



**Griswold Public Schools**  
**Educating for Excellence**

**Superintendent's Update – October 20, 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*

View your life with “kindsight.” Stop beating yourself up about things from your past. Instead of slapping your forehead and asking, ‘What was I thinking,’ breathe and ask yourself the kinder question, ‘What was I learning?’”  
 ~Karen Salmonsohn

**Calendar**




*This Week:*

**SPOOKTOPIA**

**Saturday, October 25 from 3:00 – 8:00 PM**  
**Veteran's Memorial Park**

Please contact Ryan at [director@griswoldyfs.com](mailto:director@griswoldyfs.com) if you are interested in helping or being a “trunker.” This event is a great family-friendly Halloween event!

[Click here for details.](#)

- **Monday-Friday, October 20-24 – National School Bus Safety Week.**
  - **Monday, October 20 – Board of Education Budget Subcommittee negotiations with GAA, 5:00 PM.**
  - **Tuesday, October 21 – Program for all staff: “Smart Money Moves in Your 20s and 30s.”** Don't miss this event! It's appropriate for staff of all ages. This a complimentary workshop offered by Met Life that is being presented two times:
    - **2:30 PM in the GMS Library for GHS and GMS Teachers and Staff**
    - **3:30 PM in the GES Library for GES Teachers and Staff**
  - **Tuesday, October 21 – Griswold Elementary School PTO Meeting in the GES Library, 6:00 PM.**
  -  **Tuesday, October 21 – McDonald's Night for GHS – Project Safe Grad 2015.**
- **Wednesday, October 22 – 1:10 PM dismissal for GES afternoon Parent Conferences.**
  - **Wednesday, October 22 – Evening Parent Conferences at GES for Grades K, 2, and 4.**
- **Wednesday, October 22 – GHS National Honor Society Induction in the GHS Cafeteria, 6:00 PM.**
- **Thursday, October 23 – 1:10 PM dismissal for GES afternoon Parent Conferences.**
  - **Thursday, October 23 – Evening Parent Conferences at GES for Grades 1 and 3.**
- **Monday, October 27 – Board of Education Meeting in the GMS Library, 6:00 PM.**
  - **Tuesday, October 28 – Board of Education Policy Subcommittee in the Superintendent's Office, 9:00 AM.**

- **Wednesday, October 29 – GES School family Community Partnership in the GES Library, 3:30 PM.** Parents and teachers are urged to participate.

- **NOTE CHANGE OF DATE:** **Thursday, October 30 – Griswold High School Varsity Football Game, 6:30 PM.** This game has been moved from Friday night to Thursday night as a result of Halloween falling on Friday this year.

- **Friday, October 31 – Halloween**

- **Sunday, November 2 – Daylight Savings Time Ends**

- ~~Sunday, November 2 – The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Griswold Wolverine 5K Cross-Country Classic, 10:00 AM.~~ Note: Event Postponed.

- **Monday, November 2 – Board of Education Budget Subcommittee negotiations with GAA, 5:00 PM.**
- **Tuesday, November 4 – Election Day.** This is regular day of school.
- **Wednesday, November 5 – GPS Building Committee in the GES Library, 6:00 PM.**
- **Wednesday, November 5 – Griswold High School Parents Advisory Committee (PAC) - GHS Library, 7:00 PM.**



**Friday, November 7 – “Dress Down” for the Wounded Warrior Project.** All three buildings will participate in the same Dress Down cause which will support the Wounded Warrior Project. Joe Buttacavoli (GHS Class of 2004) is a Wounded Warrior and his mother, Deb Buttacavoli (IA at GMS) has been active in raising funds for Wounded Warriors. The funds will go directly to the Connecticut Wounded Warriors.

- **Friday, November 7 – Children First Griswold Collaborative Meeting at GHS (Room 3103), 9:30 AM.** All parents and community members are invited to this meeting of the full partnership of providers who support the efforts of Children First Griswold. (There is childcare available.)
- **Monday, November 10 – Professional Development Day, No School.** *Reminder:* Students have a four-day weekend due to the Veterans Day Holiday on the 11<sup>th</sup>.
- **Monday, November 10 – Board of Education Meeting in the GMS Library, 6:00 PM.**
- **Tuesday, November 11 – Veterans Day, No School.**



*Save these dates now!*

**Monday, November 10 - Board of Education Meeting in the GMS Library, 6:00 PM.**

This meeting will open with comments from parents, students, teachers, staff, and community members. Please feel free to come to the meeting at express what you would like to see in the 2015-16 Budget.

