



Griswold Public Schools
Educating for Excellence

Superintendent's Update – May 5, 2014

The community of the Griswold Public Schools educates for excellence by empowering students to become compassionate, confident, creative, and resourceful members of society. - Griswold 2022

High expectations are the key to everything.

~ Sam Walton, American businessman

Calendar



May 5 – 9

National Teacher Appreciation Week

*This week we honor our Griswold teachers -
the best teachers in Connecticut!*



May 7

National School Nurse Appreciation Day

Please take time to thank our superb nursing staff in each building.

**Monday, May 5 – Town of Griswold Annual Town Meeting
in the GMS Cafeteria, 7:00 PM.**

- **Tuesday, May 6 – BOE Budget & Finance Subcommittee in the Superintendent's Office, 5:30 PM.**



- **Wednesday, May 7 – The annual A.C.E.S. event (All Children Exercising Simultaneously) for GES and GMS, 10:00 AM.** Project ACES was begun as a method of motivating children to exercise. Millions of children across the nation will be exercising at the same time. This will be Griswold's 23rd year participating in this event!
- **Wednesday, May 7 – BOE Policy Subcommittee in the Superintendent's Office, 4:00 PM.**
- **Wednesday, May 7 – Grade 4 Spring Concerts in the GES Cafeteria, 6:00 PM & 7:15 PM.**
- **Wednesday, May 7 – GPS Building Committee in the GES Library, 6:00 PM.**
- **Wednesday, May 7 – Griswold High School Parents Advisory Council (PAC) - GHS Library, 7:00 PM.**
- **Thursday, May 8 – GMS PTO meeting in the GMS Library, 6:00 PM.**
- **Friday, May 9 – Pre K Screening for 3-year olds in the Pre K Foyer of GES, 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM.**
- **Monday, May 12 – Board of Education Meeting in the GMS Library, 6:00 PM.** Childcare available.



**Tuesday, May 13 – Budget Referendum
on the 2014-15 Budget,
6:00 – 8:00 PM.**

Please be the voice of our students!

- **Tuesday, May 13 – Grade 7 Spring Concert in the GMS Auditorium, 7:00 PM.**
 - **Wednesday, May 14 – “Coffee and Chat” / Superintendent’s Advisory Council in the Superintendent’s Office at GMS, 7:30 AM or 8:45 AM. *This is the last meeting of this group for the year.*** Consider attending and giving the Superintendent your feedback on the 2013-14 School Year!
 - **Wednesday, May 14 – The Griswold High School Wolverine Warrior Fitness Challenge.** If you are interested in proving that you are ***Wolverine Strong***, sign up with Mr. Bruno or Mrs. Moore by May 7 to compete individually or with a team to promote physical fitness! Activities include a one mile run, one minute of push-ups, one minute of curl ups, and an obstacle course.
 - **Wednesday, May 14 – Grade 8 Spring Concert in the GMS Auditorium, 7:00 PM.**
 - **Thursday, May 15 – Griswold Middle School Art Show in the GMS Cafeteria, 6:00-8:00 PM.**
 - **Saturday, May 17 – Junior Prom in the Griswold High School Gym, 6:30 – 10:00 PM.**
 - **Sunday, May 18 – The Second Annual Eastern Connecticut Walk Against Hunger.** The ***Walk Against Hunger*** is a three-mile, non-competitive walk to benefit the [Gemma E. Moran United Way/Labor Food Center](#), located in New London and serving the entire county. [Click here to register online on Connecticut Food Bank's website.](#)
 - **Tuesday, May 20 – Griswold High School Choral Pops Concert in the GHS Auditorium, 7:00 PM.**
 - **Wednesday, May 21– BOE Policy Subcommittee in the Superintendent’s Office, 4:00 PM.**
 - **Wednesday, May 21 – GPS Building Committee in the GES Library, 6:00 PM.**
 - **Wednesday, May 21 – Griswold Middle School Book Fair in the GMS Cafeteria, 5:00 – 7:00 PM.**
 - **Wednesday, May 21 – Grade 6 Spring Concert in the GMS Auditorium, 7:00 PM.**
 - **Thursday, May 22 – Griswold High School RISE Pep Rally in the GHS Gym, 12:30 PM.**
 - **Thursday, May 22 – Grade 2 Spring Concerts in the GES Cafeteria, 6:00 PM & 7:00 PM.**
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| • Friday, May 23 – Professional Development Day for Teachers. No School. |
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| • Monday, May 26 – Memorial Day. No School. |
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- **Tuesday, May 27 – Board of Education Meeting in the GMS Library, 6:00 PM.**
 - **Wednesday, May 28 – Grade 1 Spring Concerts in the GES Cafeteria at 6:00 PM & 7:00 PM.**
 - **Thursday, May 29 – Griswold High School Instrumental Pops Concert in the GHS Auditorium, 7:00 PM.**
 - **Friday, May 30 – Grade 8 Band and Chorus to “High Note” Music Festival at Lake Compounce.**
 - **Friday, May 30 – Griswold High School Veterans History Project in the GHS Auditorium, 12:30 PM.**
 - **Friday, May 30 – GHS Senior Prom, 6:30 – 11:30 PM.**
 - **Saturday, May 31 – Griswold Recreation Department Event: Youthtopia “Lumber Jack Day” held at the Veterans’ Memorial Park on Ashland Street in Jewett City, 11:00 AM – 5:00 PM.** Catch the GMS Jazz Band at Youthtopia from at 11:45 AM.

