



Report to Town Boards and Committees

December 2022

Shared with members of school boards, select boards, superintendents, the Budget Review Committee (BRC), and the budget and finance committees of Blue Hill, Brooksville, Brooklin, Castine, Penobscot, Sedgwick, and Surry, and anyone else who requests an emailed monthly version. As with all our earlier reports to School Boards, the report will be posted on our website.

News from the GSA Board of Trustees

- GSA is in the midst of its yearlong self-study as part of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) reaccreditation process. The Board plays a role in this work; trustees serve on or chair various committees. Part of the focus of NEASC is strategic planning, and the Board has identified as one of its goals to produce a new strategic plan at the end of the process next October.

Campus News

- GSA's special education program continues to grow. Currently, we have thirty-one students who have a 504 plan. We have forty students with IEPs. They are served by three teachers, and four Ed Techs. We are currently short-staffed by two Ed Techs, which puts a strain on the program. As is the case with many schools, it is very difficult to find people to do this job.
- Several years ago, GSA began the R.I.S.E program (Road to Independence, Self-Advocacy and Empowerment). R.I.S.E provides a learning environment for students whose academic, social, emotional or behavioral needs require highly supportive and supervised special education services throughout the school day. (In the past we could not serve these students; we could only serve students whose needs could be met, with support, in regular classes, not ones who needed their own program.) R.I.S.E fosters enhanced support for students with special needs in the main-streamed classrooms and in a nurturing classroom experience with one-to-one specially designed instruction.
- The R.I.S.E program has found great success by embracing a culture that embodies opportunity to feel a part of a community. The program promotes independence in academic growth, life skills, social/emotional skills and executive functioning skills. Our program supports our students as they become more empowered to make healthy choices in their school experiences and guides them towards being active participants in their communities now and into their futures. Our

students are given opportunities to practice life skills and are supported and guided as they discover their career interests.

- On November 9, we held a Middle School Family Welcome Night to introduce prospective students to the Academy. It was well attended, and well-received.
- This fall we introduced Student-Led Conferences in place of traditional parent-teacher conferences. As the name implies, the student is part of the conference and leads the discussion about their work and performance in a class. Advisors shared that it was positive for them, their students, and parents. Parents were very positive and supportive, and many more parents were on campus than we have usually seen for traditional parent-teacher conferences. It is still possible at any time for parents to meet with teachers.
- Community service has been similarly positively received. Assistant Head of School Rebecca Gratz is working with different organizations and individuals in the community to build a list of community service opportunities and share those with students and families. The community organizations and individuals are pleased about this development.
- Ms. Gratz has connected with the Acting Registrar at EMCC to learn more about courses available to high school students. We will be doing more this spring and into next year to encourage students to take courses online/hybrid/onsite at our local community colleges along with the UM system. These dual/concurrent enrollment courses allow students to earn transferable college credits and high school credits at the same time. Students and parents appreciate the increased access to these free courses.
- Winter sports have started up in earnest. We have already had basketball scrimmages, and the boys team opens its season December 3 at MDI. We are hoping for a repeat of last year's very strong showing. The girls team, which has had low numbers the last few years, had 27 players come out for the team. It should be a good year for them, and for second-year coaches Mike Webb and Jenn Jackson.

Finances

- The tuition supplement request is the same as last year, \$1,700 per student. As in the past three years, GSA will reach out to each town (including select board, school board and other relevant committees) to offer further discussions about the tuition supplement based on the needs, preferences and timeline of each town. This follows up our work with BRC budget review and we look forward to talking more with any group that requests a meeting.
- Representatives from GSA administration, faculty, and board are also attending monthly school board meetings in each town, every month, to listen, learn, and better understand issues facing our local elementary schools.

Facilities updates

- We have received our PFAS test results, and happily our levels are well within the limits set by the State of Maine. We have also received our lead testing results, all comparable to past years, and within acceptable ranges. However, a few places are closer to the limits than we are comfortable with, and we are taking measures to eliminate the use of these sites, or add filters to the supply line.

Recent Student Highlights

- *Eve Skoletsky* '25, Sedgwick, made the front page of the *Weekly Packet* showing off her baking skills. Eve is part of the R.I.S.E program mentioned above, and she bakes treats each week, and then sells them on campus.
- *Regan Libby* '23, Brooksville, was invited to participate in the volleyball Senior Showcase.
- *Jack Sullivan* '23, Blue Hill, played football with the Ellsworth team this fall, and was the only member of the team to garner all-conference honors.
- *Jenna Blodgett* '23, Brooklin, continues to thrill and amaze the GSA community with her musical talents in the honors Jazz combo. Jenna is both a skilled instrumentalist and a fabulous vocalist.
- Jazz pianist and alumna *Yvonne Rogers* '17, Penobscot, made her headliner debut at the Stonington Opera House.

Coming events, open to the public

- The annual GSA Holiday Concert will be Wednesday December 7, at 10 am for local elementary students, and at 6 pm for the general public. Admission is free. There will be a brief reception afterward in the cafeteria with art from the Art Department and refreshments courtesy of the Culinary Arts Program.
- The GSA Band will play at the Wreaths Across America ceremony on Sunday, December 11th @ 9:15 AM at Maine Coast Mall (outside, in front of TJ Maxx).
- There will be a free basketball clinic for K-6th grade students from 9:00 until 11:00 on December 10 in the GSA gym. Snacks will be provided.

Thank you for taking the time to read this, and for your service to the well-being of our shared peninsula community. We want to hear from you, and invite you to reach out via phone (207-374-2808), t.seeley@georgestevens.org, or in person.