



# *Currents*

Curriculum Edition

The Bi-monthly Newsletter of the Genesee Community Charter School  
an EL Education School

September 2020

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## *Learning With Intention and Purpose*

This is an important school year for many reasons. We know that preliminary research indicates that students may have lost almost a year's worth of academic gains due to the pandemic and school's shift to virtual learning. However, students have also lost opportunities to develop relationships and practice social skills during a confusing and emotional time when our country is divided in many ways.

The GCCS staff wants to utilize this fall's hybrid model to prioritize our instruction for students while developing trusting relationships and exploring our identity, place, and sense of belonging in our school and community. Please use this issue of *Currents* to help you learn a bit more about our academic and social emotional curriculum this year.

## *A Word About S.E.L....*

In this moment, in our city, there exists a multitude of truths and experiences that this pandemic and the Movement for Black Lives has spotlighted.

In this moment, in our city, there is grief, there is gratitude, there is joy, there is frustration, there is fear, there is uncertainty, there is community. In this moment, in our city, it is difficult to trust the ground we're standing on.

Our school community is not exempt from these feelings, these experiences, these truths.

The start of this school year carries all of this emotional and cognitive weight too.

We view this time as an opportunity to name what it is we're bringing with us to school and to build the space to hold it.

SEL (Social Emotional Learning) is often viewed as a destination, rather than a vehicle to create the society we want for our families, for our communities, for our world. The power of SEL provides a real opportunity for people to deeply reflect their own identity, to humanize learning, to create opportunities to heal.

SEL at its core fosters our relationships, with ourselves and our community. To do this we need to move away from the individualistic perspective of who we are and how we meet our needs to a more collective perspective. SEL creates space to embrace our individual responsibility to ensure collective well-being so we can all move forward and fulfill our greatest potential.

This year at GCCS, our school-wide community will be exploring the intersections of identity, equity, and restorative justice through expedition and crew. This year, we will utilize curricula, resources, and structures such as Second Step, *This Book is Anti-Racist* by Tiffany Jewell, Mindful Schools, Teaching Tolerance, and the Abolitionist Teaching Network to support our community. This is the work of the village, requiring each of us to recognize our position and role in cultivating a just, joyful, and empowered community. This work is a process and missteps and mistakes are inevitable. In order to do the work started this past spring, we need your voice to amplify our community conversations regarding equity.

We're grateful for the opportunity to commit to this work alongside you.

## GCCS Family Association

*The purpose of the Family Association (FA) is to promote community and connections among the GCCS families and to provide support and assistance to the school and school leader. All parents and guardians of children currently enrolled in GCCS are members of the FA. The FA Officers work closely with the school to meet these goals and recruit additional parents/guardians to assist in important roles like room parents, event planning, and fundraising.*

## Family Association Directory

### Board of Trustees Representatives

Tasha Stevens (973-568-8757, [tashaystevens@gmail.com](mailto:tashaystevens@gmail.com))

Jessica Wanner (970-379-6045, [jessiewinterhalt@hotmail.com](mailto:jessiewinterhalt@hotmail.com))

Traci Terrance (585-766-9863, [traci.terrance@gmail.com](mailto:traci.terrance@gmail.com))

### Family Association Officers

**Co-Chairs:** Laura Ballou (330-3489, [laurajballou@gmail.com](mailto:laurajballou@gmail.com));

Jennifer West (461-9179, [jenniferwestphd@gmail.com](mailto:jenniferwestphd@gmail.com))

**Secretary:** Kyrra Branch (347-645-9403, [pecan282@gmail.com](mailto:pecan282@gmail.com))

**Treasurer:** Jen Gaffey-Link (760-4234, [jgaflink@gmail.com](mailto:jgaflink@gmail.com))

**The Family Association is seeking Classroom Co-Room Parents and volunteers to coordinate virtual gatherings. Please use the link below to tell the FA how you can help!**

<https://forms.gle/ypafLD2YKy9Y7MQm6>

*Come learn about the 2020-21  
instructional program*

*At Our Annual*

**Curriculum Night**

**Tuesday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>**



***This will be a live virtual event.***

*Stay tuned for information from school and your classroom teachers with more details.*

## Upcoming Dates To Remember



- Sept 2: GCCS Orientation Day
- Sept. 3: GCCS Orientation Day
- Sept. 4: Cohort B Trial Day (no bus transportation) – Cohort A and virtual learners will have assignments to do at home.
- Sept. 7: Labor Day (No School)
- Sept. 8: Cohort A Trial Day (no bus transportation) – Cohort B and virtual learners will have assignments to do at home.
- Sept. 9: Virtual Opening Ceremony at 11:00 a.m.
- Sept. 9: GCCS Board of Trustees Meeting at 5:30 p.m.
- Sept. 10: First Full Day for Cohort B (in person)  
First Full Day for Cohort A and virtual learners (remotely)  
First day for bus transportation
- Sept. 14: First Full Day for Cohort A (in person)  
First Full Day for Cohort B (remotely)  
Bus transportation continues
- Sept. 15: New Family Virtual Welcome 6:30 – 7:30 p.m.
- Sept. 17: Picture Day for Cohort B (including Cohort B virtual learners)
- Sept. 17: Diversity Committee Meeting (virtual)
- Sept. 21: Picture Day for Cohort A (including Cohort A virtual learners)
- Sept. 22: Virtual Curriculum Night
- Oct. 8: Virtual Family Association Fall Meeting, 7:00 – 8:00 p.m.
- Oct. 9: Professional Development Day  
No School for Students
- Oct. 12: Columbus Day, School is Closed
- Oct. 14: GCCS Board of Trustees Meeting at 5:30 p.m.

