

Our Flour City Campus Location!

As we announced a few weeks ago, we leased a portion of Strong Hall at the Colgate-Divinity Complex where Genesee Community Charter School - Flour City Campus will be located.

The campus is located at 1100 South Goodman St. across from Highland Park. This building offers historic value and unique architecture that can enhance lessons grounded in Rochester history. The property also offers plenty of green space for classes to explore and enjoy. We intend to grow into this space for at least 5 years when we will be accommodating students in grades K-6.

We are currently working hard to ensure that the building is ready for students in September! We look forward to giving students and families a tour next month!



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A Note From the Leadership Crew!

Welcome to our first ever issue of *The Bridge*!

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 a reference for event dates, times, and contact information.

In the future, we hope to include photos of our students learning, but since this is our first issue, you will see photos of our Flour City staff learning instead!

Please reach out if you have any questions. We are excited to be collaborating with you during this inaugural year of GCCS - Flour City Campus!

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

Stay Connected!

-  www.GCCSchool.org
-  @GeneseeCharter
-  Genesee Community Charter School
-  697-1960

Genesee Community Charter School - Flour City Campus is a replication school modeled after Genesee Community Charter School at the Rochester Museum and Science Center, which opened its doors to the students of Rochester 22 years ago. As a replication school, we have adopted the same curriculum, instructional programs, and policies as the flagship school. Both schools will also share the mission stated below:



OUR MISSION

Flour City Campus provides an integrated educational experience that values diversity, community responsibility, and intellectual rigor.

Our place-based curriculum, focused on science and local history, engages students in investigation and discovery using the cultural and natural resources of our community. We teach children to become reflective questioners, articulate communicators, critical thinkers, and skilled problem-solvers.



Almost the entire Flour City Campus staff enjoying lunch at Jine's.

Director's Message



It is with great excitement that I introduce myself as the founding Director of Genesee Community Charter School - Flour City! I am looking forward to working with you all as we collaborate to build a strong and positive school community that is just as strong as the one that has prevailed at the flagship school for over two decades.

I spent the last year as an Assistant School Leader at the flagship school learning about the operations, policies, and instructional programs that make GCCS so special. I feel more than ready to lead this replication school and to help the Flour City Campus continue the traditions of GCCS, but at the same time help us develop our own identity and story.

Before coming to GCCS in August of 2021, I spent 14 years as an elementary school teacher and 2 years as an instructional coach. I've worked in schools in both rural and urban settings, and these experiences led me to value diversity, inclusion, and equity. This is what led me to GCCS because it is clear the organization as a whole is committed to improving their practices in these areas.

I can already tell that the GCCS - Flour City Campus school community is going to be special. The interactions I have had with caregivers and students have been so positive and encouraging. So many families have offered to help get the school ready and been so understanding about the delays we are experiencing. The teachers and teaching assistants have attended the professional development days with great enthusiasm and optimism. Their thoughtfulness and diligence has been truly inspiring! I can't wait for you all to meet them!

I look forward to meeting all of the students and families and having an amazing first year at GCCS - Flour City that is filled with discovery and joy!

Sincerely,

Christine Farrell, School Director

cfarrell@gccschool.org

Genesee Community Charter School 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 either GCCS school 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 (Sbhattacharya78@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



Our first grade crew learned how many arches are in the aqueduct that is now known as the Broad Street Bridge.

