

The State Education Department
The University of the State of New York

Office of Instructional Support and Development
Public School Choice Programs
462 EBA
Albany, New York 12234
518-474-1762

Charter School Annual Report
2008 - 2009

Charter School Information and Cover Page

Name of Charter School _____ Genesee Community Charter School _____

Address _____ 657 East Avenue _____

_____ Rochester, NY 14607 _____

Telephone _____ 585-271-4552 ext. 460 _____ Fax _____ 585-271-5904 _____

BEDS # _____ 261600860826 _____

District/CSD of Location _____ Rochester City School District _____

Charter Entity _____ Board of Regents _____

Head of School (Contact Person) _____ Lisa A. Wing, Ph.D. _____
(print name)

E-mail address of contact person _____ [REDACTED] _____

President, Board of Trustees _____ Lyle Beach _____
(print name)

E-mail address and Phone Number of Board President _____ [REDACTED] _____
[REDACTED]

*Student Assessment Data
New York State Assessment Results
Grades 3 – 8 ELA and Math
2008-09 Annual Report*

Name of Charter School: Genesee Community Charter School

Grades 3 – 8 State ELA Assessments Results

<i>Year of Test</i>	Grade 3				Grade 4				Grade 5				Grade 6			
	L1	L2	L3	L4	L1	L2	L3	L4	L1	L2	L3	L4	L1	L2	L3	L4
2008-09	0	9.38	75	15.63	0	6.67	83.33	10	0	6.67	80	13.33	0	16.67	79.17	4.17
2007-08	0	3.23	61.29	35.48	6.45	6.45	83.87	3.23	0	10.71	85.71	3.23	0	3.33	86.67	10.0
2006-07	12.9	9.68	67.7	9.68	3.23	16.1	70.9	9.68	0	6.45	83.8	9.68	8.0	16.0	64.0	12.0
2005-06	0	9.68	90.3	0	0	12.5	81.2	6.25	0	23.3	63.3	6.25	0	21.05	52.6	26.3

**Grades 3 – 8
State Math Assessments Results**

<i>Year of Test</i>	Grade 3				Grade 4				Grade 5				Grade 6			
	L1	L2	L3	L4	L1	L2	L3	L4	L1	L2	L3	L4	L1	L2	L3	L4
2008-09	0	3.13	62.5	34.38	0	3.33	66.67	30	0	6.67	63.33	30	0	4.17	62.5	33.33
2007-08	0	0	35.48	64.52	3	10	68	19	3.70	22.22	62.96	11.11	0	6.9	65.52	27.59
2006-07	16.13	25.8	58.06	0	0	16.13	61.29	22.58	0	6.45	58.06	35.48	0	20	52	28
2005-06	3.23	6.45	61.29	29	0	12.5	71.88	15.63	6.67	16.67	53.3	23.33	15.79	10.53	68.42	5.26

***Student Assessment Data
New York State Assessment Results
Grade 5 Social Studies and Grade 4 Science
2008-09 Annual Report***

Name of Charter School: Genesee Community Charter School

**Grade 5
Social Studies Assessment Results**

<i>Year of Test</i>	Grade 5			
	L1	L2	L3	L4
2008-09	3.33	3.33	33.33	60
2007-08	3.85	0	80.77	15.38
2006-07	0	0	48.39	51.61
2005-06	0	3.33	50	46.67

**Grade 4
Science Assessment Results**

<i>Year of Test</i>	Grade 4			
	L1	L2	L3	L4
2008-09				
2007-08	3.23	0	32.26	64.52
2006-07	0	6.45	22.58	70.97
2005-06	0	0	31.25	68.75

**Genesee Community Charter School
Progress Toward Goals
2008-2009**

Goal 1

Satisfactory annual review by Expeditionary Learning (see EL Implementation Review attached)

In our eighth year of implementing the Expeditionary Learning model, it might be tempting to settle into our successes, rest on our laurels, and put off making far-reaching or even incremental changes. Our goal, however, has always been to avoid getting too comfortable with our same old ways of doing things. Just as we engage students in expeditions, fieldwork, and daily lessons that compel them to take risks and reach beyond their perceived limits of achievement, as a school we are constantly challenging ourselves to improve our instruction and curriculum both on a daily and long-term basis.

