

# G-MAIL

*An update on issues and events at HGHS ([www.ccsd.ws/hg](http://www.ccsd.ws/hg))*

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*From Andrew Selesnick, Principal*

In this issue of Gmail, you will find the full results of our PTA's survey on the topic of homework given over school vacations. I'd like to thank our PTA leaders, Madeline Rivlin and Heidi Fuhrman, for conceiving of and executing this survey. It came in response to a number of questions we heard earlier in the year at the evening coffees we host in family homes in the community. I'd like to think that this survey, along with the PTA meeting and discussions in school that followed, may serve as a model for future conversations between the school and the community.

About 150 parents responded to the PTA's survey via the Infinite Campus Portal, and about 20 parents attended the meeting in school (along with four or five teachers and administrators). If you include the roughly 75 parents who participated in discussions during those evening coffees, that's a significant number of parents who had a chance to give their individual input. I don't believe we could have gathered the same kind of useful feedback if we'd held, for example, a meeting in our auditorium attended by 250 parents. Though some pointed out that the survey was not scientific in its design (and they were correct - the survey was designed not by scientists, but by parent volunteers who have an interest in generating input from other parents and who feel a responsibility to represent those parents), it did achieve its intention of enlarging and sustaining the conversation. That conversation continued into the school, where I was able to discuss the parent input with our department chairpersons and with the full faculty at one of our meetings in March.

The results of the conversation were not what some would have wanted. There are some parents who believe there should never be any homework, of any kind, during the week long school vacations. There are others who believe there always should be, and there are those all along the spectrum in between. Perhaps most helpful, however, was the way the conversation shifted from being strictly about homework towards the larger topic of communication. Following one parent's description of what we all agree was an excessively large quantity of homework for a vacation period, we heard of the student AND parent's reluctance to contact the teacher about the assignment. As a result, the faculty and I have reminded one another how important it is that students should always feel comfortable approaching their teachers with any kind of question. As a school, we have a responsibility to remain approachable, even when we're giving students answers they may not want to hear. They still need to feel comfortable coming back the next time.

*(Continued on Page 7)*

# *Class Reports*

## *Seniors*

It's hard to believe that the final days for the Class of 2010 are upon us. The Senior Musical "Return to the Forbidden Planet" was a rousing success, with over half the graduating class participating in the show. Many thanks to our hard-working parent producers; Susan Hamilton, Inara De Leon, Lori Sachere, Michelle Kraushaar and Jill Haggery who worked fantastically as a team to spearhead this fun, energetic show that was enjoyed by all. Bravo to director Chris Schraufnagel and his entire cast and crew for doing such an amazing job, and our hats off to Seniors Matt Haas and Maile Hamilton for their tireless efforts as Student Producers. A great big thank you goes out to Debbie and Barry Kerchner and Keiko and Bill Spade, members of our Parent Committee, who hosted both the rehearsal dinner and the wonderful cast party. And finally, to all the parent chaperones and volunteers who worked countless hours on costumes, sets, props, hair and makeup, we thank you for your time and energy. The Seniors had the best time! This class has much to look forward to in the months ahead. We look forward to seeing you all at Graduation on June 20th!

The seniors have been busy with other exciting activities as well. Cupid Day was a huge success. We raised \$4800 to donate to charity. This year we split our donation between Partners in Health, which runs

the hospital in Haiti, and The American Heart Association, the traditional recipient of the cupid day fundraiser. The senior class also collected gently used prom dresses for Operation Prom, an organization which provides prom dresses to students who cannot afford to buy dresses. Here are our upcoming events:

- ⇒ **June 9** Senior Beach Day at Jones Beach
- ⇒ **June 14** Last day of Classes & Senior BBQ at 1pm on the fields
- ⇒ **June 18** Mandatory graduation rehearsal
- ⇒ **June 20** Graduation!

## *Juniors*

The winter provided some indoor fun for the class of 2011. Many in the class participate in the winter class event. The Grand Prix in Mt Kisco was the venue for the fun event. The winter day passed quickly as the laps were speedy.

The class provided a much needed service to the community with a successful car wash in May. Student government with the help of students and both class advisors, Jen Chemerov and Donna Versace washed and dried many community members' cars. As always, everyone involved appreciated the kindness of D'Agostino's dedicating their parking lot and donating their water.

The class could not be more appreciative and the success of all the events comes from so many involved throughout the year.

# Sports News

On **April 29**, the Athletic Department honored all winter athletes who received post-season recognition for their success in their respective sport. The names of the athletes were placed on the Honor Board in the main gym. The athletes are listed below.

