

News From The Gloucester Public Schools

Our mission is for all students to be successful, engaged, lifelong learners

Survey Of Parents And Guardians

*A warm thank you to families who responded to the survey. Over 600 responses were received. A summary of the results is **attached** to this newsletter. The individual school results have been used to inform the development of School Improvement Plans.*

O'Maley Students A Hit At The Massachusetts Institute Of Technology

"This is the best group we've had"- is how a Massachusetts Institute of Technology instructor described the twenty O'Maley Middle School students who participated in the two weeks of Science activities based at MIT and the Gloucester Maritime Heritage Center. Funded by the Gloucester Education Foundation (GEF), the summer program is part of the SEA Initiative, an ambitious effort to support the introduction of innovative hands-on Science.

Did You Know That?

Three of this year's GHS graduating class are heading to Harvard, Stanford and MIT.

The district met the No Child Left Behind progress standard in the aggregate in each of the last 3 years.

Coach Paul Ingram has been invited to coach The South in the Agganis All-Star game in July.

The Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, Dr. Shayne Trubisz, manages approximately \$3m a year in grants and also serves as our Title 1 Director.

*This year's GEF sponsored Arts Festival will take place on Saturday, May 9th at several city center venues. A summary of district arts programs is **attached**.*

The Gloucester Fishermen's Athletic Association is bringing a major Triathlon to Gloucester on August 9th. The event is attracting international competitors, including Gloucester's Janda Ricci- Munn.

More On Science

- ❖ An Environmental Protection Agency grant is helping the Gloucester Maritime Heritage Center to extend our 3rd and 4th grade maritime studies program to all elementary schools this year.*
- ❖ The GEF is supporting a "hands-on" field study program involving a variety of outdoor learning experiences for all students in Grades 2 through 6.*
- ❖ A GHS class is learning Basic Physics through Robotics this year – also with the help of the GEF.*
- ❖ The GEF has obtained funding to extend the SEA Initiative and our innovative partnership with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for a further two years.*

Proposed Charter School

At its meeting on February 24, 2009 the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approved the establishment of the Gloucester Community Arts Charter School. In making its decision the Board neither followed its own procedures nor assessed the proposal against all the required criteria. The approval is conditional upon the state providing the minimum state aid required by law in the next fiscal year. If the school is established the first financial impact will be felt in 2011-12. There is no need for the School Committee to take any action at this stage. It is estimated that the earliest year that elementary schools would be impacted in any way is the fall of 2013. The School Committee's aim is to maintain the system of local neighborhood schools. There is no truth in rumors that the committee is about to close a school or re-open the Fuller facility next year.

The district's aim will be to continue to offer the best that we can for the whole community with the available funds.

The Plan For Effective Learning Communities Revisited

There is some confusion about the relationship between the recent restructuring of the elementary schools and the Plan For Effective Learning Communities. The restructuring which was made necessary by an inadequate budget was NOT what was planned, except that the district has tried to maintain a system of local neighborhood schools. Under the Plan For Effective Learning Communities Plum Cove would have been combined with Beeman on the Beeman site, a new school would have been opened west of the Annisquam, and all the elementary schools would have been updated.

GHS Students Top The Bill At Chamber Education Breakfast

The format of the Chamber of Commerce's "Education Breakfast" changed this year. High school students took over from their Superintendents to talk about their district and their experience of school. The general consensus was that GHS seniors Sarah Johnson and Alex Trotsky stole the show with their mature and thoughtful presentations.

Potter Goes To Harvard

Those who visited the Arts Festival at the Cape Ann Historical Museum last may will recall Courtland Kelly's extraordinary vase. Courtland recently heard that she has been accepted by Harvard. We were surprised to learn that the university is more interested in Courtland as a national level diver than as a potter.

GFAA Innovates To Support The Athletics Program

The Gloucester Fishermen Athletic Association has taken new steps to support the athletics program. This fall they organized well-attended community service events through which students could earn scholarships to offset the cost of participation fees.

The GFAA hopes that Gloucester's first triathlon event, which is expected to attract a large number of participants, will become a regular fund raiser. The competitors will cycle through West Gloucester, swim off Pavilion Beach, and run through the city streets in what is expected to become a major annual event. Funds raised will be shared between Wellspring House/Pine Street Inn and the GFAA. The GFAA will be looking for volunteers to act as marshals and helpers.

Comprehensive Health and Sex Education Policy Ready For Consultation

The School Committee is revising its health education policy. The draft has been referred to school site councils for comment.

New GHS Health Center Program Implemented

The new policy on the provision of comprehensive reproductive health services took effect on January 5. Students require the permission of their families to access contraceptive services.

Teen Mentoring

The proposals which emerged from task force which was established under the leadership of school committee member Valerie Gilman have been adopted by the School Committee. Children's Friends and Family Services, which has experience in this field, are establishing the program, which will connect students at risk with trained mentors.

