

Garden City Community School  
*"learning to live!....living to learn!"*

# OUR COMMON TERMS



**GARDEN CITY COMMUNITY SCHOOL**  
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# Our Common Terms

*Some of the methods or terms at Garden City Community School may not be familiar to you. This information is to answer some of our most common questions about our educational or behavioral philosophy. You are always invited to visit the school or teacher, so contact us if you'd like more information!*

## **Achievement Report**

Instead of evaluating student work using letter grades, we evaluate work based on mastery of expectations. Rubrics, quizzes, and performance tasks along with a cycle of planning, instruction, and assessment are consistent indicators of mastery performance. Criteria based on exemplary models and state standards are used for project work.

## **Adlerian Philosophy**

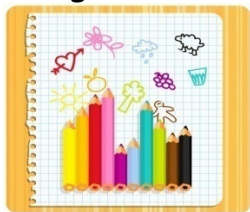


Our behavior plan includes the psychology of Alfred Adler. Adler emphasized preventing challenging behaviors by treating each other with mutual respect, encouraging and promoting social interest, fostering a sense of belonging, and by emphasizing the importance of supporting and nurturing creativity in children. He stressed the need to understand individuals within their social context - family, school, and community.

Within GCCS, the concept of community is brought to life as learners start at an early age to respect, to cooperate, and to create with others. This, combined with the encouragement of exploration and risk-taking in learning with teacher guidance, creates an environment safe for learning and development.

Our counseling department has more in-depth information about this, so be sure to ask for more!

## **Arts Integration**



The arts are integrated into the various curriculum throughout the school. This includes visual arts, music, theater and movement/dance. The ability to think in innovative and productive ways is a survival skill in a world where we are inundated daily with information. Research has proven that teaching the "whole child" with the arts not only engages them and increases their enjoyment of school, but it also addresses important brain and learning theories to improve their learning of math, literacy, science, history, etc. Students might draw a picture first and follow with a written story. They may learn math concepts through rhythm and music. Plays are developed to create real-life re-creations of a historical event.

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**Charter School**

A charter school is a free (no tuition) public school of choice funded by state funds based on student attendance. They are not able to hold bonds; therefore they receive no local taxes to fund facilities. Charters are developed by founders who have a specific educational vision for children. GCCS is authorized by the Idaho Charter School Commission and is held highly accountable to students, parents, and communities to follow their charters and meet required state standards and tests. Charter schools are created for a very definite purpose with a focus on a specific philosophy.

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**Class Circles**

Every day starts and ends with class circles where students and their teachers discuss the day's plans, reflect on their learning for the day and address issues.

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**Community Circle**

All students, K-8, gather at 9AM every Wednesday morning in the Commons Area for an all-school "Community Circle". This is a special time each week to celebrate birthdays, announce special events, enjoy guest presenters, give compliments/appreciations, practice the 5 R's, perform, and share what students are learning throughout the school. Each week a different class takes the responsibility to organize and facilitate the Circle. Families are always invited to join us and to offer to be the guest speaker.

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**Community Council**

This group consists of families, staff, board members, students and interested community members. It has been established as a forum for all stakeholders to discuss aspects of the schools, share opinions and ideas, and help create or fine-tune various aspects of the school. We are a very "transparent" school and believe we can only be successful if everyone feels welcome and important - because they certainly are! Two parents are elected to be parent representatives to the GCCS Board and maintain communication between the groups - although everyone is encouraged to participate in all school board meetings.

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**Differentiated Instruction**

This is sometimes referred to as differentiated learning or differentiation. Coming from our belief that students learn in different ways, lessons are developed to meet all children's needs. Based on their own prior experiences, preferences, individual interests, and abilities, students are guided through lessons and learning. Some students may answer a series of questions while others may choose to create a model, write an article, draw a poster, and create a song. Some may need help with basic skills such as using manipulatives (blocks or other objects to make the experience more relevant to their lives) to solve math equations while others may be solving algebraic expressions. Teachers modify lessons and student expectations so that all students within a classroom can learn effectively, regardless of differences in ability..

