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# August/September Newsletter

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## Guilderland Elementary School Smarter – Kinder - Stronger

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Dear Families,

The first month of the school year is always an exciting time. Old friendships are renewed and new ones are forged. Teachers and students begin the work of building strong classroom communities. And everyone is learning the routines and habits that will make them successful throughout the year.

It was a real pleasure to see so many of you at our recent Open House events. I believe that we had more parents attend one of the Open House nights this year than we ever have before. That is wonderful since Open House is such an important opportunity for our parents and teachers to begin to develop relationships and an understanding of the expectations for the school year.

One of my personal goals this year is to continue to foster relationships between the school and the community. There are many benefits for all stakeholders when parents and a school have strong relationships and parents are involved in activities. Just some of these benefits are:

- Children tend to achieve more, regardless of ethnic or racial background, socioeconomic status, or parents' education level.
- Children have better self-esteem, are more self-disciplined, and show higher aspirations and motivation toward school.
- Children from diverse cultural backgrounds tend to do better when parents and professionals work together to bridge the gap between the culture at home and the culture in school.
- Parents increase their interaction and discussion with their children and are more responsive and sensitive to their children's social, emotional, and intellectual developmental needs.
- When schools have a high percentage of involved parents in and out of schools, teachers and principals are more likely to experience higher morale.
- Consistent parent involvement leads to improved communication and relations between parents, teachers, and administrators.
- Teachers and principals acquire a better understanding of families' cultures and diversity, and they form deeper respect for parents' abilities and time.

Taken from *"Home-School Relations: Working Successfully with Parents and Families"*, by G. Olsen, M.L. Fuller, 2008 edition, p. 129-130.

As you can see the benefits of a strong home-school connection are many. Please help me achieve my goal of building stronger connections between us by staying informed about what is happening in the school and trying to become involved. There are many opportunities for involvement this month!

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### October 6

- Lockdown and Go Home Early Drill

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### October 9

- No School – Columbus Day

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### October 18

- PTA Meeting – 7:00pm

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### October 18 - 20

- Scholastic Book Fair

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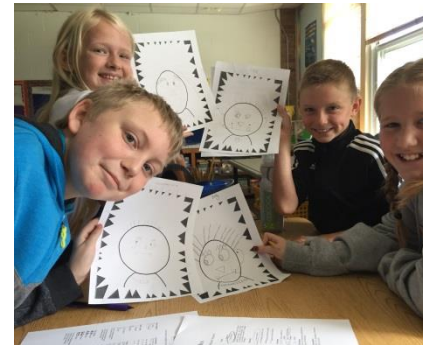
### October 20

- PTA Harvest Fest

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### October 26

- 11:30 Dismissal K-5 for Parent Conferences



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## Building Information

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### Parent conferences

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Parent conferences are a very important opportunity for you to meet with your child's teacher to discuss his or her progress early in the school year. This is a great time for you and the teacher to start building the vital relationship that can help propel your child to a successful year. There is a short article later in this newsletter with suggestions for how you can get the most out of your conference.

Dates for fall parent conferences are:  
October 26 - beginning at 11:30  
November 1 – beginning at 7:40  
November 14 – beginning at 7:40



### School Hours

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The school day begins at 7:50am and ends at 2:05 pm. Please be sure to set those alarm clocks to make sure everyone is on time. Any student arriving to school at 8:00 or later will be considered tardy.

### The Counselor's Corner

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Hello everyone! It is important to me that parents and the community stay informed about the school counseling program at GES. My hope is to include a little information each month in the newsletter.



It was a busy start to the school year for me! In the first week of school, I spent a few minutes in each classroom introducing myself and briefly discussing my role as the School Counselor. I also attended many meetings in September where I was able to gain a feel for the school and was able to better assess the needs of the student population. In the last two weeks of September, I delivered classroom lessons in kindergarten and first grade. The kindergarten students learned about personal space and the first graders about respecting their teacher and classmates by not shouting out of turn.

I also sent a survey about the counseling program to all faculty and staff in the building, and to parents and the community through School News Notifier. If you have not already, please consider taking this survey. The link is: <https://goo.gl/forms/lWSFX6Q4tjgQDWE2>. The assessment helps me determine topics for classroom guidance and other additional supports. It is anonymous and should not take more than a few minutes. Thank you!

As always, feel free to reach me by email at [rileyjen@guilderlandschools.net](mailto:rileyjen@guilderlandschools.net) or by phone at [518-869-0293 extension 3600](tel:518-869-0293).

Sincerely,  
Jenny Riley

### From the Art Room

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Hello, my name is Susan Bollentin and I am the new art teacher at GES this year. I have taught in the Guilderland school district at Westmere, Lynnwood, Farnsworth and at the High School. I am very excited to be at GES and working with such wonderful and talented students.

We will be continuing the choice-based learning that Mrs. Osborn began in the art room. Your children will be learning about many different artists, mediums and techniques throughout the year. I like to stress the experimental part of art making and encourage my students to try new things, see what happens and then make choices based on their knowledge of the materials and their desired outcome.

It is my hope that all my students will leave GES with a love for art, an inquisitive mind and confidence in their ability to be a creative thinker and problem solver. I am looking forward to becoming part of the community here at GES and getting to know all of you. Please feel free to stop in the art room and say hello. If you would like to reach me or have any questions my email is: [bollentins@guilderlandschools.net](mailto:bollentins@guilderlandschools.net)

## Lockdown/Go Home Early Drill

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On Friday, October 6th, students and staff members at GES will participate in the first lockdown drill of the year. As of last year, the state has mandated that all schools in New York conduct four of these drills in addition to 8 fire drills during the course of the year.



