



Timothy J. Seeley  
Head of School

## George Stevens Academy October Report

### Covid Update

Last week, we had our first positive case on the GSA campus. Because of the protocols we have in place (masks and three-foot spacing indoors, and keeping seating charts), we had only fifteen close contacts, and we are hopeful there will be no wider transmission. As per the CDC guidelines, all close contacts can continue coming to school.

The students have been good about living up to what are asking, although keeping the six-foot spacing while eating outside is the most difficult.

### Teacher Coaching

We have started a new teacher professional development program, one we will continue every year going forward. This program is designed to support teachers as they grow professionally by providing coaching conversations centered on classroom instruction, feedback on classroom practices, and professional learning opportunities.

The three 2021-2022 professional focuses in instructional practice are rebuilding community and connection, classroom practice in the block schedule, and assessment practice in the block schedule. There are three parts to the process:

1. **Goal-setting.** Each teacher will meet with their coaching administrator in a goal-setting meeting at the beginning of each school year, either Assistant Head of School Rebecca Gratz, Dean of Curriculum and Instruction David Stearns, or myself. The goal-setting meeting will help each teacher establish two goals for their year and will be the focus of the coach's observations and work with each faculty member throughout the year. Each faculty member will set two professional goals, each of which will be tied to their instructional practice and should be goals that can be observable and measurable as part of the coaching process.
2. **Classroom Walk-throughs.** There will be three walk-through observations of each faculty member's classes during the year. During the walk-through, the coach will be attentive to classroom practice related to the teacher's goals and the school's instructional priorities, or to other specific teaching practice topics the teacher has requested be

observed. Within one week of the walk-through, the coach will provide written feedback about the walk-through.

3. **End-of-Year Reflection:** By the end of the school year - mid-May through June - teachers will meet with their coach to reflect on goals and learning throughout the year. There will also be time to consider what professional learning the teacher might want to engage in over the summer and to think about their goals for the next school year.

I am very excited to begin this program. I think it will bring immediate benefits to our students. GSA has very good teachers, but our craft is complex, nuanced, and endlessly variable, and everyone can improve at it, no matter how experienced.

### **Attendance Policy**

Because each class period is more important in a semester-based block schedule, we have made two changes to our attendance policies. First, when there is an attendance problem, we now have in place intervention meetings with the student, a parent or guardian, the Dean of Students, and the Assistant Head of School. These are intended to determine the cause of the problem and come up with solutions. Second, rather than tie attendance to a grade, we will tie it to credit for the class, on the theory that if you miss too many days, you have not really taken the course. We also have much flexibility built in to accommodate students whose attendance challenges are out of their control and to allow students to gain the credit after the problem is fixed.

### **Senior Hike**

On Wednesday, September 28, we had our annual senior and senior advisors hike up Blue Hill Mountain. At the top, the students do some reflections on their coming year, and hear a presentation by Chrissy Beardsley Allen '98 from the Blue Hill Heritage Trust on the history of the area. This is one part of our desire that our students learn as much as possible about where they live, as well as help the senior class forge an identity.

### **Advisory**

We have started our advising program for the year. Students meet with their advisors at least twice a week. Besides some general, start-of-the-year stuff, students have done some thinking about what they want for their futures.

Thank you for all you do for the children of your town.

Respectfully,



Timothy J. Seeley  
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