



Griswold Public Schools
Educating for Excellence

Superintendent's Update – May 12, 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

For the first time in history, we are preparing our students for a future we cannot clearly see.

~ From *School 2.0*

Calendar

- **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***, this is the event for you.
- **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 – GHS and GMS Students at “Kids Speak.”** The Governor’s Prevention Partnership has partnered with the Commission on Human Rights & Opportunities and the State Department of Education to present Kids Speak. Kids Speak and the Kids Court Essay competition are opportunities for students from across the state to learn about human rights and to discuss and debate topics that are important to them. This year’s event is taking place on the campus of the UCONN Law School.

- **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.**

• **Friday, May 23 – Professional Development Day for Teachers. No School.**

• **Monday, May 26 – Memorial Day. No School.**

- **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.**
- **Tuesday, June 3 – Dedication Ceremony of the Griswold Clock in memory of Alicia Pierce (Class of 1982), 10:30 AM. Please feel free to join us outside in front of the high school for the short dedication ceremony.**
- **Wednesday, June 4 – GPS Building Committee in the GES Library, 6:00 PM.**
- **Wednesday, June 4 – Griswold High School Underclass Awards in the GHS Cafeteria, 6:00 PM.**
- **Wednesday, June 4 – Griswold High School Parents Advisory Council (PAC) - GHS Library, 7:00 PM.**
- **Wednesday, June 4 – Griswold Middle School String Festival in the GMS Auditorium, 7:00 PM.**
- **Thursday, June 5 – Griswold High School Senior Class Awards Night in the GHS Auditorium, 4:00 PM.**
- **Thursday, June 5 – Griswold High School Senior Class Banquet at the French Club, 6:00 PM.**
- **Friday, June 6 – Children First Griswold Meeting at GHS (Room 3103), 9:30 AM.**
- **Monday, June 9 – Board of Education Meeting in the GMS Library, 6:00 PM. Childcare available.**
- **Monday, June 9 – IDOLS Year-end Celebration in the GES Cafeteria, 6:00 PM.**
- **Tuesday, June 10 – Kindergarten Spring Concerts in the GES Cafeteria at 6:00 PM & 7:00 PM.**
- **Thursday, June 12 – GMS PTO meeting in the GMS Library, 6:00 PM.**
- **Friday, June 13 – Grade 8 Promotion Celebration Dance in the GMS Cafeteria, 7:00 PM.**
- **Wednesday, June 18 – GPS Building Committee in the GES Library, 6:00 PM.**
- **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.**
- **Friday, June 20 – Nomination Forms due for the Griswold Public Schools Rookie of the Year or Best New Teacher. Please nominate one of our great new hires from 2013-14. Nomination forms are on the website.**
- **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.**
- **Monday, June 23 – Board of Education Meeting in the GMS Library, 6:00 PM. Childcare available.**
- **Tuesday, June 24 – Professional Development Day for Teachers. (Last Day of School for Teachers)**
- **Wednesday-Thursday, June 25-July 3 - Griswold Summer Band/Orchestra. This year’s concert will be held on July 3 at 10:00 AM in the GHS Cafeteria.**

- **Tuesday, July 1 – Nominations Forms due for the Griswold High School Distinguished Alumni Wall of Fame.** This award honors and recognizes alumni who exemplify the values, the tradition, and the successes of GHS. Nomination forms are on the website.

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 Referendum this week!**

The school budget for 2014-15 includes a 1.95% increase. The overall town and school budget represent a mill increase of 1.23, which is the same increase that was passed by voters last year on the first referendum.

On Tuesday, May 13, please be the voice of our students.

The 2014-15 Budget for the Griswold Public Schools includes:

- **One elementary teacher to keep classes sizes in the low 20's.** Without this position, one grade level will have class sizes of high 20's.
- **The opportunity for Orchestra to continue in the middle school.** Currently there is a grade 5 & 6 program and a high school program. This addition allows for grade 7 & 8 Orchestra. The addition is the equivalent of 1/5th of a teaching position.
- **A Spanish teacher at the middle school.** Our students will benefit from an appropriate introduction to Spanish in the middle school before going to the high school. By introducing a more intense program in the middle school, students are better prepared for high school level work and have the opportunity for college credit courses in Spanish.
- **Additional reading materials and math materials** to prepare our students for the new Common Core State Standards.
- **High school online learning** for personalized learning, advanced online courses, and credit recovery opportunities.
- **Athletic trainer services for athletic programs** in the middle school and high school. This item saves the district money by contracting with a regular service agency rather than hiring separate agencies and medical services.

Information on the school budget is available at the school's website - <http://www.griswold.k12.ct.us/>. You can also call or visit me for any additional last-minute budget information at 860-376-7600 or please feel free to e-mail: psmith@griswoldpublicschools.org.

■ **Nominate one of our Rookie Teachers or New Teachers to the district for recognition.**



Please help us recognize the efforts of the newest members of the Griswold Public Schools Teaching Staff by nominating one of our brand new teachers – either a first year teacher beginning their career in Griswold or an experienced teacher who began this past September in Griswold.

Welcoming new teachers into the profession and recruiting experienced teachers are both important to the continued excellence of our schools. Please take a moment to nominate *one or more* of our brand new teachers or our experienced new teachers to be recognized as the “Rookie of the Year” for the Griswold Public Schools or “Best New Teacher” to the Griswold Public Schools.

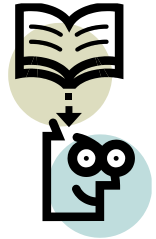
The nomination should honor a teacher who has both **made an impact on students in his/her first year in the Griswold Public Schools** and **has distinguished himself/herself as an excellent teacher in the first year of employment in the Griswold Public Schools.**

Nomination forms for Rookie of the Year or Best New Teacher can be found on the school's website. Nominations are due to Robin Drobiak, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent by the last day of school, June 20.

