



Genesee Community Charter Schools

www.GCCSchool.org

August 5, 2022

Dear Genesee Community Charter School Families and Friends,

Welcome to our 2022-2023 school year! I hope you all have had a wonderful summer! As we embark on a new school year for our current families and a brand-new school and year for our new families, this is a good time to reflect on our growth and the changes that are coming for our organization's community.

Growth and change are both exciting and anxiety-provoking for anyone. I remember as a new mom, I was so excited to see my twins hit milestones as they pulled themselves up to standing or began to crawl across the floor for their favorite toy. Yet, as soon as it was happening and I pulled my camera out to capture the moment, my heart would skip a beat, because then it meant they would take more risks and something could go wrong. I feared my babies could get hurt!

As an organization, we are experiencing the excitement and the anxiety of growth and change. We are at the cusp of a new school with more families, new staff, and more smiling students this fall. Yet the fear is, will our organization lose its identity? Will it be the same as it always has? Will we lose our reputation as a "good school"? The thing is, my children are about to be 10 years old. They haven't lost their identity, they have strengthened it. They definitely aren't physically the same as they once were, but their personalities have largely stayed the same. The core of who they are has always been there, but now they have uncovered their true potential for themselves. However, they needed their family, friends, and community to surround them with love, support, and time for reflection for them to continue on their journey to be who they are today and who they will be in the future.

As an organization, we are really excited to be on this journey of growth and change with you. Things will be different. We are getting bigger physically in size, but our "personality" or philosophy will largely be the same. However, with this growth and an invitation of new voices and perspectives, our identities will continue to be shaped and we will unlock our true potential. In the same breath, it is absolutely OK to be fearful of this change too. However, if we have the belief that we are on this same journey together, our future will be bright and full of possibilities.

This year as the School Leader and Executive Director, I will lead the charge to continue to sustain the "flow" of GCCS at the Rochester Museum & Science Center (or "River Campus"), while supporting the "growth" of GCCS – Flour City Campus (or "Flour City Campus"). We will be two different schools, in two different locations, with one mission. Kemouy Bhalai will lead the way as Assistant School Leader (Acting School Director) at the River Campus and Christine Farrell will be the School Director for the Flour City Campus. Both of these individuals spent the 2021-22 school year as our Assistant School Leaders and I have full faith in their day-to-day decision-making and visions for the future of our schools. We definitely made the right choice when we welcomed them aboard a year ago!

I want to clarify the potential confusion of titles for our school leadership team. Since each school's charter is authorized by a different state entity, we are fully implementing our growth plan for the Flour City Campus and in the process of transitioning to this same model and plan for the River Campus. This is due to the timing of our charter renewal application and process for the River Campus. Therefore, I will officially hold two titles as School Leader and Executive Director. Although Kemouy's title is "Assistant School Leader" on paper, she will function as the Acting School Director and will be the point of contact for our RMSC campus. You should expect communication to come directly from Kemouy. As we finalize our renewal process, Kemouy's title will officially shift to "School Director". We know this may be confusing and we will provide further clarity, if needed. Both of the building leaders and I will have frequent check-ins as I oversee both schools similar to a Superintendent or a District Leader role.

I want to reiterate that even with our growing organization and separate school campuses, our mission to provide a community-based program focused on local history that embeds arts-integrated and culturally responsive final products will remain the same. I'm looking forward to an innovative year together filled with our expanding school community.

Wishing you the best for a successful start to the year!

With heartfelt gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shannon Hillman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and "H".

Shannon Hillman
School Leader and Executive Director
Genesee Community Charter Schools