A Note from the Leadership Crew

Welcome to our first issue of Currents for the 2022-2023 school year.

Approximately every two months, you will receive a digital and hard copy of this school newsletter. In each issue, you will find information that will answer many questions you may have wondered and provide updates on different school happenings. Please give it a good read and keep it as reference for event dates, times, and contact information.

The front page will always have a small “table of contents” to let you know where to find this information.

Please reach out if you have any questions. We are excited for our 22nd year and our collaboration with you!

- Shannon Hillman, Acting Executive Director
- Kemouy Bhalai, Acting School Director
- Christine Farrell, School Director - Flour City
- Lisa O’Malley, Director of Curriculum & Instruction
- Maureen Milke, Director of Operations

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Connect With Us:
- GCCS Website
- GCCS Facebook
- GCCS Twitter
Director’s Message

Dear Families,

I would like to introduce myself as I am assuming the role of Acting School Director of Genesee Community Charter School - RMSC campus. For those of you who were with us last year, I may be a familiar face. And for others, I am still brand new.

I have spent the last year learning about GCCS - its mission, school culture, curriculum and the people. I am committed to upholding the traditions that continue to serve the school, while finding new opportunities for innovation.

Prior to GCCS, I have spent over a decade in the classroom and serving in different school leadership roles. My passions are instruction, equity and developing anti-racist practices in school. I am fortunate to be at a school who is centering these ideals along with socio-emotional learning, restorative practices and arts integration.

I am excited for the start of school and working with all the stakeholders to ensure a successful and joyous year.

For those of you who want to learn more about me and also about the happenings at the school, please join me in the monthly coffee chats beginning in September. I look forward to collaborating and being thought partners as we move forward.

Kind Regards,

Ms. Kemouy Bhalai
kbhalai@gccschool.org
(585) 697.1960

School Goals - What is OUR FOCUS?!

Goal #1- Empowering Student Ownership in Learning
- Students engage in reflection, self-assessment, goal setting and progress monitoring
- Student-Led Conferences
- Assessment Reflections
- Academic Intervention

Goal #2 - Building a Truly Inclusive Community
- Restorative Justice/Approach to address discipline and repair harm
- Restorative Practice and Racial Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Staff Trainings
- Affinity Groups for students and families
- Surveys and Listening Circles

Goal #3 - Reigniting the Importance of Integration
- Continued focus on Arts Integration
- Incorporation of diversity and equity connections into each expedition

OUR MISSION
The Genesee Community Charter School provides a rich educational experience that values intellectual rigor, respect for diversity, and community responsibility. Our local history-based and globally-connected program immerses our diverse population of children in investigation and discovery, extensively using the cultural and natural resources of our community. We nurture children's natural abilities to be reflective questioners, articulate communicators, critical thinkers, and skilled problem solvers, enabling them to reach exemplary standards.
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 Director. All caregivers 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 caregivers to assist in important roles like room helpers, event planning, and fundraising.

Family Association Directory

GCCS Board of Trustees Representatives

❖ GCCS Family Representatives
  ➢ Jessica Wanner (970-379-6045, jessiewinterhalt@hotmail.com)
  ➢ Charlie Johnson (sarchar.johnson@gmail.com)
  ➢ Colin Orr (colindorr@gmail.com)

❖ Alumni Family Representatives
  ➢ Tasha Stevens (tashaystevens@gmail.com)
  ➢ Michele Hannagan (michele.hannagan@gmail.com)

Family Association Officers

❖ Co-Chairs: Rose Fletcher (rose.fletcher.ny@gmail.com);
❖ Christina Foster (CNBFoster@gmail.com)
❖ Secretary: Soumyaroop Bhattacharya (Sbattacharya78@gmail.com)
❖ Treasurer: Stephanie Gallant (stephanie.a.gallant@gmail.com)

We will be reaching out soon for caregivers who want to serve as classroom volunteers.

GCCS Logogear: https://gccs-fa.square.site

To Contact the GCCS Family Association,
Email: GCCS_FA@GCCSchool.org

MARK THE DATES...

August 25:    New Family Orientation (6:00 - 7:30pm)
August 29:    Open House (6:00 - 8:00pm)
August 31:   School Begins!! (12:45 dismissal) No Buses
Sept 1-2:    Dismissal at 12:45pm (No Buses)
Sept 1:      Chaperone and Volunteer Orientation (6:30 - 8:00pm)
Sept 5:      NO SCHOOL - Labor Day
Sept 7:      Chaperone and Volunteer Orientation (1:00 - 2:30pm AND 6:30 - 8:00pm)
Sept 13:     FA Welcome Reception for New Caregivers (5:00 - 7:00pm)
Sept 15:     Chaperone and Volunteer Orientation (9:00 - 10:30am)
Sept 19-22:  6th Grade Retreat
Sept 23:     FA Movie Night (7:00 - 9:00pm)
Oct 6:       Curriculum Night (6:00 - 9:00pm)
Oct 7:       Professional Development Day No Students
Oct 10:      NO SCHOOL - Indigenous People Day
Oct 22:      FA Cleaning Day
Nov 11:      NO SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS - Veteran’s Day (staff reports)
Nov 21-25:   NO SCHOOL - Thanksgiving Recess
Nov 28 -:    Exhibition Nights (end of 1st trimester)
Dec 2:       More details to come...

