

## Griswold Public Schools Educating for Excellence

### Superintendent's Update – November 18, 2013

*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*

A man's errors are his portals of discovery.

~James Joyce

### Calendar

- **Tuesday, November 19 – Teacher of the Year Ceremony at the Bushnell in Hartford, 5:00 PM.** Erin Palonen will represent all of our great teachers at the Connecticut Teacher of Year annual ceremony.
- **Wednesday, November 20 – GES School Family Community Partnership in the GES Library, 3:30 PM.**
- **Wednesday, November 20 – Public Hearing on the GHS Roof Project in the GHS Cafeteria, 6:00 PM.** There will be a third PUBLIC HEARING to make sure that everyone has a chance to be informed about this important project. In addition, there will be a town-wide **REFERENDUM on Tuesday, December 3** to vote on the replacement of the GHS ROOF. This \$3 million project will be reimbursed at the rate of 72.14% by the State of Connecticut. Need more information? Come to the Public Hearing!
- **Thursday, November 21 – BOE Budget Subcommittee Negotiations with the GEA in the GMS Library, 5:30 PM.**
- **Friday, November 22 – GMS PTO Basket Festival and Book Fair in the GMS Cafeteria and Gym, 5:00 PM**
- **Sunday, November 24 – The 13<sup>th</sup> 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 in the gazebo and receive a gift. Free hot chocolate and treats available
- **Sunday, November 24 – GMS Select Choir performs at the Providence Bruins game.** The game starts at 3:00 PM! Tickets are available through Kathy Bocciarelli.
- **Monday, November 25 – 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.
- **Tuesday, November 26 – BOE Budget Subcommittee Negotiations with the GEA in the GMS Library, 5:30 PM.**
- **Tuesday, November 26 – Mr. GHS in the GHS Auditorium, 7:00 PM.**
- **Wednesday, November 27 – Early Dismissal/Half Day.**
- **Wednesday, November 27 – Griswold Booster Club Pasta Dinner at the French Club, 5:30-7:00 PM.** Adults \$7.00; Children under 12 - \$4.00.
- **Thursday, November 28 – Thanksgiving, No School.**
- **Thursday, November 28 – Griswold Booster Club 11<sup>th</sup> 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. Contact Pam Getter at 860-376-6615 or Glenn LaBossiere at 860-376-7636 for more information.
- **Thursday, November 28 – Thanksgiving Football Game vs. Plainfield (Home), 10:00 AM.** A little football is a great way to begin the celebration!



- Monday, December 2 – BOE Budget Subcommittee Negotiations with the GEA in the GMS Library, 5:30 PM.



- **Tuesday, December 3 – REFERENDUM on the GHS Roof Project.** Please mark this date and remember to vote!

- Wednesday, December 4 – GPS Building Committee in the GES Library, 6:00 PM.
- Wednesday, December 4 – Griswold High School Parents Advisory Council (PAC) - GHS Library, 7:00 PM.
- Friday, December 6 – Children First Griswold Meeting at GHS (Room 3103), 9:30 AM.
- Monday, December 9 – Board of Education Meeting in the GMS Library, 6:00 PM
- Tuesday, December 10 – Grade 7 Winter Concert in the GMS Auditorium, 7:00 PM.
- Wednesday, December 11– Grade 8 Winter Concert in the GMS Auditorium, 7:00 PM.
- Wednesday, December 11 – “Coffee and Chat” Superintendent’s Advisory Council in the Superintendent’s Office at GMS, 7:30 AM and/or 8:45 AM.
- Wednesday, December 11 – BOE Policy Subcommittee in the Superintendent’s Office, 4:00 PM.
- Thursday, December 12 – GMS PTO in the GMS Library, 6:00 PM.
- Thursday, December 12 – BOE Budget Subcommittee Negotiations with the GEA in the GMS Library, 5:30 PM.
- Thursday, December 12 – GES Grade 3 Winter Concert in the GES Cafetorium, 6:15 & 7:30 PM
- Tuesday, December 17 – GHS Choral Holiday Concert in the GHS Auditorium, 7:00 PM.
- Wednesday, December 18 – GES Grade 4 Winter Concert in the GES Cafetorium, 6:15 & 7:30 PM.
- Thursday, December 19 – GHS Instrumental Holiday Concert in the GHS Auditorium, 7:00 PM.
- Friday, December 20 – (Full Day of School) Winter Break begins at end of school day.
- Thursday, January 2 – Classes resume in 2014.

