

FAMILY NEWSLETTER

GARDEN CITY COMMUNITY SCHOOL

January 2010



GCCS AFRICAN ART RECEPTION

Brenda's 7th & 8th grade class invites you to join them for their artist's reception on **Thursday, January 14 from 6:00-7:30PM** for their art show displayed in the Garden City Library. There will be a program at the beginning where students present their amazing variety of African art and books they created as part of their unit on Africa. Following this, visitors will be able to taste the African food they are preparing and make a bookmark using an African printmaking process. Thanks to BSU art education students and Linda Bu for helping students create the art and to Brenda for her incredible extra efforts and grant writing to make this exciting learning happen!

NEW STUDENT RECRUITMENT

It's that time again for new students to apply for the 2010-2011 school year. Please help pass the word to families about our great school! New student applications for the lottery are due **no later than March 12, 2010 at 3PM**. (Current GCCS students will receive 2010-11 enrollment "commitment forms" for next year's enrollment in February as they are guaranteed a place if these forms are turned in before the lottery.)

NO SCHOOL

Monday, January 18 due to Martin Luther King Day. Be sure to check out the following great opportunity for families to visit the state capitol and support charter schools.



2010 IDAHO CHARTER SCHOOL DAY at the CAPITOL

Monday, January 18, 2010. The Coalition of Idaho Charter School Families has a great program planned with various activities and tours for children and adults of all ages. There will also be a rally on the capitol steps to show legislators that people are *supportive* of "choice" schools. The lawmakers have told me they mostly hear from people *against* charters, so we need to be sure they hear the "positives"! Register your family for this at <http://idchartercoalition.org/register2010>.



ART STUDIO

We continue to welcome artists to our art studio! Director Cindy has continued basic elements of visual art lessons with the students in addition to guiding the older students with their window painting project throughout business and school windows in our building complex. Our special professional artist for January will be Trina "Sidda" Smith who will introduce the students to water color painting. Please let Director Cindy know if you – or someone you know – would be willing to share their artistic talents during this time so we can continue to line out the rest of the year with incredible experiences!

PAYMENTS & PERMISSION

Don't forget to keep up with your monthly payments to cover the Special Programs Fee and your student's lunch costs! Just give your payment to Michele in the office. Don't forget that we can't let people other than legal guardians pick students up early from school unless we have a written note giving them permission.

COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETING

Thursday, January 28 from 6:30-7:30PM is the next gathering for GCCS parents, community, staff and board! Part of the evening will include introducing parents to "the Bridge" and learn how to use it in their own families to resolve conflicts. It's a simple, fun tool which the entire school is adopting! (See more information about "the Bridge" later in this newsletter.)

PANCAKE FEED FUNDRAISER

Save the morning of **Saturday, February 20, 2010** for a pancake feed at Applebee's to help raise money for GCCS! They've offered us a great fundraising activity with students selling tickets to a two hour dinner served by adults from the school. Watch for more information coming the first week of February!



VOLUNTEER OFFICE GREETERS

We sure would like to have some more volunteers help in the office to answer phones and greet people! Thanks so much to those who have been helping, however, several had schedule changes and need someone to take their place. Part-time subs are also appreciated! Let Cindy or Michele know if you're interested. It's a great way to get to know the students and staff!

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Your students' teachers have been involved in an incredible amount of trainings this school year to continue making GCCS even better! After intense training in arts integration in 2009, the majority of their focus now includes: Using Data to Improve Student Learning, Instructional Techniques to Meet the Needs of All Children, and focusing on our K-8 math program. The arts and environment continue to be included in all curriculum areas.

GCCS AUCTION

Our important annual auction will be **Friday, March 19**. Please contact Sara Covington (sara_covington@hotmail.com or 284-3992) if you are interested in helping or have art or event packages you could donate to this fund-raiser. Save the date and pass the word to people who would like to support the school financially!

The BRIDGE

As an entire school, GCCS has decided to adopt an exciting conflict-resolution tool called "The Bridge". It fits perfectly with our use of Adlerian psychology and Positive Discipline to help students learn the 5R's: respect, responsibility, resourcefulness, responsiveness and resiliency. It uses colorful posters to make a "bridge" that students physically walk on as they work through conflicts. See the attached information to learn more about this. All staff will be implementing this system and I hope you'll consider using it at home, also.



