



Griswold Public Schools Educating for Excellence

Superintendent's Update – October 27, 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

Let us remember: One book, one pen, and one teacher can change the world.

~ 2014 Nobel Peace Prize winner, Malala Yousafzai

Malala Yousafzai is a 17-year old from Pakistan. As a child, she became an advocate for girls' education, which resulted in the Taliban issuing a death threat against her. On October 9, 2012, a gunman shot Malala when she was traveling home from school. She survived, and has continued to speak out on the importance of education. She was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize in 2013. In 2014, she was nominated again and won, becoming the youngest person to receive the Nobel Peace Prize.

Calendar

- **Monday, October 27 – Board of Education Meeting in the GMS Library, 6:00 PM.** At this meeting we will recognize Dorothy M. Stott, Children's Author and Illustrator, Class of 1976 – GHS Wall of Fame recipient.
- **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. Please note that the **meeting** is on the fifth Wednesday due to last week's parent conferences.

- **Thursday, October 30 – Griswold High School Varsity Football Game, 6:30 PM. **NOTE CHANGE OF DATE:**** 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 (Be safe!)**



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

- **Tuesday, November 4 – Special Education Parents Advisory Group in the Special Education Office at GHS, 9:00 AM.** This is an opportunity for parents to meet with the Director of Special Education monthly.

- **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.**



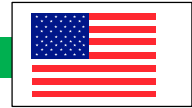
Friday, November 7 – "Dress Down" for the Wounded Warrior Project. All three buildings will participate in the same Dress Down cause which will support the Wounded Warrior Project. The funds will go directly to the Connecticut Wounded Warriors.

- **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.)

- **Saturday, November 8 – Town of Griswold EMERGENCY DRILL, 8:00 – Noon.** Volunteers are needed for this drill that includes the Fire Department and the Public Utilities, along with town officials. The event will be held at the Griswold Elementary School – *see below for information*. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact **Lisa Wood** via e-mail: selectmensassistant@griswold-ct.org – Town Hall

• **Monday, November 10 – Professional Development Day, No School.**

- **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.



• **Tuesday, November 11 – Veterans Day, No School.**

- **Wednesday, November 12 – “Coffee and Chat” Superintendent’s Advisory Council in the Superintendent’s Office at GMS, 8:45 AM.** The agenda for the month of November includes “A Glimpse into the Future of Learning” and a discussion on the development of the 2015-16 Budget.
- **Wednesday, November 12 – GMS PTO in the GMS Library, 6:00 PM.**
- **Friday, November 14 – “Kidsploration” in the GES Cafeteria, 6:00 – 8:00 PM.**
- **Friday, November 14 – Grade 7 & 8 Dance sponsored by the GMS PTO in the GMS Cafeteria, 6:00 – 8:00 PM.**

- **Friday-Saturday, November 14-15 – Griswold High School Fall Play in the GHS Auditorium, 7:00 PM.** This event is sponsored by the Jewett City Savings Bank. We are grateful that our friends at the Jewett City Savings Bank have provided the funds for this play after they were eliminated from the 2014-15 Budget. **Thank you Jewett City Savings Bank!**

- **Tuesday, November 18 – Griswold Elementary School PTO Meeting in the GES Library, 6:00 PM.**
- **Tuesday, November 18 – GHS Parent Conferences, 5:00 – 8:00 PM.** A great opportunity to meet teachers!

- **Wednesday, November 19 – GMS dismissed at Noon / GMS Parent Conferences from 12:30 – 2:30 PM.**

- **Wednesday, November 19 – GPS Building Committee in the GES Library, 6:00 PM.**
- **Wednesday, November 19 – GES School Family Community Partnership in the GES Library, 3:30 PM.**

- **Thursday, November 20 – GMS dismissed at Noon / GMS Parent Conferences from 12:30 – 2:30 PM.**
- **Thursday, November 20 – GMS Parent Conferences, 6:00 – 8:00 PM.**

- **Friday, November 21 – Fundraiser to support Tammy Ward at Surrell’s - begins at 3:00 PM and continues into the evening.** Save the date – more information to come! (*See below for information.*)

- **Sunday, November 23 – The 14th Annual Griswold Snowflake Festival and Parade, 2:00 PM.** The parade starts at GMS at 2:00 PM, proceeds down Main Street and ends at Veteran Memorial Park. Children can visit Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus in the gazebo and receive a gift. Free hot chocolate and treats available! Donations of non-perishable food items will be accepted along the parade route and at the park for St. Mary’s Food Pantry.