Learning Expeditions. Building on last year's work, we continue to scrutinize our instruction, making sure our daily lesson plans match the learning targets and reflect the long-term scope of the expedition. Expeditions and, more specifically, individual lessons are more deliberately infused with complex, compelling questions that students are invested in solving. This emphasis on inquiry in our curriculum is helping our students learn to persevere through complex quandaries and experiences, improving their ability to think critically and solve problems.

Over the course of this year, we have further distinguished our understanding of what *is* and what *is not* an inquiry-based lesson. For example, fourth grade weighed the pros and cons of using of foam plates for school lunch. Faced with an authentic problem—and forced to grapple with issues such as the amount of garbage produced, the cost of disposable lunch ware, and the possible energy and environmental impact of Styrofoam— students tackled a real-world application of inquiry and data analysis.

In our ongoing focus on inquiry, we are consciously posing more thoughtful questions to the students, while being increasingly attentive to the difficult art of pacing of those questions. Through careful teacher scaffolding and planning, students are also learning to ask more probing and thoughtful questions in a conscious manner. Kindergarten teachers thought carefully about how they would best prompt students to build a nest for their selected animal and finally asked, “What can you tell about an animal by looking at its nest?” and “What is special about its body?” After children built nests for their animals, teachers followed up, “How would you build your nest if you didn't have hands?” Crews made predictions, researched photos of their animal, and confirmed their predictions.

These daily challenges build on each other until students are ready to create a final product that embodies the major content and skill learning targets in which they have been immersed during the course of the expedition. After weeks and weeks of purposeful, planned instruction, students are ready to reflect their knowledge and skills in a creative performance, product, or

presentation. For example, the second grade honed the skills of public speaking and performance and covered the major content targets of the Erie Canal, simple machines, wheat farming, and the local milling industry. Then, they transferred this deep knowledge into their final product: a musical production of the teacher-written play, “The Little Red Hen Makes Rochester Go Boom!” about Rochester as America’s first boomtown. After investigating Frederick Douglass’ life and the issues of slavery and oppression, fifth grade students served as docents for the new Frederick Douglass exhibit at the Museum. Our final products—which this year ranged from presentations to calendars, biographies, and performances— illustrate what the students accomplished during their expeditions.

Framing the sixth grade curriculum around real-world community issues continues to motivate our students to produce quality work. In response to a proposal to create *Artwalk II*, a new corridor of public art in Rochester, this year our sixth graders investigated public art and its impact on communities. Students were charged with becoming experts on public art, specifically public art that incorporates the history of a community, appeals to children, and involves interactive elements. After spending the entire year researching the history, materials science, and economics of public art, the students prepared a proposal and presentation for the planning committee of *Artwalk II*. As part of their research, the class divided into four groups and each group traveled to a distant city with a strong presence of public art. They met with public officials and others with important roles in the planning, development, and economics of public art. This research was incorporated into their final presentation to the *Artwalk II* committee. Once again we have found that when given an authentic audience and charged with investigating real issues faced by the community, sixth graders rise to the occasion and exceed normal expectations.

Reading. Our ongoing commitment to a balanced literacy approach continues to reap benefits for our students at all grade levels. This year, we have focused our attention on second and third grade students who read below grade level and may not have Individualized Education Plans. Our new special education coordinator is providing more intervention services for these students. Complementing this effort, second grade teachers have attempted a new program, which has yielded good results. They reconfigured the literacy block so that they are able to provide additional intervention and assessment for those students. Every six weeks the teachers met with the parents of the targeted children and since the beginning of the year all the children have accelerated their progress in reading except for one child who is receiving special education services. This approach will be replicated in additional grade levels next year.

Writing. At GCCS, students at all grade levels are expected to write all day, every day. Writing takes many forms and is integrated into every investigation and every content area. Students learn note-taking as early as Kindergarten; they write reflections on fieldwork, guest experts, or ongoing studies; they write and revise many drafts as they work toward their final products, which range from poetry to biographies, scripts, and reports. For example, fifth graders studied the water quality of a stream in Greece that is a tributary to Lake Ontario. The students produced a scientific water quality report in which they were required to show their method, analysis, data, and, finally, draw conclusions. Writing is a component of every expedition and teachers are continuing to teach the 6+1 Writing Traits to ensure quality products at every grade level.