**Monday, November 24 - Board of Education Meeting in the GMS Library, 6:00 PM.**

This meeting will open with comments from parents, students, teachers, staff, and community members. Please feel free to come to the meeting at express what you would like to see in the 2015-16 Budget.

**Wednesday, December 3 - Target Meeting in the GMS Library 6:00 PM.**



This one hour meeting is open to parents, students, teachers, staff, and community members who will be asked to come up with **three targets** for the budget season. Please join us. Dinner and childcare available. Your input is critical!

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



### ■ ***Thank you Griswold Booster Club!***

On Tuesday evening, October 14 the Griswold Board of Education honored the **Griswold Booster Club**, a group made up of parents, alumni, and community members who have supported the Griswold Public Schools for years. While all of us in the school community are grateful for the several businesses who have stepped up to make stipends possible that had been cut from the budget, our schools are especially grateful to this group who have worked behind the scenes, fundraised behind the scenes, and supported programming behind the scenes.

The efforts of the Booster Club over the years have resulted in an elevation of athletics in the Griswold Schools through many individuals' and families' time commitment and financial support. They have provided backing for programs including Freshmen teams in high interest sports and they have provided continuous funding for sports designated as club sports. They have provided award jackets and anything else needed when budget dollars fell short or teams had special concerns. They are a staple at games selling refreshments and they are a constant when we have needed their help.

**We are grateful that they have decided to fund the shortfall for our Athletic Trainer.** The Board of Education had wanted to increase the Trainer's presence at games and practices at GHS and GMS, but due to budget shortfalls and reductions, the necessary increase was eliminated. The Booster Club will provide those funds for this school year only - \$3,000 to help us meet additional hours of coverage.

This donation might not attract the newspaper press as some of the other returning stipends, but there is nothing more important than the safety of our student athletes. With the increased focus on concussion prevention, recognition, and awareness, it is essential that we have a trainer equipped to ensure safety and protocols that allow our athletes to achieve at their highest while remaining healthy.

There is no more important and critical donation this year than this one. At Tuesday's Board meeting, the Superintendent of Schools spoke on behalf of students who do not have a voice at budget time when he thanked the Booster Club for providing one of the most crucial and beneficial services to our teams.

### ■ ***Griswold Board of Education Meeting Highlights (10/14/14)***

- The Board of Education recognized the Griswold Booster Club for their donation to cover additional hours for the Athletic Trainer at GHS and GMS.
- The Board reviewed the official October 1 enrollment. (This is the enrollment that the state uses for official counts.) Enrollment is as follows: Pre K-81, K-133, Gr 1-143, Gr 2-141, Gr 3-141, Gr 4-117, Gr 5-128, Gr 6-138, Gr 7-140, Gr 8-142, Gr 9-162, Gr 10-144, Gr 11-136, Gr 12-144.
- The Board was presented a report on the "Target" Meeting from October 1 concerning "parent and family engagement" and were given details on the December 3 "Target" Meeting that will focus on the 2015-16 Budget.
- The Board reviewed balances of the Internal Accounts at each school.
- The Board accepted the gifts from the following: Advanced Automotive and Valenti Auto Mall to cover the GHS Student Council, Chelsea Groton Savings Bank to cover a portion of the Grade 4 field trip to Mystic Seaport, and the GES PTO to cover funds necessary for the Griswold Elementary School Yearbook.
- The Board approved new policy (Series 3000), which will join other updated policies on the school's website.
- Associate Principal of GHS, Matthew Peel presented information on Attendance and Graduation Rates at GHS.
- The Board received an update on the GHS Roof Project. Currently the Kitchen Hood project has been awarded and parts are on order. A likely start date for that project is in mid-November.



## **Social Media and the Griswold Public Schools**

Communicating via social media has become a natural means to relay information; however, parents should understand that it is against the policy of the school district for our teachers and our staff members to “friend” current students. While teachers and parents may be “friended” on Facebook or share other accounts for communication, at no time should a student have access to a teacher’s **personal** social media account, whether it is a Facebook page, Twitter account, Snapchat/Instagram, or any other means of communication. The expectation of our staff is that they not “friend” any current student on any of their personal accounts. After students graduate from high school, they may be added by staff members onto their accounts.

While certain activities, classrooms, or teams may share a Facebook page or Twitter messages, no students will be added to the individual, personal accounts of teachers.

Communicating via the official school e-mail is the best way for students to contact their teachers.

Below are the guidelines developed from the Griswold Public Schools policy on Social Media.