COMING SOON

- **Thursday, June 19 – Grade 8 Promotion in the GMS Gym, 6:00 PM.**
- **Friday, June 20 – Last Day of School for Students. Half Day of School.**
- **Saturday, June 21 – Griswold High School Class of 2014 Graduation in the GHS Gym, 10:00 AM.**
- **Monday, June 23 – Professional Development Day for Teachers.**
- **Tuesday, June 24 – Professional Development Day for Teachers. (Last Day of School for Teachers)**

If you would like a school event/meeting listed in the Calendar section, please forward date and information to Paul Smith: psmith@griswoldpublicschools.org.

Notes

BUDGET UPDATE



■ *Budget Update 2014-15*

The Griswold Public Schools 2014-15 Budget will be presented at the annual Town Meeting on Monday, May 5 with an increase of 1.95% over the 2013-14 Budget - or an increase of \$491,450. **The current town budget and school budget represent a mill increase of 1.23 – the same increase that was passed by voters last year.**

Please be part of two events (*just two events!*)

to support the children of Griswold!

Monday, May 5

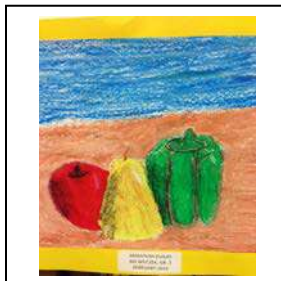
Town Meeting in the GMS Cafeteria at 7:00 PM

Tuesday, May 13

Budget Referendum from 6:00 AM – 8:00 PM

■ *Students in the news...*

Congratulations to the students from GES who had their Art Work from the recent GES Art Show chosen to be sent to the Connecticut State Department of Education Building to be displayed by the Commissioner of Education, Dr. Stefan Pryor. Dr. Pryor toured the GES Art Show in March during his visit to our campus.



We are proud to share the art work with the entire state! (Top Row L to R) **Jack Williams**, Kindergarten; **Matthew Perea**, Grade 1; **Kierra Neilson**, Grade 1; (2nd Row L to R) **Hannah Girard**, Grade 2; **Makaylah Dugas**, Grade 3; and **Adrianna Morabito**, Grade 3. [Look for their work on the School's Facebook page and Website.](#)

★ Congratulations to Griswold High School Freshman, **Alicia Marsh**, who will be honored on May 7th in New Haven at the School for Ethical Education annual Character Celebration for her prize winning Laws of Life essay.

★ Griswold High School student, **Nick Mattera** earned the honor of coming in **number one** in the annual SIFMA Stock Market simulation. Over 1500 students competed in the program throughout Connecticut. Nick will be presenting a speech at the ceremony held at the Hartford Courant building on May 22nd.

Griswold Board of Education Meeting Highlights (4/28/14)

- The Board recognized the following members of the custodial staff for their tremendous efforts in clearing the ice and snow during 7 snow days, 3 early releases, and 2 late starts – along with all the other storms on weekends and mornings that did not impact school but still resulted in snow. Thank you to Ed Bill, Gary Buffin, Marc Cote, Rich Fontaine, John Henn, Mike Millovitsch, and Andrew Zuraw.
- Lisa Barber was honored as the 2014 Griswold Public Schools Instructional Assistant of the Year. The Board wished her the best of luck as she applies to be the State of Connecticut Paraeducator of the year, named in honor of Anne Marie Murphy, a paraeducator who was killed in the Sandy Hook shooting.
- The Board approved the CONN TREK trip organized by Russ Salvador, which will begin on June 25, 2014. This year's trek of 100 miles will support the efforts of the Connecticut National Guard, who during all of the walks organized by Russ over the years has been available to help our students.
- The Board outlined changes in the Policy #1330 – Community Use of Facilities. A special thank you was given to the Policy Subcommittee of the Board who has met with the Selectmen and Board of Finance in order to update the policy. As a result, when the Board approves the policy at the May 12 meeting, all in-town, non-profit groups that are made up of over 50% Griswold students and/or residents will be able to use the school facilities free of charge.
- The Board reviewed the new GHS Chemical Hygiene Plan, which will be approved at the May 12 meeting. The plan outlines the procurement, storage, use, and disposal of hazardous chemicals in the Science classes. This is a required OSHA document.
- The Board accepted a generous gift of \$700 from the GMS PTO to be used for the annual Grade 8 Cookout on the last day of school, June 20. (The Grade 8 Promotion will be held the evening before, June 19.)
- The Board approved Policy #41181.51 – Social Networking. This policy provides guidelines for the use of personal and educational social media and e-mail by staff members of the Griswold Public Schools. The policy was shared with all staff on Wednesday, April 30 and goes into effect immediately.



