

# JEAN GARVIN TIMES

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## One-on-One Technology Initiative @ Jean Garvin

Jean Garvin has been gradually establishing a 21<sup>st</sup> Century school by improving the use of technology by both staff and students. Some of this year's initiatives include utilizing Google Applications and creating a Cyber history classroom. The program has now leaped into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century with the purchase of one-on-one technology for students and staff. Flexible and convenient access to technology will expand the learning experience at Jean Garvin by blurring the lines between the classroom and the outside world.

After exploring the various technologies available (iPads, laptops, net books, etc.), Program Director Lisa Bilowith decided that iPads were the best fit for the program. "iPads are small, easily portable, have a huge buy-in factor for our population and allow for access to thousands of educational applications for curriculum development," she explained. iPads also have easy-to-use digital media tools which provide forms of expression outside the traditional model, allowing students to be creative, collaborative and current.

This initiative will allow for enhanced progress monitoring through web-based assessment tools which can be easily administered, scored and compared pre and post. It also increases opportunities for increased collaboration across classrooms, within Garvin and beyond.

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The new technology at Garvin includes student and staff iPads, a syncing and charging cart and a Macbook computer.

The potential for integrating iPads and the nearly 140,000 associated apps into the classroom is vast. Applications allow students to digitally dissect frogs, travel the world, shoot and edit videos, listen to books and practice social scripting. Garvin staff is participating in extensive professional development before students are granted access to the iPads and are enthusiastic to begin integrating the technology into our curriculum.

We want to thank our Consortium of Special Education Directors for supporting our program in this expansion. The group has been encouraging the growth of technology and accessibility at the Jean Garvin School and seized this opportunity to promote 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning by approving the funds to purchase new equipment.

## Volunteer Spotlight: Helen Pile

Originally published in the HowardCenter newsletter, Winter 2011, which can be found at [www.howardcenter.org](http://www.howardcenter.org)

Originally from Scotland, Helen Pile came to the United States a little over a year ago when her husband received a job offer at Champlain College. While in Scotland, Helen worked as a social worker, helping young adults with mental health and developmental disabilities, including students with autism. Once in the United States, she knew that she wanted to volunteer while waiting to receive her green card. She was attracted to HowardCenter's Jean Garvin School because of the school's unique approach to supporting teenagers. She was also interested in working with a younger age group. Previously, the clients she worked with were all over 21.

From February to June, Helen volunteered three days a week at Jean Garvin. The match was a perfect fit. She says, "I believe in the worth and potential of every individual, and staff at the Jean Garvin School do, too.



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Helen helped students with academic work including reading, math, and health class and was available to talk with students when they wanted to blow off some steam or just to chat. Helen says that she received invaluable support from the teachers. "I was supported by Garvin staff to educate myself further in strategies for supporting teenagers who are dealing with crisis." Helen also has high praise for the students that she worked with: "They were intelligent, kind and funny. They taught me a lot about myself...I am very grateful for that."

This year, Helen began working at Champlain Valley Union High School as a para-educator. However, she hopes to volunteer again for HowardCenter. "I encourage everyone who wants to volunteer for HowardCenter to do so. You won't regret it, and you'll meet some amazing people," says Helen.

## Teacher's Notes

- Students will be doing a budgeting unit that helps develop practical budgeting and money management skills. The unit will involve planning a budget, practice with budgets, fixed and variable expenses and keeping a cash record.
- We have an early release day on January 25th. Students will be dismissed at 11:30 a.m.
- Jean Garvin will be having an Open House on January 26th from 5-7 p.m.
- The end of the second quarter is fast approaching. Grades close on January 27th!
- Jean Garvin has a new website! It will be updated regularly with links to our bimonthly newsletter, important

information, updates and recent photos You can access the website at [www.howardcenter.org/Jean-Garvin-School](http://www.howardcenter.org/Jean-Garvin-School)

- Harvest Feast was a huge success. Students and seniors made centerpieces, watched movies and shared a Thanksgiving Feast prepared by Garvin staff and students.



## Interview with Carrie Lutz

President of Jean Garvin's Consortium of Special Education Directors

Carrie Lutz, the Director of Special Education at Colchester High School, has been involved with Garvin for 11 years. As her school district was already being served by Garvin when she accepted her position, she initially got involved with the program by default. However, she has since become a deeply invested advocate for the program, serving as the President of the Consortium of Special Education Directors. The following is the transcript of a brief interview with Carrie:

### **Has your involvement with this program been a positive experience?**

Absolutely. The staff at Garvin really runs with initiatives—like social cognition and technology—even if they aren't entirely comfortable with it and it always feels like they are interested in learning and improving the program. I also think that the Consortium model is great. It allows various schools to bring their educational experiences and perspectives to the table and makes sure they have an investment in the program. Since Colchester kids attend Garvin year after year, I feel that I have a long term investment in the program so I care about its future, rather than just the future of the students I have attending the school at any particular time.

### **Are you excited about the one-on-one technology initiative at Garvin?**

Very excited. The Consortium pushed for a technology initiative at Garvin and I think this is an example of the benefits of the Consortium model. The members of the Consortium know about the technology that kids have access to in general education and know that, from an equity standpoint, students in special education or alternative programs sometimes get very different access. This allows us to push for that equity, although some would argue that kids at Garvin have access to things that kids in general education don't!

### **Now that the technology initiative is underway, what do you see as the next goal for improving the program?**

Strong implementation of the technology. Effectively implementing this one-to-one system will take time and we have to make a commitment to making it go smoothly.

### **What is your experience with students returning to your district from Garvin?**

I have a mix of experiences. Students that desire to come back to our school and do the work are really very successful. Some of our students have gone on to pursue post secondary education; one student is currently enrolled in a culinary program. I say a mix of experiences because we have also had kids who don't want to come back, which is fine, we just need to figure out how to meet their needs so that they can continue progressing and not digress to avoid coming back.