



Soaring

April 2021

GCS Supporters Help Make *Forward Motion* Dreams Come True!

With the help of hundreds of donors, Groton Community School has made great strides in the first phase of the *Forward Motion* project. In January, the newly renovated school was ready to welcome many smiling young children back to our home base at 110 Boston Road.

There are several details of the transformation yet to come. Still, we are settled in and enjoying the many beautiful attributes of the new space. The bright and open lobby and reception area will be an excellent place for families to gather when COVID restrictions ease. Every classroom has been redesigned, retaining the kitchen sinks and stoves that are frequently used for fun lessons. Beautiful new windows at the children's height offer a view of nature, allow them to see other children on the playground, and provide the chance to observe the weather.

Among the new additions to the building are the expansive Children's Library & Technology Center, a dedicated Staffroom, and meeting rooms and offices to accommodate the work that goes on behind the scenes. The children can't wait to experience the independence that comes with having the extensive collection of books displayed on shelves that are just the right height for them. The staff is thrilled with the spaces they now have to plan curriculum and enjoy a quiet break at lunch. It is really exciting for them to have space that comfortably



accommodates the group as a whole, and they look forward to the enhanced technology coming down the pike.

While not as flashy as some of the other enhancements to the building, the addition of several restrooms and storage areas, as well as a walk-up attic with plenty of room for school supplies, art materials, and large motor equipment is undoubtedly a game-changer for GCS. Having the new port cohere at our dismissal area has also made a substantial difference for staff and families alike.

We are tremendously grateful to the many donors who gave so generously to make these *Forward Motion* dreams come true. Stay tuned for more exciting opportunities to show your support and help us complete the Phase One renovations, like the upcoming *Bid It Forward* Online Auction (see sidebar).



Bid it Forward!

An Online Auction to Support Groton Community School

Don't miss your chance to win great prizes including vacation rentals, Red Sox tickets, tools, golf outings, and much more!

Bids Open: April 27th – May 1st

Live Zoom Event: May 1st at 8:00 PM

To register, please visit:
grotoncommunityschool.org/bid-it-forward

Why I Give *John Amaral*

John Amaral, founding partner of Omni Properties, first heard about Groton Community School from his friend and fellow GCS Trustee Peter Myette. Peter shared information about the school and its mission and approached him about serving as a Trustee. John's admiration for the GCS



community led him to accept the role. He soon became the Board President, a position he has held for three years.

“What impressed me most about GCS is the dedication of the teachers and staff to the children’s growth, development, and well-being. They have created a safe and caring environment that fosters a love of learning in the children,” shared John. “We have heard frequently from past students that their experience at GCS helped build a strong foundation. Starting their education at GCS contributed to their success through elementary school, high school, college, and into their careers.”

In addition to contributing his time as a Trustee, and his expertise during the first phase of the **Forward Motion** project, John and his wife Diane support the GCS Annual Fund every year. “Financial donations to GCS make a difference in our hometown and the neighboring communities. It’s an investment that supports families in their day-to-day lives and the children’s future through schooling and beyond. Every donated dollar is managed with a high degree of stewardship and a deep appreciation. Financial donations help to enhance the learning experience and environment for the children. It supports our teachers, provides new technology, helps to close the gap in the school’s non-profit budget and was critical in enhancing the school during its fifteen-year vision of renovating the existing school and constructing a beautiful addition.”

John and his wife Diane made their most recent GCS gifts go further to support the school’s mission. Diane works at AbbVie, a company that provides matching donations to non-profit organizations supported by their employees. John commented, “It’s a great way for a donor to leverage their contributions and increase financial support of GCS. We are grateful for AbbVie’s generous support of GCS, an organization for which we care deeply.”

In their free time, John and Diane love to travel, exploring other countries, and learning about different cultures. Visiting their son, who has lived in London and Barcelona for several years, has provided some great travel opportunities!

GCS is most grateful for John’s tirelessly volunteering his time and expertise in managing the many facets of our building transformation and for his and Diane’s generosity in supporting the GCS Annual Fund and **Forward Motion** project.

From Our Director

It is hard to believe that it has been a little over 35 years since I first drove down the long, dirt driveway leading to the little brick schoolhouse known as GCS. So much has changed over the years, from family dynamics and educational expectations to children’s needs and the community. Of course, the most significant change of all is our beautiful, newly renovated school building that sits back off of 110 Boston Road. I can’t wait for the day that we can welcome all of you for a tour and a close-up view of this gorgeous new space.

I am so grateful for the many surprises, personally meaningful gifts, and the gorgeous handcrafted kite created by Alexia Rosoff Wilber that proudly adorns our front entrance. I am also extremely honored and humbled by your many generous donations to *The Linda Kosinski Exceptional Teachers Fund* in honor of my 35 years of service at Groton Community School.