- The Board approved a letter to be sent from the Superintendent and Board Chair asking the state to put a moratorium on the building of magnet schools. Over the last three years, tuition payments to magnet schools from Griswold have doubled. Tuition payments are currently over \$88,000 for regular education students.
- Business Manager, Holly McCalla, gave the Board a Financial Update for the month of April.
- The Board received an update on the GHS roof project. The bid award was made and announced at a Special Meeting on Tuesday, April 29.
- The Board was given an update on the search for a new Assistant Principal at GMS. Interviews have begun and finalists will be brought to the Board, with an appointment likely made by the May 12 Board of Education Business Meeting.
- The Board's attention was called to the new banners on campus, which were purchased with funds left over from past Senior class activities. (None of the banners were purchased with taxpayer dollars.)

Finding happiness

All of us want our children to be happy. And, as parents or guardians the latest research described in the article below is important. Research completed recently demonstrates that for our children, happiness comes from positive relationships with whoever is offering the care at home. It also comes from good relationships with friends, especially at school. The caregivers at home may not be the traditional parenting situation that many assume with healthy relationships. The research shows that a good, quality relationship at home is a more important factor than whether that caregiver is one of the 2 natural parents. The quality of time, quality of caring, and quality of the relationship are the factors that lead to happiness in our children.

Kids' Happiness Doesn't Depend on 2 Natural Parents, Says Study by Robert Preidt in *Healthy Day News*

Relationship quality key, not whether you live with stepparent, single parent or 2 natural parents

Children who live with a stepparent or a single parent are just as happy as kids in homes with two biological parents, a new British study finds.

"It's the quality of the relationships in the home that matters -- not the family composition," said Jenny Chanfreau, of the NatCen Social Research team that conducted the study.

"Getting on well with siblings, having fun with the family at weekends, and having a parent who reported rarely or never shouting when the child was naughty, were all linked with a higher likelihood of being happy all the time among 7-year-olds," she said.

Researchers analyzed data collected from nearly 13,000 British 7-year-olds who took part in a 2008 survey. There was no significant difference in happiness levels among children in three different parenting situations: living with a biological parent and stepparent; living with two biological parents or residing with a single parent.

Overall, 36 percent of the children said they were happy all the time, and 64 percent said they were sometimes or never happy, according to the study to be presented Thursday at the British Sociological Association's annual meeting in Leeds, England.

Even after they eliminated factors such as social class, the researchers found no differences in happiness levels between the different groups of children.

However, relationships with parents and other children strongly affected the happiness of the 7-year-olds in the study. For example, those who weren't bullied at school and got along well with their siblings were more likely to be happy all the time.

"Pupil relations at school are also important -- being bullied at school or being 'horrible' to others was strongly associated with lower happiness in the 7-year-olds, for instance," Chanfreau said in an association news release.

The NatCen Social Research team also analyzed data from nearly 2,700 U.K. children aged 11 to 15 and found results similar to those in the younger children.

Data and conclusions presented at meetings are typically considered preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed medical journal.

More information:

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers tips for raising safe and healthy children.

Thoughts



What types of experiences prepare our students to be marketable in the future?

In offering the answer to the question above, it is as simple as: **project-based learning**. Project-based learning or PBL is real life, authentic learning. Too often we do math in math class, science in science class, technology in technology class – and never combine the disciplines. Most people who are employed understand that if you are working on solving a problem, you must be able to rely on all of your knowledge and combine your skills to form creative solutions in a complex world.

And while that is difficult to do in schools, it is far from impossible.

Click on the sources below for links to PBL:

[Edutopia](#)

[BIE \(Buck Institute for Education\)](#)

[ASCD \(Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development\)](#)

As a Superintendent of Schools who attends regional meetings with other Superintendents and business owners, I hear how schools are not producing enough graduates who have skills in the STEM areas (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) or STEAM areas (add in Arts to that list) to fill what is expected to be **over 2 million jobs in that sector by 2020**. Part of the issue is the way that these areas are taught in our schools and the fact that they are not seen as interconnected. Helping our students see the connection between the STEM disciplines is one of the most important things we can do. It is why we are beginning to see a dramatic increase in school STEM programming and STEM magnet schools throughout the state.

