



# Currents

The Bi-monthly Newsletter of the Genesee Community Charter School

December 2002

Volume 2 No. 3

## Planning Our Expeditions

This year's first expedition is behind us, and the preparations for our *City Grows* expeditions are well underway. As we design the learning goals, guiding questions, projects, and assessments that will frame our work with children over the next three months, we reflect on our successes and failures of the past. We plan ways to integrate the arts, we identify community sites and experts that will enhance student learning, we locate books, newspapers, web sites, maps, and primary sources that will facilitate student research. Each expedition stretches our understanding of how to plan and implement challenging, rich experiences for children that capture their interest, spur them on to high quality work, and equip them with the skills and knowledge they need.

One of the lessons we've learned is that oftentimes "less is more." Consequently, as teachers plan, they carefully identify key topics for investigation that will illuminate the essence of an historical time period for their students. They struggle to pare down all of their great ideas into a few challenging, intensive projects. A narrowly focused expedition allows classes to explore issues in greater depth and consider many different perspectives and interpretations of historical events. They make connections to other times and places, and they learn about the contributions and struggles of individuals and groups along the way. An ambitious culminating project requires that students apply their skills and knowledge to a piece of writing, performance, or service that will have a real-world audience.

Each expedition plan demonstrates our commitment to a thoughtful, high-quality education for your children. We look forward to hearing your observations as *City Grows* unfolds.

## Progress Reports Coming Soon

Teachers have begun to work on Fall progress reports, which will be mailed home just prior to Winter Recess. Progress reports will inform parents about children's social, physical, and academic performance during the first three months of school. A narrative section will describe students' accomplishments and needs, and a check-box will let you know if children are working toward, meeting, or exceeding expectations for their grade level.



In preparing progress reports, teachers carefully consider each child's work, behavior, effort, and participation over the course of the expedition. They review students' portfolio samples, assessments, and daily work in addition to the multitude of anecdotal records they have accumulated. This evidence is examined in light of the New York State Learning Standards, the *Work Sampling System* developmental checklist, and the *First Steps* developmental continuum.

Please be sure to contact your child's teachers if you have questions regarding your child's progress report or performance.

Please Join Us!

Family Social Event  
Wednesday, December 18, 2002

6:00 - 8:00 p.m.

Eisenhart Auditorium

(Details to Follow)



## From RMSC President Kate Bennett

Dear GCCS Families:

Thank you to all the families who supported us during the difficult budget negotiations with the County. Your letters of support and your words of encouragement were helpful.

The partial budget restorations of \$300,000 will enable us to keep the Cumming Nature Center open on weekends, keep Planetarium Star Shows running, and our collections department staffed, although all of our operations are at very minimal levels.

For me, the best part of these past several months was seeing so many of our partnerships thrive at the same time we were struggling. In the case of the GCCS, seeing the kids everyday, and their involvement preparing for their first expedition of the year, meant that there were smiling and engaged faces all around us. It was a reminder of the importance of our combined missions.

We are proud to have a school on campus and delighted to be back focusing on the business of running the best community Museum & Science Center possible.

Thank you,  
Kate Bennett

## Upcoming Dates To Remember



- Dec. 7: Saturday Work Day for Parents
- Dec. 9: Board of Trustees Meeting  
5:30 p.m. Cunningham House
- Dec. 12: Parent Conferences  
11:30 a.m. Dismissal for Students
- Dec. 12: 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Exhibition  
6:00 p.m. Eisenhart Auditorium  
Students Required to Attend
- Dec. 12: 1<sup>st</sup> Grade Apprenticeship Display  
5:30 p.m. Eisenhart Lobby
- Dec. 12: Parent Information Session for  
Prospective Families  
7:30 – 9:00 p.m. 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Classroom
- Dec. 18: Family Association Social Event  
6:00 p.m. Eisenhart Auditorium
- Dec. 23-  
Jan. 1: Winter Recess, School is Closed
- Jan. 2-3: Professional Development Days  
No School for Students
- Jan. 13: Board of Trustees Meeting  
5:30 p.m. Cunningham House
- Jan. 20: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day  
School is Closed
- Jan. 11: Parent Information Session for  
Prospective Families  
1:00 – 3:00 p.m. Eisenhart Auditorium
- Jan. 15: Family Association Meeting  
6:30 p.m. Eisenhart Auditorium
- Jan. 24: Sibling Applications for Fall, 2003  
Enrollment Due by 3:00 p.m.
- Jan. 25: Saturday Work Day for Parents
- Jan. 30: Parent Information Session for  
Prospective Families  
7:00 – 9:00 p.m. Eisenhart Auditorium
- Jan. 31: Enrollment Applications for Fall, 2003  
Due by 3:00 p.m.
- Feb. 3: Enrollment Lottery  
9:00 a.m. Computer Lab
- Feb. 10: Board of Trustees Meeting  
5:30 p.m. Cunningham House
- Feb. 26: Family Association Meeting  
6:30 p.m. Eisenhart Auditorium

