



JANUARY 2023

# The Griswold Times

GRISWOLD PUBLIC SCHOOLS MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

## SUPERINTENDENT'S LETTER

Dear Griswold Public Schools:

As we begin this second half of the 2022-23 school year, we continue to celebrate our students, our families, and our faculty and staff. In this edition of "The Griswold Times," there are many sources of inspiration and celebration in Griswold Public Schools

Be sure to visit our website and Facebook pages frequently. We try to do our best to keep you all informed on a routine basis. Know that the budget development process for the 2023-24 school year has begun. The Board of Education and I have created a webpage, under the Board of Education tab, where you can access all the information related to our budget work. We have a Public Hearing scheduled on the Initial Budget Proposal on March 6, 2023, at 6 p.m., in the GMS Cafeteria. All are welcome to attend.

I thank you all for your continued support.

Sincerely yours,

Sean P. McKenna  
Superintendent of Schools

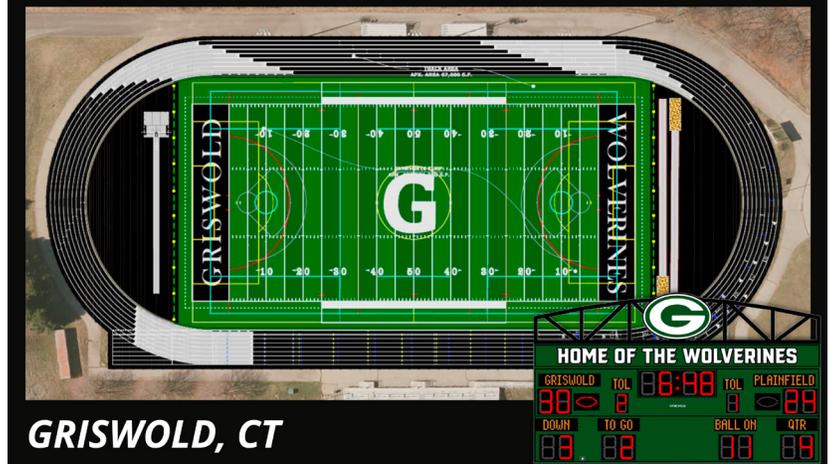
## DISTRICT NEWS

### ATHLETIC FIELDS PROJECT

The referendum for the proposed Griswold Multi-Purpose Turf field is on Wednesday, February 1, at the Griswold Town Hall. Polls will be open from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. All Griswold and Jewett City residents of voting age are encouraged to vote.

For more information on the project, [view the presentation given to the Board of Education and Board of Finance here.](#)

### COMMUNITY MULTI-PURPOSE FIELD



## Let's Get Social:

Griswold Public Schools

@griswoldschools

[griswoldpublicschools.org](http://griswoldpublicschools.org)

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## Town Referendum for Multi-Use Fields Project

Wednesday, February 1, 6am-8pm  
Town Hall

## Signing Day for College-Bound Athletes

Monday, February 6, 1:30, GHS

## Tri-M Faculty Talent Show

Thursday, February 9

## FAFSA Financial Aid Night

Friday, February 10, 5-7pm, GHS Learning Commons

## Boys XC State Champion Banner Reveal

Friday, February 10, 6:45pm (before boys basketball game)

## ECC Cheerleading Competition

Saturday, February 11  
Waterford High School

## Gown Gala

Saturday, February 11, 11am-3pm  
Senior Fashion Show 12:30pm  
GHS Auditorium

## Board of Education Meeting

Monday, February 13

## NO SCHOOL: Staff Professional Development

Friday, February 17

## NO SCHOOL: Presidents Day Recess

February 20 & 21

## GHS Shadow Day

Friday, February 24

## Board of Education Meeting

Monday, February 27

## GHS Music Trip to Disney World

March 1-4

## Shortened Days for Parent-Teacher Conferences

March 2 & 3

## GMS Exploratory Night

Wednesday, March 8, 6pm

## GMS 5th & 6th Grade Fun Night

Thursday, March 9

## NO SCHOOL: Staff Professional Development

Friday, March 10

## Board of Education Meeting

Monday, March 13

## SAT Day

Wednesday, March 22

## GMS 7th & 8th Grade Fun Night

Friday, March 24

## Booster Club Dinner Dance

March 25

## Board of Education Meeting

Monday, March 27

## Board of Education Meeting

Monday, April 3

## NO SCHOOL: Good Friday

Friday, April 7

## NO SCHOOL: Spring Break

April 10-14

## GHS Spring Musical (The Wedding Singer)

April 19-22

## Board of Education Meeting

Monday, April 24

**ATHLETIC CALENDAR:** Visit [eccathletics.org/griswold](http://eccathletics.org/griswold) for the GHS and GMS Sports schedules

