



# Currents

The Bi-monthly Newsletter of the Genesee Community Charter School

February 2004

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## Site Seminar Success

It was our turn to shine last month, as GCCS hosted 35 visitors from around the country and Puerto Rico at our Expeditionary Learning Demonstration Site Seminar *Building a Culture of Quality*. “You have touched thousands of children through the example you have provided us,” said participant Lara Alexander at the conclusion of the three-day event.

During their visit, participants engaged in a wide range of activities designed to highlight Expeditionary Learning in action. On the first morning they entered the Eisenhart Lobby, which had been transformed into a beautiful gallery of our previous expeditions with photographs,

student projects, artwork, teacher plans, powerpoint presentations, and research resources. Guests gathered for an overview of our school and curriculum, then proceeded to classrooms to join morning meetings. They observed expedition activities, a museum field study, language arts instruction, and music, art, and physical expedition lessons. Student tour guides led guests around the school, explaining expeditions and describing aspects of our school culture. Student ambassadors joined our visitors for lunch and conversation in the Eisenhart Auditorium. Visitors were entertained by student performers who sang, danced, played recorders and percussion instruments, and recited poetry. After lunch, participants visited the gallery, where student docents relayed highlights of previous expeditions. Visitors then joined the entire school for a wonderful community circle. That evening, staff and guests enjoyed the warm hospitality of our parents at a very special wine and cheese reception hosted at the home of Julie Schnepf and John Bernunzio.

**“You have touched thousands of children through the example you have provided us,” said one participant.**

On the second morning, participants engaged in a unique “learning lab” in which they observed GCCS staff during the expedition planning process. We modeled our use of our curriculum framework, a planning template, and critique protocols. In the afternoon, our staff presented workshops in our areas of expertise: integrating the arts, using the museum as a classroom, and nurturing classroom community. During lunch, participants and staff engaged in lively conversations about topics of interest to our visitors. We concluded the day with a discussion of the meaning of “quality” and with a rousing closing drum circle.

Several participants stayed for a third day, during which our staff assisted them in writing expedition plans for use in their own schools. Two teams of participants are in the process of designing their own charter schools – one in Atlanta and one in Washington D.C. They greatly appreciated hearing the ins and outs of our own start-up phase and were inspired to develop a curriculum framework modeled after ours to guide expedition planning.

Several themes arose from visitors’ comments. They were overwhelmed by the quality of student work and the level of sophistication in expedition final products. They sensed a strong feeling of community among both students and staff, and noted a high degree of collaboration. They commented on the cohesiveness and consistency across the school of everything from classroom management language to expedition topics. They cited the strength of purpose that characterizes teacher and student activity.

The site seminar was so well received, ELOB President Greg Farrell has asked us to repeat the seminar next year. We are honored to be able to serve the ELOB network by our example, and to learn from the feedback our visitors have to offer.

## Family Association Directory

### *Board of Trustees Representatives*

Sara Bruzda (473-9736) Teresa Snell (527-0070),  
Maureen McDonald (527-0824)

### *Officers*

**Co-Chairs:** Tracy Smith (544-0577), Anne Spaulding  
(461-5356)

**Secretary:** Alice Carli (527-9632)

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

### *Family Association Committee Chairs*

#### **Family Social Activities**

John Quitter (787-0332), Annette Ramos (244-1378)

#### **Babysitting & Transportation**

Betsy Serapilio-Frank (654-5958)

#### **Staff Appreciation Luncheon**

Marcy Berger (271-3549)

#### **Fund-Raising**

Mary Lavin & Tom Slothower (442-1277), Diana & Jim Carter (473-1187)

#### **Legislative Issues**

Anne Lichtenstein (244-7373)

### *Parent Volunteer Coordinators*

#### **Kindergarten**

Laura Brewer (241-3034), Blanche Fox (288-9313),  
Jennifer SanFilippo (442-5420), Nancy Weinstein  
(865-7714), Eileen Wrona (288-3273)

#### **First Grade**

Gina Dodd (426-3356), Annette Ramos (244-1378),  
Marisa Stike (254-0403), Yvonne Villareale (473-9318)

#### **Second Grade**

Joanne DeMarle (328-5982), Jeanne Eckl (377-8957),  
Bill Howard (436-2573), Kamaria Rivera (254-6598),  
Betsy Serapilio-Frank & John Frank (654-5958)

#### **Third Grade**

Faye Henri (244-1831), Sue Lederer (473-3929),  
Anne Lichtenstein (244-7373), Susan Proe (224-0536),  
Anne Spaulding (461-5356)

#### **Fourth Grade**

Alicia Ainsworth (262-5482), Robyn Dean (461-1438),  
Cheryl Marshall (671-2961),  
Debbie Ortenzi (533-2428), Maggie Torres  
(454-2659), Teddi Urriola (671-2961)

#### **Fifth Grade**

Paul Jonasse (461-1137), Mary Lavin (442-1277), Kit  
Miller (244-4189), Karen Schneider (288-4726)