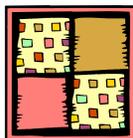
### You are Invited!

1<sup>st</sup> Graders Present  
*Apprenticeship Projects*

Thursday, January 12, 2002 5:30 p.m.  
Eisenhart Auditorium

4<sup>th</sup> Graders Present  
*Freedom: A Musical*

Thursday, January 12, 2002 6:30 p.m.  
Quilt Display at 6:00 p.m.  
Eisenhart Auditorium



## Family Association Directory

### *Board of Trustees Representatives*

Sara Bruzda (473-9736) Paul Holloway (224-0044),  
Tom Klein (388-8818)

### *Officers*

**Co-Chairs:** Dan DeMarle (328-5982), Stuart Dodd  
(726-5953), Dennis Peel (223-4530)

**Secretary:** Carol Bonnewell (647-1932)

**Treasurer:** Julie Bernunzio (256-0722)

### *Family Association Committee Chairs*

#### **Family Social Activities**

Erin Kohler (254-3815)

#### **School Extra-curricular Activities**

Liz Cope (352-9733)

#### **Babysitting & Transportation**

Kit Miller (244-4189), Betsy Serapilio-Frank  
(654-5958)

#### **Student Book Publishing**

Marcy Berger (271-3549)

#### **Food Service**

Peter Keenan (271-7406)

#### **Fund-Raising**

Barb & Tom Klein (388-8818)

#### **Communications**

Holly Merrill (224-8491)

#### **Legislative Issues**

Anne Lichtenstein (244-7373)

### *Classroom Parent Volunteer Coordinators*

#### **Kindergarten**

Gina Dodd (426-3356), Annette Ramos (244-1378),  
Yvonne Villareale (473-9318)

#### **First Grade**

James Carter (473-1187), Bill Howard (436-2573),  
Kamaria Rivera (254-6598), Betsy Serapilio-Frank &  
John Frank (654-5958)

#### **Second Grade**

Gina & Stuart Dodd (426-3356), Anne Lichtenstein  
(244-7373), Holly Merrill (224-8491), Susan Proe  
(224-0536), Anne Spaulding (461-5356)

#### **Third Grade**

Robin Dean (461-1438), Cheryl Marshall (671-2961),  
Debbie Ortenzi (533-2428), Maggie Torres  
(454-2659), Teddi Urriola (671-2961)

#### **Fourth Grade**

Mary Lavin (442-1277), Karen Schneider (288-4726),  
Teresa Snell (527-0070)



Please Observe Due Dates for  
Breakfast and Lunch Orders



Each month, the Teaching Assistants, Maureen Milke, and Michelle Henry scramble to compile breakfast and lunch orders and payment in order to meet the deadlines of our food service provider. **Please help them out by promptly returning menus with meal choices circled and payment enclosed!**

It is important that we receive menus and payment in advance; we want all children to be served a meal they will enjoy, and we are not equipped to send bills for meals at the end of each month. Thank you for your cooperation!

## GCCS Hosts Special Guests

Our students and staff are accustomed to frequent visitors who come to tour the school. Our student tour guides are well-informed and passionate in their presentation. They explain the organization of the school, describe each grade level's expedition, and offer examples of the Expeditionary Learning design principles in action. Visitors never fail to compliment the poise and enthusiasm of their young escorts.

This fall, we were especially delighted to host representatives from the Gleason Foundation, including Jim Gleason and his wife Jan. Mr. Gleason and the Foundation have contributed close to \$300,000 to the renovation and furnishing of the school, and they have a great interest in the local charter school movement.