Calendar of Events

- Sept 1: Kindergarten Screenings (by appt.)
Chaperone and Volunteer Orientation (6:30 - 8:00pm)**
- Sept 2: Kindergarten Screenings (by appt.)
- Sept 6: Kindergarten Screenings (by appt.)
Flour City Open House*
- Sept 7: **First Day of School for All Students!**
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 23: FA Movie Night (7:00 - 9:00pm)*
- Oct 13: Curriculum Night (6:00 - 7:30pm)
- Oct 10: NO SCHOOL - Indigenous People Day**
- Nov 11: NO SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS - Veteran's Day (staff reports)**
- Nov 21-25: NO SCHOOL - Thanksgiving Recess**
- Nov 29 - : Exhibition Nights (end of 1st trimester)
- Dec 1

*Details are forthcoming
**More info on page 7

Key Design Elements of Our Charter

In 2021 SUNY approved a 5-year charter for Genesee Community Charter School - Flour City Campus. As part of the application process, we submitted a list of key design elements that would serve as the foundation for the school. These 7 key design elements are listed and briefly described below:

EL Education

EL is a multidisciplinary, project-based curriculum that provides systems and structures that focuses on three dimensions of student achievement: student character, high-quality work, and mastery of knowledge and skills. Their main philosophy is “We are Crew, not passengers.” Through EL, students engage in “learning expeditions,” in-depth studies of a topic, theme, or concept. These learning expeditions often center around how to improve students’ communities.

Curriculum Framework

The curriculum framework is the foundation for GCCS – Flour City Campus’s local history and science-based interdisciplinary program. Students at all levels will investigate the natural, social, political, and economic history of the Rochester community. Using the framework, teaching crews collaboratively develop culturally relevant learning expeditions involving intensive research, reading, writing, scientific exploration, and real-world application.

Arts Integration

Teachers at GCCS – Flour City Campus will provide meaningful, integrated lessons that mutually support the objectives of the core curriculum rather than acting as an add-on. Classroom and arts teachers will collaborate to plan and implement a curriculum that allows students to use music, visual arts, and creative movement to experience, understand, and express what they are learning.

Culture and Character Development

GCCS – Flour City Campus will cultivate a strong school culture that equally values character and academic achievement. Using the Responsive Classroom model and Restorative Practices, we aim to help students develop social problem-solving skills. GCCS’s seven character traits will frame students’ interpersonal and work habits thereby providing a common vocabulary for social-emotional learning (“SEL”).

Diverse Student Population

The school will promote, celebrate, and foster a racially, economically, academically, linguistically, and ethnically diverse student population by welcoming students and families of all backgrounds and promoting an equitable community through its systems and structures. GCCS – Flour City Campus will provide an opportunity for children to learn with and from each other regardless of their background.

Relationship with RMSC

GCCS – Flour City Campus will continue to partner with the RMSC. Flour City students will experience exhibits, collections, the planetarium, and the nature center as it relates to the school’s place-based curriculum.

Professional Development

GCCS – Flour City Campus will provide teachers with over 330 hours of professional development each year to address staff-created focus areas. Consistent instructional coaching will also provide teachers with customized professional development based on teachers’ personal professional goals.

Family Participation and Involvement

GCCS – Flour City Campus views student families as partners and an integral part of the school community. Family members will have the opportunity to support learning by chaperoning fieldwork, sharing expertise as guest experts, volunteering in classrooms, and supporting students at home. Families will be involved in the schoolwide decision-making process as members of the board of trustees or by volunteering on school-based committees.

GCCS - Flour City Curricula

The curriculum at Genesee Community Charter School - Flour City mirrors that of the flagship school located at the RMSC. It is unique in the city because of its interdisciplinary project-based approach and focus on local history. Below we provide a brief curriculum overview by subject area. As you will see from the bolded resources, many of our curricula and programs are relevant in multiple subject areas demonstrating how the interdisciplinary approach is accomplished through the curricular resources and instructional practices.

English Language Arts (ELA)

In the primary grades, all students will receive daily lessons from **EL Education's Skills Block**. These lessons are part of a systematic program designed to help students develop phonemic awareness and phonics skills so that they can become proficient at decoding text and spelling words. Basic writing and handwriting skills are also taught during this daily hour-long block.

In addition to building their foundational reading and writing skills, students will also build their background knowledge about the world around them through the **EL Education ELA Modules**. The lessons in the modules are designed to guide students as they engage with stories and information about a topic, and make connections to themselves and their communities. The modules chosen as part of the curriculum align with the **GCCS Curriculum Framework** (see pg 6).

