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Griswold Public Schools Educating for Excellence

Superintendent's Update – December 8, 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

Creativity is now as important in education as literacy, and we should treat it with the same status.

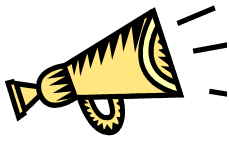
~ Ken Robinson

Calendar

- **Monday, December 8 – Board of Education Meeting in the GMS Library, 6:00 PM**
- **Tuesday, December 9 – BOE Policy Subcommittee in the Superintendent's Office, 9:00 AM.**
- **Tuesday, December 9 – Griswold Elementary School PTO Meeting in the GES Library, 6:00 PM.**
- **Tuesday, December 9 – Grade 7 Winter Concert in the GMS Auditorium, 7:00 PM.**
- **Wednesday, December 10 – “Coffee and Chat” Superintendent's Advisory Council in the Superintendent's Office at GMS, 8:45 AM.** Parents and community members are welcome to attend this monthly meeting in order to get accurate information first hand. At the December meeting we will discuss the school budget for 2015-16 and the updates to our vision, *Griswold 2022* - soon to be known as *Griswold 2025*! The meeting is held at 8:45 AM in the Superintendent's Office at the Griswold Middle School. If you cannot attend the meeting, you are always welcome to make an appointment with the Superintendent for your own personal conversation. Call 860-376-7600 to schedule a time that is convenient for you.
- **Wednesday, December 10 – Grade 8 Winter Concert in the GMS Auditorium, 7:00 PM.**
- **Thursday, December 11 – Griswold Middle School PTO in the GMS Library, 6:00 PM.**
- **Thursday, December 11 – Grade 3 Winter Concert in the GES Cafetorium, 6:00 and 7:15 PM. Please note times.**
- **Friday, December 12 – Moment of Silence in the Griswold Public Schools at 9:30 AM.** This moment of silence will be in remembrance of the students, teachers, and school community of Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, CT (Second anniversary date is December 14.)
- **Tuesday, December 16 – High School Choral Holiday Concert in the GHS Auditorium, 7:00 PM.**
- **Wednesday, December 17 – GPS Building Committee in the GES Library, 6:00 PM.**
- **Wednesday, December 17 – Grade 4 Winter Concert in the GES Cafetorium, 6:00 and 7:15 PM.**
- **Thursday, December 18 – High School Instrumental Holiday Concert in the GHS Auditorium, 7:00 PM.**
- **Sunday, December 21 – First Day of Winter.**
- **Monday, December 22 – Board of Education Meeting in the GMS Library, 6:00 PM**
- **Tuesday, December 23 – Early Dismissal/Half Day.** Winter Vacation begins at end of school day.
- **Monday, January 5 – Classes resume in 2015.**

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

Save the dates for 2015-16 Budget Meetings:



*You should be at these meetings and be part of the budget process!
It is crucial that parents understand what is at stake in this year's budget.
If the school budget is at 0% again this year, all stipends, four teachers,
and additional instructional assistants will be eliminated.*

- **Monday, January 12 – Board of Education Meeting in the GMS Library, 6:00 PM.**
 - At this meeting the Superintendent of Schools will make the initial presentation of the 2015-16 Budget to the Board of Education.
- **Wednesday, January 14 – Superintendent's Advisory Council in the Superintendent's Office, 7:30 AM & 8:45 AM.**
 - This month's Advisory meeting will feature a presentation of 2015-16 Budget to parents by the Superintendent of Schools.
- **Wednesday, January 14 – Optional faculty meeting for GMS/GHS in the GMS Library, 2:30 PM.**
 - Budget presentation to teachers and staff members of GMS/GHS
- **Thursday, January 15 – Optional faculty meeting for GES in the GES Library, 3:45 PM.**
 - Budget presentation to teachers and staff members of GES
- **Tuesday, January 20 – Special Board of Education Meeting in the GMS Library, 6:00 PM**
 - Budget information from the GES, GMS, and GHS Principals at Special Board of Education Meeting
- **Monday, January 26 – Board of Education Meeting in the GMS Library, 6:00 PM**
 - Budget information by Technology, Curriculum, and Special Education at Board of Education Meeting
- **Monday, February 2 – Special Board of Education Meeting in the GMS Auditorium, 6:00 PM.**
 - This meeting will be the annual Public Hearing on the school's 2015-16 Budget. There will be time for questions from the audience.
- **Wednesday, February 4 – Target Meeting in the GMS Library, 5:30 Dinner PM & 6:00 PM Meeting.**
 - The February Target Meeting will focus on the Town and School Budget. This is an audience participation meeting! Dinner and childcare are both available.
- **Monday, February 9 – Board of Education Meeting in the GMS Library, 6:00 PM**
 - The meeting will feature a Budget discussion and deliberations by the Board of Education.
- **Monday, February 23 – Board of Education Meeting in the GMS Library, 6:30 PM**
 - At this meeting the Board of Education will adopt the 2015-16 Budget for presentation to the Board of Finance in March.

