

## Welcome to GCCS Flour City Campus!

We are so pleased that you will be part of our special school community! Since we opened in 2022, our staff, students, and families have worked together to cultivate a positive culture that prioritizes student success. This collaboration has undoubtedly contributed to building a strong school culture, and we look forward to you and your family being members of the GCCS community!

To facilitate communication between home and school, we send out a monthly newsletter, *The Bridge*. This is the New Family Welcome Edition of that newsletter. Please give it a thorough read so you can begin to learn about the many components of Genesee Community Charter School that make it so special. Please know that throughout the year we ask caregivers to participate in surveys so that we can better understand the needs of our school community, and work to make revisions that better meet our students' needs. We truly value your input and perspective, so we work hard to ensure you are informed!

## Chaperone Training

A long-standing GCCS policy is that we require field study chaperones and classroom volunteers to complete the GCCS Caregiver Chaperone and Volunteer Training session at least once every two years. This training helps caregivers know what to expect from our field studies and classroom environments, and what we expect from caregivers when they volunteer. We offer 4 opportunities this fall to attend this session, but will consider offering more later in the year if there is enough interest. The fall sessions will be:

**Wednesday, 9/18 from 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm at GCCS- Flour City Campus**

**Wednesday, 10/9 from 6:30 pm - 7:30 pm at GCCS- Flour City Campus**


**Saturday 10/19 from 9:30 am - 10:30 am at GCCS - River Campus at RMSC**


An email will be sent to all families with a link to sign up, but you can also call the main office at 585-417-7020 and Melissa Fanizzi, our Administrative Assistant, can reserve a spot for you!




### Stay Connected!

 [www.GCCSchool.org](http://www.GCCSchool.org)

 [@GeneseeCharter](https://twitter.com/GeneseeCharter)

 Genesee Community Charter School

 585-417-7020



## Director's Message



Hello Flour City Families,

My name is Christine Farrell and I am the School Director of Genesee Community Charter School - Flour City Campus. It has been an honor to serve this school community since its inception, and I am thrilled that you will be joining us! I look forward to getting to know you and your child(ren) this school year and beyond!

In this Welcome Edition of the *The Bridge*, I'd like to share a little about my history as an educator:

I have a B.A. in Childhood Education and a M.S. in Literacy, both from SUNY Geneseo. I also have a M.S. in K-12 School Leadership & Supervision from the University of Rochester. I hold NY State certifications in Childhood Education (Grades 1-6), Literacy (Birth-6), School Building Leader, as well as School District Leader. Beginning in 2006, I served as an elementary school teacher for 13 years in the town of Pavilion in Genesee County. I then served as a K-8 instructional coach at Westminster Community Charter School in Buffalo for 2 years. Then, in 2021, I was hired as an Assistant School Leader at Genesee Community Charter School at the RMSC Campus. Soon after, I was charged with being the Founding School Director of GCCS - Flour City Campus. Educating young children and working to improve their learning experience is a passion of mine, and serving in all of these roles, especially my current one, has been an absolute privilege. I look forward to continuing my role as Director and ensuring the success of the Flour City Campus as it grows to be a K-6 school.

If you have any questions or concerns, I encourage you to reach out to me or others at the school. You will find that we have an incredibly dedicated staff that go above and beyond to provide a quality education for all of our students, and they are happy to answer any questions you may have.

If you and I haven't met in person yet, please make a point to introduce yourself whenever you are in the building. I am oftentimes outside during arrival and dismissal times, and expect to be at all school events including Open House, Curriculum Night, and Exhibition Nights.

In partnership,

Christine Farrell, School Director  
[cfarrell@gccschool.org](mailto:cfarrell@gccschool.org)

## **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. *(See Pages 5 and 6 for more information)*

### **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. *(See Pages 5 and 6 for more information)*

### **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”). *(See Page 5 for more information)*

### **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. 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**.

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 Crew** and will end their day with **Closing 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 a 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 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.

# Who do I contact if...



## **...I have a concern about my child's teachers?**

As stated in our Family Handbook, you should go right to the source and talk to the teachers. If the problem persists, then you can contact the School Director, Christine Farrell.

## **...I have a concern about another student in my child's class?**

This is also a time when you should contact your child's teachers. They can decide if another person at the school should get involved.

## **...I have a concern about the content and curriculum that is taught?**

You can contact the Director of Curriculum & Instruction, Chris Dolgos, or you can contact the School Director, Christine Farrell.