As I have said often throughout my career, success in a school is rooted in the teaching staff team who work inside. We have been so very fortunate to have an incredibly committed group of educators who have dedicated themselves to making GCS a fantastic place for young children and families.

This fund will enable us to focus more resources toward recruiting and retaining our exceptional team of teachers. I hope that we continue to grow this fund so that GCS has access, in perpetuity, to resources that allow for long-term investment in our mission. As we strive to be the best that we can be for children, families, and the communities we serve, we are grateful to have you by our side.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Linda".

Linda Kosinski, Director



From the GCS Community

In a year like no other, GCS has been a lifeline for families in our community, supporting learning, connecting, caring and sharing. We are GCS strong and so grateful for the dedication of our families and our supporters.



“GCS is truly a wonderful, magical place. All of the teachers, administrators and staff are so exceptional. I can tell how much my son’s teachers love him and he loves them. Thank you for all of your hard work through these crazy times. The quality of care and education that is being provided at GCS clearly has not suffered during this pandemic. I’m so grateful for you and your school.”

– **The Neff Family**

“It would be hard to find a place that focuses on the whole child better than GCS. Our children were safe, engaged, supported, healthy and challenged during their years in a number of different classrooms and the lessons they learned there remain imprinted on their everyday lives.”

– **The Ferriola Family**

“Groton Community School celebrates, nurtures, respects, and supports my child from the minute they walk through the door until the moment they leave each day. Every member of the staff works to create a foundation that instills a lifetime love of learning, allowing children to feel successful, confident in their abilities, and excited to go to school. GCS is the best!”

– **The Lane-Hand Family**

“As parents who work in higher education, we were looking for a school that was a good balance of preparing students socially and emotionally as well as giving them a good foundation to learn. GCS has exceeded our expectations in this preparation. The curriculum is pitch perfect in that it gets the children excited about learning and there is an expectation of kindness, respect, responsibility and grace that is exactly what we wanted from a school culture.”

– **The Seero Family**

“We’ve been fortunate to send our three children to GCS. The teachers and staff are top notch -- they love, care for and educate in meaningful and creative ways that have lasting effects. GCS truly is the best!”

– **The Baxevanis Family**

“Our family is on its 5th school year with GCS, and wish we had more! Every member of the GCS staff shows a passion for what they do and we have enjoyed seeing that same passion, for learning, reflected in our children.”

– **The Crouse Family**

“We love it here at GCS! Warm and inviting, it feels like an extension of home and our kids look forward to attending every day. Dedicated, hard-working staff are responsible for this year’s success and managed to keep school safe and open through the challenges of COVID19. Words cannot capture how happy we are to see the progress our kids have made thanks to GCS.”

– **The Halloran Family**

“My son had an incredible experience for two years at GCS. He moved on to the public school kindergarten, and his teacher’s quote says it all. ‘I always know the GCS kids. They are fully prepared academically, but more importantly, they are KIND.’”

– **The Cummings Family**

“GCS has offered each of my very different children just what they needed to be stimulated, challenged, and supported in each milestone and every discovery. Thanks to the foundation GCS has given them, my children are excited to learn, moved to be kind, and empowered to change the world. We truly could not have asked for more from a school.”

– **The Engstrom Family**





110 Boston Road, Route 119
Groton, MA 01450

Look Who's Soaring Now! *Kristina (McKinney) Balarezo*

Kristina (McKinney) Balarezo attended Groton Community School from 1994-96. Her fondest memories include loving the playground, having Linda as her teacher, making one of her lifelong friends – Ashley Alnwick (Brisbois), and having her first crush in Kindergarten.

While attending Northeastern University, Kristina had the opportunity to work for three months in a hospital and orphanage in Latin America. She loved Peru and headed back there after graduation to work in a travel agency. It was here that she met her husband, Rodrigo.

Now Kristina assists women in simplifying their fitness and nutrition routines and creating more space for intentional living. Kristina noted, "I enjoy this line of work because I feel like it's impactful. I love to

help women gain their energy, strength, and vitality back."

"The values I learned while attending GCS, especially caring for my community, were long-lasting even if I didn't realize it at the time. And just like today's GCS children are learning about having a 'growth mindset,' I am working to apply this to my own life and to help my clients apply it as well."

GCS was founded on the principal values of kindness and caring for others, community awareness, and good citizenship. Though she was young when she attended GCS, Kristina believes these values stuck with her. "I feel like I've always had the heart to care for others. I truly love to help other people succeed and overcome obstacles in their lives, and I'm sure this comes from the great teachers, classmates, and overall community I had at GCS."



Kristina, now and then!

Kristina recently joined her family in making a gift to the **Forward Motion** campaign. Her advice to the young children of GCS is to "remember what's important in life. The world will try to lure you in many directions, but everything in life should always come back to your core values and priorities." Kristina is a shining example of living your values!

Helping Children Soar