NYS Education Officials Visit GCPS

On January 13th, New York State Commissioner of Education MaryEllen Elia, pictured above during a lesson in Catherine Ehrlein’s fourth grade class, and Regent Roger Tilles visited Stewart School and Garden City High School. The visit provided state officials with a glimpse into the robust educational program offered to the district’s students. To view video highlights of the day’s events, click here or on the image above. To see photos and learn more, click here.

Winter Blues? Please Join Us!

On Friday, March 3rd (7 p.m.) & Saturday, March 4th (1 & 7 p.m.), Garden City Middle School presents Singin’ in the Rain, Jr. Please join us as this classic musical comedy made famous by the 1952 film starring Debbie Reynolds and Gene Kelly is brought to life on the middle school stage. Tickets can be purchased online by clicking here.

And, if hilarious dark comedy tickles your fancy, be sure to catch Little Shop of Horrors presented by Garden City High School at 7 p.m. on Friday, March 10th and Saturday, March 11th. To purchase tickets, click here.

FREE to Garden City senior citizens, the Garden City Teachers’ Association is sponsoring a delicious buffet dinner and special dress rehearsal of the show on Thursday, March 9th starting at 3:15 p.m. in the high school cafeteria. Please register by calling, 478-2222.

2017-2018 Budget Calendar

Upcoming meetings:
All meetings will be held at Garden City High School, 8:15 p.m.

February 28: Budget Work Session #2: All Non-Instructional Areas/Administrative and Capital Components

March 14: Budget Work Session #3: Instructional Components I

March 21: Regular Board Meeting; Budget Work Session #4: Instructional Components II

April 4: Work Session #5
Additional Budget Review (If needed)

April 20: Regular Board Meeting; District Budget Adoption

May 9: Work Session; Budget Hearing

Vote

May 16, 6 a.m. - 10 p.m.: Budget Vote and Election

We’d Like to Hear from You

2017-2018 budget...
School Start Time:
A Letter, Survey, & Community Forum are coming your way

With a start time of 7:40 a.m., and the packed schedules of teens involved in a myriad of courses and co-curricular activities, students attending Garden City Public Schools are caught between a rock and a hard place.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, “…the evidence strongly suggests that a too-early start to the school day is a critical contributor to chronic sleep deprivation among American adolescents.”

Here is what we now know:
• A teen’s maturing body shifts the sleep cycle up to two hours, making it difficult for teens to fall asleep before 11 p.m. and wake before 8 a.m.
• Teens need approximately 9.5 hours of sleep each night. Eight hours of sleep is the minimum recommended amount of sleep for teenagers.
• Teens who get enough sleep have better grades, higher standardized test scores, and an overall better quality of life.
• Sleep deprivation presents several serious safety factors: Teens who do not get enough sleep are at risk of being overweight or suffering depression, are more likely to use drugs, fall asleep in class, drink caffeinated beverages, keep a phone or computer in their bedroom, do dangerous things without thinking, and are more likely to be involved in automobile accidents.
• In a Phi Delta Kappan (PDK, 2016) follow-up study of schools that pushed back the start time, “Over 92% of the parents said their kids were ‘easier to live with.’”

The same PDK study recommended “Go for the latest start time,… The benefits are proportional to the amount of time change.”

Twenty-one Nassau County school districts have high school starting times of approximately 8 a.m. (7:55 a.m. - 8:13 a.m.)

To more closely match our students’ natural circadian rhythm with the demands of a top-notch school system, the district is considering changing school start times.

Work on the topic began last year with the high school’s Site-Based Team (SBT). The team included students, parents, teachers and administrators. The SBT read Dr. Emsellum’s book, Snooze or Lose, researched the literature on the topic, and presented their findings and recommendations to the Board of Education and the community at the May 16th meeting.

Work continues this year with the Board’s School Start Time Steering Committee. The committee includes district administration, parents, teachers, and students. The high school’s SBT presentation, Steering Committee Agendas, and research information have been posted to the district website, along with a Transportation Department study of options for Garden City. Parents are encouraged to review these documents by clicking here.

On the horizon are several opportunities for community feedback. Superintendent of Schools Dr. Feisern soon will be sending a letter announcing upcoming student, parent, and staff surveys requesting input about the school start time changes. And, please mark your calendars, a School Start Time Community Forum is planned for Monday, May 1st, 7-9 p.m. in the high school auditorium.

GC’s STEAM Trajectory

Garden City students in grades K-12 have been experiencing the joys and challenges of learning within the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, Mathematics) curriculum. “We want our students to develop computational thinking skills: to design, test, and use hands-on problem solving to bring an idea to fruition,” explained Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Dr. Ted Cannone. “We want our students to be resilient, to ‘fail forward,’ be collaborative, and be flexible and adaptive thinkers.”

Garden City’s secondary students have been testing their STEAM skills in the competition ring. Members of the middle school’s FIRST Lego League (left) and the high school’s new VEX Robotics Club have been busy building and programming robots to compete in local competitions. To catch a glimpse of the VEX machines in action, click here or on the top left photo. The video was shot at the February 4th competition at Freeport High School.

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2017 Valedictorian and Salutatorian

Congratulations to Garden City High School’s Class of 2017 Valedictorian Alyssa DeGruccio (left) and Salutatorian Seunghyun Woo. Alyssa’s seven-semester weighted GPA of 101.02 and Seunghyun’s 100.45 qualified them for the top academic honors of the senior class. Alyssa and Seunghyun will speak at the Class of 2017 commencement ceremony on June 24th. “We are very proud of the hard work and dedication of top students,” said Principal McLaughlin. “Congratulations to Alyssa and Seunghyun!”