■ *Do you still read...books?*

According to recent research, the hardcover book is alive and well – for the time being.

It's time to start choosing your summer reading selections. I always put together for myself an ambitious list of books to read over the summer. Many educational titles are on the list but I make sure there is a good selection of fiction titles for pleasure reading. I find that my educational titles are hard copy because I like to highlight them and make notes. My fiction titles are always on an e-reader. Some recent research indicates that most read from a combination of books and digital sources.



From *Kappan* (kappanmagazine.org)

Print books are still central to Americans' library use, just as they remain central in American's overall reading habits. Although more Americans than ever are reading e-books (28% of adults ages 18 or older, as of January 2014), few have abandoned print entirely; just 4% of readers read e-books exclusively. Still, many Americans say they would be interested in exploring a range of technological services at public libraries, from personalized reading recommendations and online "Ask a Librarian" services to media kiosks and mobile APPS.

■ *May Employees of the Month*

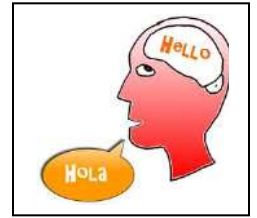


The Griswold Dream Team
Kristin LaLima (GMS), Nadine Keane (GHS), Laurie LaBossiere (GMS), and Mary Strout (GES)



We are proud of these four teachers who were selected to be part of the 97 teachers from around the state that make up Connecticut's Dream Team. This group of teachers is being trained in Common Core Lesson Development and will train other teachers around the state. The group is being flown to Washington DC next weekend by the state for a national training program.

Thoughts



“Career Ready” does not mean the elimination of the extracurriculars.

It seems in tight budget times that we have to defend everything that schools do as early as Pre K and K in terms of the contribution they make to students’ preparation for a career. Yes, it is important to make sure that our students are employable, but a narrow view of **skills that make students employable and how students attain those skills** may be doing more damage to our students’ employability than we realize.

I have included a short article below. As a strong proponent of the arts and an equally strong advocate for World Languages, this information certainly hit home. There are several links to research and other sources imbedded in the article.

Extracurriculars Are Central to Learning *Stacey Boyd U.S. News and World Report*

Harvard President Drew Faust recently wrote of students overlooking the benefit of following their “interest in art or linguistics or any of the other humanity disciplines.” The trend towards employable subjects like math and science is reflected in decisions of college students as well as decision-making in primary and secondary schools. **Funds have been cut in more than 80 percent of U.S. school districts since 2008. The very first programs to go are often disciplines such as music, art and foreign language.**

The president of Harvard is not alone in her concern. **Groundbreaking work of cognitive neuroscientists reveals what we think are “extras” are central to strengthening our minds. Studying Mandarin or music as a child might do more for your adult brain and long-term economic prospects than studying biology.**

Take music as an example. A study by Virginia Penhune at Concordia University shows that musical training, particularly instrumental training, produces long lasting changes in motor abilities and brain structure. **The earlier a child starts instrumental training, the stronger the connection between the right and left hemispheres of the brain. These changes last into adulthood and are proven to affect the ability to listen and communicate as an adult.** Nina Krauss, a cognitive neuroscientist at Northwestern University, just released a study that older adults who took music lessons at a young age can process the sounds of speech faster than those who did not, even if they haven’t picked up an instrument in 40 years.

These traits, found in musicians, are also common among world-class athletes and top-level managers. Is it a coincidence that Condoleeza Rice (piano), Alan Greenspan (jazz clarinet), Paul Allen (guitar), James Wolfensohn (cello) all studied music for years as children? Perhaps, but they all attribute current success, in part, to their musical training. Science backs that up. **Children (and even adults) who play an instrument 30 minutes a week over the course of a little over a year have more highly developed brains.**

The same is true for foreign language, often one of the first programs to go in financially strapped schools. Studying a second language restructures the brain which lasts into adulthood. The cortex, which undergoes the greatest changes when a second language is learned during childhood, influences thought and consciousness. Even memory is impacted according to a new joint study by the The Neuro at McGill University and Oxford University.

How about physical education? **While further afield from the humanities, new research reveals children who get aerobic exercise transform their brains due to a protein that is elevated during exercise acting as a sort of “miracle-gro.” Exercise matters deeply for cognitive development for kids.**

Naperville School District in Illinois, who experimented with a mandatory mile run at the very start of the school day, is a prime example. Kids in the Naperville School District not only outperformed neighboring districts, but whole countries. The eighth grade Naperville students that took the an international science test finished ahead of Singapore! As a comparison, U.S. students typically rank 18th in the world. They credit much of their academic results to a fitness-based physical education program. Yet only 6 percent of U.S. schools have physical education classes 5 times a week. In addition, 20 percent of U.S. elementary schools abolished recess in favor of increased

classroom time to improve student achievement. Students who exercise, studies have shown, have better concentration and are better team players both in and out of the classroom.

Concentration, strong recall skills, evolved communication skills, and being a good team player are just a few of the benefits research shows music, foreign language and physical education have on a developing mind. To me, that list reads as one I might put together for a model employee. Shortsightedness from parents who encourage our college-age children to focus on an "employable" major, or cutting school funding, has long-term implications. If we are truly care about the future of our kids and our country, we will think twice before cutting programs that will dwarf their (and our) potential.

Everything we do in education has the capacity to impact our students.
We sell our students short as soon as we feel we have the right to prioritize certain aspects of education.
Everything matters when it comes to student growth.

Have a great week!
Paul K. Smith



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

~Ruth E. Renkel