## **...I have a concern about my child's academic performance?**

You should contact the classroom teachers. Depending on the concern, they may pull in other people to help answer your questions.

## **...I have a concern about transportation?**

You should first contact the transportation department responsible for providing transportation. However, you can also reach out to our administrative assistant in the main office at Flour City because she may be able to provide some helpful information.

## **...my child will be absent from school?**

You should contact the administrative assistant in the main office, Melissa Fanizzi. She will let the teachers know, and will mark the absence in the proper records.

## **...I will be picking up my child early or for an appointment during the school day?**

Again, you should contact the administrative assistant in the main office, Melissa Fanizzi.

## **...I have questions about special education services?**

You can contact our Special Education Coordinator, Shelly Kordish. She is very knowledgeable and can help point you in the right direction if she is not able to answer your questions.

## **...I have concerns about the social-emotional well-being of my child at school?**

Please contact the classroom teachers first. Then they may direct you to another person at school, or they may make some adjustments in the classroom to better meet your child's needs. If concerns persist, you can also contact our Student Culture Coordinator, Shelby DiRoma.

## **...I have questions about the school lunches?**

Please contact the Food Service Coordinator, Michelle Henry.

## **...I have health concerns about my child that requires attention during the school day?**

First you should contact the classroom teachers so that they are aware. You can also contact the school health aide who is in the building each day.

**\*Page 9 has a complete email directory of staff →**

**\*\*Our GCCS-Flour City Family Handbook is also a great resource!**

## How to Get in Touch With Us!

**Flour City Campus Main Office - 585-417-7020**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Email or Phone #</b>
Meghan Barrett	Grade K teacher	mbarrett@gccschool.org
Ariana Beers	Grade K teacher	abeers@gccschool.org
Timothy Benedict	Grade 2 teacher	tbenedict@gccschool.org
Abbey Braddon	Grade 1 teacher	abraddon@gccschool.org
Khalisha Carnegie	Grade 3 teacher	kcarnegie@gccschool.org
Stacey Cicero	Academic Intervention teacher	scicero@gccschool.org
Melissa Conklin	Visual Arts teacher	mconklin@gccschool.org
Shelby DiRoma	Student Culture Coordinator	sdiroma@gccschool.org
Chris Dolgos	Director of Curriculum & Instruction	cdolgos@gccschool.org
Erika Dooley	English as a New Language teacher	edooley@gccschool.org
Justin Fanizzi	Grade 2 teaching assistant	jfanizzi@gccschool.org
Melissa Fanizzi	Administrative Assistant - Main Office	mfanizzi@gccschool.org
Christine Farrell	School Director	cfarrell@gccschool.org
Keri Gonzalez	Literacy Coordinator	kgonzalez@gccschool.org
Lauren Grimm	Social Worker	lgrimm@gccschool.org
Brooke Hayes	Grade 1 teacher	bhayes@gccschool.org
Laura Hill	School health aide	flourcitynurse@gccschool.org
Shelly Kordish	Special Education Coordinator	skordish@gccschool.org
Andrea Lincoln	Grade 1 teaching assistant	alincoln@gccschool.org
Beth Mascitti-Miller	GCCS Interim Executive Director	emascittimiller@gccschool.org
Maureen Milke	Director of Operations	mmilke@gccschool.org
Julia Postilli	Grade 3 teacher	jpostilli@gccschool.org
Colleen Sall	Dance & Movement teacher	csall@gccschool.org
Debbie Potter	Grade 2 teacher	dpotter@gccschool.org
Sierra Taylor	Music teacher	staylor@gccschool.org
Katie Tokaryk	Grade 4 teacher	ktokaryk@gccschool.org
Celeste Trevellini	Grade 4 teacher	ctrevellini@gccschool.org
Julianna Velazquez	Grade K teaching assistant	jvelazquez@gccschool.org

## First 6 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](http://www.responsiveclassroom.org) .

## GCCS 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.

## Recess! 😊

At GCCS we understand how important it is for children to have time to play with their peers. Each grade level has a recess time and a quiet break time built into their daily schedule, except Wednesdays. During this time, students take part in a an **unstructured recess** , which means students have the space to use their imaginations and the available toys and materials to engage in play with their classmates. In other words, adults supervise and advise, but do not organize play during this time. On special occasions, teachers may elect to walk the class to the Highland Park Lilac Adventure Zone. This is always a fun treat for students!