*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).*

## Notes

### ***GHS Roof Update: Referendum - Tuesday, December 3.***

Thank you to those who attended the Public Hearings on the GHS Roof Project on Tuesday, October 29 and Wednesday, November 6. There will be one more public hearing to make sure that everyone has the information they need to make an informed vote at the referendum. The **Public Meeting** is scheduled for **Wednesday, November 20 at 6:00 PM in the GHS Cafeteria**. The town-wide **referendum** will be held on **Tuesday, December 3**.

### ***Griswold Board of Education Meeting Highlights (11/12/13)***

- The Board recognized the teachers and administrators of GHS for their achievement as the #1 ranked high school in Connecticut for the third year in a row based on the highest scores in annual testing of career and technical subjects.
- The Board invited the public to address budget items and programs they would like to see included in the 2014-15 Budget. GES and GMS teacher, Amanda Richmond spoke about additional music staffing to allow string players who have begun in Grades 5 & 6 to continue into Grades 7 & 8. (**Note: There will be another chance for the public to address the Board concerning budget requests on Monday, November 25 in the GMS Library at 6:00 PM.**)

- The GHS Girls' Cross Country team and their coach, Mike Flynn were honored as the Class S State Champions for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year in a row. The team has been ECC Champions for 14 straight years and the Class S Championship marked the team's 5<sup>th</sup> first place finish in the state in the last 8 years. Senior Alyssa Brehler came in first place in the Class S championship race and Sophomore, Meagan Perez came in second place.
- Kimberly Brunelle, Board member, was honored as this was her last meeting. She was recognized for service to the Griswold Board of Education from 2001-2013. The Board welcomed returning members Laurie Sorder and Stuart Norman. The Board also introduced new member, Mary Beth Malin.
- The Board voted to purchase banners for the campus that are attached to the light poles. There will be three banners 22" X 60" for each school. [Click here to see draft copy of the design.](#)
- The Board set the date for one more Public Hearing for the GHS Roof: Wednesday, November 20 at 6:00 PM in the GHS Cafeteria.

### ***Get Healthy Griswold!***



**Our goal is to improve the health and safety of the Griswold Public Schools community.**

We're looking to continue last year's winter exercise groups, walking groups, Zumba, and Yoga. Keep reading this section for Updates. Please let us know if you are interested in leading a group in your school. Let's help each other stay fit and stay healthy!

### ***November Employee of the Month***

**EMPLOYEE of the MONTH**  
**November 2013**

**Heather Edge**  
**Technology Aide**  
**Griswold Public Schools**



### ***Congratulations Kathy!***



Congratulations to **Kathy Caisse**, the Griswold Public Schools **Instructional Assistant of the Year for 2012-13**. She was recognized on November 14th at the state conference for instructional assistants. We are proud that she represented Griswold so well! Look for nomination forms for this year's Instructional Assistant of the Year in February 2014!

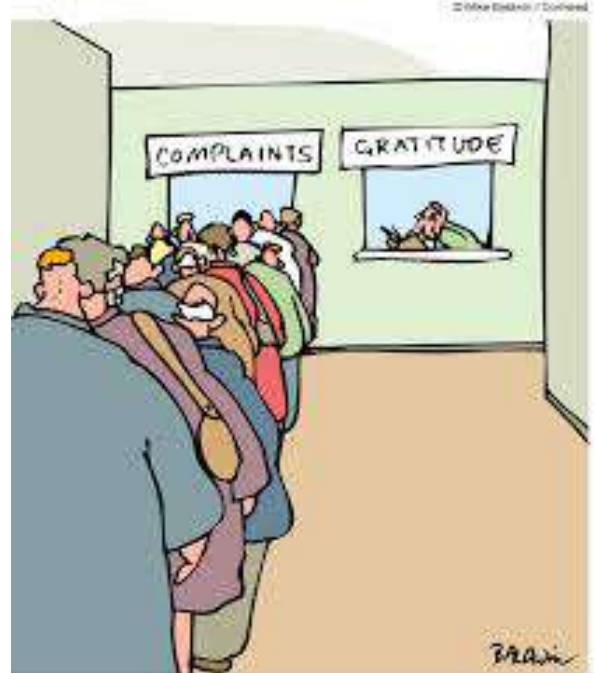
## Thoughts

It's the time of the year for gratitude. Help our students be grateful!