## Boys' Basketball

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| <i>Adam Honig</i>       | All-League, All-Conference, All-County, All-Section |
| <i>Matt Townsend</i>    | All-League, All-Conference, All-County, All-Section |
| <i>Robert Cross</i>     | All-League  |
| <i>Billy Sadik-Kham</i> | All-League  |

## Girls' Basketball

|                         |                         |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Yanna Jackson</i>    | All-League, All-Section |
| <i>Jacqueline Brett</i> | All-League              |
| <i>Julia Kronenfeld</i> | All-League              |

## Bowling

|                      |            |
|----------------------|------------|
| <i>Bobby Macente</i> | All-League |
|----------------------|------------|

## Ice Hockey

|                   |            |
|-------------------|------------|
| <i>Ben Berkey</i> | All-League |
|-------------------|------------|

## Indoor Track

|                         |            |
|-------------------------|------------|
| <i>Brooke Biederman</i> | All-League |
|-------------------------|------------|

## Boys' Skiing

|                    |                         |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Dan Oliver</i>  | All-League              |
| <i>Andrew Park</i> | All-League, All-Section |

## Girls' Skiing

|                        |            |
|------------------------|------------|
| <i>Sarah McElheny</i>  | All-League |
| <i>Erin Oliver</i>     | All-League |
| <i>Samara Shutkind</i> | All-League |

## Boys' Swimming and Diving

|                          |                                       |                           |            |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------|
| <i>Risten Clarke</i>     | All-League, All-Section, All-American | <i>Josh Tesser</i>        | All-League |
| <i>Taegan Clarke</i>     | All-League, All-Section, All-American | <i>Alec Sherman</i>       | All-League |
| <i>Matt Hadley</i>       | All-League, All-Section, All-American | <i>Thomas St. Vincent</i> | All-League |
| <i>Michael Nicholson</i> | All-League, All-Section, All-American | <i>Henry Simon</i>        | All-League |

## Wrestling

|                         |            |
|-------------------------|------------|
| <i>Andrew Lefkowitz</i> | All-League |
| <i>Scott Wymbs</i>      | All-League |

Congratulations also go to

- ⇒ *Matt Hadley* and *Michael Nicholson* for being selected co-swimmers of the year in Section One
- ⇒ Boys' swimming and diving coach *Meg Kaplan* for being named The Journal News "Coach of the Year" in boys' swimming for the second consecutive year
- ⇒ *John Alkalay* for being named the League "Coach of the Year" in girls' basketball
- ⇒ *Will Robins* and *Henry Koster* for being selected to the All-Academic Team in boys' swimming by the National Interscholastic Swim Coaches Association.
  
- ⇒ The Senior Athlete Awards Dinner will take place on **June 13** at the Westchester Marriott in Tarrytown.
- ⇒ In an effort to scale back on mailings, the Sports Physical Forms for next year will be placed on-line.
- ⇒ On behalf of the athletes and coaches, thanks to everyone for supporting the teams throughout the year.

*Steve Young*

## *English Department News*

- ⇒ The “Write On” Club, along with the school’s literary magazine *Satori*, hosted a special after-school event in **February**. Author **Steve Lewis** read from his new poetry collection *A Month on a Barrier Island*, and spoke on the subject of the writing life.
- ⇒ **Lisa Mayer** attended a workshop at New York Public Library’s Cullman Institute in April with writer **Julie Orringer**.
- ⇒ **Beth Aviv** has received a fellowship from New York Public Library’s “Cullman Center Summer Seminars” to attend a seminar entitled “Reality Is a Friend: Approaches to Writing Non-fiction” this summer with author **Ian Frazier**.
- ⇒ **Sarah Reilly’s** 9-10 English classes participated in poetry slams during the month of **March**. They memorized and recited/performed two poems—one written by an acclaimed poet and one written by themselves.
- ⇒ The English teachers are all busily assembling classroom libraries in all of the English classrooms to promote reading for pleasure.
- ⇒ In **March**, the Alliance for Young Artists and Writers announced two more Scholastic writing gold key award winners. Congratulations to seniors **Brooke Biederman** and **Will Mantell!**
- ⇒ In **May**, a few English and social studies classes will hear Greeley graduate **Chloe Schama** (’01) speak about writing, research, the genre of non-fiction, and her new book *Wild Romance*.

## *Foreign Language Department News*

Two students from our Chinese language program will receive full scholarships to attend a 6-week summer program of immersion Chinese in China. Only 100 students from the whole country were selected. The students chosen are **Jordan Elkin** and **Sammi Leroy**.

This is a great opportunity for these students to enhance their language skills and enrich their learning experience. It’s an honor for them, as well as for Greeley HS.

