

GATOR GAZETTE



Giffen Memorial Elementary School Newsletter

Fall 2017

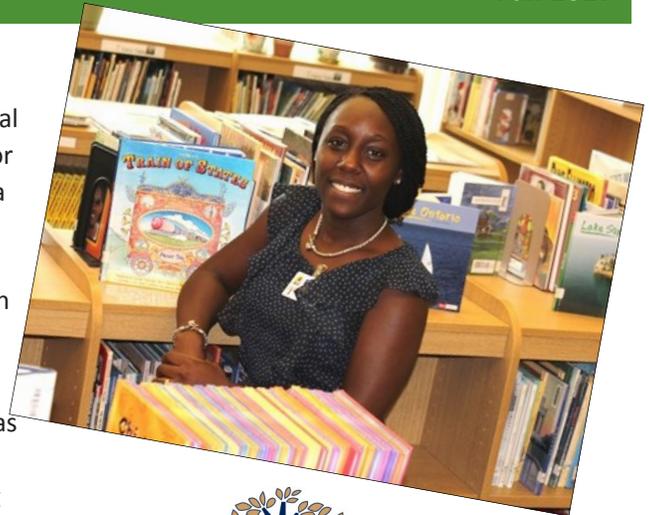
A note from Principal Brown ...

Hello, Giffen families! The school year got off to a fantastic start, and I was excited to receive students, faculty and staff. September brought about meeting new families, reintroducing classroom and building routines and building a sense of community that will help establish the foundation for a successful school year.

In October, teachers will dive into curriculum to provide rich instruction for your children. Our academic focus this year is to use

student data to make instructional and social-emotional decisions for each child. We will be providing a number of enrichment opportunities such as tutoring, Saturday Morning Basketball with Books, Chess Club and Saturday Academy, to name a few.

Please check student backpacks as we send more information out in October. I look forward to seeing you this month at one of our upcoming events, and as always, feel free to stop by.



SAVE THE DATES!

OCTOBER

- 18 PTA meeting, 8-9 a.m.
English as a New Language Night, 4 p.m.
- 27 College Friday
- 30 Book Fair

NOVEMBER

- 1 Book Fair
- 2 Book Fair
School Picture Day
Harvest Fest, 4 p.m.
- 7 Conference day, no school
- 8 Parent University, 5 p.m.
- 10 Veterans Day, no school
- 15 PTA meeting, 5 p.m.
- 17 College Friday
- 20 Parent University, 4 p.m.
Community Dinner, 5 p.m.
Honor Roll Recognition, 5 p.m.
- 22 Conference Day, no school
- 23 Thanksgiving, no school
- 24 Thanksgiving break, no school



Basketball with books: Get fit, get smart!

Join Derek Johnson, Giffen's home school coordinator, for our Saturday Morning Basketball with Books program.

Each weekend, Giffen students come to develop athletic and life skills and read in the school gym. The program often includes motivational speakers from our community and teachers visit the last hour to work with small groups of students.

The goal of the program is to give kids a happy, safe place to start their weekends, while promoting reading and developing

young students into life-long responsible citizens and learners.

This year's Basketball with Books program got off to a great start, with speakers that included Dr. Brenda Robinson, a member of the Albany Public Library Board of Trustees and CEO and founder of the Black Nurses Coalition, and Herbert McLaughlin, a former warden in the New York State Department of Corrections.

We look forward to a successful program this year and want to see the gym packed with students each Saturday!

The scoop on PBIS

What is it?

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support -- PBIS for short -- is a school-wide program whose goal is to improve the building's environment. PBIS defines, teaches, and supports appropriate student behavior to create a positive school environment where teachers can teach and students can learn.

How does PBIS work?

We have behavior expectations for areas throughout the school: classrooms, hallways, the playground, bus, bathrooms and cafeteria. These expectations are listed in a "behavior matrix" that describes how to be safe, respectful and responsible in each area. We will teach these behaviors to students, practice them and reinforce them. Students caught doing the right thing will be rewarded with "Gator Tickets."

What can you do at home?

- Review our behavior expectations and matrix with your child (located in his/her agenda).
- Keep in touch with your child's teacher.
- Be a member of your child's class community: volunteer, attend parent meetings, join in-class activities.

READING BETWEEN THE LINES

How our school is helping your child be a reader

Giffen reading teachers have been working hard to complete beginning-of-the-year assessments to help inform instruction of classroom teachers. These assessments are critical to our work to ensure that we are teaching students exactly what they need to know and building their reading skills for the next level.

Last year, we began using the Wonders reading program in grades kindergarten-2. This year, we have expanded that program to grades 3, 4 and 5. Wonders has many online features that you may use at home and in school. Teachers will be sending home more information on how to access Wonders at home in the coming weeks.

What you can do to encourage reading at home

- Read to and/or with your child
- Visit your local branch of the Albany Public Library (*the closest one to Giffen is the Howe Branch, located at 105 Schuyler St. at intersection of Schuyler and Broad streets*)
- Share stories, poems, recipes and/or articles
- Notice and read street signs aloud

We are a community school!

Giffen is now a community school – a neighborhood hub that will provide services to students and families during and beyond the regular school day.

Why is Giffen a Community School?

As we continue to empower our children to become strong, responsible students, we realized we can't do it alone! The Community Schools strategy combines essential supports for learning with the help of community partners, parents and families. Through the dedicated efforts of staff, involved parents and supportive community organizations, we hope to remove obstacles to student learning and positively affect student achievement.

What can we expect?

Giffen's mission remains true. We strive to offer our students an exciting learning

place where they can develop their natural gifts and abilities as they gain confidence in their potential.

To strengthen this work, we will rely on the following elements:

- A strong core instructional program designed to help all students meet high academic standards
- Expanded learning opportunities designed to enrich the learning environment for students and their families
- A range of health, mental health and social services designed to promote children's well-being and remove barriers to learning.

Questions? Contact Community Schools Coordinator Amanda Boyd at 518-475-6669 or aboyd@albany.k12.ny.us.

WHO'S WHO AT GIFFEN

Mrs. Brown, principal • **Mr. Rogers**, assistant principal • **Mr. Johnson**, home school coordinator
Mr. Calderon and Ms. Torres, social workers • **Mrs. Lein and Ms. Kirchgraber**, nurses