**ACADEMIC CALENDAR:** Visit the [Academic Calendar webpage](#)

## NOW HIRING:

GPS is hiring for the following positions (as of 1/29/23):

- Full-time Paraeducators (2)
- Full-time Head Custodian
- Part-time Custodian, GHS
- Wolverines Forward Before & After School Program Instructor
- Coaches: Outdoor Track Assistant Coach
- Long-term Substitute Special Education Teacher, GHS
- Long-term Substitute Math Teacher, GMS
- Substitutes: Custodians, as well as Teachers, Paraeducators, Cafe Service Providers, Health Assistants, and Nurses

Find all open positions at [applitrack.com/griswold/onlineapp/](http://applitrack.com/griswold/onlineapp/)

## MODERN CLASSROOM EDUCATOR

Congratulations to GPS' Teaching, Learning, and Innovation Coordinator Jessica Gillespie, who has earned a Distinguished Modern Classroom Educator certification!

Distinguished Modern Classroom Educators know how to meet their students' needs through blended, self-paced, mastery-based instruction. Because of Mrs. Gillespie's role in our TLI department, the approach will serve as professional development for GPS' faculty and catalyst team teachers, who may choose to implement the model with their students for an individualized approach to teaching.

Read more about this designation in [The Day](#) (requires subscription).

.....

## REMINDER FROM THE SPECIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

If you have a PPT scheduled on a morning or afternoon affected by a delay or early dismissal, the PPT will be canceled and rescheduled for a later date. This applies to delays and early dismissals that are weather-related or otherwise. For example, if there is a 2-hour delay on a day where you have a 9:00 a.m. PPT at GMS, the PPT would be canceled because school would now start at 9:20 a.m. If this occurs, the special education office will contact you to reschedule.

## FUTURE-FOCUSED TALK

On January 12, Griswold Public Schools hosted a Future-Focused Talk for faculty and staff on Zoom to discuss Artificial Intelligence (AI), ChatGPT, game design, and other future-focused subjects. The goal of the session was to consider ways to expose our students to a future that is already upon us. The group will meet again soon.

.....

## CASE STUDY AT NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Generation Esports, the leader in Gaming Concepts education and esports competition at schools across the United States, has included Griswold Public Schools as a case study in their presentation at the 2023 Future of Education Technology Conference (FETC) in New Orleans from Jan. 23-26.

Generation Esports Vice President of Educational Innovation Kristy Custer presented, "Put the WOW factor into your scholastic esports program," which mentioned Griswold High School's innovative new programs.

In 2021, Griswold High School opened The Nexus Lab, an advanced-technology lab, where classes and afterschool programs could take place. The Lab has become home to new courses in animation, esports, design, coding, and drafting. The school also launched an esports team in 2021. Since then, the Lab was named one of the Top 10 Gaming and Esports Labs in the country by Generation Esports in 2022, and one of the school's Valorant teams was ranked 7th in the High School Esports League's eastern US division, and 1st in the state of Connecticut in the fall.

.....

## BEFORE & AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAM

In need of before and/or after school care for your GES student? [Learn more or enroll your child in the Wolverines Forward Before & After School Program on our website.](#)

Benefits of the program include:

- Affordable and high-quality care
- Exciting Enrichments rotated monthly
- Academic Skill-building and homework help daily
- Fitness activities daily
- Low staff-to-student ratios

.....

## BUNDLE UP YOUR STUDENTS

Winter is still upon us, and it's time to bundle up! Students across the district go outside for recess, physical education and other classes, snack, senior lunch, to the buses, and other activities year-round. Warm clothing is important. Please be sure to send your student with a winter coat, gloves, hat, etc. so they are dressed for the weather. Contact your student's school if you're in need of cold-weather outerwear for them.