*"Studies show that grateful youth have higher GPAs; experience more positive emotions; and, ultimately, go on to live more meaningful lives. In addition, gratitude among middle school students can foster an increased sense of hope and trust in others and fuel a desire to give back to their community."*

There is now research on **gratitude** that has real implications for schools and our students. I am urging everyone during the stress of the holiday season to help our students identify reasons they have to be grateful.

It would be good for all of us to do this, too!



**Tapping into the Power of Gratitude** from *Education Update* at [www.ascd.org](http://www.ascd.org) by Sarah McKibben

*No longer just a "soft skill," gratitude can lead to higher grades and life satisfaction among students.*

With Thanksgiving fast approaching, gratitude will once again take its place at the center of our tables, nestled somewhere between the mashed potatoes and cranberry relish. Although gratitude may be an element of our family traditions or spiritual practices, emerging research points to gratitude as a potential bridge between students' academic and social well-being.

Studies show that grateful youth have higher GPAs; experience more positive emotions; and, ultimately, go on to live more meaningful lives. In addition, gratitude among middle school students can foster an increased sense of hope and trust in others and fuel a desire to give back to their community.

Giacomo Bono, a professor at California State University, Fullerton, has been at the forefront of that research and believes that the benefits of gratitude can be realized across the K–12 pipeline.

The most recent findings, presented by Bono and his colleagues at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, suggest that practicing gratitude at a young age promotes later development of self-control and self-regulation, which Bono says are resources for lifelong success.

Not surprisingly, the Greater Good Science Center at the University of California, Berkeley, finds that gratitude is good for schools because it "helps students feel more connected to their school, family, and community."

"It's very intuitive," says Vicki Zakrzewski, the center's education director. "Gratitude helps foster positive emotions, and we know from research that positive emotions help students with the learning process [by keeping students' stress responses down]."

Zakrzewski defines gratitude as "affirming that there are good things in the world—gifts and benefits that we've received—and recognizing that these sources of goodness come from outside ourselves."

It's a skill that can be taught, albeit, in tune with developmental readiness. Bono contends that gratitude can manifest in kids as young as 6 or 7 by linking positive events to the people who help foster them. Usually, though,

gratitude doesn't fully materialize until ages 10–14, when students become less egocentric and develop the ability to empathize.

To incorporate the discipline early on, Zakrzewski encourages teachers to have students say *why* they're grateful. "Generally, by about 1st or 2nd grade, students can get that," says Zakrzewski. "But teachers have to model that again and again for students to think more deeply in terms of why they're grateful for someone [or something]."

### **Gratitude in Practice**

Last year, Kimberly Schonert-Reichl, a professor at the University of British Columbia, worked on gratitude interventions with 35 teachers as part of a social-emotional learning research project. She recalls how the practice completely transformed a 2nd grade classroom. Over the course of eight weeks, students learned about the concept of gratitude, practiced it regularly, and began using gratitude journals.

They became so excited about the project that they rushed into the classroom each morning to write down what they were thankful for in their journals. Parents took notice and said that family conversations on the drive to school had turned to thankfulness and appreciation. Students also used the journals as a coping mechanism by taking them into a quiet area of the classroom to read when they were upset.

"It's so easy to get caught up in what goes wrong in our day," says Schonert-Reichl, but making gratitude a routine through repeated exercises can take teachers and students out of automatic pilot.

Pam Reed, an English language arts teacher at Buckeye Middle School in Columbus, Ohio, discovered that her students, many of whom live in high poverty, have "never really been exposed to gratitude."

"The whole concept of thankfulness and gratitude is very foreign to middle schoolers, period," says Reed. "And especially for kids in high poverty, it's really something that's hard to do: to step outside themselves and think about what [they are] really grateful for."

To give them that opportunity, Reed exposes her students to a range of social justice issues and has them participate in at least four service-learning projects each year. During one Common Core–embedded project, students studied genocide and then heard about the plight firsthand from a young Rwandan survivor. "Her story was horrific yet inspiring because she still shows so much gratitude for the things she has in her life today," says Reed. Fueled by the experience, the class hosted a celebration of Africa to raise money for the cause.