All members of the staff and public are invited to attend and participate in the above meetings. At these meetings participants will get accurate information. Don't pay attention to the purposely misleading information on social media sites when you can get accurate information in person directly from school officials!

Notes

■ **Griswold holiday shopping starts here...**



Griswold Charm bracelets are available for the holidays! You'll support GHS Project Safe Grad 2015 with your purchase. Show your pride and help support a safe graduation party for the seniors, the Class of 2015. The charms are custom made with the Wolverine paw and a green and black bead. All charms are 100% American Pewter with a silver tone.

Available for \$20 - Contact Lisa Willard at ghsprojectsafe@att.net.

■ **Buying the right type of technology is important...**

Are you in the market for new technology? Read the information below from *Educational Leadership*.

Dear Parents, Guardians, Teachers, and anyone considering purchasing a computer:

As the holiday season nears, gift buying will move into high gear for a lot of us. I am sure that some sort of technology device is on many of your children's (or you own) wish lists. Products like the iPad Mini, the Microsoft Surface, various Android tablets like the Nexus and the Galaxy, and color e-book readers such as the Kindle Fire and the Nook, along with netbooks, Chromebooks, and laptops, are adding a lot of choices and confusion to the computing market. Smartphones—both iPhones and Androids—are popular with many children and young adults and are surprisingly powerful. We thought it might be helpful to outline some specifications about what any device you buy your children should have if you'd like them to use it for schoolwork. Although we won't recommend specific models or kinds of devices, if you buy a computer or similar equipment for your child, we encourage you to buy a device that features:

- *An 802.11x wireless networking capability.*
- *A virus protection program, if purchasing a Windows or Macintosh desktop or laptop computer.*
- *A color screen with a minimum resolution of 1024 × 600 pixels.*
- *An on-screen or external keyboard for entering text.*
- *An audio output for earbuds or headphones.*
- *A minimum of 6 hours of use from one battery charge.*
- *A full-functioning, recent web browser (such as Firefox, Explorer, or Safari) that will allow access to GoogleApps for Education tools and documents, Moodle 2.0, our state's content databases, and our school library catalog and e-book collection.*
- *A case that will protect the device.*

Although these features are less essential, you might consider getting a device with

- *A camera that takes both still photos and video (front- and rear-facing cameras are most versatile).*
- *A microphone.*
- *The ability to run Flash software (to view some online videos and animations).*
- *Machine-based productivity software (such as Microsoft Office, Open Office, or iWork).*
- *The capacity to run graphing calculator software.*

Many smartphones, netbooks, tablets, or full-sized laptops (new or used) can do most of these things. You may wish to bring the above list into the store to ask salespeople whether the devices you're considering meet the requirements. But remember, there is no perfect device. When writing a paper, solving a math problem, researching a topic, or collaborating with fellow students, technology can help your child do his or her schoolwork and develop good technology skills along the way—and maybe even play Angry Birds when he or she is finished.

From: "A Buying Guide for Parents" by Doug Johnson in *Educational Leadership*, November 2014, <http://bit.ly/1FGH000>.

Thoughts

"After School" is just as important as "During School."

The school day for our students should not end after the last class of the day.



There are tremendous opportunities for our students who take advantage of our athletics and the very limited after school clubs. For high school athletes who participate on our teams (that have not been cut due to budget constraints), their experience is very positive. There are very limited athletic teams in middle school and those too are also high quality.

