

GBCS Mission Statement

To provide our students with an education of the highest standards that incorporates their individual interests and learning styles, and nurtures their intellectual, social, emotional, and physical well-being within a learning community; and to share our best practices with other schools and educators.

GBCS Vision Statement

To be a community focused public school where students demonstrate a passion for learning, strong academic and social skills, independence and self-direction, confidence, and responsibility for their education, school, family, and community.



GBCS Summary

Greater Brunswick Charter School **began as the dream** of local parents, educators, and community members who believed that a public school dedicated to **individualized instruction**, **parental involvement**, and **social awareness** could flourish in our community. GBCS opened in September of 1998 and from the very beginning families came to value the dedicated teachers, innovative educational program, and positive school culture. Some of our **innovative educational programs** include Personal Education Plans for all students, Positive Discipline, Dual Language instruction, and Enrichment Clusters.

Personal Education Plans (PEPs) have always been a unique and integral part of the educational experience at GBCS. They reflect our school's mission and vision to support individual learning and to encourage all of our students to become independent and self-directed learners. The teachers, student and parents develop the child's goals together during and in-between conferences, based on the student's interests and learning profile. Students may work on their PEP goals during class time, centers, FLEX time, Genius Hour, and Enrichment Clusters.

We began to implement **Positive Discipline** in 2001 and have followed its principles ever since. Our students begin using **conflict resolution** and **class meetings** in kindergarten. Positive Discipline uses solution



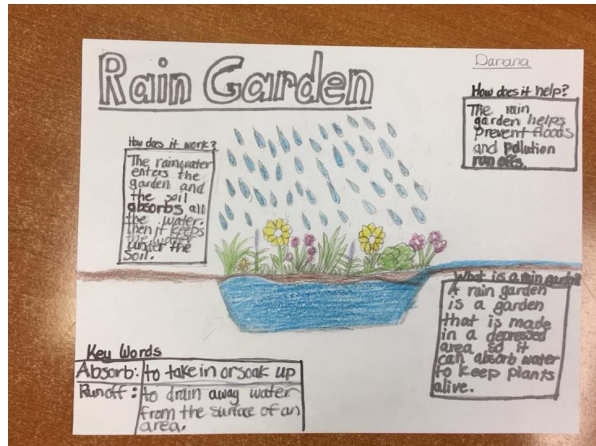
focused discipline to build a powerful learning community that models mutual respect and supports academic excellence. It is kind and firm; rooted in **social-emotional learning** and **restorative justice**.



In 2004 GBCS **purchased and renovated its current building**, a former bowling alley, and had a place to call its own in a welcoming, vibrant neighborhood a short walk from downtown New Brunswick. **Walking field trips** to the State Theatre, George Street Playhouse, and the New Brunswick Free Public Library are common for all GBCS students. In 2010 we completed the renovation of our building, adding a full size middle school gymnasium, media center, kiln room, and science laboratory.



In 2011 GBCS partnered with Kaboom! and Foresters Insurance to build a **community playground** in our backyard. In addition to a slide, swings, and zip line, we expanded our **student gardens**. Community gardeners and teachers work with students to plant, weed, water, and observe our award-winning garden come to life. Our students enjoy harvesting blueberries and grapes while our parents prefer the tomatoes and cilantro. Today our gardens include two **cisterns** (rain barrels) and two **rain gardens**, as a result of grants and community partnerships with New Brunswick 4-H, Johnson & Johnson, and Rutgers University.



GBCS has shown they are dedicated to environmental protection by retrofitting their property with rain gardens and cisterns that help protect their local watershed. We are excited to have partnered with GBCS to demonstrate best practices for stormwater management in the community. – Michele Bakacs, Associate Professor, Rutgers Cooperative Extension

Also, in 2011, we launched our innovative 50/50 **Dual Language program** in half the kindergarten and first grade classes. Based on parent interest and program benefits, we expanded the program in 2015 to include all kindergarten classes; the program will be fully implemented for all students through grade five in 2020. In addition to the social and cognitive benefits of bilingualism, gaining a second language provides students with a broader overall vocabulary and multiple views of the world. Towards these benefits, the program sets out to accomplish the following goals:

- Develop high levels of proficiency in Spanish and English
- Achieve high levels of academic performance in Spanish and English
- Take advantage of the optimal window of learning a second language during the primary years
- Give students an upper edge in high school, college, and the global economy
- Promote bilingualism, biliteracy, and biculturalism to create culturally literate citizens
- Develop positive cross-cultural attitudes and behaviors to support civil society

*“The development of **two** languages during the early {childhood and elementary} years **benefits** the **BRAIN** through the development of **greater BRAIN TISSUE DENSITY** in areas related to **language, memory and attention.**” – Child Development Associates Council, February 2009*

The Greater Brunswick Charter School has successfully served both children and parents in our community as an additional option in education...We are so very proud to have GBCS as part of our community. – James M. Cahill, Mayor City of New Brunswick



