



Building Community Through Extended School Programming at Georgetown School



Small rural schools are often faced with the challenges of how to support working families who may need before and after care for their children. Before and after care sometimes provided through the YMCA, or other organizations, are not always accessible to families, making drop off and pick up times difficult. In some cases, rural schools lose students to other schools who have consistent care programs. In Georgetown we heard this challenge

presented many times from multiple families. The goal was to find a solution that made sense for families.

Last year, Georgetown School, with the support of Georgetown Island Education Foundation, a nonprofit organization that raises funds for education in Georgetown, began offering free after school clubs to students. The first step was to find a program coordinator, someone that could administratively organize the sign ups and rally adults interested in offering unique opportunities for students at Georgetown. Sarah Mancini, a local community member, was interested in charging the venture of after school clubs.

Beginning in November, GCS offered nine different clubs free for students in grades PreK-6. From learning how to survive in the wild, to archery and a regular after school homework club, the news of clubs began to spread in the community. More and more community members came forward and offered to volunteer their time to work with kids after school. This helped increase the offerings of after school clubs, traditionally run by just school employees.

“I feel so lucky to live and work in a place where community members consistently donate their time to work with the kids at Georgetown School,” said Sarah Mancini.

By June, students had access to regular weekly clubs Monday through Friday, many of which were run solely by community volunteers. Over the course of last year, we provided after school clubs to 78% of our student population.



This year, Georgetown School is continuing to offer after school clubs for all students. This fall, students have had offerings of 8 different clubs that have served around 75% of the school population. Weekly, students have access to a regular homework club and after school gym time. GCS also offers special clubs such as theater club, gift making, soccer club, arts etc., garden club, and archery.

While after school clubs were providing a much needed community connection for students, they ultimately were not solving the problem of before and after care for students. Principal Nina Willette and after school program coordinator Sarah Mancini, sat down this summer to try to problem solve how to help. With the help of AOS98 Schools, the school found a way to utilize school employees, and a donation system, to offer daily before and after school programming for students. What has evolved from simply attempting to solve a problem in the community has become something independently beautiful. With the help of Jordan Lang, a local community member and parent, and Sarah Mancini, the school is able to provide families with a monthly sign up for before school programming beginning at 7:30am, and after school programming ending at 5:30pm.

The school aims to keep the cost as low as possible for families, enough to pay employees who provide a creative, loving, and community building space for students to be together before and after school. A less structured environment than clubs, programming allows kids the time to be together, something that has been greatly lost these last few years of the pandemic. Kids have creative choices and lots of outdoor play time. So far, in the months of September, October and November, before and after school programming has served roughly 17 families in the community.

Donations are essential to providing programming to the students in our community. Principal Willette and Sarah Mancini are actively searching for other funding sources that will allow before and after programming to be free of charge to students and families who may need or benefit from this service.

“We are thankful to those community members who have generously donated towards ensuring this program is successful. We know that schools and children are the foundation of our communities,” said Principal Willette. “Our hope is to continue to provide this much needed service to families in Georgetown for years to come.”

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