Math. We acquired the updated edition of *Investigations* this year and we are continuing to adjust to the revised curriculum. Over the course of the year, teachers have attempted to identify weaknesses in the program. In spite of our exceptional test scores, we are still concerned that the program does not effectively meet the needs of two cohorts: the weakest math students and, at the other end of the spectrum, the strongest math students. For this reason, math will be a focus area next year.

Arts. This year our arts teachers co-taught several exemplary projects that integrated the arts into expedition content on a more profound level. Our arts teachers are striving to incorporate the arts into expeditions from a conceptual perspective, rather than on a concrete, project-based level. They are pushing the envelope of what an integrated arts project looks like, even expanding the meaning of arts integration. Within the fourth- and fifth-grade study of oppression and slavery, for example, the arts teachers chose to explore the overarching theme of polyrhythms – which are evident in African art and music – through music, visual arts, and movement. Rather than simply learn songs about slavery or draw pictures of Frederick Douglass, teachers challenged students to use their knowledge of African culture to explore the underlying features of music, dance, and art and to connect those features to their own artistic and dance creations. Students, for example, performed African drumming and dance; made stamps with symbols of slavery, oppression, and freedom; and then created polyrhythmic paintings with repeated stamp patterns in various orientations.

In addition, this year GCCS produced its fourth professionally-recorded CD, called *The Songs that Nature Sings*. The songs revolve around the natural world, an important aspect of the time period of our current expeditions.

Goal 2

Ninety-five percent of students are promoted to the next grade level

We promoted 99.5% of our students to the next grade level.

Goal 3

Active parent involvement in the school program and events

We have continued to make concerted efforts to communicate regularly with parents. Each class prepared a weekly newsletter to keep parents informed about classroom goals and activities. *Currents* was published bimonthly.

The Family Association meetings continued to function, however communication between the Family Association and the parents was a bit sporadic and not timely enough. Social events most definitely drew the largest number of families, whereas business meetings attracted the fewest. Social events included a family math night, a family dance party, the Fourth Annual Family Talent Show, and the Winter Potluck Social and Service Auction. Many families pitched

in to help spread mulch on the school playground one Saturday this spring. Not only has this fixed the mud problem in the hallways, but it is a safer turf for the children's play area.

Parents held several fundraising events, including a new Dining for Dollars Fundraiser, proceeds from which went toward our new kitchen in the Eisenhart Basement (see below) and provided funds for regular Family Association functions.

Once again we held chaperone orientation sessions this year. These orientations help prepare parents for the demands of fieldwork. We have found that a few very vocal parents are dissatisfied that they cannot attend field study overnights with their children, but we believe the current chaperone policy is working well and providing us with safe, attentive, and skilled support on field studies. We will continue to uphold that policy.

Goal 4

Ninety percent of parents satisfied

One reflection of parent satisfaction is the vast majority of students who will return in 2009-2010. 97.6% of our students will return next year. Of those not returning, 1.4% (three children) are moving out of state, and .5% (one child) has moved to a suburb and will attend his suburban elementary school, 1% (two children) are leaving to attend their suburban middle schools, which start at sixth grade, and .5% (one child) is leaving to attend a more traditional city school.

Another indication is the number of applicants for enrollment for next year. We had 123 applications for 20 open kindergarten spaces for Fall. We had approximately 100 applications for Grades 1-5.

We conducted a parent satisfaction survey in May, 2009 (See Appendix). Surveys were mailed to homes along with a self-addressed stamped envelope. We received 59 responses, which is about a 35% response rate.

On average, 99% of the responding parents were somewhat satisfied, satisfied, or very satisfied. 95% of the responding parents were satisfied or very satisfied. The areas of greatest satisfaction seemed to be the quality of expeditions and student exhibition nights, the language arts program, the quality of teaching, books and materials, children's social and behavioral progress, opportunities for parent involvement in school, and the school environment.