- **Monday, November 24 – Board of Education Meeting in the GMS Library, 6:00 PM.** During the *Public Comment* portion of the meeting teachers, staff, students, and parents will have an opportunity to make brief statements regarding budget requests for the upcoming year. Please take advantage of this opportunity for the Board of Education to hear your thoughts!

- **Wednesday, November 26 – Early Dismissal/Half Day.**

- **Wednesday, November 26 – Griswold Booster Club Pasta Dinner at the French Club, 5:30-7:00 PM.** Adults \$7.00; Children under 12 - \$5.00.

- **Thursday, November 27 – Thanksgiving, No School.**



- **Thursday, November 27 – Griswold Booster Club 12th Annual Turkey Dip at Ashland Lake at the French Club.** Registration is at 7:30 AM. The jump time is 8:00 AM! Proceeds benefit all Griswold athletic programs.

- **Thursday, November 28 – Thanksgiving Football Game vs. Plainfield (AWAY), 10:00 AM.** A little football is a great way to begin the celebration!

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

■ **Save these dates: November 8, November 21, December 3**



November 8 - On Saturday November 8 from 8:00 AM – Noon, the Town of Griswold will conduct a **town-wide Emergency DRILL**. This will be an exercise that prepares emergency responders for a potential rescue and shelter situation as a result of a weather event. The training exercise will be based on a rain event (several days of heavy rains and wind scenario) causing downed power lines and trees, partial road closures due to flooding, and generally unsafe conditions.

The town needs volunteers for this event! Volunteers will act as citizens who require rescue and/or transport to shelter, those who show up at shelter, and those who can assist in other ways. Volunteers will be needed at GES beginning at 8:00 AM. If you are interested in volunteering please contact the Town Hall: **Lisa Wood via e-mail: selectmensassistant@griswold-ct.org**

November 21 – On Friday, November 21, there will be a fundraiser for Tammy Ward at Surrell's beginning at 3:00 PM in the afternoon and continuing into the evening. Tammy has been one of the most dedicated volunteers and most relied on source for raising funds for the school and town organizations. **Tammy has raised funds for all of us and now it's time to raise funds for Tammy!** Look for more details to come on this event!

December 3 – on Wednesday evening, December 3 from 6:00 – 7:00 PM, we will host a “Target” Meeting in the GMS Library on the 2015-16 School and Town Budget. 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!



■ **September was National Attendance Month – but how are you doing in October?**

Even though National Attendance Month is over, we still continue the focus on attending school! **We want every healthy child in school every day!** The statistics below will shock you. For example, students who have missed two to four days already this year will go on to miss a month of school. That translates to a real deficit in learning. Here's the crux of the article below: **only 17 percent of the students who were chronically absent in both kindergarten and 1st grade read proficiently by 3rd grade.**

That is an alarming statistic! We need our students to be healthy and present in school!

★ Attendance Matters ★

From **Chronic Absenteeism Can Devastate K-12 Learning** By Hedy Chang, John Gomperts, & Leslie Boissiere in *EdWeek*

Warning systems exist to keep us out of harm's way. The car's dashboard light warns of low tire pressure; the urgent weather bulletin advises us to evacuate ahead of a storm. We are conditioned to take these warnings seriously and act upon them.

Now, just weeks into the new school year, another warning system is sending a message to parents and educators: the early signs of chronically absent students.