## OUT AND ABOUT WITH MR. MCKENNA

Superintendent McKenna has been visiting classrooms to see how teachers and students are working together to move Griswold *Forward*.

Last week, reading, thinking and writing activities at GES included the exploration of arctic animals in first grade, where students had to research whales, foxes, and bears that can endure the cold temps.



Students in Mr. Scholl's 8th grade English/LA class are reading and studying Ender's Game. To develop a deeper understanding of the novel, students worked in groups to create a talk-show script based on the characters and story, and performed them in the GMS auditorium.



In 5th grade science, Mr. Knolhoff and Mrs. LaBossiere helped the students design "biomes" in the GMS Launch Pad. Our student scientists had to identify 20 organisms to place in their individual digital domes.

Overall, he found the lessons to be highly engaging. Griswold teachers are guiding our students in critical thinking, creative approaches and effective communication so that they can thrive.

# ATHLETICS [GHS/GMS ATHLETIC CALENDAR LINK](#)

## GRISWOLD BOOSTER CLUB ATHLETES OF THE WEEK:

### Dec 26 - 31

Emily McDonough '25, Indoor Track - Emily ran a personal best in the 55m race at the ECC Developmental race placing 7th of 95 runners. Emily qualified to represent Griswold at the State Track meet on February 9.

Jeff Souvenance '23, Basketball - In 3 games scored 37 points, 33 rebounds, 3 steals, 1 block and 2 charges. Helped the team go 3-0 for the week.

### Jan 1 - 7

Christian Russell '23, Basketball - Christian averaged 20 points, 6 assists, and 5 rebounds in two games. Christian was also selected as the ECC boys basketball player of the week for January 2-6.

Abby Matheson '25, Basketball - Abby Matheson has a two game average of 14 points, 8 steals, 5 rebounds in wins against Tourtellotte and Putnam.

### Jan 8 - 14

Alexis Johnson '23, Cheer - Lexi is a great all-around athlete and was recently nominated for All-State. She is very versatile in stunts, has stunning jumps, and works incredibly hard to ensure she is the best she can be for her team.

Seth Christie '25, Wrestling - Seth is currently is posting a record of 19-3, with a 2nd place finish at the Casey Yates Memorial Tournament and a 1st place finish at the Griswold Midseason Invitational.

### Jan 15 - 21

Jackson Collins '23, Indoor Track - Jack placed 3rd in the 1000m and 6th in the 1600m in this past weekend's track meet. Jack exemplifies great leadership and acts as a mentor to the underclass athletes. Jack qualified to represent Griswold at the State Track meet on February 9.

Kaitlin Pearson '23, Cheer - Kaity gives 100% effort at every practice, game, and competition. She's never missed anything cheer-related in 4 years.

Follow [Griswold Booster Club on Facebook](#) for more Griswold sports info!

## WRESTLING UPDATE

January was a good month for the wrestling team with 4 tournaments and 7 dual matches.

At the Casey Yates Memorial Tournament at Lyman, Griswold finished in 8th place with Seth Christie taking 2nd, and Jesse Costley taking first.

At the Griswold Invitational, Griswold finished 6th with Seth and Jesse as champions, Steven Steniger at 4th, and 6th place finishes for Liam Gervais, and Wheeler wrestlers Cody Comeau, Ethan Sweet and Ben Lewis.

At the Highlander Invite at Portland team 8th, Seth 1st, Liam 3rd.

At the Queen of the Mat at Foran High, team 13th out of 41, with a top 8 finish for Zelig Dietz, top 6 for Alec Bedingfield and Jillian Comeau (Wheeler) and a 2nd place for Kayla Navarro.

Duals: Wins against Ellis Tech 47-36, Bacon Academy 60-21, Montville 57-23, St Paul 84-0 and Daniel Hand 40-39. Losses to Haddam-Killingworth 46-34 and Lyman Memorial 48-36.

.....

## CHEER COMPETITIONS

The GHS cheerleaders took 3rd in the Crusader Classic Cheer Competition at Holy Cross H.S. earlier this month. Congrats to our cheerleaders who took place in the Top Gun jump contest: Lexi Johnson 1st, Skyla Oddo 2nd, and Nevin Irvine 3rd place!