The area of least satisfaction, as it is every year, is with the math curriculum. *Investigations* is different enough from a traditional approach that parents often have difficulty comprehending how their children are learning math. We worked on the math program as a school focus area, and several comments did reflect increased, although skeptical, satisfaction in that area. We will continue to ramp up our communication with parents about the mathematics, and include both increased challenge and increased attention to basic facts and algorithms as we make our way through the new edition of *Investigations*.

Goal 5

Conduct ongoing, comprehensive, and informative assessment

Teachers continue to use individual, small group, and large group assessments to gauge children's progress. Developmental reading assessments, running reading records, math unit tests, and performance tasks give teachers additional insight into children's progress. In addition, we are using more pre-assessment in math to determine appropriate grouping and instruction levels for children.

The New York State ELA and Mathematics exams were administered to our students in Grades 3-6, the NYS Science exam was administered to fourth graders, and the NYS Social Studies exam was administered to fifth graders.

English Language Arts

3rd Grade – 93%

4th Grade – 93%

5th Grade – 91%

6th Grade – 83%

4th Grade Science – 97%

Mathematics

3rd Grade – 97%

4th Grade – 97%

5th Grade – 93%

6th Grade – 96%

5th Grade Social Studies – 93%

Goal 6

Provide exemplary professional development for staff

At GCCS, we have a two-pronged approach to professional development. The first is our own professional growth, and the second is our dissemination of effective practices to educators from other schools around the country.

We devote most of our professional development effort to addressing the focus areas selected by our staff based on an analysis of student performance, feedback from Expeditionary Learning, input from the State Education Department, and parent satisfaction surveys. This year we chose four focus areas: spelling, inquiry-based learning, final products, and revisiting our roots.

Spelling. We researched both the science of spelling and many approaches to spelling instruction. During the year, the staff met in book clubs, did presentations on their research, and several attended an outside institute on spelling instruction. This endeavor took some time as we had never explored this terrain before and we were determined to find the right program that would match the philosophy of the school and meet our particular needs. Now that we have narrowed our choices down to two programs—Words Their Way and Sitton Spelling Program—representatives of the companies will present their programs. We will then we will make our decision as a staff, and we will implement the selected program next year.

Inquiry-based learning (see discussion above). We resumed use of the Looking at Teacher Work protocol, continuing to tailor the protocol to meet our needs. At the beginning of the year, teaching teams brought lesson plans to the staff for critique, videotaped their implementation of the revised plans, then brought the videotape back to the staff for further critique. The protocol evolved over the course of the year. With our adapted model, a team of teachers shared their learning targets for a particular inquiry-based lesson. The staff then broke up into small groups, and each group designed a lesson addressing the learning targets in question. Each group then presented their resulting lesson design to the staff. The team selected a design, taught the lesson to their class, and videotaped it. The staff then reviewed the videotape. This benefited our teachers in two ways. First, we improved in our ability to plan lessons that clearly match the intended learning targets. Second, we all received additional practice generating ideas for inquiry-based lesson design.

Final products. With our second group of sixth grade students matriculating from Kindergarten to our passage ceremony, we realized that it was fortuitous that each group had naturally created a variety of final products. We now knew that we needed a system to make sure that each cohort created many different and varied final products, such as books, newspapers, calendars, presentations, plays, etc. This newly-developed system now tracks each cohort so that they will be exposed to many different formats for final products over their seven years at GCCS. We also (as discussed above) scrutinized the final products to assure that they addressed the nature of the learning targets of the expedition in question. For example, the second grade book, *A Stroll through Seneca Park*, evolved from previous product, *A Stroll through Highland Park*, after teachers examined the expedition's learning targets and realized the existing final product did not address enough of them. Rather than focusing solely on local habitats, the new investigation includes global habitats, comparing animals that live in Seneca Park with those that live in the Seneca Park Zoo.

Revisiting our roots. This focus was an all-embracing, candid journey back to our roots designed to take stock of our practices and philosophies and to gauge our fidelity to both the original vision of the school and to the Expeditionary Learning model. We staged a retreat at the beginning of the year to help build culture, we read the original charter as a staff, and we worked with Steven Levy, our school designer from Expeditionary Learning, on the roots of the design. While examining the previous years' focus areas to determine if we had sustained our previous years' improvements, we uncovered, for example, that we had neglected to uphold one of our favorite writing protocols, Describe the Day. Yet we were pleased to observe that other improvements had become woven into the fabric of the school: our writing instruction is infused with the 6+1 Writing Traits and Reading Comprehension Strategies; high quality expeditions are a constant; parent communication is strong; and we sustained original improvements to our progress reports.