### ***Guidelines for all teachers and staff concerning Social Media***

#### **1. Guidelines for the use of social networking sites by all employees of the Griswold Public Schools:**

**Social networks** are rapidly growing in popularity and used by all ages in society. The most popular social networks are web-based, commercial, and not purposely designed for educational use. For individuals, social networking sites provide tremendous opportunities for staying in touch with friends and family.

- Do not accept currently enrolled students as friends on personal social networking sites. Decline any currently enrolled student-initiated friend requests. Do not initiate friendships with currently enrolled students on social networking sites. Remember that people classified as “friends” have the ability to download and share your information with others.
- When posting items or photos to personal social networking sites do not include sexual content or items that exhibit or advocate the use of drugs or alcohol. Exercise good judgment in all online activities
- Do not discuss students, policies, or school personnel on personal social networking sites.
- Inappropriate contact with currently enrolled students via social networking sites is prohibited.

#### **2. Guidelines for the use of educational networking sites by all employees of the Griswold Public Schools:**

**Educational networking sites** are also growing in use. These sites are used by educators for both professional development and as a teaching tool, and are usually restricted to selected users and not available to the general public.

The district does recognize the value of student/teacher interaction on educational networking sites. Collaboration, resource sharing, and student/teacher and student/student dialog can all be facilitated by the judicious use of educational networking tools. Such interactivity is a critical component of any online class and can greatly enhance face-to-face classes.

- Let your administrator, fellow teachers, and parents know about your educational network.
- Have a clear statement of purpose and outcomes for the use of the networking tool.
- Establish a code of conduct for all network participants.
- Do not post images that include students without parental release forms on file.
- Pay close attention to the site's security settings and allow only approved participants access to the site.
- If a staff member learns of information on the educational networking site that falls under the mandatory reporting guidelines, he or she must report it as required by law.
- Inappropriate contact with currently enrolled students via educational networking sites is prohibited.

#### **Guidelines for the use of e-mail by all employees of the Griswold Public Schools:**

- E-mail contact with currently enrolled students should be through the District’s computer system.
- E-mail contact with parents/guardians/families should be through the District’s computer system.
- Currently enrolled students should not be contacted using personal e-mail accounts in non-emergency situations.
- Inappropriate contact with currently enrolled students via e-mail is prohibited.

## **Social media boundaries: Should teachers and students be 'friends'?** by Alexandra Rockey Fleming at [www.today.com](http://www.today.com)

Parents want to know where the boundaries should be when it comes to educators and students using technology to communicate.

Tara Paige feels fine about digital communication. The Arlington, Texas, entrepreneur and mother of eight says her children sometimes use technology—such as texts and social media—to correspond with their teachers and coaches. “I’m OK with texting one-on-one,” she says. “I believe in writing because it serves as documentation. And social media is a way for teachers to be leaders and role models with their students. It takes a village.”

Meanwhile, Stefani McNair has tried to think of a reason why her kids and their teachers should connect via texts or social media, but she can’t. “I don’t think any circumstances warrant students and teachers communicating that way,” says the Oakton, Virginia, designer and mother of two teens. “I think there’s great potential for the lines of respect and influence to get fuzzy.”

Considering that 95 percent of teens are online, according to the Pew Research Internet Project’s national survey of teens and parents, and 81 percent use social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat, it’s understandable that technology is a convenient way for teachers to connect with students.

Convenience isn’t everything, though, says Terri Miller, president of S.E.S.A.M.E. (Stop Educator Sexual Abuse Misconduct & Exploitation). “Communication technology has perpetuated blurred boundaries and sexual misconduct,” says Miller. “Adults are saying things to children online and via text that they wouldn’t say face to face. They forget who they’re talking to. This can be a prelude to sexual contact.”

Students need to be taught the difference between personal and professional digital communication, says Jennifer Beaver, a teacher at South Carolina Virtual Charter School, “the same way students would treat their teachers differently than their friends in a face-to-face conversation.”

Many teachers — Beaver included — have professional blogs or Twitter accounts where all of the chatter is related to the classroom and their assignments. “Social media is where teenagers are,” she says. “This is a great tool that allows teachers to connect with students in a way that interests them.”

She encourages educators to consider apps such as “Remind” as well. “Remind allows teachers to send text reminders to parents and students about due dates and assignments without allowing students to know the teacher’s phone number,” Beaver says, adding the app doesn’t allow for responses and also stores all messages sent by the teacher in case the administration feels the need to review them.

