

GIFFEN MEMORIAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Mrs. Jasmine N. Brown, Principal

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City School District of Albany

August 2021

Dear Giffen Parents, Guardians, and Students,

As we approach the beginning of the upcoming school year, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome all of you. As principal of Giffen Memorial Elementary, I am ready and committed to lead our school to a joyful and successful school year. Though the last year and a half were like no other school years, we have learned a lot and are ready to apply all that knowledge to the upcoming school year to keep our students safe and still provide a rigorous and engaging school experience. It is always an exciting time; this year brings some exciting opportunities for teachers, new tools for parents, as well as some continued and new programs for our students. Both teachers and students alike will be excited about coming to school and learning. Here are just a few:

- **1:1 Chromebooks:** We are excited to welcome back all our students in person this upcoming school year. While the pandemic brought about many challenges for us to overcome, we are now positioned to have all students have personal Chromebooks in their classes to assist with instruction. We learned to integrate many online learning tools, platforms, and programs and will continue to weave them into our instructional units.
- **Departmentalizing:** This year we will departmentalizing in grade 3, meaning students will be taught by subject area by teachers who specialize either in ELA, Math or Science/Social Studies. In grades 4 and 5, students will receive instruction from two classroom teachers (one teaching ELA/Social Studies and the other teaching Math/Science). This model will allow the teachers to specialize and become an expert in their subject area (as opposed to teaching all subjects), to prepare more focused and individualized lesson plans, and to allow for greater student understanding around the NYS learning standards.
- **Student Enrichment Opportunities:** We strive to provide additional enrichment opportunities for our students and this year our great community partners will be working with us to provide student opportunities once every two weeks. At the start of the year, students will be able to provide input to what their interests are (coding, skateboarding, cooking, business, etc.) to help us align our partners with grade levels and classes. This will be a great opportunity for the learning of our children, and us, the adults 😊.

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Giffen Memorial Elementary School is an exciting learning place where young people develop their natural gifts and abilities as they gain confidence in their potential. Students grow to become well-adjusted, independent thinkers as they explore their intelligences; they realize the satisfaction of productive teamwork as they collaborate with others from a variety of racial, ethnic and economic backgrounds. Stimulating activity integrates themes and basic content, resulting in higher scholastic achievement for all. Children are empowered to become strong, responsible citizens through the dedicated efforts of competent staff, involved parents and supportive community organization.

COVID-19 safety

As many of you are aware, we are still practicing implementation of our COVID protocols this upcoming year. Here are some of the practices that will be implemented this upcoming school year:

- Masks will be mandatory in school for everyone, regardless of vaccination status.
- Masks will be optional outside on school grounds.
- We will follow 3 feet of social distancing in our buildings wherever possible.
- In cases where we cannot maintain 3 feet while also achieving our goal of daily in-person instruction for all students, we will use polycarbonate (plastic) dividers as an extra safety measure.
- We will conduct daily temperature screenings for all individuals upon arrival to school.
- We will continue to follow the same hand hygiene and daily cleaning and disinfecting protocols that we have used since the start of the pandemic.
- Masks also will be required for all students on buses and we will return to regular capacity guidelines on all buses.

Orientation and first day of school

We will start the school year with **full orientation days** for students **BASED ON YOUR CHILD'S GRADE**. Transportation will begin on the days outlined below for those families who qualify for transportation and have completed all necessary paperwork.

Pre-K through Grade 2 and all Souder and DiVeglia students (NO SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS IN GRADES 3-5)	Thursday, Sept. 2 9 a.m.-3:35 pm
Grades 3-5 and all Simon students (NO SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS IN PREKINDERGARTEN-GRADE 2)	Friday, Sept. 3 9 a.m.- 3:35 pm

Please see the enclosure regarding an opportunity for families to do a brief building walkthrough and drop off supplies before our scheduled orientation days.

The first FULL day of school FOR ALL STUDENTS is Wednesday, Sept. 8. It is of the utmost importance that your child is in attendance and on time for school daily. For those of you that may be new to GMES, the school times (slightly adjusted based on COVID protocols) are as follows:

- Building Opens: 9 a.m.
- School Day Begins: 9:05 a.m.
- School Day Ends: 3:35 p.m.

Arrival and dismissal

Below are the school entrances and exits that will be used at the start of this school year:

- **Pre-K** – Green Street Pre-K courtyard based on assigned classroom
- **K/1, Souder and Simon students** – Green Street door #16
- **Grades 2-3** – Pearl Street. Arrival: main entrance. Dismissal: middle doors
- **Grades 4-5** – Schuyler Street door

(please see next page)

If you have multiple children in the building, **your designated pick-up spot for all children will be at the location of the youngest child.**

Giffen has always had a policy regarding signing students out early. **We will continue to strictly enforce this policy.** Students should remain in school for the entire instructional day. It is very disruptive to the learning process of your child(ren) when they are being signed out of school before the end of the school day. **Parents will not be able to enter the Main Lobby after 3:15 p.m. for the purpose of signing their child(ren) out early unless a doctor/dental or legal appointment card is presented to the receptionist, or the receptionist has received prior written notification.**

We are also asking that students be picked up from school on time. **Dismissal is at 3:35 p.m.** Please be here on time to receive your child. If your normal dismissal arrangements need to be changed, we request that they be provided in writing. We will not be able to honor phone calls at the end of the day for change in dismissal needs.

Parent and guardian participation

I am also pleased to share that Linda Mitchell will continue in her role of PTA president, with the support of Amanda Boyd. They will be reaching out to parents to join. Your participation is crucial to the academic success of our children. In addition to joining our PTA, we are also seeking parents to be involved with our Building Leadership Team and our Community Schools Advisory Board. Please give us a call at (518) 475-6650 if interested.

If there is anything, we can do to help your child in anyway, please do not hesitate to call. The unvoiced problem cannot be resolved, as the missed opportunity rarely offers itself again. Our goal remains to provide the best possible education for each student and to ensure that both parents and students alike feel comfortable and at home at Giffen Memorial Elementary School.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jasmine Brown".

Jasmine N. Brown
Principal