Going back to our roots was fortuitously, but not purposely, timed with the completion and delivery of our charter renewal! The charter renewal—a huge undertaking—became part of our revisit of the original vision of the school. The “final product,” delivered to the State Department of Education in boxes complete with plum-colored bows, was the end result of a process that involved many staff members and incorporated feedback from the parent satisfaction surveys. It was completed entirely in-house.

The second aspect of professional development at GCCS is the dissemination of effective practices to other schools. We have many strengths – our strong culture of community; engaging, substantive learning expeditions; integration of the arts into academic disciplines; the use of community resources – which are our responsibility to share with others. In turn, our staff benefits greatly from facilitating the learning of other educators. Teachers from other schools provide us with an authentic professional audience, which keeps our faculty engaged in continuous examination of our work and our students’ performance.

Our sixth Site Seminar yielded a record attendance of 144 participants. The Site Seminar is always an opportunity to reflect on our own practices, strengths, and weaknesses. In the process of preparing for the event, we review practices we are particularly proud of and that our colleagues will learn from; we also admit to those that we do not feel strong enough to demonstrate.

Five of our teachers attended the Expeditionary Learning National Conference, presenting master classes, including Turning Sixth Grade Adolescents into Young Activists and Using Creative Movement during a Study of Immigration. Staff members also attended the Expeditionary Learning Reading Institute, Assessment Institute, Data Institute, and Writing Institute.

Elizabeth Hallmark, a former GCCS parent, spent the year conducting observations at GCCS, doing research for her dissertation prepared for the University of Rochester Warner School of Education.

This was the third of four years of the federal Arts Dissemination Grant. This year we reconfigured our teachers’ work in Springfield both to alleviate their travel burden and to provide the Springfield teachers with more intensive experiences with each of the art disciplines. Our arts teachers, accompanied by a GCCS classroom teacher, each visited Springfield once from Friday to Monday. On Saturday, they conducted a half-day workshop and on Monday held demonstration lessons or met with teachers to assist with their planning. Since next year is the last year of the grant, we are establishing sustainable practices with structures and formats they will always have on hand. In addition, the grant will equip the schools with instruments and art supplies, such as clay tools and sketch boards, that will be useful beyond the grant period.

Goal 7

Maintain a respectful, safe, orderly learning environment

We have had few serious discipline issues this year. The vast majority of classroom management and discipline issues are handled by teachers. Parents are contacted and special behavior plans are put in place for children with continual behavior challenges. We have had just four suspensions this year, three for instances of physical contact and one for bullying.

Following up on our previous work on girl bullying, we implemented the Ophelia Project curriculum and continued to put into practice the bullying policies we had created last year. As a

result of the increased awareness and the implementation of the curriculum, we have seen a large reduction in the number of bullying incidents among girls. We find that bullying has continued to crop up in fourth grade, but teachers are now prepared to name it, to help students understand it, to address it with parents, and to respond if follow-up or consequences are necessary.

**THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE,
SECONDARY AND CONTINUING EDUCATION
PROGRAMS
ROOM 462, EDUCATION BUILDING ANNEX
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12234**

**CHARTER SCHOOL ANNUAL
REPORT OF FISCAL PERFORMANCE
FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR ENDED 6/30/09**

Charter School Code:

2	6	1	6	0	0	8	6	0	8	2	6
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Charter School Name: Genesee Community Charter School	
Contact Person: Lisa Wing	Phone: 585-697-1960

REVENUES

A. STATE SOURCES	<u>50,000.00</u>
B. FEDERAL SOURCES	<u>212,127.70</u>
C. PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS	
1. BASIC OPERATING REVENUES	<u>1,934,504.00</u>
2. STATE AID-PUPILS WITH DISABILITIES	<u>24,610.80</u>
3. FED. AID-PUPILS WITH DISABILITIES	<u>29,925.00</u>
4. OTHER REV FROM PUB SCH DISTRICTS	<u>323,140.54</u>
D. ALL OTHER REVENUES	<u>86,006.86</u>
E. TOTAL REVENUES FROM ALL SOURCES	<u><u>2,660,314.90</u></u>
S. ENROLLMENT	<u>210</u>
T. EXPENDITURES PER PUPIL	<u>11,8901</u> (R/S)