The girls will be traveling to Waterford High School on February 11 for the ECC Cheerleading competition.

## GSPN: GRISWOLD SPORTS NETWORK LIVE STREAMS

Subscribe to the [Griswold Sports Network's \(GSPN\) YouTube Channel](#) to watch live streamed home games all winter long!



## COMMITTED!

Griswold High School will be hosting athletes and local medias for a Signing Day ceremony on February 6. Senior athletes participating that have made early commitments to continue their athletic careers in college are:

- Michael Strain, Quinnipiac University, Cross Country
- Kuranda Ruggiero, Army West Point, Volleyball
- Evan Merchant, Fitchburg State University, Basketball
- Jackson Collins, D'Youville University, Cross Country
- Daniel Sims, Curry College, Football
- Dylan Freyer, Ohio Northern University, Lacrosse

More student-athletes are expected to committ in the coming weeks.

.....

## FENCING UPDATE

Congratulations to the Griswold Fencing team as Griswold beat Bacon 7-2 in epee as the Wolverines' Devyn Pelillo '24 going 3-0.

# GHS NEWS

## MIDTERMS & SENIOR SHOWCASES

Students completed midterm exams the week of January 17-20. When students returned to school on the 23rd, they entered the second semester, and half-year courses changed. Thank you to the GHS PTO for celebrating the halfway point of the school year and supplying cookies during all lunch waves on Jan. 24.

During midterms week, members of the senior class presented their capstone showcases to panel members. The class of 2023 is the first to go through four years of the state capstone requirements, and impressed faculty members with their experiences in academics, extracurriculars, and community service while at GHS. These experiences tied into GPS's vision of the graduate: that Graduates of Griswold Public Schools journey into the future as engaged citizens, effective communicators, critical thinkers, and resilient problem solvers. Congratulations to all of the seniors who presented and have completed that requirement for graduation!



## EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER

Congratulations to the Griswold Public Schools' GHS Employee of the Quarter, Paraeducator, Mrs. Kathy Caisse!



## WINTER BALL

Winter Ball on January 21st was a blast! The evening included a DJ, caricature artist, magicians, selfie-stations, and tons of food. Thanks to the PTO for planning this evening for our students! We had incredible feedback from our vendors about how kind and respectful GHS students are.



## PROJECT SAFE GRAD FUNDRAISERS

Did you get your prize calendar? During the month of February, members of the GHS Class of 2023 Project Safe Graduation will draw a calendar number that wins the daily prize. Participants are eligible for the drawing each day, even if they already won something. Calendars are being sold through 1/31. Email ghspsg2023@gmail.com if you didn't get one and would like one.

On February 11, Project Safe Grad is bringing back the **Gown Gala!** This event will take place in the high school auditorium and surrounding hallways from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Attendees will be able to shop lightly-used formal dresses and accessories for prom, military balls, weddings, and other formal events. At 12:30 p.m., there will be a fashion show with the senior girls, MC'd by WCTY's Jimmy and Shelly. This event is free and open to the public.



## ALL NEW ENGLAND MUSIC FESTIVAL

Congratulations to all of our students who auditioned for the All-New England Honors Music Festival. The following students have been invited to participate and will represent GHS at the festival in March: Paige Allard, Connor Benoit, Avery Brown, Sydney Churchill, Shelby Colbridge, Liam Gervais, Jacob Hamel, Stephen Johnson, Ruby Logan, Samuel Martin, Evan Merchant, Summer Milette, Makayla Nielson, Devyn Pelillo, Ayden Rourke, Jacob Strain, Michael Strain, Madilyn Wooten, and Amanda Wrobel.



## COMMUNITY SERVICE

In December, 157 GHS students were celebrated for over 930 community service hours! Community Service hours are displayed in the Feed Griz showcase outside of the cafeteria.

Additionally, members of our football team were recognized and honored at a celebratory dinner through the Plainfield VFW for their community service! This is a wonderful honor and we are so proud of our student athletes!



Seniors who completed their Capstone Showcase were celebrated



**PRINCIPAL PALONEN'S WEEKLY MEMOS**

Are you receiving Principal Palonen's weekly memos via email on Fridays? If not, please contact the GHS Main Office at 860-376-7640.