As a school district our shortcoming is very apparent when the school day ends for our non-athletes. While there are limited musical activities during certain portions of the year, we lack a structured after school program that includes additional academic support and growth opportunities such as clubs that promote pre-engineering, robotics, and video technology. We fail to offer year-round after school academic tutorial opportunities. While there are some clubs and a few remaining stipends to support them at the high school, there is virtually nothing after school for our middle school students and elementary students.

Research clearly shows how beneficial structured after school expanded learning programs are for our students. Students can explore areas of interest and have access to academic support. Maintaining connection with adult mentors is a great gain in these types of after school opportunities. Structured post-school activities prevent students from getting into trouble after school – often regarded as the prime time for students to get into serious jeopardy.

The only reason these programs do not exist is the lack of the relatively small amount of funding required for them.

There is student interest. There is adult mentor interest. There are volunteers and teachers ready to help.

Unfortunately, these programs are being eliminated systematically by budgets which do not support the “during school” programs. In 2014-15, the school was forced to reduce exiting teachers and instructional assistants in basic areas of academics. All after school stipends were eliminated as a result of five referenda. The generous support of local business was very much appreciated and helped to restore some of the stipends – but the reality is that only six of the after school programs were returned with business support.

The school is required to provide the “during school” programs that are mandated – and yet each year we whittle down getting closer to only those things that are mandated.

After school time matters just as much to our students and is no less important in individual student growth, development, and maturity than the during school hours.

Griswold owes our children more, not less. The prevailing budget climate is very harmful to the future of our students.

Start coming to the budget meetings listed in the calendar section above and find out just how perilous the current funding is to our students and this very proud school district.

Report: After School Programs Can Help Teens at Risk of Dropping Out from the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABE)

The hours between 3-7 p.m. can be risky for many high school students, as they are often alone and unsupervised. Violent juvenile crimes occur most frequently in the hours immediately following the end of school on school days, according to federal data. After-school programs, long an option for working parents of younger children, can be an important tool in preventing at-risk teens from dropping out.

About 2 million high school students participate in an after-school program, according to a report released last month by the Afterschool Alliance, which advocates for quality, affordable after-school programs. While the specifics of after-school programs vary greatly across the U.S., many offer homework help, career exploration and other academic enrichment opportunities that may not fit into the traditional school day, such as learning Mandarin Chinese or computer coding.

"Generally, when you think of after-school you would think of the school football team," says Jodi Grant, executive director of the Afterschool Alliance. Though there are programs that offer students opportunities to play sports, she says, the environment is usually much less competitive.

Students who participate in what are known as expanded learning opportunities, which includes after-school programs, show higher rates of school attendance, lower dropout rates and improved attitudes toward school, according to a 2011 report. Grant says that after-school programs can be a successful dropout prevention tool because they address

three key indicators of students leaving school which are attendance, behavior and course completion. "You have to go to school to participate in after-school," she says. "There's just a direct correlation."

Besides giving students something to look forward to when coming to school, students in after-school have less opportunity to be involved in illegal activities, such as drug use and gang involvement, during the critical hours immediately following school, she says. Grant says teachers reported students in after-school programs improved their behavior in class. Plus, the additional tutoring and homework help often provided in after-school programs can help students improve their grades.

However, while after-school programs have shown proven benefits, demand is not being met. More than 4.6 million high school students not currently enrolled in an after-school program would participate if one were available, according to the Afterschool Alliance's analysis. There is a need for more of these programs.

Source: "After-school Programs Can Help Teens at Risk of Dropping Out," by Alexandra Pannoni, *U.S. News and World Report*, Nov. 3, 2014

Enjoy the holiday season and have a great week!
Paul K. Smith



If everyone is thinking alike, then somebody isn't thinking.

~ George S. Patton



Get school cancellations directly from the Superintendent right at the moment the decision is made!
If you would like text message cancellation notices and other reminders about Griswold Public School events directly from the Superintendent of Schools please visit <https://www.remind.com/join/grisw> and simply enter your mobile phone number.

Please note that this APP will only be used by the Superintendent of Schools and information is not shared with any other party.