

Monitoring Report
Prepared for the Guffey Community Charter School's Board of Directors
December, 2015
By Pam Moore, School Administrator

Policy Number: E-6

Policy Type: Ends

Policy Title: School Community Connection

The school and the community will work together to accomplish the following:

Pam Moore writes: *As evidenced by the following, I am in compliance with this policy. The school and the community do work together to accomplish the following:*

K-2 teacher, Jenny Hartman writes:

6.1 Student work is intellectually powerful, embedded in the local setting, holds personal meaning and is authentic – related to “real life”.

At Guffey School, we do our best to make sure that the lessons we are teaching are authentic and meaningful to our students. Everything that we are teaching, from math to social studies, science, and writing is taught in such a way that it makes sense to how it could be applied in real life. For example, in math we are teaching the hard facts and concepts that will be applicable in life - - we are purposefully not teaching the Common Core math that shows a round-about way of adding, making a 2 second problem take 3 minutes to figure out. The students are challenging themselves intellectually by taking timed math fact tests and pushing themselves to accurately answer 90 math problems in 5 minutes. At first, the students struggled with these tests, but now the students are showing internal motivation to push themselves further and have all more than doubled their scores from just one month ago. In social studies we are learning about natural and renewable resources and in science, we are learning about plants. We are relating what we are learning to our local environment. We have had discussions about how what we have learned applies to the garden that we planted last spring. We also learned about how different environments produce a better yield of crops than other places and how living in the mountains affected the amount of vegetables that grew in our garden at Guffey School. We also have plants in our classroom; we have tested how some plants like more sun than others, and are currently testing how the leaves will be affected if we put black paper over them so that they see no sun at all. The students enjoy learning about concepts that they can physically see and know how they apply to real life.

6.2 Community expectations for schools and students include a large focus on the local environment, work outside of school, long-term projects, active learning and public performance of academic work.

At Guffey School, we do our best to structure our curriculum around the local environment. This month, we were learning about animals as well as renewable and sustainable energy. To support what we learned in the classroom, we took a local field trip to the Beaver Ponds Environmental Education Center. As a part of this field trip, we learned about our local mountain ecology and how beavers can affect the environment. We also learned about how we can create our own sustainable energy in the mountains through water and solar energy. We are also trying to encourage learning outside of school. In the K-2 classroom, we are logging the amount of reading each student does outside of the classroom. We have a reading incentive program that encourages reading at home. For every 10 minutes a student reads at home, he/she gets to put a sticker on our chart. After a certain amount of minutes, the students can receive various rewards. Last term, the 6 students in the class read a combined total of 9,170 minutes!

Middle school teacher, Hillevi Peterson-Hirsch writes:

6.3 School and community interactions are rich, complex, varied and natural

It almost goes without saying that Guffey Community Charter School students are involved in the local community. Just this past weekend, students were invited to make decorations and decorate a tree at the Freshwater Grill for Christmas. Our annual Halloween parade is a rousing tribute to the community spirit with the fire department, community members out on the streets interacting with our kids. The Bull-Moose Restaurant hosts the school after the parade and treats them to more sweets and punch. We honor our elders through our Veteran's Day concert, and entertain with the spring concert. We also have our bi-weekly visit to the library connecting with community members who volunteer there.

The middle school/8th grade fundraisers, like making fire starters, the spaghetti dinner, and the chili cook-off adds to the list of school fundraisers such as the Pie Palooza and demonstrates how their personal effort and contribution to the financial needs of their own school. The 8th grade class has also taken on a holiday toy drive for families in the community with financial needs.

The Guffey community is almost synonymous with Guffey Community Charter School – from its outstanding volunteer spirit to the Parrish Christmas party that raises additional funds for our school. The spirit of this town is interwoven with compassion and generosity.

3-5 teacher, Lynda MacDonald writes:

6.4 School and community actively collaborate in seeking to make the local environment a good place in which to live and work.

6.5 Students value their local places and see them as having the potential to sustain a life of quality.

I had a hard time separating these two Ends because I believe they are integrally integrated together. So I will address them together. Guffey Community Charter School has incredible community support. Having taught here for over 20 years and seeing the changes from pre charter to post charter, I would have to say one of the best benefits of becoming a charter school is the incredible community support that our school receives. This support definitely makes the local environment a good place to live and work. Below are some examples of this support. However, this is by no means a complete list of what our community does for our school, nor what our school does for our community.