The Gleasons were extremely pleased with the results of their generosity. They commented on the quality of student work, the pleasant and productive instructional environment, and the skill and dedication of GCCS staff.

Student tour guides also shared our school with Senator Joe Robach.

It is always a pleasure to show off our exemplary student work and describe our instructional program to our guests. We greatly appreciate their interest and the feedback they provide.

## Join Us for Saturday Parent Work Days

Our first Saturday Work Day was held on October 7, and was a great success! Sincere thanks to Anne Lichtenstein for organizing the event. Many parents from each grade level pitched in to help. All kinds of tasks were accomplished, including washing furniture, sorting books, and preparing bulletin board displays. School staff is very grateful for the service parents provided.

Join us for the next Saturday Work Day on December 7 between 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. It's a great way to fulfill your family's 20 hour school service obligation! Pizza will be served at noon, and child care is provided by some of the parent volunteers. You're sure to enjoy meeting other parents while helping us maintain our beautiful learning environment. For more information, please call your Room Parent (see page 3 for contact information).

### Saturday Work Days for Parents 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

- December 7
- January 25
- March 8
- May 10



## Winter Weather Has Arrived!

And the need for boots and warm outerwear is upon us! Please be sure your child is equipped with boots, hats, mittens, and snowpants every day. We request that a hat and a spare pair of boots, mittens and snowpants be left at school for the winter season. Children need to be well-prepared for outdoor recess and field studies every day.

### Please send into school:

- ✓ Boots
- ✓ Hat
- ✓ Mittens
- ✓ Snowpants



## Sibling Applications Due Jan. 24

If you have a child entering kindergarten in the Fall 2003, your child may be automatically admitted to our new kindergarten class. Watch your mail in early January for a sibling application. Applications are due Friday, January 24 by 3:00 p.m. in the main office. Sibling applications submitted after the deadline will be given priority on the waiting list after our enrollment lottery is held.

Please submit an application for siblings entering other grade levels as well. They will be placed at the top of the waiting list, and will be admitted as space allows.



## Parent Information Sessions Scheduled for New Families

Three sessions will give prospective families an overview of the philosophy and educational program at GCCS – Thursday, December 12 from 7:30-9 p.m.; Saturday, January 11 from 1-3 p.m.; and Thursday, January 30 from 7-9 p.m. Spread the word if you know families who might be interested in enrolling their kindergarten-5<sup>th</sup> grade children in GCCS. Applications and written information will be available at these sessions.

Applications for enrollment are due in the main GCCS office by 3:00 Friday, January 31. The lottery for admission will be held Monday, February 3 at 9:00 a.m. in the Computer Lab.

## Save the Dates for City Grows Exhibitions!

Mark your calendars! Kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup>, and 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade classes will perform and display their work from the City Grows expedition on Thursday, March 13, 2003. 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Graders will exhibit their projects on Monday, March 17, 2003.

Exhibitions are collaborative events in each classroom, and are an important part of our assessment of student learning. All students are required to attend.

More details will be coming after the first of the year.



### What Do You See When You Assist With Lunch?

Our teachers love your presence at lunch time; they are very grateful when parents come in to help serve, clean up, and converse with students. However, they sometimes lament that parents may leave with a distorted impression of how the classroom functions all day long!

Please be assured that lunch is an unusually hectic time of the day. Ordinarily calm, productive classes morph into super-charged high-volume crowds once the food cart rolls in. The transitions before and after lunch are the most difficult – there are so many tasks to be accomplished in addition to helping children settle down to and from their meal.

On the other hand, if you have ever seen a school cafeteria, you will appreciate how much more orderly and pleasant our lunch periods are by comparison. We're making steady improvements in our lunch delivery, and we're striving for the congenial, sparkling atmosphere of a good restaurant.

With your assistance, we can achieve this goal. Please continue to volunteer at lunch time – and if you'd like to see a more typical picture of how the classroom runs, your child's teachers would be happy to arrange for you to observe at another time of the day.