At GCCS, we go outside for recess as much as possible! Sometimes the yard on the property can get muddy, so please know that your child's shoes may get dirty. Sending in an **old pair of shoes or rubber boots** to keep at school is highly recommended. We do have some extra pairs available at school, but not many.

During the winter months we also go outside as much as the temperatures/precipitation allow. We use an index provided by New York State to determine whether or not it is safe to take students outside or not. We ask all GCCS students to have **snow clothes** (snow pants, winter coat, hat, gloves, winter boots) available at school. If you need assistance securing winter gear, please let Shelby DiRoma, our Student Culture Coordinator, know so she can help.

## Snack Policy

Students are welcome to bring a small snack each day to school. Teachers will provide some time between breakfast and lunch for students to eat a snack, but it is not a requirement. Please note that staff will not be able to heat up food items, and students must consume their snack in less than 10 minutes, so please keep it small.

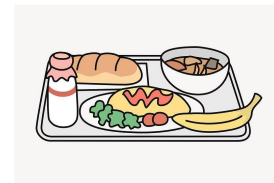


## Toys from Home Policy

We strongly advise students and families to keep personal toys, fidgets, technology, etc. at home. Students who do bring personal items from home without permission from a teacher will be directed to keep the item(s) in their backpack all day, even during recess. Of course there are times when teachers may assign students to bring something from home into school. Or, a class could earn a special privilege to bring items from home for a day. But, if it's not prearranged and communicated by a teacher, it's best if personal items from home stay at home.

## 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 on the first day of school. The cost for **breakfast will be \$2.20** and the cost for **lunch will be \$3.20**. 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. Our Food Service Coordinator, Michelle Henry will send out all necessary information concerning Food Service.



When your child will be absent, tardy, or be picked up early, please call or email Melissa Fanizzi in the main office at 585-417-7020 and [mfanizzi@gccschool.org](mailto:mfanizzi@gccschool.org).

## 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. Also, all behavior concerns or incidents that happen on the bus are addressed by the transportation office, not GCCS.

**RCSD Transportation Office**  
**336-4000**



As you may have heard, or experienced, bus companies have had a difficult time finding drivers which has led to frequent delays. GCCS does our best to inform caregivers about delays, but sometimes the information we get isn't always accurate, or we don't get information in a timely fashion. If your child does not return home after school near the expected time, please try calling the transportation office first. If you can't hold of someone, or get the information you need, you can call the **School Director, Christine Farrell, at 585-880-9396** and she can help you problem solve with the transportation department. She's happy to help.



## Please join us for Open House and Curriculum Night!

**Open House** - Monday August 26th 5:00 pm - 6:30 pm

**Curriculum Night** - Thursday October 3rd 6:00 pm - 7:30 pm

Open House is a night when students can visit their classrooms, meet their teachers (or just see them again), and maybe drop off their school supplies if they choose. Then, Curriculum Night is a time when parents/caregivers can learn more specific details about the curriculum at their child's grade level. Classroom teachers with help from the arts teachers will provide information sessions and some activities to give parents/caregivers a sense of the topics, concepts, and skills their child will be learning during the 2024-2025 school year.

### Arrival and Dismissal Times

Students can begin arriving each day at 7:35 am

Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays - 8:00 am - 2:45 pm

Wednesdays - 8:00 am - 12:45 pm

## **Genesee Community Charter School Family Association**

### ***GCCS Board of Trustees Representatives***

- ❖ GCCS Family Representatives
- Teresa Sinicropi (Flour City rep)
- Lindsay Tarnoff (Flour City rep)
- Ben Clarke (River Campus rep)
- Kiersten Blankley (River Campus rep)

### ***Family Association Officers***

- ❖ **Co-Chairs:**  
Blake Crowley ([blake.crowley@gmail.com](mailto:blake.crowley@gmail.com))  
*\*This seat is currently open*
- ❖ **Secretary:** Karla Carey  
([karlarae5@gmail.com](mailto:karlarae5@gmail.com))
- ❖ **Treasurer:** Isha Torres ([iyt6977@gmail.com](mailto:iyt6977@gmail.com))

**GCCS Logogear:** <https://gccs-fa.square.site>



### Our MISSION

Genesee Community Charter School - 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.