Half of all students who miss two to four days of school in the first month will go on to miss nearly a month of school in excused or unexcused absences, according to a [study](#) released in July by the Baltimore Education Research Consortium.

The study examined chronic absence and found a striking pattern. Remarkably, nine out of 10 students who missed five or more days in the first month went on to be chronically absent—defined as missing 10 percent of the school year in excused and unexcused absences—for the year.

So, even though it's only October, we already know which students are most at risk. The warning lights are blinking. The alerts are flashing before us. What happens if we disregard them?

If poor attendance is allowed to persist, the impact can undermine children's prospects for academic achievement. In the early grades, students who are chronically absent have lower reading and math scores, as well as weaker social-emotional skills than they need to persist in school.

In fact, in a [study](#) of California students for Attendance Works, the organization that Hedy Chang oversees, only 17 percent of the students who were chronically absent in both kindergarten and 1st grade were reading proficiently by 3rd grade, compared with 64 percent of those with good attendance in the early years. Weak reading skills in the 3rd grade translate into academic trouble ahead: Students who aren't reading well by that point are four times more likely to drop out of high school, according to a 2012 study released by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Chronic absence in middle school is another red flag that a student will drop out of high school. By high school, attendance is a better dropout indicator than test scores.

This is a particular problem for children from low-income families, who often face significant barriers to getting to school. They may have little access to health care to control the asthma that keeps them home, or they may live in housing that contributes to their health problems. They may face a dangerous walk to school, either because of community violence or traffic patterns.

[To read entire article, click here.](#)

Click here for a national [report on absences and individual academic progress](#), titled **Absences Add Up**.



Parents and Teachers: We Need To Teach Kindness

As busy as our teaching days are as we make sure that we stress literacy and numeracy skills, the Common Core, critical thinking, and creative thinking, never let us forget that we must model and teach our students how to be kind.

As busy as our parenting nights are as we drive students to practices, games, scouts, and other activities that consume time, never let us forget that we must model and teach our children how to be kind.

Teaching Kindness by Lisa Currie in www.edutopia.org

Phrases like "random acts of kindness" and "pay it forward" have become popular terms in modern society. Perhaps this could be best explained by those who have identified a deficiency in their lives that can only be fulfilled by altruism.

It seems that we just can't get enough of those addictive, feel-good emotions -- and with good reason. [Scientific studies prove that kindness has many physical, emotional, and mental health benefits.](#) And children need a healthy dose of the warm-and-fuzzies to thrive as healthy, happy, well-rounded individuals.

Patty O'Grady, PhD, an expert in neuroscience, emotional learning, and positive psychology, specializes in education. She reports:

Kindness changes the brain by the experience of kindness. Children and adolescents do not learn kindness by only thinking about it and talking about it. Kindness is best learned by feeling it so that they can reproduce it.

A great number of benefits have been reported to support teaching kindness in schools, best summed up by the following.

Happy, Caring Children

The good feelings that we experience when being kind are produced by endorphins. They activate areas of the brain that are associated with pleasure, social connection, and trust. These feelings of joyfulness are proven to be contagious and encourage more kind behavior (also known as altruism) by the giver and recipient.

Increased Peer Acceptance

Research on the subject has determined that kindness increases our ability to form meaningful connections with others. Kind, happy children enjoy greater peer acceptance because they are well liked. Better-than-average mental health is reported in classrooms that practice more inclusive behavior due to an even distribution of popularity.

Greater Sense of Belonging and Improved Self-Esteem

Studies show that people experience a "helper's high" when they do a good deed. This rush of endorphins creates a lasting sense of pride, wellbeing, and an enriched sense of belonging. It's reported that even small acts of kindness heighten our sense of wellbeing, increase energy, and give a wonderful feeling of optimism and self-worth.

Improved Health and Less Stress

Being kind can trigger a release of the hormone oxytocin, which has a number of physical and mental health benefits. Oxytocin can significantly increase a person's level of happiness and reduce stress levels. It also protects the heart by lowering blood pressure and reducing free radicals and inflammation, which incidentally speed up the aging process.