Vocabulary acquisition skills are taught across all subjects.

Social Studies and Science

These two subjects are integrated into the ELA Module content and **Learning Expeditions**. Students take part in 3 Learning Expeditions per school year. Each expedition is carefully planned by grade level teaching crews with guidance from GCCS and EL Education coaches. In addition, **The Arts** crew collaborates with teaching crews to plan for opportunities within the expedition for students to learn content and/or express content through the arts. All expeditions provide project-based learning experiences that include relevant **field studies** and **field experts** in our local community and beyond.

All New York State Science and Social Studies Standards are incorporated into the **EL Education ELA Modules** and the **GCCS Curriculum Framework**. Therefore, opportunities for students to meet these standards are mostly provided through Learning Expedition experiences. But, expeditions benefit students in so many ways beyond just mastery of mandated learning standards. They also provide rich opportunities to strengthen their **Character Traits**.

 Education



 Illustrative Mathematics

Character Education

Character Education is integrated into all times/subjects of the school day. Throughout the year students will learn about the **7 Character Traits**: *Courage, Responsibility, Compassion, Gratitude, Perseverance, Collaboration, Initiative*.

Each day, students will begin with **Morning Meeting** and end with **Crew**. Both of these times are dedicated to building community by learning about ourselves, one another, and how we contribute to our classroom community. Crew is an **EL Education** component inspired by their motto, "*We are Crew, not passengers.*" Teachers will design responsive lessons that connect thoughtfully-selected texts to the character traits and current Crew needs or discussions.

Arts classes and **Learning Expeditions** will also provide opportunities to learn about and express understanding of character traits.

Mathematics

Both Genesee Community Charter Schools are piloting a new mathematics curriculum called **Illustrative Mathematics**. This is a newly developed problem-based curriculum designed to meet the diverse needs of all learners. Students will learn mathematical concepts through real-world contexts, and they will learn to explain their thinking through discussion with their peers and teachers.

The Illustrative Mathematics Curriculum helps teachers facilitate student learning through high-leverage routines and tangible math tools that can help students make connections between concepts and computation procedures. Students in primary grades will experience a balance of explicit instruction and hands-on activities so that they can gain a deep understanding of math concepts giving them the knowledge necessary to be successful mathematicians now and in the future.

Building the Bridge

Parent satisfaction at the GCCS flagship school is very high and we intend to achieve the same results at the Flour City Campus. However, achieving this level of satisfaction will require strong lines of communication between caregivers and school.

In our experience at the flagship school, we have found that when parents are dissatisfied, the root of the problem is usually a lack of communication. Communication is a responsibility shared by parents and school staff, and we must work together continually to build an open, trusting relationship.

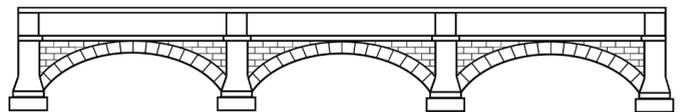
True to its name, this newsletter is intended to serve as a bridge of communication between home and school. *The Bridge* will be sent out every two months; this newsletter contains all the crucial information parents and community members need in order to understand and participate in the life of our school. Dates for deadlines, events, meetings, and exhibitions are announced. Expeditions are described, school policies are explained, and contact information is listed. *The Bridge* also provides clarification of our school's philosophies and an occasional commentary about educational issues.

Each classroom will send home a bi-weekly newsletter to inform parents about what the class is studying, when field studies and exhibition nights are scheduled, when parent volunteers are needed, and when the snack supply is running low. Bi-weekly newsletters also offer parents suggestions for home learning and give parents a heads-up about any issues that are arising in the class.

