

GATOR GAZETTE



Giffen Memorial Elementary School Newsletter

Midwinter 2018

A note from Principal Brown ...

Happy February to all. Enclosed with this newsletter is your child's second-quarter report card. Please review the report and feel free to give us a call at (518) 475-6650 to either speak with your child's teacher or to set up a conference. At Giffen, our mission centers around making family connections and partnering with our parents to ensure our students' success. We are proud to note that we had a number of students make the honor roll this quarter, as

well as receive perfect attendance. Way to go, Giffen Gators. Keep up the great work! As we move into the second half of the year, it is important that we remain focused on increasing student achievement and socially developing our students. We have just concluded our winter assessment benchmarks, which help us measure student progress in reading and math. Many student

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SAVE THE DATES!

FEBRUARY

- 15 Parent University, 5-7 p.m.
Financial Literacy Workshop, 5:30-6:30 P.M.
- 16 College Friday
- 19-23 Winter recess, no school
- 26 Workforce Development Workshop, 5:30-6:30 p.m.

MARCH

- 2 Deadline to apply for 2018-19 pre-K lottery
- 5 Workforce Development Workshop, 5:30-6:30 p.m.
- 7 Science Night, 5 p.m.
- 9 Meet the Author-Illustrator Day
- 12 Workforce Development Workshop, 5:30-6:30 p.m.
- 14 Parent University, 5-7 p.m.
- 19 Workforce Development Workshop, 5:30-6:30 p.m.
- 20 Spring Picture Day
- 26 College Friday
Workforce Development Workshop 5:30-6:30 p.m.

GIFFEN LEADERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Members of the Grade 6 Leadership Team at Giffen Memorial Elementary School, pictured below, are doing a service project to help homeless people. See page 4 to learn more, including how you can help!



STATE TESTS ON THE HORIZON

Each year the New York State Education Department requires schools around the state to administer tests that measure student skills in English, math and science.

The tests begin in third grade in English and math, and students take them every year through eighth grade. Students in fourth and eighth grade also take science tests. Students throughout the state take the same test at the same time.

Other exams State Ed issues include:

- Regents exams – high school exams that measure ability in English, math, science, social studies and foreign language.
- New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA) – these tests in English, math, science and social studies measure the progress of students with disabilities in grades 3-8
- New York State English as a Second Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) – these tests measure the progress of English-language learners from kindergarten through grade 12.

The testing schedule for this year follows. Please make sure your child comes to school well-rested and with a good breakfast so he or she is prepared to do his or her best on the days of the exams.

Date	Test
March 12-June 8	Alternate assessment tests in English, math, science and social studies (dates vary from school to school; families will receive a letter from
April 11-13	English-language arts (ELA) exam, grades 3-8 (make-ups April 16-18)
May 1-May 3	Math exam, grades 3-8 (make-ups May 4-9)
April 9-May 18	Speaking part of NYSESLAT exam begins (dates vary from school to
May 7-18	Listening, reading and writing parts of NYSESLAT exam (dates vary from school to school; families will receive a letter from school indicating the
May 23-June 1	Performance part of science exam, grades 4 and 8 (dates vary from school to school; families will receive a letter from school indicating the
June 4	Written part of science exam, grades 4 and 8 (make-ups June 5-6)
June 12-21	Regents exams in a variety of subjects, grades 8-12

We want to see you!

We know life is busy and that you can't always make it here, but your involvement is invaluable! From parent-teacher conferences to our "We Are" Community Dinner, there are many opportunities throughout the year to get to know our staff, learn more about what's happening in your children's classrooms and strengthen the Giffen family bond!

This year, as an extra incentive to getting involved, we're introducing our "We Are" Giffen Family Chomp Card. For each Giffen event you attend, you earn a "chomp." Once you earn five "chomps, your card will be entered into a raffle. At the end of the school year, a winner will be drawn. **This year's prize is a 40-inch Samsung flat-screen HD television!**

"We Are" Family Stamp Cards will be available at Giffen events beginning February 1.

For questions, please contact Community School Site Coordinator Amanda Boyd at (518)475-6669 or stop by and see her in the Family Resource Room. We hope to see you soon!

SATURDAY ACADEMIES ENRICH STUDENTS

The Saturday Academy at Giffen Memorial Elementary School is an enrichment program for targeted students in grades 3-6.

The program meets two Saturdays a month, with a focus on standards-driven, small-group, project-based instruction. It is designed to engage and allow students to show their learning in a variety of ways, while still working on the standards that will help them in demonstrating proficiency on state exams.

During the month of January, Giffen students learned more about “ethno-mathematics,” specifically the use of **symmetry and coordinating planes**. * They then used a computer program

to plug their **Adinkra**** symbols onto the computer. This required students to code their script to complete the patterns and symbols. These were then printed out using 3-D printing technology.