## WHERE ARE WE IN HISTORY?

From the birth of the Erie Canal to the Civil War, we explore Rochester as it explodes from a small village to a booming city. The fertile land and the development of mills along the river allowed wheat to be grown locally and transformed into flour. By taming the land and the river, the settlers produced a surplus of flour. Students will learn the role of the Erie Canal in carrying the flour out of the area – resulting in a population and production boom that transformed Rochester from a small frontier town to “The Young Lion of the West.”

At the same time, our community and nation struggled to define “freedom.” Rochester’s citizens played a significant role in fighting slavery and advocating for women’s rights. Fourth and fifth graders will use our museum’s and community’s resources to develop an understanding of this period in history and the remarkable people who endured – and overcame – forces of oppression.

## Kindergarten and First Grade – ...And So Much More!



Students in Kindergarten and First Grade will be learning about early Rochester’s community...and so much more! They will explore their personal identity and how they fit into the community of their class and our school. They will learn what a community is and how people in a community can care for each other.

They will learn about who was in early Rochester’s community by looking at directories from the early years of Rochester. As we learn about each other and the people who lived here long ago, we will notice how sometimes we don’t get enough information about people to help us understand who they are and where they come from. Research, art, and writing will help us add important details to what we know about ourselves and others. Students will create their own directory that lists the people in their classroom community...and so much more!

## Second Grade – Constructing the Artificial River



How does a community face the problems that are placed in front of it? How do they work together to find the solutions that allow the whole community to move forward? Rochesterville was a comfortably settled community, but with a limited market for their goods. Farmers had cleared land and discovered they could grow more wheat than they needed for themselves and those around them... but what to do with the additional wheat? The chain of events started by this question leads to Rochester becoming a stop along an artificial river. It wasn’t easy for the citizens of Rochesterville; there were problems that kept slowing them down or stopping plans altogether. We will investigate how these early settlers problem-solved, and see how we can apply their strategies to solve challenges we are facing today.

## Third Grade – The Amazing, Impossible Canal

What is the story of the Erie Canal? What makes the canal different from the River which flows through the heart of Rochester? How did creativity and innovation of simple machines turn the impossible, possible? How did this new, manmade “Clinton’s Ditch” make what were once ordinary settlements into an extraordinary city? We will quickly learn that it was not Clinton after all who “LOCKed” in this wonderful idea; perhaps it came from another person entirely, a person whose story has been left out of history. What other stories and perspectives are we missing? The class will explore this theme while half of their classmates are missing themselves, learning from home. We will investigate how the canal carried goods, and with that, change that led to a BOOM.



## Fourth Grade – \_\_\_\_\_ for Change

What is the Black Lives Matter movement? How do people use their gifts to challenge oppression? Fourth graders will examine the Black Lives Matter movement as a lens for understanding our country's and city's history to consider how we got to this moment today. Students will study slavery and the abolitionist movement locally and nationally, ultimately discovering that the abolition of slavery and the Civil Rights movement did not solve racial injustice. In ELA, students will be engaged in a parallel study on the women's suffrage movement and will make concrete connections to their own lives understanding how their identity and unique gifts can enact change.



## Fifth Grade – Who Are We?

Who are we? Who am I? How can I use my gifts to make a better we? Students will explore these questions through the lens of history and the intellectual rigor of considering multiple perspectives. We'll connect current day events to America's history of grappling with slavery, equal rights and discrimination. We'll go all the way back to early Rochesterville and follow Rochester through time to learn about the myriad of people and movements that stood up against injustice and used their gifts and talents for change. Students will learn about themselves through art, music and dance as they explore their own gifts that will empower them to make change that matters to them.

## Sixth Grade – What I Stand For!

The Spring and Summer of 2020 saw Americans take to the streets to protest in record numbers. The pandemic helped lay bare the inequities in all of our systems and many people came to realize and understand that the inequity is deeply-rooted and much of it by design. This year, sixth graders will take a look at protest to understand what it takes for someone to say "Enough!" and stand up for themselves and for others. In the fall we will begin with the self, coming to terms with who we are as individuals by examining our identities. Students will also look at the concept of race - what it is and what it is not - and how one element of our identity has been used to systematically oppress others. Finally, we will study the amazing adolescent brain and how this is the time our sense of fairness, justice, and empathy becomes an important part of who we are. By the end of the expedition, students will be able to confidently express who they are, what matters to them, and what they stand for. This will pave the way for the important work we have in store for the rest of our year.

### Supporting Our Students...

All schools consider ways to support students in order to accelerate their academic engagement and social skills. Schools call this Response to Intervention (RtI) where staff uses resources to "intervene" and support academic growth and emotion regulation.

During the past few years, GCCS's Intervention Team has grown tremendously. Here are some of the teachers that will be supporting students in addition to your child(ren)'s teachers:

- **SEL Team:** Lauren Grimm (Social Worker), Kyle Skovira (Restorative Practice Coach)
- **Academic Team:** Rachel Kruze (Literacy Specialist and Special Education Coordinator), Jean Hurst (Early Literacy Specialist), Stacey Cicero (Transition Coach – Literacy and Emotion Regulation Specialist), Erika Dooley (Math Intervention Specialist, English as a New Language Teacher)

We also want to welcome back, Wendy Ryder and Ashley Agan as our on-site Special Education Teachers working with RCSD students with Individualized Education Plans! They also participate on the Intervention Team.