



News from GSA March 2023

Shared by GSA's Head of School 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, current parents and faculty, and anyone else who requests an emailed monthly version. News from GSA will also be posted on our website.

News from the GSA Board of Trustees

The GSA Board of Trustees has directed the Head of School Search Committee to focus its immediate efforts on finding an interim candidate for 2023-24. An Interim Head of School will allow for a smooth transition in leadership. It will also give the Search Committee time and flexibility in its search for a permanent candidate. For application information, please see the link on the GSA website [here](#). There will be opportunities for public comment and input at a later stage. We will continue to keep you updated throughout the process.

Campus News: ISIP

Independent Study and Internship Program: This month all our juniors and seniors began their two-week independent study projects. At GSA, we believe that when appropriate we should enable students to set their own paths and follow their interests. One of GSA's signature programs began in February. Familiarly known as ISIP (which stands for Independent Study and Internship Program), it has been in place for more than fifty years, and every junior and senior participates.

Students can begin over February break if they wish, and then take the two weeks after break to work on projects they designed themselves. Students study things that interest them as they think about a possible college major, or explore possible careers, or undertake creative projects in the arts and engineering, or travel to study elsewhere.

Recent subjects of ISIP projects have included exploring the workings of state government, working with a game warden, go-kart construction, boatbuilding,

math teaching, comparing the pedagogy of two schools, nonprofit businesses, supply-chain logistics, the business of a soccer academy, being a surgeon, how music affects the brain, coding, building a computer, marine research at UMO, scalloping, veterinary care, fashion design, playing guitar, ukulele building, filming the Filipino community, green architecture, Jewish literature, and the Spanish language.

Preparing for and during ISIP, students work with a faculty advisor and a project mentor to design and carry out their projects, who also evaluate their work. Students show off the results of their ISIP projects at the public presentation on March 22. (See below for details.) We invite all community members to this event, to see what your town's students have been up to (and all the rest!).

For students who are not able to arrange their own projects, we have set up a program at school. This year, it will include: a half day coaching and goal setting and a half day volunteering at Parker Ridge; a visit and tour at EMCC; a day touring Bangor; volunteering at a preschool; half a day at the Brooklin Boat Yard; and a day learning about entrepreneurship.

More Campus News

After a Covid-imposed hiatus, GSA once again hosted the peninsula Middle School Basketball tournament, on February 10 and 11. Congratulations to all the middle school athletes!

GSA will be welcoming prospective students to three events in March. On Thursday, March 2, and Tuesday, March 7, students are invited to campus for "Shadow Days" from 7:30 am until 2:30 pm. These are opportunities for 8th-graders (and some 7th-graders) to "shadow" a GSA student and get a sense of what it's like to be at school here. And on Thursday, March 9, we will host our second Middle School Family Welcome Night from 5:30 until 7:30 in the gym. Visit mini-classes, meet teachers, hear from GSA students! Free pizza and childcare for children under age 12. If you are interested in any of these, please contact Day Admissions Director Jane O'Connor at j.oconnor@georgestevens.org.

Maine Department of Education Data

The Maine Department of Education has finally released data for the 2021-2022 school year. ([Link here.](#)) It covers all sorts of things, some of which do not apply to a town academy like GSA, but here are a couple of relevant pieces:

2021-2022 Graduation Rates

- Average for all Maine High Schools: 86.3%
- Average for Hancock County High Schools: 86.2%
- **GSA graduation rate: 92.3 This is the highest in the county.**

2021-2022 Costs per pupil (including special education and transportation)

- Average for all Maine High Schools: \$17,999
- Average for Hancock County High Schools: \$20,124
- GSA cost per pupil: \$17,482*
- **Cost to taxpayers for GSA students: \$16,381**

(GSA makes up the difference between what we receive in tuition and the cost of our programs with other revenue sources and through fundraising, which is done at no cost to taxpayers.)

Finances

We have begun the budget process for next year. Unlike public schools, whose budgets are expense driven (they decide what is needed to be spent to fund the school, and that is what taxpayers are asked to spend), the GSA budget is revenue driven—we make projections on our revenues from enrollment and other sources, and then work so expenses match those projections. This makes the GSA budget much more fluid throughout the process, as our enrollment and fundraising projections get ever more refined, based on what we are seeing in admissions and what our fundraising results are as this year progresses.

The first step in our process is to fill in expenses we can predict easily and know we must have. Next is to make enrollment projections, based on our registrations to date, and decide on projections for expenses that can vary year to year. Then we make projections on other revenue sources (fundraising, summer programming, and the like). We continually work to be certain that our projected expenses match our anticipated revenues. Normally, the first draft of our budget goes to our finance committee in April, and the Board sees it that month as well. The Budget Review Committee (BRC) will also see the initial draft.

The budget is refined throughout the summer with up-to-date enrollment data, and the final version goes to the GSA Board in September. The BRC receives updated versions to review and comment upon, and the final, Board-approved one.

We continue to monitor current expenses closely, refraining from non-essential spending.

GSA’s request for supplemental tuition from towns

We are deeply grateful for the support all towns have shown us the last two years by approving a tuition supplement on top of the State-required tuition. As the (above) cost numbers show, it is impossible to have a full service, quality high school in Maine and Hancock County on what the state specifies, and no Maine high school is doing it.

Even with the supplement, the cost to taxpayers in our towns is many thousands less than the cost to taxpayers in towns with public high schools. The chart below shows the tax impact in each town of the supplement in next year’s town budgets. (Please note, since the actual cost will depend on how many students attend GSA, these are estimates based on numbers in town budgets, and estimates from the town schools and school boards. The actual numbers will not differ much, if at all, from many of these.)

2023-2024 Tax Implications for Each Town						
Town	22-23 enrollment	Total cost of supplement	23-24 budgeted enrollment	Total cost of supplement		Tax impact on Town
Blue Hill	111	\$188,700	104	\$176,800		-\$11,900
Brooklin	15	\$25,500	20	\$39,100		\$8,500
Brooksville	32	\$54,400	33	\$56,100		\$1,700
Castine	16	\$27,200	20	\$34,000		\$6,800
Penobscot	19	\$32,300	27	\$45,900		\$13,600
Sedgwick	32	\$54,400	27	\$45,900		-\$8,500
Surry	42	\$71,400	49	\$83,300		\$11,900

Facilities updates

The early February storm which brought snow, followed by rain, followed by freezing temperatures, posed some challenges for our buildings with flat roofs, most particularly the two wings on the side of the gym (which house classrooms, locker rooms, and our weight room, on one side, and the cafeteria and kitchen and a classroom on the other). Getting the snow off those roofs means dumping it next to the building, and then that must be removed before the building can be opened for students and staff. As a result, after this past storm, we were not able to open the school for a day while the removal took place.

This is one of many issues that will be addressed when GSA is able to do its campus-wide renovation and renewal.

Recent Student Highlight

Senior Ian Bowden (Orland) and tenth-grader Ben Baldwin (Blue Hill) traveled to Colorado to compete in the 2023 Junior Olympics in fencing.

Coming Event - Open to the Public

ISIP Exhibition Night: Please join us on March 22 at 5:30pm in the GSA gym to see all the wonderful projects our students did during ISIP. They will each have a presentation set up on a table, and be available to talk about their work and answer questions.

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 to me by phone (207-374-2808), by email to t.seeley@georgestevens.org, or in person.