



Timothy J. Seeley
Head of School

George Stevens Academy September Report

And here we are! School starts again, with everyone on campus, every day. While I wish that masks were not necessary, it is so very satisfying to be able to write that second sentence.

Orientation Days

We began school on September 1 with an orientation day for all 9th and 10th grade students, followed on Thursday by a program for all 11th and 12th graders. Each day was a mix of community-building activities, getting computers, and meeting teachers. There was much enthusiasm amongst everyone—students and staff. Everyone is excited to be back at school.

Supporting Students as They Return

We know that most students are delighted to be back in school, but we also know the anxiety for some will be very high. We reached out individually to those students and their families during August so we could listen to them and reassure them. Also, each of our academic departments is adjusting their first quarter curricula as warranted to address any learning loss that happened last year while we were in hybrid and remote modes.

Academics

You will recall that after a great deal of consideration and study, we opted to go with a semester-based, block academic schedule this year. There were a number of reasons for this, based on our experience using it last year. A primary one for me is that students only need to be working on four classes at a time maximum, and teachers have a reduced number of students they are working with at any one time, which means each student can get more attention. As with everything we do, we will evaluate the new schedule as we use it in order to determine if we need to make any adjustments next year.

Advisory in 2021-22

All students are in an advisory group, which meets one or two times a week. In addition to academic advising (going over grades, picking courses, providing learning support, etc.), our advising program addresses community and adolescent development issues. The schedule for this coming year:

Month	Value/Theme
September	Community
October	Diversity
November	Empathy

December	Respect
January	Resilience
February	Equity & Inclusion
March	Self-care
April	Perseverance
May	Kindness
June	Joy

New faculty and staff

We welcomed a number of new teachers and staff members over the summer. We continue to have a great team here, and I am excited to work with our new colleagues.

Faculty

- **Erin Wenal** joins GSA as a part-time English teacher. Erin has recently been an English teacher and IB program coordinator at Rifle High School in Colorado. She has master's degrees in both special education and secondary literacy and has worked throughout her career as both an English teacher and a special education teacher.
- **Phelan Gallagher** joins GSA as the music teacher and band director. Phelan is a GSA graduate whose own experience with music here as a student was transformative. He earned a bachelor's in jazz performance and a master's in music education. He has worked in various capacities as a musician, a music educator, and a technology educator. Most recently he worked at BHCS as their technology integrator.
- **Reed Hayden** joins GSA as a part-time visual arts teacher. He is primarily a wood sculptor with a B.F.A. in Sculpture and an M.F.A. in Intermedia. He has taught woodcarving and boatmaking elements for Wooden Boat school for about 15 years. He is a local sign maker who has made some of GSA's signage, carves and exhibits professionally, and has worked as a boatbuilder.

Staff

- **Rebecca Gratz** is our new assistant head of school. Rebecca is a 1988 graduate of the University of Vermont with a B.S. in Environmental Science. After working as an environmental educator in New York City, she attended graduate school at Yale, earning a master's in environmental management and teaching certification in history and social studies. After 22 years at the Sound School in New Haven, Conn., where she began as a student teacher and ended up the principal, Rebecca was assistant head of school at Bancroft School. She is already receiving very good reviews.
- **Jane O'Connor** is our director of day admissions and coordinator of community, equity, and inclusion. She has already been working hard to improve our admissions efforts and will lead our community in our work to be a place all feel safe, known, and welcomed. Jane received her B.A. at Hampshire College, studying photoethnography, and her M.Ed. at Harvard University, with a concentration on human development and learning.
- **Trudy Bell** returns to GSA after eight years to serve as advancement associate. She spent three years working at The Bay School as business manager and five years working at Parker Ridge Retirement Community as administrative coordinator.

During her previous ten-year stint at GSA, Trudy held several positions including registrar and director of annual Giving. Trudy is the parent of two GSA alums.

- **Seth Brown** is GSA's new director of finance and operations. He is a '98 graduate of Maine Maritime Academy earning a B.S. in Marina/Boatyard Management and an '01 graduate of the University of Maine earning an M.S. in Management. Seth joins GSA after a 22-year soccer career, which encompassed youth, collegiate, and professional soccer. He has been an assistant professor at Husson University. Most recently, he was the director of business development for Gateway Title of Maine, a subsidiary of Fidelity.
- **Lydia Gray** will be our new receptionist/administrative assistant handling all of the front desk duties including attendance. Lydia is a 2010 graduate of George Stevens. She attended Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts.
- **Bella Cox** is a GSA alumna, Class of 2021, and joins our kitchen staff as our new baker.
- **Corey Esposito**, who took over our metal shop halfway through last year, has become the continuing teacher in that position.
- **Debbie Davis** is back this year in her new role as registrar. Debbie held the position of receptionist/attendance clerk for almost 20 years here at GSA!

Opening Numbers

Although, as you know, enrolment numbers fluctuate in early September, we opened with 300 local, day students, and 5 boarding students. At the next meeting I come to, I will go over our strategies for reviving the boarding program. It brings so much to our school and communities that we intend to do all we can to get it back on its feet. We know, however, that we cannot keep it indefinitely, if it does not increase in size. Each year, we evaluate its viability.

Sports

Our athletic teams have once again gotten off to a fine start, with three of four winning early season contests. It is wonderful to be able to once again have full and normal athletic schedules and to be able to welcome spectators back to cheer on our athletes.

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

Respectfully,



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