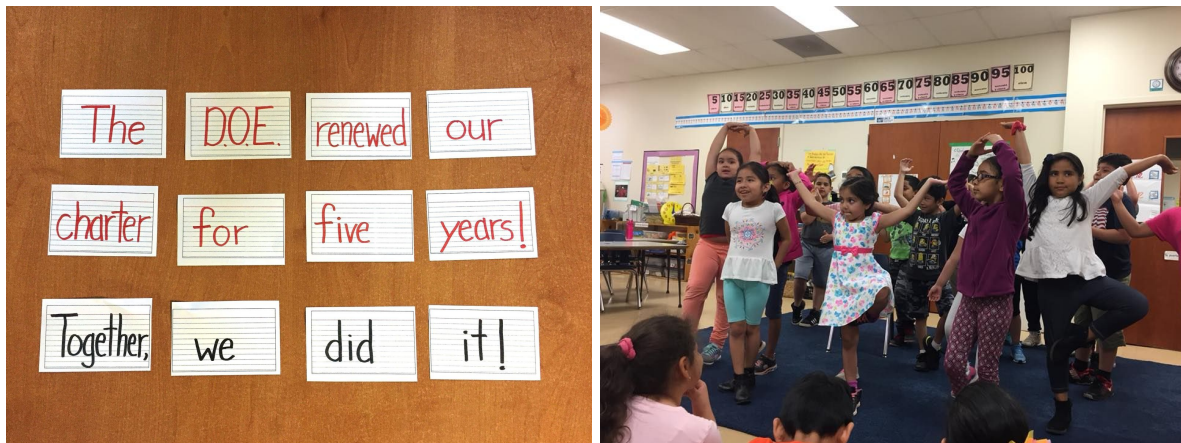
In 2012 we began **Enrichment Clusters**, which allow groups of students and facilitators who share a common interest to come together during a scheduled time to explore that interest. Enrichment Clusters usually culminate in an original product or performance with a real-world audience. Our clusters take place on Wednesday afternoons from 1:35 - 2:45, with volunteer facilitators, when the teaching staff has school wide planning time. Some examples include: Newspaper writing, singing, comic book writing, gardening, hula hooping, face painting.



Our **Family Learning Night (FLN)** program offers weekly workshops and classes for parents/guardians that are related to helping students, furthering adult education, fitness, nutrition, finance, and more. In 2013 we expanded from one evening a week to up to four evenings, based on interest. We now offer engaging and educational programs for students whose parents attend FLN classes, capitalizing on additional learning time. In 2017 we added Family Clay Nights, a weekly class where families work together with clay over multiple sessions.

Through its deep community engagement and strong student outcomes, GBCS has established itself throughout Middlesex County as a **quality public school of choice**. Our school has become woven into the fabric of our community, enjoying **productive partnerships** with arts organizations, libraries, hospitals, colleges, universities, child-care programs, businesses, and cultural institutions throughout New Brunswick. Our students benefit daily from the connections we draw between classroom learning and the wider world.

GBCS students are offered opportunities to perform in a choral program and, beginning in 2015, our school band. The band and choral programs continue to grow each year, including our partnership with **New Brunswick Jazz Project**, who volunteer their time and offer free music coaching and lessons after school.



In 2017, NJDOE Acting Commissioner Kimberly Harrington **renewed our charter** for a period of five years through June 30, 2022, based on her review of our academic performance, fiscal viability, and operational stability. Also, in 2017 we began a partnership with **George Street Playhouse**, training staff and students with their Theater at the Core program.



In 2018 GBCS was recognized by **New Brunswick Ciclovía**, an open streets project, as a Distinguished Community Partner. GBCS has supported and collaborated with the City of New Brunswick, New Brunswick Tomorrow, and Rutgers University since 2013 to launch and support this initiative to mobilize community members to embrace active living and promote social interaction and community engagement in a safe setting. During Ciclovía, the streets become



car-free for five hours for residents to enjoy physical activity, creating a healthy, sustainable and vibrant city street experience.

GBCS has also become a place where **master teachers** share their expertise with colleagues throughout the profession. Rutgers University, Montclair State University, Kean University, and Middlesex County College are some of the institutions that have sent their students for training and field study at GBCS. In addition, GBCS **disseminates best practices** through workshops and tours of our school connected to Positive Discipline – Social Emotional Learning and Restorative Justice, Dual Language, Personal Education Plans, and more.

Looking ahead, GBCS is developing and improving. We have grown from 88 students in 1998 to a more sustainable and efficient school community of 394. At its full size, GBCS is still a **small, family-friendly school**. Students at GBCS are learning to be active participants in their neighborhoods as they master the social and academic skills they will need to succeed in college and career. We are committed to **educating the whole child**, and we dedicate the time and resources needed to understand the different ways students learn. We seek to create a true **learning community** as we develop lasting partnerships within our school membership and beyond.

As a parent whose sons are graduates of GBCS and are now in college and as a professional whose staff interacts with the students of GBCS, GBCS has my admiration and respect, Robert J. Belvin, Ph.D.