## *Final Exams*

Each year, we receive phone calls from families inquiring about our final examination schedule. Most of these calls are prompted by a desire to plan a family vacation or because students are seeking to enroll in a summer program that begins before our exam week officially ends (**June 23**). Many requests come in asking us to accommodate a student by allowing him/her to take exams early. As a school, we certainly support our students’ desires to enrich themselves through such summer programs. However, in order to administer our examination period effectively and to maintain the highest level of test security, we cannot accommodate such requests to rearrange individual students’ examination schedules. As such, we ask that students explore programs that either begin after **June 23** or that allow for flexibility in their start date.

We would also like to remind families that final exams count as part of a student’s final course grade. Students who miss an examination due to illness must provide proper documentation and will be required to sit for a makeup examination on **June 23**.

The final examination schedule is available on the web site. The schedule of Regents examinations (only some of our courses culminate in a NYS Regents examination) is available by visiting the New York State Department of Education’s web site at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/osa/schedules/det504-610.pdf>. Please note that if a student misses a Regents exam for any reason, he/she will be required to sit for it during the next available administration (**August** or **January**) and will need to take an alternative local examination on the makeup day.

# Science Department News

**Carol DiGuglielmo**, **Naomi Cook**, and **Rich Goodman** have been overseeing a busy and successful season for the Science Research program, as seniors have been taking their projects on the road and presenting them publicly. In **February**, students took part in the Westchester-Rockland Junior Science & Humanities Symposium at John Jay High School. Two students were recognized in the poster competition, **Michael Levine** - 1<sup>st</sup> place in Environmental Science and **Todd Brenner** - 3<sup>rd</sup> place in Medicine. Five students were recognized in the presentation competition, and were invited to show their work at the state competition in Albany: **Cheryl Cho**, **Samantha Wesner**, **Natalie Roher**, **Frank Zheng** and **Adam Krebs**. In Albany, **Adam** took 4<sup>th</sup> place in the state in Environmental Science.

Students also took part in the Westchester Science & Engineering Fair (WESEF) in **March**. Twelve students placed top 5 in their category:

- ⇒ 4th Place winners: **Raj Agarwal**, **Natalie Roher**, **Michael Levine**, **Michael Goodman**
- ⇒ 3rd Place winners: **James Chang**, **Adam Krebs**, **Jessica Yao**, **Robby Horowitz**, **Frank Zheng**, **Matthew Marano**
- ⇒ 2nd Place winners: **Debbie Sachare**, **Todd Brenner**

Many other students won specific sponsored awards:

- ⇒ American Meteorological Society Award for projects of excellence dealing with weather or climate: **Adam Krebs**
- ⇒ U.S. Army Awards - Top projects/Molecular Biochemistry: **Rose Schrott**
- ⇒ Stockholm Junior Water Prizes - Top water related projects: **Adam Krebs**
- ⇒ Westchester Academy of Medicine - Top medicine and health research projects- **Todd Brenner**, **Jessica Yao**
- ⇒ Philips Awards for Exceptional Research - awarded to projects that focus on improving the quality of people's lives: **Cheryl Cho**, **Doris Berman**
- ⇒ Paul J. Maddon Innovations in Science Award- awarded to two projects that focus on research using innovative solutions or processes: **Matthew Gingrich**
- ⇒ ISWEEP- awarded all expense paid trip to Houston Texas to present research at science symposium: **Debbie Sachare**

The school even came away with a Carl Zeiss Stereo Microscope!

Several sophomore teams received honorable mention for their projects submitted to the Toshiba Exploravision competition: **Rebecca Passman** and **Julia Keegan**, **Alexandra Rota** and **Jillian Cardona**, **Natanie Erlilch** and **Joshua Rosen** and **Hiro Asaga**, **Vaishali Kumaraguru** and **Angela Liu** and **Chloe Chopigin** and **Vanessa Compoverde-Ayala**. Congratulations to all our student researchers!

The following students took part in the local ACS sponsored Chemistry Olympiad Competition Held at Greeley on **March 6, 2010**: **Christian Moore**, **Brian Dubs**, **Joshua Begleiter**, **Alison Schur**, **Katharine Barclay**, **Gabriel Weissmann**, **Alex Besen**, **Zaid Qureishi**, **Jeremy Fischer**, **Gautam Narasimham**, **Adam Baitch**, **Matthew Abemayor**, **James Cranston**, **Kamil Alizai Sadik**, **Molly Pickel**, **Brian Newborn**, **Matt Townsend** and **Michelle Neuberger**. All participants will receive a certificate of participation. **Matt Townsend** qualified to advance to the national level of the competition.