Class of 2016 Tops in Nassau County

The Class of 2016 placed Garden City High School as the top district in Nassau County for its percentage of students graduating with Regents Diplomas with Advanced Designation. New York State requires a minimum of 22 credits for high school graduation. To receive a Regents Diploma with Advanced Designation, students must pass additional required Regents Exams. Congratulations to the 310 members of the Class of 2016 for achieving this amazing distinction!

Carnegie Hall Honor Concert Chorus

Congratulations to Garden City High School senior Ann Ambach (Mixed Chorus) and junior Annalise LoBiondo (Women’s Chorus) for being selected to perform as members of the Honors Performance Series Concert Choir at Carnegie Hall on February 5th. Annalise LoBiondo is pictured with Women’s Chorus conductor Dr. Tim Seelig (inset). Both women are students of music teacher Steve Mayo. Student representatives from across the U.S. and five countries rehearsed for being selected to perform as members of the Carnegie Hall Honor Concert Chorus.

Future Business Leaders

“Garden City High School business students did an excellent job at the 2017 Future Business Leaders of America District Competition,” shared business teacher Dr. Erin McKinstry (far right). “The January event hosted 172 Long Island students competing in a variety of public speaking and written events.” Congratulations to our winners: Dean Van Noy: 1st place; Caroline Feryo: two 3rd place awards; Vedant Trivedi: 3rd place; Brennan Maggio: 3rd place and 4th place; Chase Gladd: 4th place; and Joe Doud: 5th place.

Individual Gold

Congratulations to two outstanding high school athletes for winning Individual Gold Medals at the Nassau County Fencing Finals held in late January. Pictured here (left to right) are Boys Fencing coach Kevin Oliver, who was named Nassau County Fencing Coach of the Year; Gold Medalist in Foil Phillip Acinapuro; Gold Medalist in Foil Tia Petrides (Tia won County Gold last year as well); and Girls Fencing coach Denise Holz. Watch for a complete summary of Winter Athletics in the upcoming Spring issue of the district’s On The Line newsletter.

Nat’l Merit Scholarship Finalist

On February 6th, Garden City High School senior Eileen Farrell was elevated to Finalist in the 2017 National Merit Scholarship Competition. Eileen is pictured above with guidance counselor Jim Malone and Principal Nanine McLaughlin when she was named a Semifinalist back in September. Eileen now moves on to be considered for a number of monetary college scholarship awards. Since 2009, the high school has had 20 seniors named as Finalists in the National Merit Scholarship competition.

Nat’l School to Watch/Gold Star School

Garden City Middle School recently received two honors for the quality of its academic program, and its responsive and socially equitable culture. The school was redesignated as a National and NYS Department of Education Essential Elements’ School to Watch. Also, the school received Gold Star Recognition as a School of Character from the Anti-Defamation League, documenting that its programs address school tone and help to build student-school connectedness.
Congratulations to Stewart’s fifth grade cast and crew, parents and teachers, and music teacher Kelly Grace on another successful opera production! On Thursday, January 19th, two casts (150 students) presented Donizetti’s “The Elixir of Love,” the school’s 79th opera production. To view the entire album of images from both casts, click here.

Stratford Avenue’s fifth graders presented “The Wizard of Oz” on February 8th and 10th to the delight of family, friends, and schoolmates. Congratulations to the cast and crew (above), music teacher Meredith Lavin, and all the supportive parents on a wonderfully entertaining, vibrant and lively production! To view a photo album of both casts in action, click here.

The Wizard of Oz

The Elixir of Love

2017-2018 Proposed Budget

- The Governor’s budget proposal contains no new initiatives for significant mandate relief.
- The proposed school district budget includes funding to maintain the district’s robust educational program, including the additions of three new high school electives: the third college-credit component in the Project Lead the Way sequence; Media Arts I; and Advanced Placement Geography.

If residents are unable to attend the upcoming meetings, all 2017-2018 budget information is available on the district website under “Budget Information.” Click here to view. Audio recordings of the Board meetings are now available; click here to access the files.

GC’s STEAM Trajectory

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The dozen VEX members built three robots in this, their first year of the new club, meeting after school twice a week with advisor Vincent Pane and retired Grumman programmer Ed Lancevich.

At the middle school, two teams guided by teachers Brittany Kupferman and Amanda Piersa, the Probots and the Bumblebots, have been working to assemble and program small robot vehicles to perform prescribed tasks during FIRST Lego competitions. They also developed projects to present: the Probots created 3D-printed prosthetic limbs that were comfortable and affordable for use on animals; the Bumblebots reached out to local arboretums to share an idea for protecting dwindling honeybee populations.

At Stewart and Stratford, second and third graders worked with Sphero, an app-programmable orb, and fourth and fifth graders worked with kidOYO to learn to write code in self-paced learning modules of increasing difficulty (top, left).

Thanks to grants from the PTA, even the district’s youngest students are engaged in computational thinking skills using small robots. At the October Board meeting at Homestead School (center image), para-professional Alyson Sandler led first graders in a demonstration of Dash, a programmable robot they learned to manipulate as kindergartners. Looking on as they control the robot on an iPad are Board Trustee Bob Martin (standing) and Vice President Tom Pinou.

In early February, Miss Sandler introduced a new robot, Code & Go Robot Mouse, to kindergartners at Homestead (lower left). The robot is programmed by students using simple directional codes that guide the mouse to a piece of cheese through a maze course the students design.

“The available technology is advancing quickly,” shared Superintendent Dr. Feirsen. “We want to keep the end result in mind: to provide a broad range of opportunities for our students to experience so they are well prepared to meet the demanding goals of the future.”