

GARDEN CITY COMMUNITY SCHOOL

FAMILY NEWSLETTER: January 9, 2009

"Garden City, Alive!"

A performance by the students of Garden City Community School

January 15, 2008 at 7PM

Location: Community Christian Center's auditorium located on 42nd St. next to the Garden City UPS store just north of Chinden Blvd.

The K – 8th grade students of Garden City Community School invite their families, friends and the public to their first all-school theatrical presentation, "Garden City, Alive!" Thursday, January 15 at 7PM!

The performance is based on the colorful history of Garden City, the beautiful river landscape that is cherished in the Treasure Valley, its flora and fauna, and the potential future of our community. Come see all our students tell this story as you have never seen it before!

Artist-in-Residence, Anna Marie Boles, has been working with the school through a grant from Idaho Commission on the Arts and the National Endowment of the Arts. Ms. Boles has collaborated with the teaching staff and GCCS Arts and Community Integration Coordinator, Rebecca Weeks DeMeritt, to help GCCS launch a theater program at the school. Students have worked together researching, writing scripts, blocking scenes, studying Idaho history, and making costumes and props to bring the community alive!

Join us afterwards for a forum on the vision of Garden City and our great school!

NOTE to GCCS families: Every student has a part in this production and it will only work if everyone attends! Their second quarter art grade is determined by their participation. Please be sure to mark this date on your calendar and make arrangements for your children to be there January 15! If transportation is needed, please share rides with other families and have students to the Center at 6:45PM! Ask their teacher for more information regarding costumes and help needed.

NO SCHOOL FRIDAY, JANUARY 16 or MONDAY, JANUARY 19 for students. Staff will be attending professional development workshops Friday and Monday is Martin Luther King Day. This is the end of second quarter. ACHIEVEMENT REPORTS will be mailed home to you Friday, January 23.

GOOD BYE REBECCA! WELCOME LINDA! Our beloved arts and integration coordinator, Rebecca Weeks DeMeritt, will be taking off second semester to enjoy her baby which is due in a few weeks. Linda Buczynski has been hired as her substitute. Linda is a certified art teacher who used to teach art at FootHills and has worked with the Boise Commission on the Arts. She's been helping students with performance masks this week and their first visual arts projects with her will be the development of class art to sell at the March 7 GCCS Auction.

VOLUNTEER PAINTING HELP NEEDED Our second semester art teacher, Linda, has volunteered to paint the art studio, but would love parent volunteers! This project will start at 1:00PM on Saturday, January 17 in the art studio in the annex. Please call the office at 377-0011 by Thursday, January 15 to sign up to help her! Paint will be provided, but we need more brushes and rollers! It'd be great to welcome her with this support!

ABSENCES According to our policies, if your child has missed more than nine days by now, you have gone beyond the maximum 10% allowed. Please be sure they get to school as it certainly affects their learning – especially in a school like ours! The amount of money we receive from the state to help run our school is almost totally dependent on how many days each child is actually in school. If they miss, we will get cut on our funds.

PE & CIRCUS PERFORMANCE Last year's wonderful circus performer from England, Stuart Barber, returned to GCCS this week! All students have been having a blast learning skills for balance, movement, and creativity. Be sure to ask your child to share their experiences! We're trying to set up a community circle time in February for the students to share their learning with the rest of the school. We'll let you know if this works out as it would be a wonderful thing for parents to experience, too!

HOW TO TELL WHAT ACADEMIC PROGRESS YOUR CHILD IS MAKING

We always invite you to talk with your child's teacher regarding academic or behavior questions or concerns. Our educational philosophy focuses on hands-on and group activities, so – if a child misses the class – it's sometimes difficult to have the child make up the work or explain the learning to parents. Without having the typical tests and report cards of traditional schools, parents often ask me "How can I tell how my child is doing in school in their core subjects?" At this point, students receive four "Achievement Reports" and share their portfolio work twice a year.

Our staff's professional development time this month will performance-based documentation to show what our students are learning with our unique methods. Staff is making plans for more thorough, understandable, and consistent student portfolios. Parents have asked to gain a better understanding of what our students are learning, so we're sure you will appreciate the development of these new methods. Stay tuned to learn more!

Our teachers and paraprofessionals – under the guidance of Special Services Coordinator, Valerie Aker, are also completing more traditional assessments for every student in the areas of math and reading. The required ISATs (state tests) will not take place until spring this year, so we wanted a way to base where students' abilities are now to compare to later in order to evaluate their progress. These assessments were very "short and sweet" and will be used for teachers to identify their classes' needs to they may adjust their curriculum.

I felt you would want to know what recent assessments were done. "Curriculum-Based Measurements" in math are one to four minute timed tests to check basic math skills. "Running Records" was the method used by staff to check the specific needs students are having while reading. Students read a short passage while the adult marks specific reading skills. Next week, students in grades K-3 will take the short Idaho Reading Indicator (IRI) tests where the paraprofessional asks them to read or identify words and letters during a specific length of time. This test is taken three times a year to keep track of their reading progress.

We are a works-in-progress and constantly strive to improve student learning while continuing to keep the interactive fun and excitement for which GCCS is known!

Here's to a very happy new year for all our GCCS families! I look forward to seeing you next Thursday at the "**GARDEN CITY, *Alive!***" performance!

Cindy Hoovel, Director
Garden City Community School
(208) 377-0011
cindy.hoovel@gardencityschool.org