On Feb. 3, the students were assisted by undergraduate students and postdoctoral researchers from RPI, as students worked on social network analysis and Adinkra stamping. Students learned about constructing and interpreting Social Network graphs that show how people, places, and things are related to one another. The students constructed graphs that demonstrated their knowledge of how historical figures such as

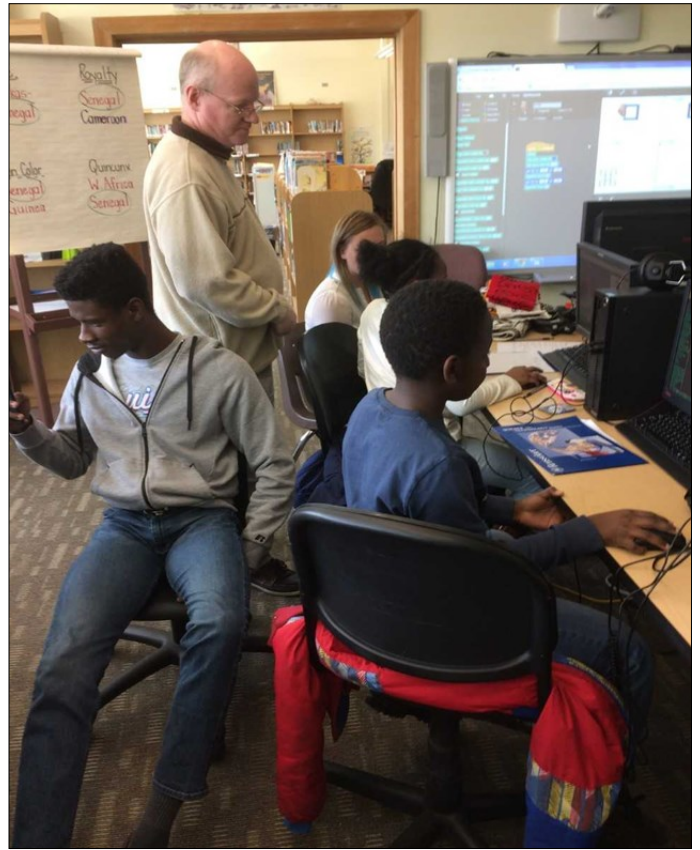
Benjamin Banneker connect with Washington D.C. and Senegal, Africa.

These connections relate to the West African symbol **Quincunx*****. In the Adinkra stamping activity, students physically rendered their virtual Quincunx designs created on Jan. 20 into stamps. They then used fabric paint and stamped the images onto t-shirts.

***Symmetry** is a state in which both sides of something are balanced in size, form or arrangement. **Coordinating planes** are two number lines that intersect, one horizontally one vertically.

****Adinkra** is visual symbols that represent concepts. Its origins are Ghana, Africa.

*****Quincunx** is a geometric pattern consisting of five points arranged in a cross, with four forming a square or rectangle and the fifth at its center.



HELP GIFFEN LEADERS HELP THE HOMELESS

Members of the Grade 6 Leadership Team are looking for your help with a project they are undertaking.

They have noticed a need in their community and would like to create goodie bags for the homeless that contain toiletries and other essentials.

At a recent meeting, the students expressed concern for homeless men and women, particularly in extremely cold weather. Their plan is to have each grade collect specific items and bring them to school between Monday, Feb. 12 and Friday, Feb. 16. These items will be sorted and bagged by the leadership team. Bags are being generously donated through a partnership with the Albany Rotary Club. Thank you in advance for your help!

Proposed Items

- From kindergarten — Baby wipes
- From grade 1 — Toothpaste/toothbrushes
- From grade 2 — Soap
- From grade 3 — Hand sanitizer
- From grade 4 — Granola bars
- From grade 5 — Socks
- From grade 6 — Gloves



From the principal

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report cards reference the progress of students as shown on these assessments. Students in grades 3-6 are gearing up for our New York State assessments. GMES students are ready to show what they've learned and prepared to do their best. A New York State assessment schedule is included within the newsletter. Feel free to reach out to me if there are any questions around either our benchmark or state assessments.

This is also a reminder to our 6th-grade families: Please stay tuned for 6th-grade progress reports, as well as

student requirements regarding the moving up ceremony that will be held in June. Students must be passing all their core area classes and be in good behavioral standing to participate. More information will be mailed out within the next couple weeks.

This month, as we celebrate Black history, there will be a number of opportunities for students to learn about the contributions of African-Americans. The Underground Railroad History Project will be coming in and working with students in kindergarten -grade 6. In our auditorium, students

also will see "Polkadots: the Cool Kids Musical," created by African-American playwright Douglas Lyons and inspired by American Civil Rights history involving the Little Rock Nine. Giffen strives to celebrate and create an understanding and appreciation for the diversity of all of our students. We are excited to be able to present these opportunities to students this upcoming month.

I wish you a peaceful and restful winter recess. If I can be of any assistance to you, please feel free to contact me at the number above.

WHO'S WHO AT GIFFEN

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