The annual Earth Science Project Night was once again organized by **Chuck Schulster** and **MaryRose Joseph** on April 28. We had a great turnout of the public who came to learn about the earth, sea and sky from the student posters, videos and construction projects.

Physics students celebrated the post-AP exam season with the annual Physics Day at Six Flags -Great Adventure on **May 28**, organized by **Sue Moore** with fellow roller-coaster riders **Paul Bianchi**, **Pat Donovan**, and **Kevin Kuczma**. Distances and times will be measured, accelerations calculated, and lots of ice cream eaten.

# Summary of Homework Survey

Below are the results of the parent survey about homework over vacation. This survey and our PTA meeting on the same topic were an attempt to follow up on concerns raised during the principal-parent coffees over the winter about homework over vacation. We recognize that sending the survey through infinite campus was cumbersome for some because not everyone has an infinite campus key. We now have the capacity to conduct surveys through the PTA e-mail system and if we develop any surveys in the future we plan to use that system which, we hope, will be simpler.

Although clearly the survey was far from perfect in design, we found the results to be interesting and, perhaps not surprisingly, opinions on the topic varied greatly. As you will see, a significant number of parents said that there should be no homework given over vacation (in many cases mentioning stress or family time as issues). A much smaller number of parents said the exact opposite, namely, that they liked homework over vacation (and, in some cases, thought there should be more homework). In the middle were a large group of parents who were comfortable with some homework over vacation but had caveats as to the timing of the homework (e.g., it should not be due the first day back and/or should be assigned well in advance of the vacation), and/or as to the form of the homework (e.g., they did not like homework that required heavy text books or computers), and/or as to the amount of homework. A few parents noted that although they thought there should be no homework over vacation, they would make an exception for AP courses. Finally, there was a moderate group of parents who favored reading a book as the only homework over vacation. Some representative comments:

- ⇒ *"I like the concept of homework over vacations; I just don't like the form it is currently taking. I would suggest the following: minimal homework with assignments given many days before break and nothing due immediately after break."*
- ⇒ *"I do not agree with homework during a vacation. Reading a book other than a text would be fine."*
- ⇒ *"I really can't believe that this is an issue. It actually is a bit ironic in a community that wears a badge of parenting success by the college decal they proudly display on their car that actual academic enrichment would even be an issue. BTW...question #4 made me answer...there is not one concern we have for issuing homework while over vacation so I was forced to answer or I could not complete survey."*
- ⇒ *"Don't mind some homework over vacations. A math packet that is self-contained that can be done on a plane is perfect. However, when textbooks and loose papers have to be brought out to beach chairs on a family vacation, as a parent you are really wondering what your child is really going to get out of the assignment in that environment anyway. In addition, even though an assignment may not require computer access, your child may need to 'google' something just to get it done. Sometimes it costs extra for computer access, or you have to go to the hotel's business center. This becomes quite inconvenient. Perhaps assignments could be confined to reading books/handouts."*
- ⇒ *"I like the concept of homework during the vacations. When we were growing up we always got it. You just develop a discipline and get it done. It does not interfere with anything. I am in strong favor of having homework during breaks."*
- ⇒ *"There should not be a test on the first day or 2 back from vacation."*
- ⇒ *"Homework should not be given over vacation periods."*
- ⇒ *"I do not like the concept of homework over vacations. Greeley is very stressful. If the Administration is looking for creative ways to relieve stress in the student body, and create a healthy environment, eliminating homework over vacations is a good way to start. I speak as a parent who has had three A students pass through Greeley, and they all agree with me and my husband."*
- ⇒ *"I don't think homework should be given over a break. It is time for kids to relax and re-energize away from school. That way they are refreshed and ready to take on new challenges when they return after a break."*
- ⇒ *"Reading of easily packed and transported material is fine. The need to transport heavy science textbooks and laptops creates both psychic and physical inconvenience. We all want to relax and if parents can find a way to leave work behind students should have the same opportunity. Down time is crucially important particularly in such a competitive community."*
- ⇒ *"Homework over vacations should be kept to a minimum. Encourage independent reading over vacations as an alternative to required homework assignments. This will allow for some down time and much needed relaxation."*

To see all the comments, please go to the Greeley PTA website, <http://www.chappaquapta.net/HGSHHome.php>, and click on the link entitled "Vacation Homework Survey: Full Comments."

Thank you to everyone who took the time to participate in the survey and/or to attend the PTA meeting!