As a prewriting strategy, Reed assigns A–Z gratitude lists, which add an element of structure to journaling. Reed writes her own list on the board to model specificity by noting gifts like "hot water" or her "daughter's smile" that elicit gratitude. She might also have students write lists on behalf of characters or historical figures they're studying.

Reed's sweeping attention to gratitude has paid off. "I've never had a fight in my classroom," she says. "There's just more empathy and my students seem happier."

### **Across the Continuum**

Deidre Hughes, a professor at California State University, Fullerton, believes that gratitude practices "should be a continuation through the entire education cycle." She recently began to incorporate gratitude and mindfulness into her developmental reading course.

First, she boosts mindfulness by beginning each class with a mini-meditation session to redirect students' conversations. Then, while taking roll, she asks students to turn to the person next to them and say something they are grateful for about that person or just in general. Because she typically has a small class, students know one another well enough to meaningfully engage in the exercise. Hughes also ends the course with a gratitude circle, in which students take turns discussing what they are thankful for from the course. Last semester, while a few students talked about a specific strategy they learned, others pointed to the social relationships they forged.

"At the community college, having connections in a classroom can prevent a student from dropping out," says Hughes.

Hughes's efforts dovetail with a recent push by California Community Colleges to focus on the habits of mind that help students succeed in college. "It's more than just addressing the cognitive realm; we need to also be looking at the social and emotional realms of students' development," she says.



## Be the Change

Zakrzewski emphasizes that the most effective way to nurture those social-emotional skills is to model—or better yet—embody them.

That can mean showing gratitude for kids, even middle schoolers, when they are at their worst. "As a teacher, the best time to tell a student that you're grateful for them is when you're absolutely not," Reed says.

Balance your approach; kids can spot a phony, warns Zakrzewski. "The more a teacher can practice gratitude in his or her own life, the more it will become a part of who they are, the more they will naturally express it in class," she says.

Gratitude may start with teacher modeling, but it doesn't end there. "It builds a bond that is never going to be undone," says Reed.

"When you're grateful, you're positively transformed," Bono adds. "You tend to take yourself more seriously, you value others more, and it strengthens your relationships."

## Cultivating Gratitude in the Classroom from Education Update at [www.ascd.org](http://www.ascd.org)

### ✓ Think intentions, costs, and benefits.

Researcher Giacomo Bono suggests that when students express gratitude, educators should encourage them to notice intentions (the thought behind the gift that they received), appreciate costs (someone went out of her way or made sacrifices to help them), and recognize the benefits (someone provided them with a gift or a kind act that has personal value).

### ✓ Use a gratitude journal.

This may be one of the simplest ways to increase gratitude. In a 2008 study by Bono and Jeffrey Froh, middle school students who regularly wrote about what they were thankful for reported greater optimism and a more positive outlook on their school experience.

### ✓ Lead gratitude activities.

Have students write a thank-you letter to someone in their lives, participate in gratitude circles, or contribute to a gratitude wall or bulletin board.

### ✓ Pair students to increase cooperation.

Gratitude can emerge organically in mixed-ability grouping that allows students to complement one another's strengths.

### ✓ Use question prompts.

For example, when students come into school on Monday mornings, ask them what their favorite part of the weekend was, says Bono. Then, follow up with, *Did someone help make that happen?* Or, if they faced a particular challenge, ask, *Did someone help you overcome it?* Bono explains, "It's easy in the day-to-day conversations that you have with a child to talk about the people who were responsible [for a positive event]."

### ✓ Encourage service learning.

Service learning gives students an opportunity to experience and reflect on the struggles of others. Each discipline poses opportunities for service learning around a social justice question or authentic community need.

### ✓ Model it!

The key to cultivating gratitude in your classroom is to make it part of your own routine. By modeling gratitude, you encourage students to do the same, and, according to the Greater Good Science Center, teachers who practice gratitude "feel more satisfied and accomplished, and less emotionally exhausted, possibly reducing teacher burnout."

Model gratitude and be grateful – and help others to be grateful for what they have!  
Have a great week!  
Paul K. Smith



The only way to make sense out of change is to plunge into it, move with it, and join the dance.

~Alan Watts