SCHOOL CALENDAR EVENTS

August 2022
Volume 22, Issue 1
Hello there! How are you? It’s so good to see you.
Hello there! How are you? It’s so good to see you!
We’ll sing and be happy that we’re all here together again! 🎶

Staffing Updates

Welcome back students and families; and we are extending an extra special welcome to our new families and students. We are so excited to begin the 2022-2023 school year.

We want to make you all aware of some staffing changes and shifts to our teams. Please give everyone a warm GCCS Welcome!!

Leadership Shifts
Ms. Kemouy Bhalai who served as the Assistant School Leader is now the Acting School Director. Mrs. Hillman is transitioning to Acting Executive Director of both schools.

Mrs. Rahimah Wynn who served as the Director of Family and Community Engagement will not be returning this year. Also, Kyle Skovira and Erika Barone will not be returning. We are sad to see them leave, but wish them the best in the next phase of their journey. We will keep you posted on new hires for those positions and for the 2nd grade team.

Grade Teams
We have some new staff additions to our grade teams and many of our returning staff:

Kindergarten Team:
Mrs. Allison Carlson
Ms. Liliana Villanueva
Ms. Ashlee Henderson

1st Grade Team:
Ms. Maggie Deutschbein
Mrs. Keri Gonzalez
Mrs. Sarah David

2nd Grade Team:
Mr. William Schumacher
Ms. Roseanne DiMaria

3rd Grade Team:
Ms. Ebony Edwards
Mrs. Jenna Morales
Mrs. Latoya Bewley

4th Grade Team:
Mrs. Laura Kraftschik
Mr. Dan Walpole
Ms. Kayla Jaruzel

5th Grade Team:
Mr. Jeremiah Ditch
Mrs. Becki Mason
Ms. Ma’Keba Smithers

6th Grade Team:
Mr. Chris Dolgos
Mrs. Alexis Stubbe
Mrs. Melissa Jones

For 6th Grade, Mr. Dolgos will be on a sabbatical during the first trimester. In his absence, Ms. Alexa Markel will serve as Mr. Dolgos’ substitute.

Arts Team:
Mrs. Sarah Johnson
Mrs. Vanessa Rizzari (formerly Petrella)

We are excited to have our new teams and are ready to embark on a joy-filled and productive year!!
New School Times

Due to RCSD switching to a two-tiered system for bell times, there were shifts made to the daily schedule. Our new times are below for Mondays-Thursdays:

**School begins at 7:45am**
**School ends at 2:45pm**

Our Wednesday early release day has switched to Friday. Beginning this school year, **Friday dismissal is at 12:45pm.**

What do these changes mean for our weekly Community Circle? Community Circle will shift to Fridays and begin at 12:10pm. We look forward to seeing families in attendance!!

If you have questions about busing, please contact our Director of Operations, Mrs. Maureen Milke at mmilke@gccschool.org or by phone at 585.697.1960, ext. 460.

Back-to-School Supplies

You should have received a list of back to supplies for your child's grade. If you have not received the list, please contact the school for additional information. The list provided below is for all students.

**Each Student Needs:**
- A complete change of clothing, including pants, shirt, underwear, socks, and sneakers. *Please place these items in a 1- or 2-gallon zip-top bag, labeled with your child's name.*
- 1 pair of headphones labeled with your child's name
- A water bottle with your child's name
- 2 masks in your child's backpack

**All classrooms will accept snack donations for hungry tummies!**
*(Nut-free)*

Large packages of graham crackers, animal crackers, goldfish, or pretzels. Please keep an eye on sugar content and look out for healthy-snack sign-ups sent out by Classroom Caregivers.

Dress Code

Students should dress in a way that reflects and expresses their identity, but also allows them the ability and comfortability to learn and play as our days are filled with movement, exploration, and the natural world. GCCS students should wear shoes that allow them to play freely without risk of injury and therefore sneakers or close-toed shoes are recommended. As a school that embraces and welcomes all families, we will ask students to change if messaging on clothing implies or expresses harm to self or others through racism, discrimination, violence, or the use of illegal substances.

**Religious, Medical, Gender Identity, and Disability Accommodations**

GCCS will reasonably accommodate a student's religious beliefs, medical condition, gender identity, or disability by making exceptions to this policy. Students/families who need such an accommodation should contact the School Director.

Please select a modestly-sized backpack without wheels for your child due to safety and storage challenges. Thank you!
Arrival & Dismissal Procedures for Safety

These are a few reminders of the arrival and dismissal procedures to help promote a smooth and safe transition.