Increased Feelings of Gratitude

When children are part of projects that help others less fortunate than themselves, it provides them with a real sense of perspective. Helping someone else makes them appreciate the good things in their own lives.

Better Concentration and Improved Results

Kindness is a key ingredient that helps children feel good about themselves as it increases serotonin levels. This important chemical affects learning, memory, mood, sleep, health, and digestion. Having a positive outlook enables greater attention spans and more creative thinking to produce better results at school.

Reduced Depression

Dr. Wayne Dyer, an internationally-renowned author and speaker, says that an act of kindness triggers an increase in serotonin, a natural chemical responsible for improving mood. This boost in happiness occurs not only in both the giver and receiver of kindness, but also in anyone who witnesses it. This makes kindness a powerful, natural antidepressant.

Less Bullying

Shanetia Clark and Barbara Marinak are Penn State Harrisburg faculty researchers. They say, "Unlike previous generations, today's adolescents are victimizing each other at alarming rates." They argue that adolescent bullying and violence can be confronted with in-school programs that integrate "kindness -- the antithesis of victimization."

Many traditional anti-bullying programs focus on the negative actions that cause anxiety in children. When kindness and compassion are taught instead, it fosters the positive behavior that's expected. Promoting its psychological opposite is key in reducing bullying to create warm and inclusive school environments.

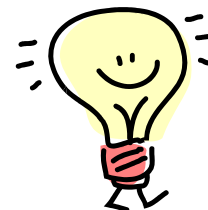
Maurice Elias, Professor at Rutgers University Psychology Department, is also [an advocate for kindness](#). He says:

As a citizen, grandparent, father, and professional, it is clear to me that the mission of schools must include teaching kindness. Without it, communities, families, schools, and classrooms become places of incivility where lasting learning is unlikely to take place . . . [W]e need to be prepared to teach kindness, because it can be delayed due to maltreatment early in life. It can be smothered under the weight of poverty, and it can be derailed by victimization later in life . . . Kindness can be taught, and it is a defining aspect of civilized human life. It belongs in every home, school, neighborhood, and society.

It's become quite clear that modern education must encompass more than just academics, and that matters of the heart must be taken seriously and nurtured as a matter of priority.



Thoughts



Watch this video and picture your students (and your children) in the last frame!

[\(Click here for video.\)](#)

The education that many of us as adults received in our own schooling was focused on memorization of facts and information. It was an education designed to prepare us for our future. However, the memorization of facts does not prepare our current students for the future employment opportunities they will face. Our own children will likely have multiple career moves, work with technology that we can't even begin to imagine, and be required to adapt to an ever changing work environment. It requires flexibility, creativity, adaptability, and a few other "skill" words that have not yet been coined.

Watch the video in the link above. Our children's world will not be a world where they are asked to provide answers. It will be necessary for them to **ask questions** and **solve complex problems** in high functioning and dynamic teams.

With the current education we provide, are we as a community doing our best to prepare our children for their future?

The author of this article below bemoans "standardization" in a world of "personalization."

We owe our children every opportunity to be successful.

K-12 Schools Need More Steve Jobs and Less Bill Gates By David Bernstein in www.edweek.org

Few voices have been more influential in recent education debates than that of Microsoft co-founder and mega-philanthropist Bill Gates. At a gathering of teachers last March in Washington, **Gates repeated his endorsement of the Common Core State Standards**, arguing that having academic standards in the United States will promote classroom innovation and help students compete globally. Using the analogy of the nonstandard electrical outlet, he explained, "If you had 50 different plug types, appliances wouldn't be available and would be very expensive." A universal plug type, he said, encourages product competition and variety, and cost parity.

We have a tendency to revere the counsel of successful business leaders on public-policy issues, as if the know-how to turn a profit in a particular industry at a specific time gives them superhuman insight and the ability to handle any challenge that comes their way. Business leaders, however, can't agree among themselves about what works best when it comes to commerce, let alone public policy, which is one reason there's a new business book released every week contradicting the last one published.