School Committee Energy Initiative Recognized

The efforts of the district to avoid energy costs were recognized recently by Energy Education Inc. The company presented the School Committee with a plaque to recognize cost avoidance of over \$1.25m since March 2005. In addition to the program to encourage all staff to be careful users of energy, new technologies are being introduced. With the help of a National Grid incentive program the lighting at O'Maley Middle School is being replaced with more effective equipment which will use less energy. The project will pay for itself and result in lower energy costs in the future.

Budget Season

The uncertainties surrounding the development of this year's budget has resulted in the postponement of decisions on the budget to be presented to the Mayor and the City Council until this week. Although we expect federal stimulus funds will be made available for special education and through the Title 1 program, we do not have details at this stage.

As usual the aim of the committee is to maintain programs and services with fewer and fewer funds.

The budget which is approved for consideration by the Mayor and the City Council will be published on the district web site at the end of this week.

Key dates (which may be subject to change) include the City's Budget and Finance Committee review on May 12, the City Council budget hearing on June 2, and the City's approval of the budget between June 16 and 19. It is expected that the School Committee will need to review its proposed budget in the light of the City Council's decisions in late June.

The clear message from the School Committee's public hearing on the budget held on March 18 was that we should keep class sizes down and maintain our system of neighborhood schools.

Multiage Classrooms

The Multiage Task Force presented its report to the School Committee on February 25, 2009. Its Powerpoint presentation is on the district web site.

“The Committee noted that:

- *Multiage classrooms are not experimental: they have been used in educational settings for a long time.*
- *There is agreement among sub-committee members of the multiple benefits of multiage classrooms*
- *The School Committee, along with the superintendent, and multiage task force members are all in agreement that multiage classrooms are an arrangement that the educational community in Gloucester should grow to be comfortable with.*

Upon a motion by Mrs. Gilman, seconded by Mrs. Harrison, it was VOTED unanimously to endorse multiage classrooms as an educationally sound arrangement under appropriate circumstances.”

Teachers already work with children with wide differences in academic and personal development which may span more than one grade level in their classrooms now. They work with groups of children as much as the whole class. In addition to the direct benefits of multiage arrangements which are summarized in the Powerpoint presentation, they will help us to make more equitable provision by avoiding very small or very large classes.

Gloucester School Connection Grants

The Gloucester School Connection continues to support teacher initiatives. This year seven grants have been made to nine teachers to promote science, photography, a poet-in-residence, musical performances, and the establishment of a GHS school store.

MIT Hosts Alumni Event To Support The Gloucester Public Schools

As part of the GEF sponsored SEA Initiative collaborative program with MIT, the Edgerton Center’s Professor Kim Vandiver recently organized an alumni event to link MIT alumni with GPS staff and programs. A visitor from Rockport and mother of middle school aged children reported that she was amazed at the range of exciting programs available to students at our middle and high schools.

People

*Thank you to **Tony Verga** for his unfailing support for the schools during his period of service as state representative.*

*Congratulations to **Dr. Bill Goodwin** on his appointment as Principal of Gloucester High school.*

*A search has just begun to find a replacement for **Jim Gutstadt**, Principal of West Parish Elementary School, who has announced his retirement in the fall of this year.*

If you have suggestions please contact your Principal or me at cfarmer@gloucester.k12.ma.us

*Christopher Farmer
April 2009*

Gloucester Public Schools

Parent/Guardian Satisfaction Survey - Summer 2008

Q#	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Summary Agree	Some Disagreement	Strong Disagreement	Summary Disagree
Students							
8 Students treated with respect	35	42	15	92	5	3	8
27 Discipline policies defined/communicated	14	50	19	83	11	6	17
34 Discipline handled appropriately	13	40	28	81	10	9	19
35 My student's conduct handled appropriately	17	62	13	92	5	3	8
29 Students feel safe on the bus	18	49	17	84	10	6	16
33 Student's social/emotional needs met	10	47	26	83	10	7	17
13 Bullying not a problem	20	40	15	75	13	12	25
31 Effective support services available	16	39	26	81	12	7	19
Teaching And Learning				Average	83.9		
26 Class size meets expectations	8	48	23	79	13	8	21
14 Instruction differentiated	14	41	27	82	11	7	18
15 Student's work appropriately challenging	13	45	22	80	13	7	20
24 Homework appropriately challenging	13	46	20	79	12	9	21
10 Satisfactory exposure to Science	13	48	23	84	12	4	16
19 Exposure to visual/performing arts satis	16	40	20	76	14	10	24
20 Exposure to health ed satisfactory	10	43	25	78	13	9	22
21 Exposure to PE satisfactory	14	45	16	75	12	13	25
30 Student well prepared for next grade	28	49	14	91	6	3	9
Parental Participation				Average	80.4		
16 Meaningful ways for parent involvement	20	48	19	87	9	4	13
17 Am actively involved in school as parent	21	36	28	85	11	4	15
Communications				Average	86		
38 Kept abreast of student's progress	20	42	21	83	11	6	17
9 Satisfied with school communications	21	37	23	81	10	9	19
11 Web site is useful	7	43	28	78	14	8	22
25 Supt. communicates effectively	21	46	22	89	4	7	11
18 Principal visible	46	38	11	95	2	3	5
Responsiveness				Average	85.2		
36 District office responds satisfactorily	17	45	21	83	8	9	17
12 Opinions/concerns responded to by school	20	41	23	84	8	8	16
Facilities				Average	83.5		
22 School is clean	11	32	22	65	17	18	35
23 School is well maintained	8	27	25	60	20	20	40
Other services				Average	62.5		
37 Food service/quality meets expectations	5	32	31	68	17	15	32
Resources							
28 District has adequate resources	7	29	23	59	20	21	41
Overall							
39 Recommend school to other parents	22	32	24	78	12	10	22
40 Overall education meeting expectations	13	40	25	78	15	7	22
32 Districting satisfying mission	8	28	34	70	18	12	30
Average				75.3			

