

GATOR GAZETTE



Giffen Memorial Elementary School Newsletter

Fall 2022

A note from Principal Brown ...

Hey Giffen Families!

The 2022-23 school year is in full swing, and the hallways of Giffen Memorial Elementary are humming with excitement for learning and gaining new enriching experiences for all. Students have jumped right into learning school and classroom routines and getting to know one another. We are elated to be back to our normal school hours and reinstating all our in-person events. It has been great to see

you all around and in the building these past few weeks.

This upcoming school year, we remain committed to strengthening academics, lifting student voices and providing enriching learning opportunities for all our students. We strive to be a welcoming environment for all our children so that they are encouraged and will maximize their potential. We strive to create a culturally competent environment and empower our



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SAVE THE DATES!

OCTOBER

- 27 Parent-Teacher Conferences, 4-7 p.m.
Trunk or Treat, 4-6 p.m.
- 28 No school, Parent-Teacher Conferences, 8-11 a.m.

NOVEMBER

- 10 Family Art Night, 5 p.m.
- 11 No school, Veterans Day
- 16 Conversations with the Coordinators, 12:30 p.m.
Community Dinner, 5-7 p.m.
- 18 College Friday
- 23-25 No school, Thanksgiving Recess

DECEMBER

- 14 PTA meeting, 8 a.m.
Conversations with the Coordinators, 12:30 p.m.
- 21 Winter Concert, 5:30 p.m.
- 23-30 No school, Holiday Recess

CELEBRATING FALL AND STEM



Giffen students joyfully got their hands dirty doing cool fall-themed science projects at the Oct. 20 Families Rising Together Harvest STEM Festival.

Attendance matters

Students benefit in many ways from being in school: in their academic and social-emotional growth, and in the supportive relationships they build with peers, teachers and staff members.

Attendance matters in a student's success starting as early as kindergarten. Missing even two days every month causes students to fall behind. By sixth grade, chronic absence is a leading predictor that a student will drop out of high school. By ninth grade, regular attendance is a better predictor of graduation than eighth-grade test scores.

Students are expected to be in school every day unless they are sick, have a medical appointment or have a religious reason. If your student is absent, you must provide a written excuse for every absence or late arrival. The excuse must be signed and dated and reasons for the absence or lateness.

Being on time for school is part of having good attendance! Missing 5-10 minutes of class might not seem like much, but it adds up. Every time your child comes in late, they start the day playing catch-up. Help your child be successful and get them to school on time. Giffen is committed to working with you to help your student have great attendance!

FROM ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL FLAX-LEIGHT

I sometimes wish the outside world could better resemble Giffen. As we enter our second month of the school year, students are settling into routines. Classrooms are deep into curriculum and students have learned their classroom routines. We are now moving into one of the most productive times of the year.

As I listen to the news driving to school in the morning, I run through the day's schedule in my head. I think about the buses pulling up in the morning, and families dropping off students at the school door.

School has two sacred purposes. One is to prepare students for the world as it is. It is the practical skills of communication, and a working knowledge of math and science. It is the development of the critical thinking skills essential to college and the workplace.

The other purpose is to create learners capable of constructing a world we have

only imagined. To empower students to dream that things can be better.

As I listen to the radio, and the news of war and cruelty filters into my thoughts about school, I realize that is some of the most important work of a school. It is also a charge we share with parents and families.

One of the greatest gifts that we can provide our students with is the opportunity to engage in instruction and the time to explore their dreams. Regular attendance is the key to this. Each day our students miss, these dreams become a little more difficult to achieve.

Every day at school is a building block to a future. Regular attendance is the material of dreams.



Community School update

As a Community School, Giffen continues to strive to support families and scholars by bringing together the relationships and assets of our community.

We're happy to welcome back partnering organizations 4th Family and Noteworthy Resources, who host our morning programs for third through fifth graders.

Events like our Harvest STEM Festival allow us to collaborate with our building teachers, as well as local educator-entrepreneurs, to engage our scholars in fun education-based activities that extend learning beyond the classroom. We invite our families to join in on fun!

With support and input from our Community Schools Advisory Board, we make decisions that respond to the unique needs of our neighborhood and our scholars to coordinate opportunities to accelerate student success.

For more information on how to participate, contact Community School Coordinator Amanda Boyd at (518) 475-6669 or aboyd@albany.k12.ny.us.



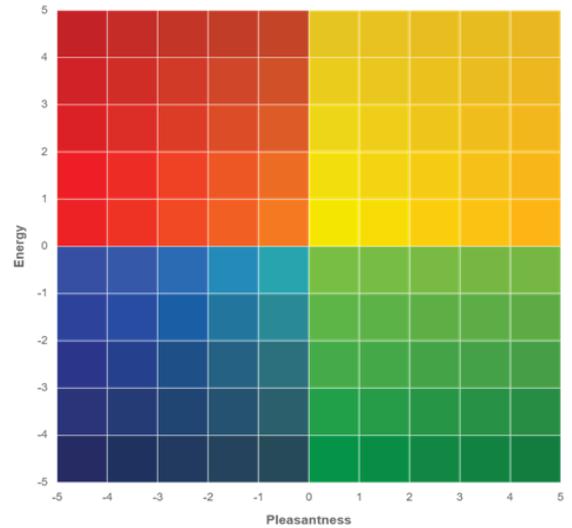
SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING UPDATE

This year, we have started integrating a new social-emotional learning program called RULER into each homeroom to complement Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS).