# GMS NEWS

## GUEST SPEAKER ON CYBER SECURITY

On January 11, the Science Olympiad Team had a video call with Andrew Bonillo, General Manager of TikTok US Data Security, to have an informal discussion about careers in Cyber Security and general internet safety.

.....

## 6TH GRADE CONCERT

On January 18th, the entire 6th grade performed in their first Griswold Middle School concert! Band, Orchestra, and Chorus performed beautifully for their family and friends in a packed GHS Auditorium. We are so excited to see and hear what they can accomplish in the Spring! Griswold Middle School is lucky to have a flourishing music program employing over 75% of the entire student body!

.....

## EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER

Congratulations to the Griswold Public Schools' GMS Employee of the Quarter, Library Media Specialist Laurie LaBossiere.

.....

## MAKERSPACE FUN

In the GMS Learning Commons Makerspace, Mrs. LaBossiere led a Lego Challenge using donated Legos from FirstBook.org. Each box opened had a variety of pieces, and students worked together to build something from the pieces that they were given. On another day, they used the website CoSpaces Edu to create virtual worlds, and then used the VR headsets to enter into each other's world and see what they had created. Some students even used block coding and made some of their objects move and talk. Students also made cute little folded paper hedgehog with pages from old/ damaged books. Coming soon in the Makerspace is directed drawings, Keva plank challenges, and a cardboard design challenge.

.....

## EXPLORATORIES UPDATES

P.E./Gym: all grades started their volleyball unit

Health: students in 7th grade health classes created "Eat This, Not That" projects to explore how to make healthier decisions at fast food restaurants

Art: 8th grade students worked very hard on their choice projects and pottery pieces, while 5th and 6th grade art classes had a couple of guest teachers. Logan and Eliana were the winners of the "Be the Art Teacher" silent auction experience from last month's Holiday Fair and Basket Raffle hosted by the PTO. Students worked on a compass rose drawing with Logan and a flower painting with Eliana.

.....

## FUN NIGHTS!

PTO hosted a Fun Night for 5th and 6th graders on January 13, and 7th and 8th grade students on January 27. Thanks to the PTOs for all you do for our students! Not only do these programs bring lots of joy to our students, but also raise funds for school programs.

If you'd like to be involved in future events, the GMS PTO meets on the second Wednesday of each month at 2:30 p.m. in the GMS Office (or attend virtually). Learn more about the [GMS PTO here](#), and their mission to support the students and teachers/staff of GMS.



## GMS NOW

Get daily updates from Griswold Middle School on the [GMS NOW Blog!](#)

# GES NEWS

## KINDNESS IN THE CLASSROOM

GES's Current character trait is INCLUSIVENESS. Second grade reread The Invisible Boy with a focus on that character trait, and fourth grade has also begun the SEL unit and is grasping ways in which they can include others, and learn more about their introverted or extroverted tendencies.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

GES will celebrate World Read Aloud Day on Wednesday, February 1. GMS and GHS students are scheduled to visit and read to GES students.

It's the time of year again for the Kids Heart Challenge! Wear Red on Friday, February 3 to support Heart Health Month. Heart-healthy exercises will be taking place during Health and PE classes February 16-28. GES will be raising funds all month long; last year GES raised \$4,400 during the Kids Heart Challenge.

On March 6, the GES PTO will host Dress as your Favorite Book Character Day to kick off their reading challenge fundraiser.



## EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER

Congratulations to the Griswold Public Schools' GES Employee of the Quarter, Karen Vargo. Mrs. Vargo sprung to action when a student was choking in the cafeteria.



## PRESCHOOL SCREENINGS

All families in Griswold and Jewett City with children who were born in 2019 and 2020 are invited to schedule an individual appointment for a free developmental screening at Griswold Elementary School.

Upcoming developmental screening dates are February 10 and March 31. Request an appointment by filling out [this Google Form](#).

If you would like your child to be considered for a placement in the Griswold Early Education Program in the fall, applications should be completed by March 31. Applications and information about the Griswold Early Education Program (formerly Griswold Preschool) can be found [here](#).

