



KNIGHTLY NEWS

SEPTEMBER 2011
ELEMENTARY VOLUME 02

Apply your heart to instruction and your ears to words of knowledge. Proverbs 23:12

Upcoming Elementary Events

September 1

9:00 AM

Future Family

Tell your friends about GCS!

September 2

8:15 AM in café

Parent Volunteer Training

September 5

No School

September 7 & 8

Picture Day

Smile!

September 13

2:00 PM

Afternoon Parent Training

September 19-23

Spirit Week

Go Knights!

September 27

8:15 AM in café

Parent Volunteer Training

September 29

2:00 PM in gym

Grandma's Cookies (Awards Assembly)

Welcome All !

Multiage Classes Good for Children

By Ann Flagg
Elementary School Principal

Gilbert Christian Elementary School has a unique classroom structure; mixed-age children stay with the same teacher for 2 years. Children in kindergarten and 1st grade, 2nd and 3rd grade and again in 4th and 5th grade may participate in multiage classes. Each class has a heterogeneous balance of gender and age that creates a family environment with opportunities for social interaction and cross-age learning. This class structure is not an accident or a convenience; it's part of an educational philosophy based on how children learn. Children learn at different rates, and the combo class affords each child time to progress towards learning goals at his or her own pace over a 2 year span. How does this work? Through careful observations and assessment, the teacher identifies objectives for each child. She then

begins pulling small, flexible groups of children with similar academic goals to receive carefully crafted lessons. Children's continuous learning is enhanced with flexible instructional grouping allowing for review or acceleration. While it is clear that combo classes provide time needed to grasp difficult concepts. Does this model also provide a challenge for children through objectives that can proceed quickly? Yes, children in combo classes may work towards goals and objectives above their formal grade level. Teachers often have groups that focus on above-grade level concepts if that is



Continued on the next page...

KLEENEX! MARKERS!

POST-IT NOTES!

Thank you for the many, many donations to our classrooms.

Parent Volunteers Needed

What is the number 1 indicator of student success in school? Research says it is the parent's expectation that their child learn. At GCS we love to have parents in the classroom influencing children and demonstrating involvement and concern. After the first few weeks of school, teachers begin to ask for parent helpers. In order to volunteer in the class or chaperone or drive on fieldtrips, parents must attend one of our parent volunteer classes. The dates for the next few trainings are listed in the margin to the right of this article. Volunteers must also wear a GCS polo when serving. This helps preserve Christian modesty and keeps us all looking sharp. Can't come into the classroom? We have projects to take home and complete too. Teachers say consistency blesses them greatly.

Sports for Elementary

By Janet Oitzman, GCS Athletic Director

At Gilbert Christian Schools we believe in educating the whole child. In other words we have academic goals, spiritual goals, character/social goals, and physical goals for each child. Our routine of daily PE or classroom fitness demonstrates our commitment to strong bodies! In addition to daily classroom activity, afterschool sports is an option for children starting in the 2nd grade. The following afterschool sports will be offered for the elementary children throughout the 2011-12 school year:

Fall (August—October)

- 4 - 6 grade co-ed soccer
- 5 - 6 grade girls volleyball



Winter (November—February)

- 5 - 6 grade boys basketball
- 2 - 4 grade co-ed Bitty Basketball (approximately 6 Saturdays in Dec - Jan)

Games are played on Wednesday afternoons and practices are typically held on Wednesday (until games begin) and one additional morning during the week. For more information, please see our Athletic Handbook on our website

www.gilbertchristianschools.org under athletics. You can also contact our Athletic Director Janet Oitzman at joitzman@gcs-hs.org. **Go Knights!**

Morning Preparation Matters

By Ann Flagg, Elementary School Principal

To be a Christian educator is to be a professional who is spiritually mature, academically trained, and organized in nature and intent. At Gilbert Christian Elementary School teachers want to open the door each morning at 7:55 with a smile, an enthusiastic welcome, and an orderly plan for the day. I pray each GCS child has felt this Christian love and welcome as he or she begins the day.

Behind the scenes teachers work hard to prepare. One of the most crucial times of teacher preparation happens between 7:30 – 7:55 in the morning. Teachers review lesson plans, double check curriculum /supplies, read content one more time and pray over the classroom and the students. That is why teachers often have their door locked before school and children head out to the playground.

As the principal, and a long-time teacher myself, I know having 20 uninterrupted minutes before the day begins can

make or sometimes break the whole day. With that said, you can help our teachers be the best they can be. Please do not knock on the classroom door before 7: 55 unless you have an appointment with the teacher. Teachers welcome morning appointments because we strive to be accessible to parents, but a drop-in visit may prevent a teacher from planning.

Time with teachers is part of what makes GCS special, but please follow these 3 simple guidelines. 1) Ask quick questions between 7:55 and 8:00. 2) Make appointments by email for extended concerns. 3) Guard the teacher's time before 7:55 by allowing her to prepare. If her door is open early, feel free to go on in. Teachers are glad to meet with you at a variety of times including before/after school or by phone during a prep hour. Working together we can help teachers bless their students every day. **Thank you.**

Multi-Age Classes (continued)

appropriate and in the best interest of the child. Multiage classrooms offer social benefits too. The older children welcome the younger into the classroom family and learn responsibility and kindness towards younger classmates. This increases the confidence of the older children and is reassuring to the younger. Having a teacher for two years is also a benefit because she can continue with identified goals from day 1 of a new school year. Start up is easier as the established class absorbs the new students and both teacher and children are quickly working effectively for the good of all children. We hope to explore the benefits of combo classes for many years to come at GCS.