



Dear Alumni, Parents, and Friends of GSA,

As George Stevens Academy's faculty and staff strive every day to address the pressing needs of students during the pandemic, we want to share this update on the Trustees' efforts to support the school's long-run success, in particular, the significant progress made towards securing adequate tuition from our towns.

Background

- *A tuition level that reflects the actual costs of education is essential if GSA is to continue to provide quality education for all students.*
- On October 1, 2020, GSA formally requested an additional \$1000 per student from towns in this coming year.
- The state-set tuition level has increased by an average of 2.9% per year for the past five years. *This year it increased by only 0.03%.*
- The majority of families with high-school age children in this area choose GSA every year. Local enrollment has grown steadily since 2009. Strong schools and secondary school choice attract families to this region.
- GSA's costs per student are in line with other similar schools in Maine, including most of the local public high schools. The ratio of students to publicly-funded administrators at GSA also matches local public high schools and other town academies.
- GSA employs over 100 full and part time employees. Teaching salaries are lower on average than at other Maine town academies and slightly below that in Unions 76 and 93.
- Hundreds of thousands of dollars have been cut from the operating budget in the past several years. This is unsustainable and threatens to diminish student experience. Important campus infrastructure repairs and improvements have now been deferred for decades.
- Fundraising and the endowment help GSA's finances significantly but cannot adequately cover the gap between what towns pay and the school requires.
- Since 2006, the Boarding Program surplus revenue has helped subsidize what towns pay, but this is no longer the case. International admissions have changed dramatically for schools like GSA, for reasons beyond our control.
- In 2020, the GSA Board established a new committee focused exclusively on the Boarding Program. The Committee's aim is to determine if the Boarding Program should be a part of GSA's future and, if so, what strategy will most likely guarantee its success. For the 2021-22 academic year, the Boarding Program will continue with currently enrolled students. The program is small by historic standards (~12 students), and costs have been cut down accordingly.

Updates & progress

- Representatives from Blue Hill, Brooklin, Brooksville, Castine, Penobscot, Sedgwick, and Surry select boards and school boards are now meeting regularly with GSA Trustees on a special committee charged with exploring these issues and moving ahead constructively to sustain secondary education in our community. This committee is co-chaired by Sedgwick selectman Ben Astbury '96 and GSA Board chair Sally Mills '85.

- In 2019 and 2020, GSA Trustees and Head of School Tim Seeley also met with these seven select and school boards individually regarding the tuition request. Orland has also been involved but has a different school board structure.
- Prior to the pandemic, community-wide information meetings were held in each tuitioning town.
- The GSA Board's Finance Committee has worked tirelessly over the past two years on budget strategy, long-term planning, outside audits, and sharing GSA financial information with towns and the public.
- All key materials and background information pertaining to the tuition request are posted on GSA's website under "useful links" or <https://www.georgestevensacademy.org/Page/1002>. This website is updated as new information arises.
- *Each town will vote on the requested tuition increase in the coming months.*

GSA's sixteen-member Board of Trustees includes ten current and past GSA parents, seven GSA alumni spanning classes from 1966 to 2003, one retired GSA teacher, and year-round residents of most of our sending towns. Each board member volunteers their time, expertise and passion in service to the Academy, knowing that GSA is crucial not only to the success of our students, but to the success and vitality of this community itself. Please help us in this endeavor.

What can you do to help support GSA?

- If you are a resident of one of our sending towns, please vote on your town budget; be sure you know when/where/how voting will take place this year due to the pandemic restrictions.
- Encourage your friends and neighbors to vote to support high quality secondary education.
- Take pride in your school and let people know what it means to you and your family.
- Stay informed, visit the website at <https://www.georgestevensacademy.org/Page/1002>.
- Follow GSA on facebook and Instagram.
- If you are an alum, reach out to your classmates and ask them to support their school too.

On behalf of the GSA Board of Trustees, thank you! Your support and participation will set a course of excellence for this, and the next, generation of GSA students.

Zoë Tenney '93, GSA trustee & current parent

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