The programs that are being implemented feature PBL so that all disciplines are utilized to complete open-ended problems with more than one solution. The more we expose our students to this type of learning, the better they will be prepared for one of the 2 million jobs in 2020.

PBL and STEAM Education: A Natural Fit by Andrew Miller *Edutopia*

Both project-based learning and STEAM education (science, technology, engineering, art and math) are growing rapidly in our schools. Some schools are doing STEAM, some are doing PBL, and some are leveraging the strengths of both to do STEAM PBL. **With a push for deeper learning, teaching and assessment of 21st-century skills, both PBL and STEAM help schools target rigorous learning and problem solving.** They are not exactly the same, but teachers can easily connect to them to teach not only STEAM content and design challenges, but also authentic learning and public, high-quality work. In fact, many know that STEAM education isn't just the content, but the process of being scientists, mathematicians, engineers, artists and technological entrepreneurs. Here are some ways that PBL and STEAM can complement each other as you deliver instruction.

From Design Challenges to Authentic Problems

Many of us have experienced, either as a teacher or student, the bridge design challenge. It often unfolds in this way. Students are given the challenge to make a bridge out of materials that will hold the most weight. These materials might be marshmallows, glue, toothpicks and the like. Students are given multiple opportunities to try out ideas and refine their work. It might culminate in a public content or presentation day when the bridges are tested for the last time. This is a fun and engaging design challenge that encourages the freedom to fail as well as opportunities for revision, reflection and using critical thinking skills.

PBL can take this design challenge up a notch. Instead of just designing a "fake" bridge, students might actually make recommendations to real architects and engineers for local bridges that need repairs. Some further math or physics content might be intentionally included and scaffolded so that students end up writing a rigorous design briefing and make a public presentation to the architects. Here the work can be more authentic and perhaps make a real difference as students truly become designers of real-world STEAM work.

21st Century Skills

One of the essential elements of PBL is the 21st century skillset. These skills are often defined as the 4Cs -- creativity, collaboration, critical thinking and communication -- although there are many more, including technology literacy and health literacy. In a PBL project, teachers teach and assess one or more of these skills. This might mean using an effective rubric for formative and summative assessment aligned to collaboration, collecting evidence, facilitating reflection, and scaffolding many quality indicators and collaboration skills within the PBL project. Although STEAM design challenges foster this naturally as an organic process, PBL can add the intentionality needed to teach and assess the 21st century skills embedded in STEAM.

For example, a teacher might choose to target technology literacy for a PBL STEAM project, build a rubric in collaboration with students, and assess both formatively and summatively. In addition, the design process, a key component of STEAM education, can be utilized. Perhaps a teacher has a design process rubric used in the PBL project, or even an empathy rubric that leverages and targets one key component of the design process. When "marrying" PBL and STEAM in projects, the 21st century skills not only fit well, but fit intentionally into the assessment process.

Integrated Disciplines

Project-based learning can target one or more content areas. Many PBL teachers start small in their first implementations and only pick a couple of content areas to target. However, as teachers and students become more PBL-savvy, STEAM can be great opportunity to create a project that hits science, math, technology and even art content. The key is to start with the content. When teachers design projects, they need to leverage the backwards design framework and begin with the end in mind. The questions should be:

- What STEAM content will be assessed?
- What products will students create to demonstrate mastery of these many content standards?

As STEAM focuses on integration of content, pairing STEAM with PBL can hit not only STEAM content, but also content outside of the core STEAM subjects. English can be integrated, as well as foreign languages and social studies. It's all about designing effective PBL that targets these content areas.

As STEAM and PBL continue to grow in implementation, teachers can fit them together in curriculum and instructional practice. Additionally, these two approaches can capitalize on each other's strengths and fill each other's potential gaps. The key is intentionality in design that recognizes what might be missing from each approach.

From Edutopia:

Project-based learning is a dynamic approach to teaching in which students explore real-world problems and challenges. With this type of active and engaged learning, students are inspired to obtain a deeper knowledge of the subjects they're studying

From BIE:

Today's students, more than ever, often find school to be boring and meaningless. In PBL, students are active, not passive; a project engages their hearts and minds, and provides real-world relevance for learning. After completing a project, students remember what they learn and retain it longer than is often the case with traditional instruction. Because of this, students who gain content knowledge with PBL are better able to apply what they know and can do to new situations.

From ASCD:

A project should give students opportunities to build such 21st century skills as collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and the use of technology, which will serve them well in the workplace and life. This exposure to authentic skills meets the second criterion for meaningful work—an important purpose. A teacher in a project-based learning environment explicitly teaches and assesses these skills and provides frequent opportunities for students to assess themselves.

Connect students to a project that has meaning in their lives.

Have a great week!

Paul K. Smith



Never fear shadows. They simply mean there's a light shining somewhere nearby.

~Ruth E. Renkel