# Andrew Selesnick (Continued from Page 1)

So where does that leave us? The high school is NOT going to adopt a homework policy. There is simply too much disparity between one course and another and from one year to the next (in terms of the school's schedule), to be able to say responsibly and with certainty that there will never be homework or that there will always be homework during those vacation periods. We all understand and agree that vacations need to be vacations and that a reduction in workload and stress is important. But many also believe that the world today is such that our students need to learn how to create and maintain a healthy balance in their lives, by learning to plan appropriately, by advocating when necessary, and, sometimes, by doing some amount of work during a vacation in order to lessen the load at other times. Most importantly, we must always have open lines of communication so that we can discuss the needs of individual students and individual situations. When we do that well, we come closest to providing what's best for all.

Thank you to all those parents and to all the members of the staff who helped us to move this conversation forward.

## Survey Response Summary Report

| 1. Have Greeley teachers assigned homework to your child (or children) to be completed during winter, February or spring vacation? | Total Responses | Percent of Total |
|--|-----------------|------------------|
| a. Often   | 114             | 77.03%           |
| b. Rarely  | 33              | 22.30%           |
| c. Never   | 1               | 0.68%            |

Total Not Answered: 0 0.00%  
Total Respondents: 148 100.00%

| 2. What did the homework require? (check all that apply) | Total Responses | Percent of Total |
|--|-----------------|------------------|
| a. Textbook(s)   | 93              | 62.84%           |
| b. Research  | 73              | 49.32%           |
| c. Writing a paper                                       | 103             | 69.59%           |
| d. Reading a book (other than a textbook)                | 126             | 85.14%           |
| e. Worksheets or packet                                  | 129             | 87.16%           |

Total Not Answered: 0 0.00%  
Total Respondents: 148 100.00%

| 3. Which of the following most closely reflects your opinion of homework given over school vacations? (choose just one response) | Total Responses | Percent of Total |
|--|-----------------|------------------|
| a. Too little homework is given over vacations   | 7               | 4.73%            |
| b. I've never given the subject any thought  | 7               | 4.73%            |
| c. I'm aware of current practice and think it is fine  | 34              | 22.97%           |
| d. Too much homework is given over vacations   | 49              | 33.11%           |
| e. No homework should ever be given over vacations   | 51              | 34.46%           |

Total Not Answered: 0 0.00%  
Total Respondents: 148 100.00%

| 4. Which of the following captures some or all of your reasons for being concerned about homework given over vacations? (Choose as many as apply) | Total Responses | Percent of Total |
|---|-----------------|------------------|
| a. HW interferes with family vacation plans   | 77              | 52.03%           |
| b. HW doesn't appear to be helpful  | 32              | 21.62%           |
| c. HW creates stress during a time to relax   | 112             | 75.68%           |
| d. HW requires computer access during vacation travel   | 72              | 48.65%           |
| e. HW requires heavy textbooks, etc. during travel  | 70              | 47.30%           |

Total Not Answered: 0 0.00%  
Total Respondents: 148 100.00%

| 5. I like the concept of homework over vacations; I just don't like the form it is currently taking. I would suggest the following | Total Responses | Percent of Total |
|--|-----------------|------------------|
|--|-----------------|------------------|

Individual Text Area Responses Are Not Displayed In This Report.

Total Not Answered: 0 0.00%  
Total Respondents: 148 100.00%

# Calendar

## June

- 1 Student Initiated Research Project (SIR), 4-7 pm, Academic Commons  
BOE Meeting, 8:15 pm, HGHS
- 2 Student Council Elections  
Student Initiated Research Project (SIR), 4-7 pm, Academic Commons  
Chamber Orchestra Concert, 7:30 pm, Aud
- 3 Science Research Symposium, 7 pm, K110
- 4 Senior Class Breakfast, 8 am, Cafeteria  
Awards Ceremony, Gym  
Senior Prom
- 5 SAT Test
- 7-10 Theatre Company Spring Festival
- 8 L.I.F.E. School Senior Exhibits, 5-8 pm, C Building
- 9 Class Government Elections  
Senior Beach Day
- 12 ACT Test
- 13 Pops Concert, 1:30 pm, Parking Lot  
Sport Award Dinner, 5 pm
- 14 End of 4th Quarter, Last Day of Classes  
Senior BBQ, 1 pm
- 15 BOE Meeting, 8:15 pm, HGHS
- 15-18 Final Exams
- 18 Mandatory Graduation Rehearsal, 5 pm
- 20 Graduation, 5 pm
- 21-24 Final Exams
- 24 2nd Semester Ends
- 25 Last Day of School

*The G-Mail is jointly published by the Administration and the PTA of Horace Greeley High School, and edited by **Orna Kliger**. Items of interest to the Greeley community may be sent to [hghsgmail@chappaquapta.org](mailto:hghsgmail@chappaquapta.org).*

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