### Rock Ventures Outing Provided Challenge and Camaraderie



In late November, 1<sup>st</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> Graders enjoyed a day of physical and mental challenge as they scaled the heights at Rock Ventures. Children tackled the dicey hand-holds of the rock wall for an hour, then conquered the high ropes course – all while securely harnessed and tethered, with plenty of adult supervision and support. Many thanks to the parents and grandparents who gave up an evening for training and a day to spend with the climbers.

Mrs. Haydanek returned from the trip glowing, "It was exhilarating! The kids were scared, but when they crossed that log [20 feet in the air], they were so proud of them-

selves!" One 2nd Grader exclaimed, "I couldn't have done it if my friends weren't cheering for me!"

The event provided children an opportunity to test both their physical strength and emotional mettle. All children were given the support to attempt the rock wall and ropes course to the extent of their choice. Many climbed the wall like pros and walked the ropes course without hesitation, while others elected to keep their feet on the ground and encourage their peers.

Rock Ventures graciously donated the training and facility for the event, which will be repeated several times this year.



## Kindergarten – Playing Along

What is play? Why do we need it? Have children always played in the same way? These are the questions kindergarten will be tackling during the *City Grows* expedition.

Project work will take the class into the amazing world of play, where they will explore what actually takes place and the impact play has on academic and social development. They will examine toys over the last hundred years and the impact that various inventions had on the toy industry and the lives of families and children. The class will develop a “living time line” of toys from the last century, and will design and create a board game about the history of toys.



## First Grade – Rochester Scrapbook



People have documented their lives throughout history – from oral stories to photographs and beyond. 1<sup>st</sup> Graders will focus on the use of photography to document history. The photo industry had a big impact on the growth of Rochester. Students will investigate this impact along with the science of photography. They will search for answers to the questions “What can you learn from a photograph?” “What has changed from the 1900’s to now?” “How does change affect people?” Students will keep image journals, take and develop their own pictures, and create pinhole cameras. They will use archival photographs, field studies, and community experts to uncover how inventions and technology changed people’s lives, and how those changes are reflected in photographs.

Children will work extensively with the George Eastman House, the RMSC Slide Library, and guest photographers. Watch for the unveiling of their “Rochester Scrapbook” at the March Exhibition!

## Second Grade – Progress: The Bridges of Rochester



During the second expedition, the children will continue to focus on the guiding questions “What is progress?” and “What affects the speed of progress?”

The bridges of Rochester influenced the progress of the city’s geographic, economic, and social development. Each bridge, and its surrounding neighborhood, has its own intriguing story. Students will study the bridges of Rochester and research the history of each bridge. The class will explore the shapes and materials from which bridges are constructed, and how they impact the structure’s strength and appearance.

The class’s culminating project will provide a service for the community and will capture the skills and knowledge children learn. The class will build a 9-hole miniature golf course, which we hope will be included at a community site or event. Each hole will feature a model of a Rochester bridge and an information plaque about its history.

## Third Grade – Seeds of the Flower City



From the 1840’s until the early 20th century, Rochester was known as the Flower City. Why did Rochester become the Flower City? How did the nursery industry flourish in Rochester’s climate? Do we still regard ourselves as a flower city?

During this expedition, students will explore these questions by researching the historic figures who helped create the flower city image, discovering how plants grow by cultivating seeds and bulbs, forecasting the weather based on records and direct observations, investigating how Rochester’s parks and gardens came into existence, and demonstrating how seeds are packaged and sold. Students will capture this knowledge in their own Flower City Almanac, a compilation of their findings, poetry, botanical illustrations, creative writing and non-fiction writing modeled after the almanacs used by gardeners in the Flower City. Students will also showcase their green thumbs in an end-of expedition Flower Show.

## Fourth Grade – Innovations



Innovation, industry, and immigration had a great effect on the development of Rochester. During this expedition, the 4<sup>th</sup> Grade will explore three guiding questions: “What were the effects of the Industrial Revolution on Rochester and its citizens?” “How does need inspire innovation?” “How do individuals and groups affect the development of a community or industry?”

According to *USA Today*, Rochester is the most inventive city in the United States. The 4<sup>th</sup> Grade expedition will begin with an investigation of industrial changes in Rochester as the city evolved from its “Flour City” beginnings. Students will research how immigration and south-to-north migration changed the workforce and the variety of goods and services created in Rochester. Crews of students will spotlight different immigrant groups, industries, and innovators in Rochester from the late 1800’s to the late 1900’s. Research will culminate in a student-produced website. The site will document the innovative history of Rochester. Students will also present their research findings through artifacts, primary source documents, and their ongoing classwork on exhibition night.