RULER is short for **recognizing, understanding, labeling, expressing and regulating** — the five skills of emotional intelligence.

RULER for Elementary School (K-5) is a developmentally appropriate and comprehensive curriculum that builds students’ emotional intelligence within their experience of the world.

All Giffen classes have started their introduction of this curriculum by utilizing the Mood Meter on the right and developing their emotional vocabulary. Ask your child about the Mood Meter!



Basketball with Books

Saturday Morning Basketball with Books is back! Our program operates from 9 a.m. to noon. During that time, we do group and individual work sessions while helping kids further develop their skills.

The program provides plenty of free time so students can socialize, feel safe and learn at their own pace. There’s no pressure as we introduce them to the beautiful game of basketball and the discipline, social skills and higher-order thinking its required to play successfully.

From time to time we have speakers come, share their life experiences and connect to and inspire students. Guest lecturers include former NBA star Sam Perkins,

who played college basketball with Michael Jordan, as well as college and high school coaches.

The last part is the reading component. Sometimes we will stop and drop and read independently for 25 minutes. At other times, we may be joined by a teacher or an adult that would like to do a group read or an activity followed by a discussion with the group all in an effort to always connect academics with athletics.

All students in good standing can take part in Basketball with Books. For more info, contact Mr. Johnson at school at (518) 475-6650.

Principal’s message *(continued from page 1)*

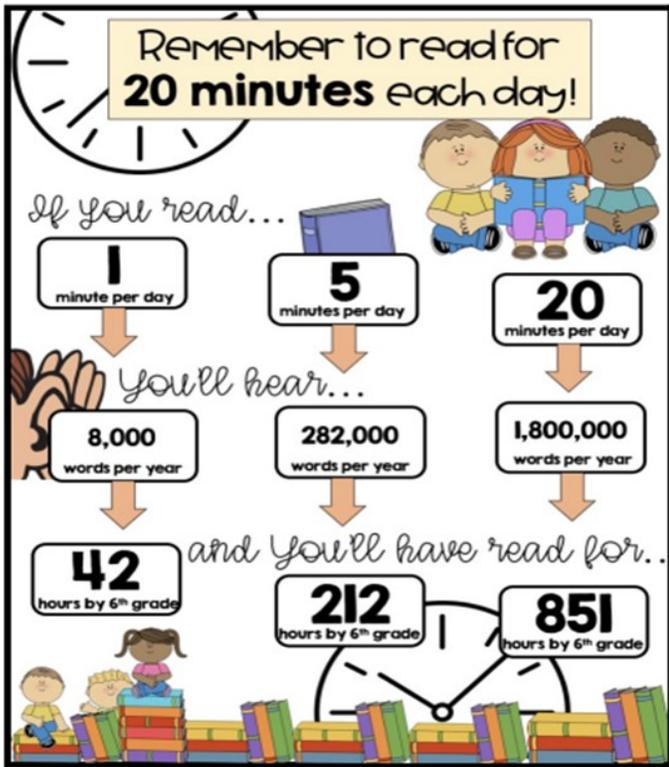
students to be leaders in their community and be empowered to lift their voices around their educational experience, social equity and justice. We ask that you partner with us in that charge.

Delivering standards-based instruction with maximum student engagement is also one of our priorities this year. As a community school, we also welcome and encourage parent and community engagement. Your partnership, input and feedback are critical to our growth as a school community. And don’t let me pressure or overwhelm you – start small. Get to know your child’s teacher or our wonderful support staff at arrival or dismissal, or our wonderful ladies in the main office, or our caring nurses, or ... (can you tell I love our staff?). We just want all to feel like they are a part of our Giffen family because you are! There are many wonderful programs and opportunities for

both students and families, so please inquire, ask and check those backpacks and Remind messages!

In the upcoming days, we will have parent teacher conferences on the evening of Oct. 27 from 4-7 p.m. (there may actually be a fun event scheduled for students this night – check out our events), and during the day on Oct. 28 from 8-11 a.m. Please reach out to schedule a conference time with your child’s teacher. We hope those two different times will be able to accommodate more parents. We have learned so much about your children these first couple months and would love to be able to share what we’ve learned about them and hear from you about how we can best nurture your child’s development. I am looking forward to seeing you all in the upcoming weeks and am excited about the prospects of this school year. Be well. Love you all.

WE ARE GIFFEN ... WE ARE READERS!