Backpack mail, e-mail, and the GCCS website are other avenues for keeping parents informed. Family Association announcements, fliers for special events, fundraising opportunities, and other information may be contained in backpack mail, e-mail, or listed on the school's website home page or on the web calendar. School is a busy, multifaceted place and it's difficult for parents to understand all of its complexities with just the lean information children typically provide. A thorough read of each issue of *The Bridge* and a daily check in your child's backpack for fliers, announcements, and classroom newsletters will facilitate your connection with GCCS.

Written communication is vital, but nothing can replace face-to-face contact between parents and staff. Please feel free to schedule conferences and visitations with your child's teachers or the School Director. All issues of *The Bridge* will be available on our website at www.GCCSchool.org. Articles in these issues may fill in some of the gaps for you. But if in doubt, please ask.

We're looking forward to a great year working in partnership with family and community members. Please stay in close touch so that together we may help your child grow and learn.



First Six Weeks Emphasize Classroom Procedures and Routines

What's the best way to accomplish a huge amount with a classroom full of eager, active learners? Spend sufficient time laying the foundation for a year of success! In keeping with our Responsive Classroom approach to classroom management, all our teachers set aside time during the first six weeks of school to review proper use of materials, establish expectations for transitions and routines, and reinforce social guidelines. All students benefit from working together in a classroom community and this belief is fundamental to GCCS's commitment to promoting character development.

If you want to know more about the Responsive Classroom model, visit their website at www.responsiveclassroom.org.



The Arts Crew found a Cutler Mail Chute!

Volunteer and Chaperone Training

Parents are an integral part of student learning at GCCS, and we have structured our program so that parents may participate in the daily life of our school community.

We have a variety of needs for volunteer services and welcome parents as both classroom volunteers and fieldwork chaperones.

For more information about these opportunities, see the Volunteer & Chaperone Guidelines, which is part of the enrollment packet each year. To prepare parents for the roles and responsibilities of classroom volunteering and chaperoning, we provide multiple opportunities for volunteer/chaperone training each year. Training is mandatory for all chaperones and volunteers.

The orientation addresses ways to support student learning, assist with assignments, manage behavior, and keep students safe on field studies.

Volunteers must complete the training every three years. We are also required to run background checks and receive clearance for any adult who is a regular volunteer. Background checks are conducted at the school's expense. This process is explained with more detail in the Family Handbook.

Thank you for considering volunteering or chaperoning. Trainings will be held at the GCCS campus at the RMSC during these times:

Thursday September 1st - 6:30pm - 8:00pm

Wednesday September 7th - 1:00pm - 2:30pm

Wednesday September 7th - 6:30pm - 8:00pm

Thursday September 15th - 9:00am - 10:30am

Problems with the bus?

If you have a question or concern about your child's bus transportation, please call the transportation office of your home district. The transportation folks will be able to help you with scheduling, routes, pick-up and drop off locations, and other issues.



RCSD Transportation Office

336-4000

GCCS - Flour City Campus Hours

Our school hours Mondays-Thursdays are:

School begins at 7:45am

School ends at 2:45pm

To allow for our teachers and staff to take part in professional development opportunities regularly throughout the year students will be **dismissed each Friday at 12:45pm.**

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

School Supplies

During our inaugural year, the school will cover the costs of most classroom supplies that serve as tools for learning (i.e. paper, pencils, scissors).

Supply list for all students to be shared with the classroom community:

- 2 boxes of tissues
- A bottle of hand soap
- Disinfecting wipes
- Gallon size Ziploc bags

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 the child's name
- A water bottle with your child's name
- Masks are optional
-

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.

Our Student Culture Coordinator and a kindergarten teacher found a millstone!



Food Service

Breakfast and lunch will be offered daily and will be prepared by Julia K Caters. A menu and order forms will be sent home monthly with all students. Menus for September will be sent out as soon as we get them from the caterer. Due to the construction project that will be going on in the building, we will have only cold meals available during the first month. The cost for breakfast will be \$2.00 and the cost for lunch will be \$3.00. Only the main dish listed on the menu will be available to students, and each meal includes a fruit option and a small carton of milk.