Hans Mundahl calls digital communication between teachers and students “a gray issue.” Mundahl is a former school administrator who works with schools to set and implement their social media policies. He favors an approach that emphasizes training and passive monitoring to make sure behavior is healthy and above-board.

His top 4 recommendations:

1. Every school should have a social media policy outlining how teachers should and shouldn’t interact on social media.
2. Faculty shouldn’t friend, follow, or otherwise engage with students on social media directly. Instagram, specifically, “is very tricky because the potential for abuse is higher with images published publicly. I’d only support Instagram use if it is in line with the school’s policy, it only happens outside of the classroom, and the person in the photograph knows they’re being photographed,” says Mundahl.
3. Texting with students—about assignment-related issues—is OK if it’s in line with school policy, is within reasonable time bounds (similar to “office hours”), and doesn’t fail the “exclusive” test, which Mundahl defines as communicating with a student in a way that they wouldn’t with any other student or that would cause concern if someone else saw the message.
4. Every school should have a privacy policy addressing being photographed without permission. Every student with a smart phone has a camera and a way to publish that picture.

Perhaps most important, Mundahl says, is to remember that young people have fundamentally different attitudes than adults toward privacy. And it’s of limited value to have never-ending conversations with youth about how scary and dangerous the Internet is. “They just don’t believe this,” he says.

## Thoughts



**We must show our students - our children - that we care.**

*“What students need at their core is caring.” ~ Brandon Busteed (see article below).*

Nobody will argue that reading, writing, and math are important to our children; however, what the article below describes (based on research and recent Gallup polls) is that our students are longing for individual care and individual choices during this time of pre-determined standards, standardized testing, and high accountability.

We cannot afford to lose focus on the basic needs of our students as we work to make sure they are prepared for the Common Core and the new SBAC testing regimen in the Spring of 2015. All the work in promoting important skills in our children is for naught if we fail to meet their basic needs.

One of the most profound statements in the article below is: *“Fewer than half of all students strongly agree they have an opportunity to do what they do best every day at school, and this is one of the key components of school engagement.”*

According to the research described in the article below, pollsters found evidence that teachers had a strong impact on whether students reported being “hopeful” about their lives and their future. Of those students who were polled in grades 5-12, 54% were hopeful, 32% felt stuck and 14% felt discouraged. There was a high correlation between student “hope” and whether they were “engaged” in their schooling. The same students reported that they were engaged (55%), not engaged (28%), or actively disengaged (17%).

What a shame to make great advances in the Common Core standards if our students lose hope or feel disengaged from school. What a loss to this generation if the activities in which they are truly interested are set aside.

### **Make a Difference: Show Students You Care** By Brandon H. Busteed in *Ed Week*

Over the past two decades, our country's leaders have done a great job building a massive accountability system around schools. What they've failed to do, in the meantime, is build an engagement system within them.

Accountability can be healthy if we hold schools accountable for the right outcomes. If not, it can be problematic. And if we put so much emphasis on accountability that we lose sight of the most basic elements of human development, it can be a catastrophe. This is what we have done in our K-12 schools—and teachers and students are suffering because of it.

Among all the professions our organization, Gallup, has studied, teachers are last in agreeing that their “opinions count” at work and their “supervisors create an open and trusting environment.” These are two crucial elements of teacher engagement, which is the single greatest predictor of student engagement. But how can we expect teachers to engage students in this kind of negative workplace?

#### **Show Students You Care: It Makes a Difference**

Pollsters found evidence that **teachers had an impact on whether students reported being hopeful**. When students are “actively disengaged,” their attitudes and behavior can disrupt classes for others. Gallup asked students to rate their current lives and their hopes for the future. Those who gave low ratings in both categories were deemed to be “suffering.”

Gallup surveyed more than 600,000 5th through 12th grade students in 2013 through the **Gallup Student Poll**, an annual survey that measures hope for the future, engagement with school, and well-being—factors that have been shown to drive grades, achievement scores, retention, and future employment. We learned that **student engagement drops precipitously from 5th through 12th grades**. If our education system were working well, this finding would be the absolute opposite because students should be more engaged in school over time, not less.

Gallup has learned how important it is for all human beings—regardless of age—to have the opportunity to do what they do best every day. Rather than trying to fix weaknesses, the most successful people focus primarily on building on what they're naturally good at and turning those talents into strengths. This fundamental insight about strengths-based development is derived from some of the most comprehensive research Gallup has ever done.