Reading at home is important

Want your child to be a better reader? Have them read 20 minutes a day.

When a student reads 20 minutes a day, it adds up to 3,600 minutes and 1.8 million words per school year. Students who read 20 minutes a day tend to score in the top 90 percent of their peers who take standardized tests.

When a student reads five minutes a day, it adds up to 900 minutes and 282,000 words per school year. Students who read five minutes a day tend to score in the middle of their peers who take standardized tests.

When a student reads only a minute a day, it adds up to 180 minutes and 8,000 words per school year. Students who read only a minute a day tend to score in the bottom 10 percent of their peers who take standardized tests.

The message is clear: Reading matters!

Giffen reads together!

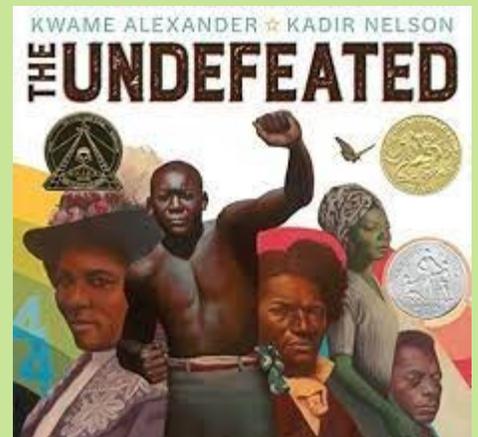
Giffen is participating in One School, One Book, and this year's read is "The Undefeated" by Kwame Alexander (with illustrations by Kadir Nelson).

Every Giffen student from kindergarten through fifth grade will receive a copy of the book, along with activities to complete while reading it.

The purpose of participating in One School, One Book is to build a community of readers through a shared reading experience. Studies have shown that reading to children helps them to listen better and longer, build vocabulary, and feel positive about both books and learning. When an entire school reads together it creates excitement about the book and builds community in the school family.

"The Undefeated" is a non-fiction history in verse that tells the stories of prominent African-Americans who played important roles in history. For the first half of the year, Giffen teachers and staff will engage students in a variety of activities involving the text and illustrations.

Eventually, students will receive a copy of the book to add to their home libraries.



CHARACTER PAYS AT GATOR STORE

At Giffen, we celebrate when our students demonstrate good character. One way we encourage good behavior is through the reinforcement provided by our school store.

Students earn Gator "We Are" Tickets daily for following the 3 Bs: Be Respectful, Be Responsible, Be Safe. Students visit our store and can use their tickets to "buy" prizes like pencils, fidget toys, and games.

Our store opened for the year Oct. 14, and students eagerly "spent" their tickets, as we celebrated both their individual accomplishments and those of our larger school community. Thank you for encouraging students to follow the three Bs at home!



From the Nurse

It's time to schedule your child's yearly physical exam! Call for an appointment today.

Whitney Young School-Based Health Center

Giffen Elementary School
(518) 925-5904

St. Peters Family Health Center

326 S. Pearl St.
(518) 449-0100

Albany Med Pediatrics

391 Myrtle Ave.
(518) 262-5588

Please bring a copy of the completed physical exam form to the school nurse!

KEEPING UP WITH GIFFEN NEWS

At Giffen, we communicate with families in many ways. One important way is through email. If we have an email address for you in our records, we can keep you informed about important events and activities that happen at school.

Parents and guardians automatically receive updates via email and phone call to the contact information on file in our student information database.

We can also send a text message to your cell phone BUT you need to give us permission. The easiest way to receive a text message from us is to simply text "Y" or "yes" to 67587 from a number that is on file in our student database.

Please help us help you stay informed! If you have moved or your phone number or email changed, please call school so we can update our information database and keep you in the loop!

Classroom spotlight

Our fourth graders have begun their study of environments. We will investigate several different plants and animals to discover the structures and functions that serve in growth and survival and the environments that support their well-being and attempt to determine the optimum environments for some of the organisms. You can support your child's natural curiosity of science at home as well. If possible, take a family field trip to a local aquatic environment to see what lives there and to ponder the environmental factors that affect those organisms there.

SEEN AROUND GIFFEN



Welcome Back "Clap-In," Sept. 7



PTA Parade, Sept. 23



PTA Parade, Sept. 23



Open House, Sept. 14



PTA Parade, Sept. 23



PTA Parade, Sept. 23

Join band or orchestra

Band and orchestra are still accepting sign-ups for students in grades 3-5!

Your student can learn to play flute, clarinet, saxophone, trumpet, trombone, violin, viola, cello or bass.

If your child is interested in playing an instrument this year, email Mr. Affatigato at jaffatigato@albany.k12.ny.us or Ms. Gucwa at mgucwa@albany.k12.ny.us for more information.

GIFFEN GRATITUDE ...

We extend our gratitude and thanks to:

Our families for helping to get our students off to a great start of the school year

Our community partners for their continuing support of our students.

We appreciate you!