## GRISWOLD EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAM

*Preschool provides the building blocks for learning!*

### 2023 Community Developmental Screenings

All families in Griswold and Jewett City with children who were born in 2019 and 2020 are invited to schedule an individual appointment for a free developmental screening at Griswold Elementary School.

#### Developmental Screening Dates: February 10 & March 31, 2023

Griswold Early Education Program and area community programs will provide information about their program/ services on March 31. Whether or not you have concerns about your child's development, early screenings, interventions, assessments, and programming can help maximize a child's ability to learn and be successful at school and in the community. Screenings are confidential.

Please request a developmental screening appointment by completing this [Google Form](#) (or scan the QR code). Griswold Elementary School secretary Sarah Guillet will be in touch to schedule your appointment.



Once your appointment is scheduled, please complete a **Griswold Early Education Program application** to bring to your designated screening time. The application form can be found on our website via the QR code below.

Feel free to reach out to the Griswold Early Education team at 860.376.7610 x1135 during normal elementary school hours to discuss screenings or ask questions.

Learn more about Griswold Public Schools' Early Education Program and fill out an application at [griswold.k12.ct.us/ges/about/preschool-program](https://griswold.k12.ct.us/ges/about/preschool-program) or by scanning the QR Code at the right:



**GRISWOLD EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAM**  
AT GRISWOLD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
303 Slater Avenue, Griswold, CT 06351  
(860) 376-7610



# ALUMNI NEWS: THE SIMS BROTHERS

By Kayla Hedman '10



Danny Sims #73

Image Source: [Norwich Bulletin](#); [GHS Media Day](#)



Michael Sims #35

Image Source: [Hudl](#); [Curry College website](#)



Stephen Sims #40 (#50 while at GHS)

Image Source: [provided](#); [U. New England website](#)

Since the early days of Griswold High School, we have had standout athletes who have gone on to do amazing things to represent our town, region, and state. Cal Coffey '69 even represented the United States at the 1976 Summer Olympics in rowing and took home a silver medal! Others have played sports in college, played professional sports in the MLB ([Bill Dawley '76](#), [Roger LaFrancois '74](#), [Jayson Drobiak '97](#)), AFL and IFL (QB [Sean Brackett '09](#)), gone on to be successful coaches and athletic trainers, and even had days named in their honor ([Gavin Coombs '04](#) Day is March 22, per former CT Governor Rowland after winning New England and National Championships in the 1- and 2-mile). More recently, we have seen students excel in each of our athletic programs. In 2022, 9 seniors made commitments to play sports in college. The two years prior, 11 students total. So far this year, we have six seniors who committed early to continue their athletic careers in college, and more will do so in the coming weeks. One of those early commitment students is Daniel Sims.

You may remember seeing Danny Sims on the football field, playing Defensive or Offensive Line. You can hardly miss him—Danny stands at 6' 3" and is 300lbs. He has received All-ECC and All-Bulletin teams his Junior and Senior years, and was one of the team captains in the 2022 season. Although his senior season ended early due to a knee injury, he impressed college recruiters both on and off the field to be scouted for a slot on a team next year.

Not only is Danny an all-area athlete, but he is also a motivated academic and student leader. Danny likes to "lead by example," by putting his best effort forward in everything he does. He has also participated in Outdoor Track, leading the throwing team, and tried both Basketball and Wrestling. In his four years at Griswold, he took four Advanced Placement courses, and was one of a handful of seniors to have their Capstone Senior Showcase filmed. This year, Danny enrolled in the new Esports Management course in the Nexus Lab, and determined that sports management may be something he'd like to pursue in the future. He plans to study Business Administration and Management in college. Ultimately, Danny chose to sign with Curry College in Milton, MA, to follow in the footsteps of his older brother, Michael.

Michael Sims graduated from Griswold High School in 2020. The middle of three athletic boys, he was well positioned to follow in his eldest brother's footsteps to explore NCAA athletics, while forging his own path and being a role model to Danny. Despite COVID-19 interrupting his senior year of high school, Michael was able to tour many colleges to decide where he wanted to study and play football. Forward-thinking, he determined he'd rather attend a smaller school where he could build relationships with professors, coaches and teammates, and have a bigger impact. After his third visit to Curry College, he decided it was the place for him. Less than a two hour drive from the family's home in Sprague, attending Curry would allow him to visit home and his parents to attend his games. Picking a smaller school has paid off. His first year, he was able to focus on academics, as the football season was suspended due to the pandemic. When he came back for his second academic year, Michael was named Defensive Rookie of the Year in his freshmen year on the field. This year, he made the 2nd Team All-Conference (Commonwealth Coast Conference), was named the Team Defensive Player of the Year, and is proud to be a member of a tight-knit team. For more about the Curry College DIII Football team, follow [@currycollegefootball on Instagram](#), which Michael manages.