But instead of using a strengths-based approach in education, we have created a system that approaches everything through a deficit-based lens: what's wrong with students, what they don't know, and how ineffective teachers are, for example. We even use phrases like "education reform" and "remedial classes" to describe how we hope to fix schools and students. Fewer than half of all students strongly agree they have an opportunity to do what they do best every day at school, and this is one of the key components of school engagement.

If you were to ask Gallup what the most important elements are for students to be successful in school, our research would tell you it's having someone who cares about your development and having an opportunity to do what you do best every day. These are the same exact elements that are required for anyone to be successful in work and in life—regardless of age, race, sex, or the country one lives in, whether the respondent is employed or retired. Decades of Gallup research around the world on workplace engagement and well-being point to this as the formula for success. It's especially true in schools, for teachers and students alike.

Instead of allowing everyone in our schools—students, teachers, and other staff members—to focus on these fundamentals, we have insisted on setting up an accountability system on a narrow set of measures: grades and test scores. And we have gone insane over it.

Texas, one of the first states to go running into the high-stakes-testing frenzy, is now one of the first to back away from it by passing recent legislation to **reduce the number of required tests** between the 9th and 12th grades from 15 to five. While I would agree that a modest level of testing is helpful to measure student growth and learning, right now testing has become our end-all-be-all strategy to improve educational outcomes, and it's failing our students.

Perhaps the most important education news story of last year was **Google's announcement** that it found **no correlation between the grades and test scores of its employees and their success on the job**, so the company no longer asks applicants about them. This was a shocking statement coming from a company that receives more than 2 million job applications a year. Yet it seems as though Google simply discovered what superintendents around the country already know.

In Gallup's survey of more than 2,500 superintendents, conducted in partnership with *Education Week*, we found that only 5 percent strongly agreed that a high GPA is the best predictor of success in college, and only 6 percent strongly agreed that high SAT and ACT scores are the best predictor. This doesn't mean that we should throw out grades and testing entirely. But it does emphasize the need to greatly reduce the weight we put on these measures. Certainly there is more to success in work and life than grades and test scores.

We're making matters worse by handing our most talented and engaged teachers manuals on how and what they should teach. Yes, we need more rigorous standards, but what we don't need is more standardized rigor. Teachers aren't failing us; instead, the system they're forced to work within is failing us and them. And if we want to build engaged schools, **we need to put ownership of the teaching and learning process back in the hands of teachers and students**. We need to empower them to do what they are innately built to do: thrive when someone cares about their development and when they have opportunities to do what they do best each day. We need to create an environment that gives them ideas and energy for the future—that gives students hope.

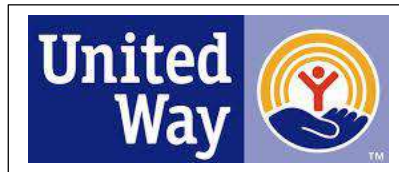
Caring and hope sound like things that are *nice* to have, rather than things we *need* to have for success in life. But, as Gallup research shows, hope is a stronger predictor of college success than GPA or SAT and ACT scores, and caring or "emotional support" elements are crucial to success in life after college. Not surprisingly, when Gallup polled Americans and asked them to describe the best teacher they ever had, the most common word they used was "caring."

Gallup's recent study of more than 30,000 college graduates shows **how important emotional-support elements are, and how few young people are receiving them**. Graduates who strongly agreed that they received emotional support during college doubled their odds of being engaged in their work and of thriving overall. Emotional support includes three crucial elements: feeling that they had a professor who made them excited about learning, that the professors at their alma mater cared about them as people, and that they had a mentor who encouraged them to

pursue their goals and dreams. Yet as profoundly important as these emotional-support elements are to long-term success in work and life, a mere 14 percent of all college graduates strongly agreed they received all three.

When it comes to being engaged at work and feeling fulfilled after college, what you studied and where you went to college hardly mattered. What mattered is *how you did* college—having a meaningful internship or job, working on a long-term project, and being actively involved in extracurricular activities—and being emotionally supported by others during college.

**What students need at their core is caring.** If we can create a system that allows caring to flourish and become a common experience that all students receive, America will once again have the best school system in the world.



Give to the United Way! Contact Robin Drobiak.

Have a great week.  
Paul K. Smith



A caring heart that listens is more valuable than an intelligent mind that talks.

~ Michael Josephson

If you would like text message reminders of important Griswold Public School events and other information from the Superintendent of Schools please visit <https://www.remind.com/join/grisw>. Please note that this APP will only be used by the Superintendent of Schools and information is not shared with any other party.