The BRIDGE



This research-based, school-tested tool has some basic assumptions that may or may not overlap with your home messages about conflict resolution. Please know that we are trying to address some challenges in our school culture, not trying to change your family culture. We would appreciate your support of our work together when your child is at school. Please refer to the attached description of The Bridge as well as taking a moment to familiarize you with some of the assumptions and principles of The Bridge:

- Conflicts are a normal part of childhood and of life. All children will have conflicts on occasion.
- Conflicts generally arise when children experience uncomfortable emotions (jealousy, frustration, anger, fear, and so forth) and don't have the proper skills to manage those emotions. The Bridge is a tool that helps to teach children how to manage their emotions appropriately.
- Conflicts are solved with words and negotiation, not with physical aggression.
- Children must learn to handle conflict appropriately in order to be effective and well adjusted adults.
- Conflicts at school present educators with very important "teachable moments," and are a vital part of our curriculum.
- The Bridge is a tool that capitalizes on those teachable moments to improve and expand our children's social competence in developmentally appropriate ways.
- The Bridge is not a tool that includes punishment or consequences; instead, it focuses on teaching and empowering children to solve the conflict that led to bad behavior in the first place.
- Social competence comes from practicing skills in conflict situations. Thus, we anticipate your child will visit The Bridge multiple times each year. Visiting the Bridge is a sign of growth!
- Children who are upset or frightened have difficulty concentrating and learning. If your child does need to complete the bridge during learning time, this does not impact his or her learning; it replaces distracting emotions with calming solutions. In fact, if the process is successful, your child will be better able to relax, pay attention, and learn more in the future.

I thank you for your support of our work to help children learn how to get along together at school. We plan to demonstrate and practice this at the January 28 GCCS Community Council meeting also. Please feel free to contact me or your child's teacher if you have further questions about this program.

As always, I invite you to contact me with any questions, concerns or ideas! We hope you'll find time to visit the school to volunteer and/or attend the upcoming events!

Cindy Hoovel, GCCS Director cindy.hoovel@gardencityschool.org or 377-0011

The BRIDGE: *An Overview*



The Bridge represents a **philosophy of problem solving**: conflicts among children are a normal part of life that cannot and should not be ignored or completely solved by adults; children must learn to solve problems appropriately in order to grow morally and social-emotionally; children need to be explicitly taught and coached in how to solve problems; young children working through problems together should be focused on problem solving and not punishment or restitution; and, a sense of community develops when problem-solving is a focus of attention.



The Bridge is **based upon principles** of trust, empowerment, equality, independence from adults, and interdependence amongst kids. Trust is created and maintained by the teacher-coach and comes from experiencing the outcomes of doing the Bridge over time. Bright primary colors link to the trusting feeling of classroom time. Empowerment and equality between two participants are echoed by the absolutely symmetrical nature of the two halves of each Bridge. Independence is embedded in the Bridge; trained Bridge-users can successfully follow steps to resolve conflicts without help from anyone else. This independence is even possible for pre-readers because each step of the problem-solving process has an associated color and graphic that is easy to understand and remember. The interdependence amongst the participants is emphasized by three of the steps that require both parties to hear, and be heard by, each other.

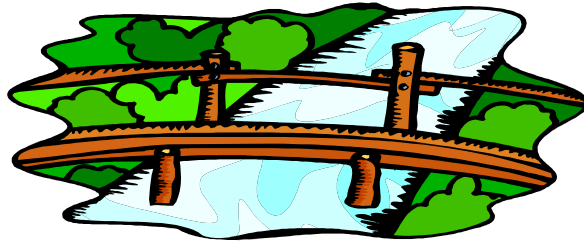


The Bridge is a **5-step problem-solving process** designed for 2 people to work through. Each of the 5 steps is represented by a color and a picture as well as a title. The steps are laid out side by side in consecutive order. The first step is represented by the color red, and the final step is green, to evoke familiarity with stoplights and the game Red Light, Green Light. The 5 steps to solving a problem are described in more detail below.












The Bridge is a **physical path** or location upon which to work through the 5 steps. Two identical problem-solving strips are taped together facing each other. As the two parties work through the steps of their problem, they move physically closer and closer toward each other. The emotional movement from separation to friendship that occurs when problems are solved is mirrored by the physical movement of the two people from the far ends to the center of the bridge, where they find themselves facing each other in close proximity.

“The world is a very narrow bridge, and the most important thing is not to be afraid.”



The 5 Steps of the Bridge

-  **Stop and Cool Off**  **(Red Square)**. Upset Bridge users begin the process of solving a problem here. They stand on these squares until they are both ready to participate in the Bridge appropriately.
-  **Speak, Listen, Repeat**  **(Orange Square)**. Each person has a turn to describe their problem. Specific language is used: “I felt _____ when you _____.” Each person has a turn to listen to the other describe their problem. Each person must repeat back what the other person said their problem was.
-  **Think of Ideas to Solve the Problem**  **(Yellow Square)**. Both people spend some time thinking of possible solutions to the problem (s) at hand. Nobody criticizes the ideas of the other during this time.
-  **Choose an Idea You Both Like**  **(Blue Square)**. Both people must discuss the options, and agree upon a solution to the problem that they will both adopt.
-  **Shake Hands/Be Friends/ Be Done (Green Square)**. Both people make some kind of physical contact to indicate that they have finished the conflict resolution process and are ready to let go of the problem, try a solution, and move forward positively.