## Environmental Focus



As of Fall 2009, we are the pilot school for the Boise Watershed Project's new environmental curriculum. GCCS uses the Hyatt Wetlands (located across Maple Grove from the school) to increase students' understanding of and commitment to our environment. Through their participation in research and service-learning projects, students' critical and creative thinking skills are stimulated and contribute to the community. We continue to pursue additional funding and community partnerships to increase our student's outdoor experiences and increased awareness to respect their own, others, and world space.

GCCS staff is pursuing their environmental certification showing our commitment to environmental education.

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## Essential Learning Outcomes

Basic units of learning that are based in situations and meaningful contexts for the student addressing the following:

- Thinking
- Communication
- Personal Futures
- Social Responsibility
- World Futures

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## First Names

At GCCS we introduce ourselves and address each other by first names. This fosters a culture of respect within relationships not necessarily based on title. Some of our students prefer to put Ms./Mr. in front of names. We respect their desire to do so.

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## Homework-the "Family-Friendly" process



At GCCS we recognize families as the first teachers of their children and we consider *whole* families - not just the individual child - to be the learner. We want parents and their children to be able to enjoy family time in the evenings versus stressing over pages and pages of homework. However, parents are expected to support student learning by assisting in reviewing information sent home by teachers. This might include: 1) reviewing spelling words and math facts 2) asking children about the topics they are studying and adding information and resources as appropriate or 3) monitoring students' nutrition, television viewing, and appropriate amounts of sleep.

From time to time teachers will send "family oriented homework" which involves children and parents together on inquiry projects which teachers have tied to units being explored at school. Parents will be equipped with packets that will help them support the child's learning. Examples might include: gathering family photos for a history project, collecting leaves for biology, interviewing their personal hero, etc.

## Inquiry-Based Learning



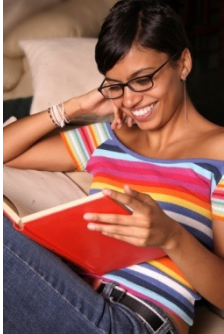
Effective inquiry is more than just asking questions. It's known that: "Tell me and I forget, show me and I remember, involve me and I understand." The last part of this statement is the essence of inquiry-based learning.

Inquiry implies *involvement* that leads to understanding. Teachers do not "spoon feed" information to students as it's much more meaningful for the child to discover the answers through experiments, discussion, and expression of their own unique ideas leading to the various possibilities of results.

The process of inquiring begins with gathering information and data through applying the human senses -- seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling. A complex process is involved when individuals attempt to convert information and data into useful knowledge. Useful application of inquiry learning involves several factors: a context for questions, a framework for questions, a focus for questions, and different levels of questions. Well-designed inquiry learning produces knowledge formation that can be widely applied.

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## Literacy



Reading. Writing. Language Usage. We use a balanced and contextual approach emphasizing equal amounts of guided reading, self-selected reading, writing, and working with words. Daily instruction in all four blocks provides numerous and varied opportunities for all children to learn to read and write. Using all four blocks acknowledges that children do not all learn in the same way and provides substantial instruction to support whatever learning personality comes with the child. Different literacy levels accepted in every classroom provides additional support for children who struggle and additional challenges for children who catch on quickly.

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## Mathematics



Activity based investigations encourage students to think creatively, develop their own problem-solving strategies, and work cooperatively. Students write, draw, and talk about mathematics as well as use manipulatives, calculators, and computers. Mathematics content includes number and operation, concepts and principles of measurement, concepts and language of algebra and functions, concepts and principles of geometry, data analysis, probability and statistics. Math is held at the same time throughout the school to enable students to meet with various strength groupings.