EXPENDITURES

	<u>SALARIES</u>	<u>OTHER</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
F. GENERAL ADMINISTRATION	<u>220,427.93</u>	<u>74,498.58</u>	<u>294,926.51</u>
G. INSTRUCTIONAL SUPERVISION	<u>12,021.45</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>12,021.45</u>
H. ALL OTHER INSTRUCTION	<u>1,146,640.73</u>	<u>350,005.06</u>	<u>1,496,645.79</u>
I. PUPIL SERVICES	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>
J. PUPILS WITH DISABILITIES	<u>10,831.50</u>	<u>35,027.48</u>	<u>45,858.98</u>
K. TRANSPORTATION	<u>0.00</u>	<u>23,071.03</u>	<u>23,071.03</u>
L. COMMUNITY SERVICE	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>
M. OPERATION & MAINTENANCE	<u>0.00</u>	<u>169,627.76</u>	<u>169,627.76</u>
N. EMPLOYEE BENEFITS			<u>409,320.85</u>
O. DEBT SERVICE			<u>0.00</u>
P. SCHOOL LUNCH			<u>37,066.92</u>
Q. CAPITAL EXPENSE			<u>8,647.58</u>
R. GRAND TOTAL EXPENDITURES			<u><u>2,497,186.87</u></u>

**COMPLETED FORM MUST BE RETURNED
NO LATER THAN AUGUST 3, 2009**

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Chief School Officer



Genesee Community Charter School 2008-2009 Calendar

<i>Staff only/No students</i>	<i>School is Closed</i>	<i>Half Day for Conferences</i>
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August 2008					September 2008					October 2008				
M	T	W	Th	F	M	T	W	Th	F	M	T	W	Th	F
				1	1	2	3	4	5			1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	8	9	10	11	12	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	15	16	17	18	19	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	22	23	24	25	26	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	29	30				27	28	29	30	31

August:

Teacher Education: 8/4-8/26
 First Day for 1st-6th Grade: 8/27
 1:00 Dismissal: 8/27-8/29

September:

Labor Day: 9/1
 Half Day for Kindergarten: 9/2
 First Full Day for Kindergarten: 9/3

October:

Teacher Education: 10/10
 Columbus Day: 10/13
 Site Seminar – 1:00 Dismissal: 10/24

November 2008					December 2008					January 2009				
M	T	W	Th	F	M	T	W	Th	F	M	T	W	Th	F
3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5				1	2
10	11	12	13	14	8	9	10	11	12	5	6	7	8	9
17	18	19	20	21	15	16	17	18	19	12	13	14	15	16
24	25	26	27	28	22	23	24	25	26	19	20	21	22	23
					29	30	31			26	27	28	29	30

November:

Teacher Education: 11/11
 Teacher Education: 11/24-11/25
 Thanksgiving Recess: 11/26-11/28

December:

Conferences – 11:30 Dismissal: 12/11
 Winter Recess: 12/22-12/31

January

Winter Recess: 1/1-1/2
 Martin Luther King Day: 1/19

February 2009					March 2009					April 2009				
M	T	W	Th	F	M	T	W	Th	F	M	T	W	Th	F
2	3	4	5	6	2	3	4	5	6			1	2	3
9	10	11	12	13	9	10	11	12	13	6	7	8	9	10
16	17	18	19	20	16	17	18	19	20	13	14	15	16	17
23	24	25	26	27	23	24	25	26	27	20	21	22	23	24
					30	31				27	28	29	30	

February:

President's Day: 2/16
 Teacher Education: 2/17-2/18
 School Is Open: 2/19-2/20

March:

Teacher Education: 3/19-3/20
 Conferences – 11:30 Dismissal: 3/26

April:

