpack mail for more info

Mark Your Calendars!

Family Open House

Thursday, August 27 6:00-7:30 p.m.

With Gratitude

The Genesee Community Charter School staff and families extend heartfelt appreciation to William M. Colby, who concludes his service as Board of Trustees President this month. Mr. Colby has served in this role since the school's opening. He skillfully shepherded the school through its start-up phase, helping to establish thoughtful policies and practices that reflect the school's mission and philosophy. As the school has grown and matured, Mr. Colby's leadership has ensured that all decisions are made with the best interests of our students at the forefront. We are grateful that Mr. Colby will remain on the Board for at least another year.

Assuming the office of President is Lyle Beach. Mr. Beach has also served on the GCCS Board since the school's inception, and he was instrumental in helping us secure our museum location. Mr. Beach was Chief Financial Officer at the RMSC and at Strong Museum. He currently serves as Vice President of Business at Bishop Kearney High School. Mr. Beach has a great deal of experience on not-for-profit boards as well as a warm leadership style and passion for good schools. Please join the GCCS staff in welcoming Mr. Beach to this new position.