## Indians/Explorers/Settlers Exhibition Nights

**Tuesday, March 16**

Kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> Grade, 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade

**Monday, March 22**

3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> Grades

**All Students Required to Attend**  
Times and Locations to be announced

## Upcoming Dates To Remember

- Feb. 16: School is Closed
- Feb. 17: Professional Development Day  
No School for Students
- Feb. 18: Family Association Meeting  
6:30 p.m. Eisenhart Auditorium
- Feb. 18-20: YES! Students DO have school!
- Mar. 3: 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Parent Information Session
- Mar. 8: Board of Trustees Meeting  
5:30-7:30 p.m. Cunningham House
- Mar. 11: Half Day Parent Conferences  
Dismissal 11:30 a.m.
- Mar. 16: Exhibition Night Grades K, 1, 2  
Students Required to Attend
- Mar. 17: Family Association Meeting  
6:30 p.m. Eisenhart Auditorium
- Mar. 19: Intent to Return Forms Due
- Mar. 20: Saturday Parent Work Day  
9 a.m. – 1 p.m.
- Mar. 22: Exhibition Night Grades 3, 4, 5  
Students Required to Attend
- Mar. 25-26: Professional Development Days  
No School for Students
- Apr. 5: Board of Trustees Meeting  
5:30-7:30 p.m. Cunningham House
- Apr. 9-16: Spring Recess  
School is Closed
- Apr. 21: Family Association Meeting  
6:30 p.m. Eisenhart Auditorium
- May 10: Board of Trustees Meeting  
5:30-7:30 p.m. Cunningham House



## A Special Invitation for 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Grade Parents

We have submitted our plans for Sixth Grade to the State Education Department, and are awaiting their final approval for this amendment to our Charter. We have planned a program for sixth grade that will culminate students' years of study at GCCS with an ambitious research, publication, and service project.

Sixth Grade will be a "passage" year for our students. Students will reflect upon and synthesize the skills and content they have learned about Rochester's natural and human history in previous expeditions. They will apply their knowledge to in-depth investigations of river communities around the world through time. Throughout their course of study, students will expand their understandings of how people and places interact to form distinct cultures with global influences and connections.

Please join us to learn more about the Sixth Grade curriculum and structure. We will host an information session for parents of 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Graders on Wednesday March 3 from 7:00 – 8:00 p.m. in the 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Classroom. We look forward to sharing our plans with you and addressing your questions as you begin to think about middle school and beyond.

**6<sup>th</sup> Grade  
Information Session  
Wednesday, March 3,  
2004**



### Mark your calendar for another wonderful concert event

Our Family Association Fundraising Committee is planning a spring concert with noted folk singer Christine Lavin. We are delighted to host Ms. Lavin, who in addition to being a captivating performer, is the aunt of two of our students.

The concert will be held in the Eisenhart Auditorium on Friday, June 18. Proceeds will benefit Family Association activities.

Volunteers will be needed to make the concert a success. Both large and small tasks will need to be accomplished. Please watch for future notices about planning meetings. The concert committee is a great way to meet other parents, and all are welcome!

**Christine Lavin in concert  
Friday, June 18, 2004 7:30 p.m.  
Eisenhart Auditorium**

## Charter Renewal Process Underway

Our Charter with the New York State Board of Regents will be up for renewal next year; Charters are awarded for a five-year period. How quickly time flies! Our renewal application is due July 1, 2004.

The renewal process will be a period of self-examination for the Board and the school. We must review our original charter application and identify areas in which we have deviated from our original plans. We will set new goals and lay out plans for achieving them. The Regents will look at our fiscal audits, assessment results, and parent satisfaction data. State Education representatives may interview Board members, teachers, and parents to learn more about the school.

We have received very encouraging words from the State Education Department about the prospects for our renewal. GCCS is highly regarded in Albany, and we look forward to the positive conclusion of this process.



## Intent to Return Due March 19



The deadline for **INTENT TO RETURN** forms is **Friday, March 19 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 late February. If you haven't received a form by March 1, 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.

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## Family Association Meeting

Wednesday, February 18

6:30 p.m.

Eisenhart Auditorium

Special Guest Speaker – Bill Phillips  
from the *New York State Charter Schools Association*

Childcare available.

Watch backpack mail for registration.

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## Celebrating Our Parents Who Volunteer!

They're everywhere! Our parents can be found reading with children, hiking through the woods on field studies, serving up lunch, planning family social activities, cleaning and repairing school furniture, and participating in school governance, to name just a few parent activities. We are so grateful to all our parents who give of their time and skills to assist with our educational program, after-school events, and school operations. The school community we have created wouldn't be possible without them.

Parent participation and support is critical to children's school success. That's why we require parents to commit to 20 hours per year of family service to the school. So many of our parents go well above and beyond this obligation, contributing countless hours of support to classroom and school activities.

If you're a GCCS parent, and you haven't fulfilled your service commitment this year, please call your classroom parent volunteer coordinators (listed on p. 2) or your classroom teachers. We need you, and your children will benefit from your interest and involvement.