Teacher Education: 4/10
 April Break: 4/20-4/24

May 2009					June 2009				
M	T	W	Th	F	M	T	W	Th	F
				1	1	2	3	4	5
4	5	6	7	8	8	9	10	11	12
11	12	13	14	15	15	16	17	18	19
18	19	20	21	22	22	23	24	25	26
25	26	27	28	29	29	30			

May:

Teacher Education: 5/22
 Memorial Day: 5/25

June:

Conferences – 11:30 Dismissal: 6/11
 Last Day of School for Students: 6/17
 Teacher Education: 6/18-6/19

School Hours:
 M, T, Th, F: 8:00 - 3:00
 Every Wed.: 8:00 - 1:00

School Closings
 will be announced on
 Radio 1180/WHAM &
 WROC TV Channel 8

For inclement weather,
 please check WROC
 Channel 8 for GCCS's
 status when the City
 School District closes



Expeditionary Learning Schools Outward Bound

June 23, 2009

Lisa Wing, School Leader
Genesee Community Charter School
Rochester, NY, 14607

Dear Lisa and Genesee School Community,

This letter presents the findings of our annual Implementation Review (IR), lists the priorities in the past year's Work Plan, and identifies possible foci for next year's plan of work together.

The report is based on information collected through the IR surveys of teachers and administrators, PD surveys, conversations with staff and school leaders/administrators, and your School Designers' observations. The IR is not an overall measure of the quality of your school; rather, this process is aimed at assessing the level of implementation of ELS's Core Practices.

The two purposes of the Review are:

- To provide an informed basis for developing next year's work plan, and
- To give our organization information essential for continuous improvement of our services to you.

INTRODUCTION

Genesee Community Charter School continues to be a shining star in the Expeditionary Learning Schools network. Your reputation for excellence in teaching and arts-integrated expeditions is a model for teachers and leaders across the country. Your products in our archive collection have set a high bar for quality, and demonstrate what children are capable of producing when given the right kind of inspiration and support. Your connections to Rochester have brought relevance and meaning to expeditions, and enriched the local community.

Never a school to rest on its reputation, GCCS continues to find areas for improvement. Teachers are always seeking knowledge and feedback to improve their practice, and school leaders provide the requisite experiences and support.

OUR WORK PLAN GOALS FOR 2008-2009

We chose to focus on four goals this year:

1. Design final products that invite students to demonstrate progress towards meeting expedition learning targets, and support them in producing high quality work.
2. Design lessons that promote student inquiry and construction of knowledge.
3. Teach students how to spell.
4. Align teaching with agreed upon features described in the roots of ELS and charter of GCCS.

Final Products

Accomplishments

Student products continue to be a defining feature of GCCS. Every grade level produces culminating products that shine with student pride and demonstrate learning. Highlights of work this year:

- Teachers paid particular attention to designing final products that were consistently aligned with learning targets. About 80% of the products this year met that standard.
- Teachers wanted some aspect of the final product to provide answers to the guiding questions. Teachers report many (but not all) grades succeeded in this goal.
- A log was created to catalog the kinds of products produced at each grade level, towards the end of diversifying product formats and thoughtfully sequencing them across grade levels. Some new formats this year included a Pop-up video and Pop-up books.

Areas for further development:

- Not all grades included student-generated answers to the guiding questions. Continue to strive for 100% meeting this goal.
- Teachers could attend each other's exhibition night and collect data on how well the students could answer the guiding questions.
- Continue to work on the product log.
- Products at GCCS are such high quality that many people who see them can't help but wonder what the adult role was in producing them. Indeed, teachers do spend a lot of time formatting and editing student work. That is certainly appropriate, but we think it is important to include a page in the product, or even an addendum, that describes the process and the degree of adult support. Some GCCS products do have something like this, but we recommend it become a regular feature so the audience (often teachers from other schools) are clear about the production process.

Inquiry

Accomplishments

Inquiry based lessons were a focus of professional development all year long. The school designer modeled inquiry lessons on various subjects at all day professional development sessions and weekly faculty meetings. Teachers designed inquiry lessons together, and gave ideas to the implementing team. They watched videos of each other's lessons and gave critique and feedback. Some specific results of the focus on inquiry this year:

- 88% of the teachers (including the arts) conducted at least two inquiry-based lessons per expedition.
- Looking at Teacher Work sessions focused on understanding the structure of inquiry lessons, planning them together, and then observing each other's lessons (via video) and giving critique.
- Teachers report paying more attention to the types of questions they ask students, and to including more variety in their questioning repertoire.
- Teachers collected data on the kinds of questions students asked.