The lockdown drill will be followed by another state-wide drill, the Emergency Go-Home Early drill. On that day (Oct. 6) all of our students will evacuate the building to the buses and the buses will depart from the school, about 15 minutes earlier than usual. Our Y-Time program will still be running so students who attend Y-Time will remain in the building. Please contact your child's teacher if you have any questions.

## A positive mindset can help your child succeed in math

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Think your child's state of mind has nothing to do with his performance in math class? Think again. According to research, the brain's "emotion" and "intellect" centers are connected. They are permanently entwined.

What this means for your child is that his mindset can affect his ability to solve math problems. Think about it: If he's nervous or upset about the worksheet in front of him, he may struggle to answer the questions. But if he's calm and confident, he'll likely do much better.

To encourage a positive mindset in your child when it comes to math:

- Remind him that effort leads to achievement. Does your child claim he can't do math because he's "just not smart"? That implies people are either born intelligent or not. But that isn't true. Buckling down can lead to smarts.
- Send the right message. Instead of saying, "That problem looks really hard," say, "That problem looks challenging." If your child worries about something being too difficult, he may decide he can't do it. But if it's a

challenge—not necessarily hard or easy—he might approach it more positively.

- Teach him to relax. If your child's jitters get the best of him when he's faced with a math problem, have him take a deep breath. Suggest that he picture something happy or fun. Remind him that he knows more than he thinks he does. If you can help him calm his nerves before he picks up his pencil, he'll have a better chance for success!

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## How to get the most out of parent-teacher conferences

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Some parents say that the parent-teacher conference is one of the most valuable things they attend all year. These one-on-one meetings are great for learning more about your child's strengths and weaknesses, and will give both you and the teacher a better idea about the year ahead.

To get the most from your meeting:

- Talk to your child. Ask her to tell you what she thinks are her easiest and most difficult subjects—and why. Does she have any questions she'd like you to ask the teacher?
- Make a list of things to tell the teacher. You know your child better than anyone else. Sharing some of this information will make it easier for the teacher to meet your child's needs.
- Write down your questions. Ask things such as:
  - Is my child in different groups for different subjects?
  - Does my child participate in class discussions and activities?
  - Is my child working up to her ability?
  - How well does my child get along with others?
- Arrive on time. Teachers usually have many conferences scheduled during a single day. Arriving on time will allow you to take full

advantage of the time the teacher has available.

- Create an action plan. Ask the teacher what you can do at home to reinforce what your child is learning at school. Try to get at least one or two specific suggestions.

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## **Are you building a team with your child's school?**

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Research shows that when home and school act as a strong team, students are the real winners. They learn more and do better academically and socially.

Are you doing everything you can to build a successful school-home team? Answer yes or no to the questions below to find out:

1. Have you met your child's classroom teacher?
2. Do you talk with your child about school each day and review all of the information he brings home?
3. Do you monitor your child's homework? If he struggles with an assignment, do you ask the teacher how you can help at home?
4. Do you make sure your child gets to school on time each day with everything he needs for school?
5. Have you reviewed the school handbook and told your child that you expect him to follow all school rules?

### **How well are you doing?**

Each yes answer means you are helping build a strong home-school team. For each no answer, try that idea from the quiz.

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## From the PTA

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### Harvest Fest

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Join your GES community at the Harvest Fest on Friday, October 20<sup>th</sup>, from 6-8pm at GES. Fun activities are being organized, like crafts, face painting, Snip-It's hair color and glitter, FREE photo booth, and Martial Arts Board Breaking (\$6 for 2 boards). The Scholastic Book Fair will be open, Spirit Wear will be on sale and we will have raffles. There will also be pizza, water and cookies for sale. Don't miss the fun.



### Membership

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PTA relies on our membership drive to help fund our programs that support our children and our school. There are two easy ways to become a member: send your blue membership form to school with your contribution or visit this online site:

<https://ges-pta-membership-88309.cheddarup.com>. Memberships are \$15 and do not bind you to volunteer or participate in the future.



### Volunteer

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The PTA cannot offer our variety of programs and supports without the generosity of our volunteers. Please consider signing up to volunteer at one of our events or programs. Many ways to volunteer can be done at home with your computer or a small time commitment outside of home. If

you have time available during the day, there are opportunities for you, too. A blue packet was sent home at the end of September and has full descriptions of volunteer

opportunities. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact MaryAnn Dunn, PTA President, at [maryannkdunn@gmail.com](mailto:maryannkdunn@gmail.com)



### Enrichments

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Do you have a skill, hobby, or interest that you could share at one of our Afterschool Enrichment Programs? We are looking for volunteers to run a 4-week session from 2-3pm on a Monday, Tuesday, or Thursday. If you don't have an idea or special skills, but you are willing to run a class, we will be happy to organize the class for you. Most classes will also have an assistant to help you during class. Please contact Erin Coufal if you are interested or have any questions at: [erincoufal@yahoo.com](mailto:erincoufal@yahoo.com).

What are enrichments? The GES PTA has discovered that we can fundraise by offering mini-classes for GES students after school. These classes have covered topics such as: yoga, Taekwondo, drama, and Lego Robotics. The sessions run for 4 weeks in the fall, winter and spring and are offered to specific grades. Parents are notified of upcoming enrichment classes by backpack mail and e-mail.