In contemplating the future of education, we'd do well to countenance the voice of a man with an equally impressive business pedigree, that of Gates' sometimes friend, sometimes nemesis, and fellow college dropout: the late Steve Jobs.

Gates' views on education and the economy clearly grew out of his experience at Microsoft, whose successful standardization of the PC's operating system—Windows—could, like the uniform electrical outlet, also make the case for standardization in education. Gates' business model is that of a large company that dominated an industry, similar to the dominance of such entrepreneurial titans of the past as John D. Rockefeller and Andrew Carnegie. These men also influenced the development of the modern education system, patterned after the factory itself.

In this decidedly 20th-century outlook, big companies were the engines of economic growth and required large, skilled workforces to power them. The purpose of education then was (and, I believe, still is) to prepare young Americans to receive the mantle from business leaders of corporate entities, such as Microsoft today, to carry them into the future.

But a **different philosophy emerges from the story of Steve Jobs.**

While he never publicly argued a particular view on education policy, Jobs made clear in his biography by Walter Isaacson that school was never a good fit for him. “[Schools] came close to really beating any curiosity out of me,” he told Isaacson. Jobs possessed a very different sensibility for business and human nature, which has played out in the competition between Apple and Microsoft.

In his **2005 now-famous Stanford University commencement address**, Jobs noted that after dropping out of Reed College, no longer having to take “the normal classes,” he decided to take one on calligraphy. “**Much of what I stumbled into by following my curiosity and intuition turned out to be priceless later on,**” he said. “[T]en years later, when we were designing the first Macintosh computer, it all came back to me. ... If I had never dropped in on that single course in college, the Mac would have never had multiple typefaces or proportionally spaced fonts. And since Windows just copied the Mac, it's likely that no personal computer would have them.”

For Jobs, education was not an orderly process of acquiring a defined set of skills. It was **a personal journey of exploring interests and following passions.** Jobs' relatively few public remarks on education are a far cry from Gates' comprehensive road map for education change. Instead, they provide an alternative framework for thinking about K-12 challenges and the health of our economy.

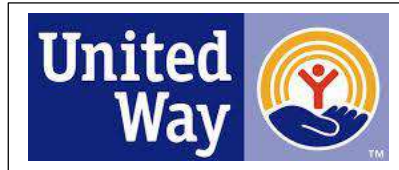
America's economy is shifting rapidly right beneath our feet. With the globalization of labor, American workers, as we can see from vacant factory buildings across the country, have been steadily losing out to lower-wage earners in China and elsewhere. Years ago, global competition left its ugly mark exclusively on lower-level factory jobs, but now it wreaks havoc on higher-skilled information-age jobs as well. A computer programmer in China or India may be able to do the same job for a fraction of the cost of the average American programmer.

If we educate American kids on the same defined set of skills that China's education system imparts, as Gates insists we do, one could imagine the day when the salary of lower-paid workers in the developing world are more competitive than those of higher-paid American workers.

For the United States to be competitive, it must offer—and educate for—something that cannot be produced at a lower cost elsewhere. That something is innovation.

How do we create a generation of innovators? **Standardization and testing are not a platform for innovation,** contrary to Gates' argument. They produce competent workers in a stagnant and aging industrial economy. The real platform for innovation is a highly diversified, stimulating educational environment—one that encourages students to explore their curiosity and pursue their passions.

Now is the time to double down on diversification, *not uniformity*; on creativity and innovation, *not one-size-fits-all skill sets*; on innovation and entrepreneurship, *not competence*. It is these attributes that will set Americans apart in the global economy. The industrial mindset of Bill Gates is the wrong one for educating the next generation in our shifting economy. We could really use Steve Jobs' wisdom on education right now.



Give to the United Way! Contact Robin Drobiak.



Do one kind thing every day this week.
Have a great week.
Paul K. Smith



Never look down on anybody, unless you are helping him up.

~ Jesse Jackson

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.