## Art - In Full Bloom

During their exploration of the growth of Rochester from 1865-1970, students will connect visual art concepts and activities to our curriculum. The visual arts will be embedded in their understanding of the culture, natural environment, built environment, technology, commerce, inventions, and community values of Rochester.

The kindergarten expedition, “Playing Along” will focus on the change in technology, industry, children’s lives, family roles and the qualities of play itself. In art, students will explore a range of materials to stimulate their imaginations, curiosity, and ingenuity to create their own games. Visits to the Memorial Art Gallery to find paintings of the children and families of early Rochester will offer insight into household inventions, toys and games, roles, and connections to generations.

1<sup>st</sup> Graders will investigate how images from early Rochester tell the story of growth through technology, inventions, and the arts. At local museums and galleries the class will search for and reflect on images of people, architecture, landscapes and cityscapes. Sketching and writing daily in a journal will deepen student’s understanding of the city’s development.

2<sup>nd</sup> Grade students’ miniature golf course project will drive the students’ curiosity and learning in history, technology, science, the built environment, and the arts. To prepare, students will explore, draw, and create bridge structures. Visits to the art gallery to find and interpret paintings of bridges will inspire us and offer a reflection of the architectural and cultural values of the time period.

To prepare for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Graders’ creation of an almanac and printed seed packages, students will sharpen their observational drawing skills. They’ll study the form, texture, and structure of plant materials by drawing and looking through a microscope. Art history abounds with portrayals of plants, trees, and flowers. Studying paintings, drawing, and prints at the art gallery will offer us insight into artist interpretations of plants, from detailed scientific studies to abstract representations.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Graders will employ the creative process in art and find its parallel in the scientific process leading to product design. Students will explore the impact of design on virtually all we use in daily life and learn to make informed judgments about products of a particular culture.

## Exploring the Time Period Through Movement and Dance



In Physical Expedition class, children will use their bodies to stretch their understandings of the *City Grows* time period. Each grade level will engage in sports, dance, and games that connect to its expedition.

Kindergarteners will research games and toys of the last century. They will take part in physical activities such as hoop-rolling, hopscotch, hula-hoops, and baseball. They will create a movement game that they can play with another class.

1<sup>st</sup> Graders will explore the role of dance in family histories. They will interview parents and grandparents about dance and movement as part of family traditions.

2<sup>nd</sup> Graders will connect attributes of bridges – connections, motion, balance, stability, and strength – to movement and dance. They will create a group dance that incorporates and showcases all of these attributes.

3<sup>rd</sup> Graders will invent cyclical dances to represent the water cycle and the cycle of seasons. They will also learn harvest dances.

4<sup>th</sup> graders will extend their understanding of the cultures and traditions immigrants bring to a new home. They will learn several folk dances, and will pair up to enjoy dances of the Roaring 20's.

In addition, children will continue to improve their skills in yoga, ball-handling, tumbling, endurance, and strength.

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## Music Expeditions



What makes the music from 100 years ago different from the music of today? How does a composer tell a story through music? How does the size of an instrument affect its sound? What do singing games teach us about music and play? How has George Eastman made an impact on Rochester's musical community?

Students will focus on these questions throughout the next expedition. Music will flow in and out of the classroom expeditions as kindergarteners perform singing games galore, 1<sup>st</sup> graders study and sing songs about Rochester, 2<sup>nd</sup> graders compose short pieces about the bridges of Rochester, and 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders serenade the school with the beginning sounds of the recorder. The learning goals center around specific musical outcomes such as learning to read rhythmic and melodic notation. Content of the expeditions includes music history, instruments of the orchestra, and the science of sound.

The Kodaly Method and Orff-Schulwerk approach are the primary ways that the children experience the language of music at GCCS. These processes are child-centered and build a repertoire of song and play matched with skills of reading and performing.

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## City Grows Exhibitions

**Kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Grades – Thursday, March 13, 2003, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.**

**3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Grades – Monday, March 17, 2003, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.**

**Eisenhart Auditorium**

***All students are required to attend.***