To start the year, this summer, a group of volunteers worked with the students to build a community garden. Throughout the summer, other volunteers helped to care for the garden. Those who worked it could then help themselves to the produce as they wished. Once school resumed, the students harvested the remaining produce. Then one of our employees created a delicious soup for all to share and enjoy.

In October, we had our annual Halloween Parade. Once again the community came out in droves to hand out candy along the route. This tradition has been going back since the inception of the school. It is always a fun time. In recent years the Bull Moose has added the tradition of hosting a Halloween party for the students. This takes a lot of energy and is greatly appreciated by all.

In November, Mrs. Peterson-Hirsch once again, put together an incredible Veteran's Day program that was well attended and greatly appreciated by the veterans in our community. Later that month the 8th graders put on their second annual spaghetti dinner fundraiser. This was well supported by the community raising nearly \$800. The Guffey Library also was a partner in this event by providing the desserts and benefited with their silent auction.

Coming up in December we will have our annual winter program. This is always well attended. Here the fire department gets involved with Toys for Tots and brings in Santa to pass out toys for all kids in the community. The 8th grade students are also eliciting community support with their own toy drive

and getting great response. This toy drive is set up to provide the community the opportunity to come in and pick up toys as needed for their families.

In February we will have our annual Pie Palooza. This is a great event for the community and a wonderful fundraiser for the school. In past years the place has been packed helping us to raise nearly \$4000 every year.

Speaking of fundraisers, our community always comes through when there is a need. Every December for the past five years, the Parrish family has hosted a community holiday party providing a giving tree where community members can give to the school. This year over \$2,700 has been raised so far. The school also offers an opportunity for community members to support those in need through a variety of programs. Every year we have a "secret angel" who gives the students a gift card for the Dollar Store. We have a program currently set up to provide meals and money for a family with medical needs and have had incredibly generous support.

I would be remiss if I did not include our incredible array of community volunteers that selflessly give of their time to help out weekly in the classroom. Teaching in multi-age classrooms with such a variety of needs is so much more effective when we have community volunteers who are willing to come into the classroom to work with small groups of students. In the k-2 classroom, we currently have four people who are coming in on a regular basis to work with the students in reading and movement. In the 3rd -5th grade classroom, I am so appreciative of my math helper who comes in daily to support the 3rd graders. I also have a volunteer who comes in weekly to provide after school homework help. In the middle school we have two people who come in twice a week to support the students in math and science. We also have three people who come in twice a month to work with the k – 5th graders in art. All I can say is THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU!!

Middle school teacher, Hillevi Peterson-Hirsch writes:

6.6 School decision-making is responsibly and democratically determined by the people the school serves for the benefit of the entire community.

Guffey School has an atmosphere that welcomes the community involvement in our PTO, Accountability Committee, and on the school board. The overall feeling among the staff is one of openness and welcoming new ideas as we meet together weekly for staff meetings. As a school, we are well connected to our families; we email, send home notes in "Ponies" and call when needed. At times throughout the years I have been here, we have had to adapt our policies to meet needs of the families we serve. As a teacher, I have been approached to create work-arounds for students and families facing problems of illnesses and injuries. This is who we are in Guffey. Families first. After all, this is why we are here.

6.7 Students, regardless of circumstances (economic, cultural, linguistic, geographic, etc.) have access to and participate in high quality educational experiences.

Big cities and well-appointed schools do not guarantee a well-rounded education. Guffey School has something most schools do not have – small student to teacher ratio with a staff that has the heart and commitment to meet the academic, emotional and social success of the individual child as well as contribute to the personal awareness of the local and global community.

We are willing to go that extra mile to individualize the needs for each of our students, while meeting the standards expected by the state. We don't accommodate weaknesses; we work to raise their personal confidence to overcome whatever obstacle may stand in their way. We are not afraid to hold each student accountable for his or her work and give him or her opportunities to succeed.

Through our music, theater, and classroom presentations, we involve all the students and focus on

overcoming the fear of speaking in front of people, learning to enunciate and creating memories that last a lifetime.

This year, Guffey students began the season with a number of educational field trips to a play, the symphony, and a science exploration of the Manitou waters that open their eyes and minds to the physical wonders and cultures around their community. We live in a place where families around our country save their vacation money so they may travel to experience what we at Guffey Community Charter School can hop on a bus and experience right in our own “back yard.”