**Multi-Age Groupings**

Our classrooms have a balanced mix of children spanning two grade levels (with the exception of kindergarten). Multi-age grouping allows a classroom to accommodate children's different levels of social and academic capabilities. We teach to the child rather than the grade level. Younger children experience a leadership role when the older group moves on and a younger group moves in. This brings a sense of continuity and allows the teacher to use knowledge gained about a child in year one to plan experiences for year two.

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**Parent Education Classes**

An important tenant of Adlerian Philosophy is ongoing education and training to help parents support their children. Each parent is expected to attend and participate in a *GCCS* Parent Education Class. Classes are offered three times per year - fall, winter, and spring trimester. Registration information will be sent home with students.

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**Performance-Based Assessment**

Alongside their teachers, students learn to participate in the evaluation of their own performance. Through guided reflection, students show evidence of at least a working knowledge of the content but with a goal of a much deeper understanding. These understandings are shared with parents at Student-Led Conferences. Work samples are chosen and kept in each student's portfolio.

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**Performance-Based Documentation**

*GCCS* believes that the "process" of learning is as important (or more!) as a final result - such as state required tests. We want to develop creative problem solvers ready to go into the world! We have been gathering data to show evidence of this learning through portfolios and classroom learning wall documentation where visitors can view actual examples of various unit's learning processes as shown through photos and student work. Ask to view our "Garden City, Alive!" book or posters which are available now.

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**Portfolio**

Every child at *GCCS* compiles a portfolio to showcase accomplished and exemplary work aligned with the state standards and the essential learning outcomes. The portfolio includes personal reflections and academic samples from science, social studies, literacy, math, and art. Portfolios demonstrate what students know and are able to do. They help teachers, students, and families to recognize missing links in the child's learning, but also to acknowledge and celebrate the child's accomplishments.

## Special Services

GCCS embraces the idea that all people have a right to equal access of educational opportunity irrespective of physical, mental, or situational challenge confronted in typical learning environments. In accordance with federal law, we provide Special Education Services for students qualified under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Title I Service for students academically at risk in reading or math, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Gifted and Talented student identification, and Limited English Proficiency service. Questions regarding eligibility for service should be directed to the Special Services Coordinator.

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## Student-Led Conferences

Twice a year students invite parents to school and lead them through a demonstration and showcase of their learning. The conference shows the family how the student is doing. It also provide an opportunity for students to reflect on their progress, set goals for future work, and make a public presentation to the most important people in their lives. Students prepare by choosing samples of their best work - often those that demonstrate revision and reflection - and then the student leads his or her own conference to parents. Parents enjoy the educational conversation with their children and the build communication skills as they proudly share their accomplishments.

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## Studio Art

In addition to including the arts in all areas of our learning processes, we have developed a special session each week for students to experience professional guest artists in the fields of visual, music, theater, and dance. This is a great way for them to explore and appreciate the various arts. We welcome family and community members to share their talents during this special time dedicated to "art for art's sake".

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## The 5 R's



The culture of GCCS relates to the "5 R's": Respect, Resourcefulness, Responsibility, Responsiveness, and Resiliency. In brief, the educational approach built around these five principles provides a great deal of respect and flexibility to learners while at the same time expecting a high level of responsibility. The 5 R's are goals for the children as well as for parents and all school personnel.

## **Volunteer Opportunities**

We consider whole families (rather than just the individual student) to be our learning community. Family involvement is very important to the success of each student - as well as to the entire school. To help build the community, all families are expected to devote time, energy, and/or resources to the school community. This may be in the form of donating time to your own child's classroom, school special events, or by sharing a talent or special interest. Each family is expected to devote a minimum of five (5) hours of volunteer service to the school each month.

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## **Website**

Visit our website at [www.gardencityschool.org](http://www.gardencityschool.org) Our website is kept updated to help families or visitors know our current or future events - in addition to containing multitudes of information about the school in general

**GARDEN CITY COMMUNITY SCHOOL**  
9165 Chinden Blvd., #101  
Garden City, Idaho 83714  
(208) 377-0011  
(208) 37709592, fax

Cindy Hoovel, Director