Overall average discounting Food and District resources

81

The Gloucester Public Schools

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The Arts In The Gloucester Public Schools

“Live a balanced life - learn some and think some, and draw and paint, and sing and dance, and play and work every day some.” Robert Fulghum, 1986

Despite severe annual cuts in the School Committee’s budget since 2001-02, the district has made every effort to provide a curriculum that is broad, balanced, rigorous, differentiated, and relevant to the life and lives of Gloucester children. The district’s efforts are led by a group of highly dedicated teachers, who are personally engaged at a high level in their work. What follows is intended to provide an overview of opportunities in the Visual and Performing Arts that are offered to students on a regular basis.

Christopher Farmer
Superintendent of Schools

April 2009

Gloucester High School

Courses

Studio Art 1 and 2 and Honors
Drawing and painting
Clay Works 1 and 2
Photography 1 and 2
Advanced Photography
AP Art available

Music Fundamentals
Bach to Rock
Music Technology
Chorus
Jazz Band

Extended Day Program

The art, clay work and photography studios are regularly populated by students exploring their personal interests and projects.

The Docksiders and the Marching Band.

GHS students regularly win Boston Globe awards for the Visual Arts, and pursue the Arts at the college level. Several scholarships are available for students who intend to study Art or Music.

The Docksiders perform in public regularly, and have made several visits to Disneyland.

The chorus makes highly regarded public performances.

Students use advanced technology to record and produce music and video for a variety of organizations.

The drama program is the responsibility of a stipended teacher, and enjoys at least three productions (including a musical) each year.

The German program regularly enters a play in German into an inter-school competition.

Students have the opportunity to participate in a Film and Video Program based at the middle school and sponsored by the Gloucester Education Foundation (GEF).

The GEF supports the stipends for extended day programs and has also helped to provide equipment and materials.

O'Maley Middle School

All students take classes in Art and the Performing Arts at each grade level. The programs incorporate almost all the state standards for the Arts. The Art disciplines include Dance, Music, Theatre and the Visual Arts. Teachers seek to help students to make connections between different elements of the curriculum.

The schedule is organized so that students experience these disciplines in intensive 12-week blocks.

Performing Art students are involved in an "end-of unit" production.

Band is taught partly in the school day and partly as an extended school day program.

The Arts may also be experienced as an integral element of other subjects. For example, the Ocean House 8th Grade Writers Group recently published a collection of prose, poems and visual art entitled "Voices Within the Ocean."

Extended Day Program

The Band performs at city events.

The Performing Arts teachers produce an annual musical production. All students who wish to participate do so in one role or another.

During the summer the Performing Arts teachers run a very popular workshop which is open to all students.

The Gloucester Education Foundation is sponsoring a Film and Video Production program.

The Elementary Schools

All the elementary schools have dedicated, credentialed Art and Music teachers. The teachers seek to make connections between different elements of the curriculum. All students have Art and Music classes each week. A ballroom dancing program is taught partly in school and partly as an extended day program leading to *The Mad Hot Ball*. Schools provide Readers Theatre program experiences.

Extended Day Program

Teachers provide opportunities for students to develop their skills outside of the classroom. For example at Beeman Memorial School the Music teacher offers the opportunity for students to join a 5th Grade Chorus.

Students have opportunities to participate in theatre/musicals. This year the productions include *Annie*, *Twinderella*, *Beeman on Broadway*, and *A Thousand Cranes*. Over the past two years John Sarrouf of the Gloucester Stage Company (GSC) and a board member of the Gloucester Education Foundation has provided support for some of these efforts. The GSC has supported Veterans' Memorial programming, including a summer reading program.

Elementary 4th and 5th Grade Band and String Instrumental Ensemble Music supported by the GEF.

The Annual Exhibition

The Gloucester Education Foundation has re-established an annual exhibition intended to enable the community to appreciate the range and quality of student work at all levels: May 9th this year.