Areas for further development:

Even with all the attention we gave to inquiry this year, the staff is still developing a common understanding of what it means and what it looks like. They also planned to focus more on primary source materials and provide opportunities for original research. Some specific ideas for future consideration:

- Revisit and revise the inquiry lesson rubric developed last year.
- Continue to build familiarity with primary source documents and build lessons to explore them.
- Standardize the “Looking at Teacher Work” protocol.
- Make sure arts and all classroom teachers have the opportunity to present at “Looking at Teacher Work” sessions.
- Invite school designer to observe and give feedback to classroom teachers when they conduct inquiry lessons. Set up a schedule for the year to ensure all teachers have an opportunity to be observed.

Spelling

Accomplishments

Good for GCCS, taking on something as mundane, but essential as spelling! Not nearly as compelling as the rich content, nor as inspiring as the beautiful artistic elements in student products, spelling is an essential element of the high quality teachers and students strive for at GCCS. The way you went about improving spelling was simple, but brilliant. Rather than rush in to purchase a spelling program, teachers spent the entire year, first examining several possible programs, and then trying them out in their classes. As a result of this thorough study, next year GCCS will choose a spelling program and teachers will be prepared to implement it.

Areas for further development

Choose a spelling program and implement it with school wide consistency.

Revisiting GCCS Roots

Accomplishments

This was an intriguing goal, eight years after beginning, to revisit the roots of GCCS and Expeditionary Learning, to check the current course and make sure it hasn't drifted from the founding mission and vision. Some specific results follow:

- Teachers read and reviewed founding documents of GCCS and ELS, and noted consistencies and gaps.
- Staff engaged in physical adventure together, such as a ropes course, disco dancing, drumming, and brain gym.
- Expedition plans included category for NYS standards and EL best practices.
- Staff had more opportunities for vertical teaming.

Areas for further development

After reading the original EL proposal for funding, the faculty noted several elements they wanted to strengthen at GCCS, including more service within the expeditions, more time for solitude and reflection, and more physical rigor. Specific recommendations from staff reflection include:

- Review the mission more often during the year.
- Continue staff retreat every year.
- Code expedition plans to principles from the mission.
- More opportunities to meet in vertical teams.

DATA SUMMARY FROM THE IR WITH SOME INTERPRETATION

(Note: Parentheses indicate score on that item on last year's IR)

Learning Expeditions	Score	Active Pedagogy	Score	Culture and Character	Score
1. Compelling Topic	4	5. Lesson design	4 (3)	11. C&C in classrooms	4
2. Linked projects & products	4 (3)	6. Effective instructional practices	3	12. C&C school-side	4
3. Fieldwork, service & experts	4	7. Teach reading across disciplines	4	13. Professional Learning Community	4
4. High quality student work	4 (3)	8. Teach writing across disciplines	4	14. Leadership and SI	4
<i>Scores are 1-4 with 4=highest level of implementation</i>		9. Inquiry-based math	3	15. School structures	4
		10. Effective assessment practices	3	16. Grading & Reporting	4

It is difficult to improve on the high scores GCCS consistently earns on this review. Nevertheless, improvement was demonstrated in three areas. Linked projects and products and high quality student work both moved from a 3 to a 4. It is notable that many teachers rated themselves lower than 4, due, I think, to a humility born of high expectation. But if the projects and products at GCCS are not 4s, then there shouldn't be 4s anywhere in the country. Lesson design also moved up to a 4, due to the year-long intense focus on designing inquiry-based lessons.

I continue to learn and grow with you, and am inspired over and over again by all the amazing work your teachers and students accomplish. I am grateful for the privilege of working together.

Sincerely yours,

Steven Levy

Steven Levy,
School Designer

Ron Berger,
Field Director

All applicable leases, certificates, and approvals necessary to operate the Genesee Community Charter School at 657 East Avenue, Rochester, NY 14607 are in full force and effect.