His success so far at Curry doesn't come as a surprise to those who knew him at GHS. While at GHS, Michael received All-ECC Football recognitions three times (2017, 2018, and 2019), was a team captain his senior year, and was proud of his "Leather Helmet" Team Award for attending every practice and showing his work ethic by leadership. Coach Phil Ancil noted that this award shows that Michael's attitude towards football is strictly business, and that he was one of the finest players Griswold ever had. Michael also participated in Basketball (Varsity starter junior and senior years), and Coach Ancil recruited him to be on the Outdoor Track Team, where he was a thrower. Michael was consistently on the Honor Roll, and a member of the National Honor Society. Instructors in the high school's business department had a huge impact on him, and led him to study Business Administration, with minors in Marketing and Managing Information Systems, in college.

In our phone interview, Michael referenced the impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on his senior year of high school in various ways. Fortunately, his senior football season was unscathed. However, his winter and spring sports were not. He noted the 2019-2020 boys basketball team was a top-10 seed, but unfortunately, the state playoff tournament was canceled. For four years, he and his classmates had looked forward to all the senior activities that led up to graduation, but was disappointed that they were all modified or canceled while school was remote. For the oldest brother, Stephen, COVID-19 has impacted most of his college experience.

Stephen Sims graduated from GHS in 2019, and went on to study Applied Mathematics and play football (fullback) at University of New England (UNE). The football season was canceled his sophomore year, and for a while college life post-pandemic felt very uncertain. The UNE team spent a whole season in practice without games, and classes were half in person and half online. Things finally felt back to normal his senior year of school.

Funny enough, Stephen shared with me that UNE is in the same Conference as Curry College, so the brothers have played each other on multiple occasions. "The coaches acknowledge it and the whole team gets excited the week-of, because no one else has a brother playing in the conference," said Stephen during a phone call. "We play the game to win, but at the end of the day we're still family. Who would have thought when we were kids playing Griswold Youth Football that we would end up playing against each other in college?"

The Sims brothers all played Griswold Youth Football from a young age. Stephen noted he played his first ever football game and his last high school football game on the same field at Griswold High School, despite being from Sprague.

Being the oldest brother, Stephen led the way for the brothers to attend Griswold High School. However, I was surprised to learn that he didn't attend Griswold all four years. "I attended NFA my freshman year because Sprague students were not able to choose to attend Griswold yet. Once I was able to my sophomore year, I transferred. I wanted to attend Griswold High School because I would be a name, not a number, and I already had a lot of friends there from Youth Sports," he said.

While at GHS, Stephen was inducted into the National Honor Society, was part of Stage Crew for the spring musical his senior year, and took some elective courses in woodworking and Computer Aided Drafting and Design. In addition to Football, Stephen participated in Wrestling and Outdoor Track. He was All-ECC for both Football and Wrestling, and a CIAC Scholar-Athlete. He takes a lot of pride in Wrestling in the State finals, even though he didn't win. In his time as a Wrestler, he got close to Coach Dana Cooke, who would also be his AP Calculus teacher senior year. When he toured University of New England, and they presented an Applied Mathematics major and the opportunity to play football, he jumped at the chance. He's happy to still be a name, not a number (except when he puts on the #40 UNE jersey), and has great connections with the faculty in the UNE math department.

Stephen has maintained a 3.5 GPA or higher to be part of the Commonwealth Coast Conference Academic Team all four years. Now in his final semester of senior year at UNE, Stephen has a Finance and Data Analyst internship and is applying for jobs post-graduation. His dream job would be in sports analytics.

Each brother has left their own mark on Griswold High School, most notably the hard work they have put in on the field and in the classroom. Michael and Danny were happy to follow Stephen and their youth football friends to Griswold High School. In Danny's capstone senior showcase earlier this month, he noted that "Griswold does a good job of accepting everyone and providing opportunities."