Arrival
- Morning Car Drop Offs need to enter the campus from Oxford Street (the East Ave entrance is for the school bus).
- Children are marked tardy and must be signed in by a caregiver if they enter the classroom after 8:00 a.m. Please come to the GCCS door, ring the buzzer and proceed to the River Room to sign your child(ren) in.
- Breakfast will be served from 7:45 – 8:15 a.m. However, breakfast will be available if a student is tardy.

Dismissal
- Students can only be picked up by whom is written on the pick up authorization list.
- If you are making changes to the dismissal plan, you must provide written notice or notify the office (ex. bus change, early pickup, pick up by someone who is not on the authorization list, etc.).
- We ask that caregivers use the Bear Garden or the backend of the Back 40 to check in with each other after pick up. This helps the teachers and staff identify who is safely with their caregivers and who still needs to be picked up.
- Buses will collect children in front of the school building.
- Families picking up children will enter through the Oxford Street entrance and will pick up child(ren) from identified spots on the Back 40.

Come to GCCS Curriculum Night!

Thursday, October 6th
6:00 - 7:15 pm for Grades K, 1, 5, & 6
7:30 - 8:45 pm for Grades 2, 3, & 4

Hear from teachers about what is in store for your GCCS student(s) and have a chance to get-to-know GCCS families and staff.

Early Dismissal Drill

As part of our annual safety practice and procedures, we will be holding a Community Circle dedicated to safety during October. During this event, we will rehearse an exit drill and dismiss five minutes early (12:40 pm) so that transportation and families can discuss procedures in case the school has to close early due to inclement weather or another emergency reason.

More information will be sent closer to this drill.
Expeditions

For the 2022-2023 school year, classes will focus on the following three time periods:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village to City</th>
<th>City Grows</th>
<th>Today and Tomorrow</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Canal – Civil War</td>
<td>Post Civil War – Pre-space exploration</td>
<td>Space Exploration – Future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1820-1865</td>
<td>1865-1960</td>
<td>1960-Tomorrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did the village</td>
<td>How did industry and inventions</td>
<td>Where and how do plants and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>become a city? What</td>
<td>make a difference in city life?</td>
<td>animals live?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>were the successes and</td>
<td>How did people take responsibility</td>
<td>How do people keep the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>struggles?</td>
<td>for their community?</td>
<td>environment safe for every</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>living thing?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For each trimester, classes will focus on one time period, beginning with Village to City. Each expedition will last approximately 12 weeks and culminate in an Exhibition Night. Each expedition is a time of research, collaboration, knowledge building, inquiry and problem solving.

More information about Expeditions will be provided by the grade team in their weekly newsletter and in our next issue of Currents!!

Math Updates

Our school is piloting a new math curriculum this year, Illustrative Math, which uses an inquiry based approach for students to engage with the content. Illustrative was selected after reviewing several other programs and some teachers piloting units last school year.

We are looking forward to using this program and believe that it will be the right fit for our school and students.

Resources for Home Learning

Some websites that families can use to encourage practice at home are:

- KhanAcademyKids
- IXL
- EpicBooks
- National Geographic Kids
COVID Guidelines

As new variants emerge, we know COVID-19 will continue to be an area of discussion for the upcoming school year. The school will continue to follow the guidelines from Monroe County (the guidelines below are the latest for schools issued 5/31/22).

We continue to encourage caregivers to monitor symptoms of their child(ren) and keep children home if they are not feeling well. We have additional home test kits available, if needed. We encourage families to have masks available for their child(ren).

**Vaccinated Students and Staff**
- Will not have to quarantine after close contact with someone with COVID-19.
- Wear a well-fitting mask around others for 10 days from the date of last close contact with someone with COVID-19 (the date of last close contact is considered day 0). Get tested at least 5 days after the date of last close contact with someone with COVID19. If test is positive or COVID-19 symptoms develop, isolate from other people.

**Unvaccinated Students and Staff**
- Will have to quarantine after close contact with someone with COVID-19.
- Stay home and away from other people for at least 5 days (day 0 through day 5) after the date of contact (exposure) is considered day 0.

As a school, we will continue to take precautions and proactive measures to reduce the spread of germs within our community. We will continue to keep you updated with further guidance.

**Bus Transportation**

You will receive notification regarding routes and times mid to late August. We currently do not have bus schedules and routes available.

As you know, the GCCS calendar differs from that of traditional districts. Due to our differing calendar, there may be days that transportation is not provided by your home district.

**Days that there will be NO BUSING:**
- August 31st - dismissal at 12:45pm
- September 1st - dismissal at 12:45pm
- September 2nd - dismissal at 12:45pm
- September 6th - dismissal at 2:45pm

**Medical Forms**

All health-related forms are due at the school by **Monday, August 15th**. If you have not submitted these forms, please do so as soon as possible. **Remember that children cannot begin school without required immunizations.**

Currently, COVID-19 vaccinations are **not required** to attend school, but we do encourage vaccinations to continue supporting a healthy and safe environment.