***"I played my first ever football game with Griswold Youth Football and my last high school football game on the same field."***

—Stephen Sims



Above: The brothers' Griswold Youth Football pictures from 2011, and together recently after a Curry vs. University of New England game (L-R: Danny, Michael, Stephen). Image Source: Twitter

# ALUMNI NEWS: UPDATES FROM THE CLASS OF 2010

## WELCOME BACK TO THE GHS FOOD LAB

On February 6, Briana (Davis) Neeley '10, will be joining the Griswold High School staff as our new Family & Consumer Sciences teacher! She graduated top of her culinary class at Johnson and Wales and credits Jayne Maynard as her inspiration for pursuing Baking and Pastry Arts and Food Service Management. Since high school, Briana has held positions as a pastry cook within Foxwoods, Saybrook Point Inn, Weekapaug Inn, and The Engine Room in Mystic. She and her husband Matt have two daughters and live in Lisbon.



.....

## REWRITING ROMANCE DOCUMENTARY

Also from the GHS class of 2010, Evie Vournazos is working on a new project. You may remember Evie from when she graced the GHS stage in the spring productions of *The Wizard of Oz* (2009, Dorothy) and *Sound of Music* (2010, Maria). Not only does Evie still sing today (find her music online under "Evie Joy") and perform on stages all over the world, but she also is a gifted storyteller and songwriter.

For the past three years, Evie has been filming interviews with couples around the United States and Canada on their unique and real love stories. These interviews, combined with those from relationship scientists, neuroscientists, sociologists and more, are helping Evie and her audience find different definitions of love—beyond fairytale and rom-com influences—to better navigate romance. Evie has always been fascinated with love, which has been a large influence in her songwriting.



In January, Evie set out again to capture more stories; this time, with 25 couples across Europe. This self-funded project called "Rewriting Romance" will include love songs, written and performed by Evie herself, that align with the theme of each episode.



If you want to learn more about Evie's project, visit [RewriteRomance.com](http://RewriteRomance.com). You can also show your support of this Griswold grad by contributing to [Rewriting Romance on Kickstarter](http://RewritingRomance.com).

## FROM THE ARCHIVES

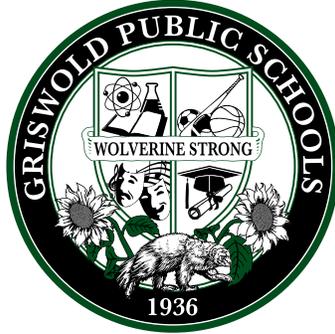
Members of the class of 2010 take a break after decorating elements of the 2009 Homecoming Float and Pep Rally. The theme that year was Decades, and the seniors chose the 1980s.



Griswold High School recently sent out all the yearbooks we have in possession from 1937 (the year the original GHS building at 211 Slater Avenue, now serving as the Middle School, opened) through 2016 to be scanned and digitized. [Check them out on Classmates.com!](http://Classmates.com)

Above, left to right: Lakota Whitcomb, Briana Davis, Heather Schramm, Jennifer Trantalis, Alyssa Pezzello, Evie Vournazos and Kayla Hedman. Right: Briana Davis and Kayla Hedman cut out their Swatch.





## GRISWOLD FORWARD

### OUR MISSION

Griswold Public Schools educates for excellence by ensuring our students are connected, by nurturing individual student talents, and by fostering a future-focused mindset.

### OUR VISION

Graduates of Griswold Public Schools journey into the future as engaged citizens, effective communicators, critical thinkers, and resilient problem solvers.

### DISTRICT GOALS

#### **District Goal #1:** Social and Emotional Learning

Griswold Public Schools commits to the advancement of social and emotional competencies in inclusive and equitable learning environments so that all of our students can grow and thrive.

#### **District Goal #2:** Blended and Personalized Learning

Griswold Public Schools will focus on promoting the implementation and expansion of Blended and Personalized Learning in all PreK-12 learning environments.

#### **District Goal #3:** Research-Based Instruction

Griswold Public Schools will explore and implement research-based instruction to improve outcomes for all Griswold students.