



## Weekly GLA Family Newsletter

April 14, 2026

### STAFF SPOTLIGHT



**Ms. Harr - ESL Teacher/ELPT**

**Tell us one of your favorite memories from your time at GLA.**

Dissecting frogs with last year's 8th graders is definitely one of my favorite GLA memories. They were just as intrigued and excited as they were disgusted, which made the whole experience really memorable. Those hands-on learning days are the best. It's so fun to watch their curiosity take over and see them fully engaged.

**Tell us one of your proudest teacher moments.**

My proudest moment working in a school was hosting Project #Thanks4Giving with our NJHS students. We came up with the idea on

the fly in late October and decided to immediately run with it because we knew we had families in our community who could benefit from it. Everything came together incredibly fast since we were on a time crunch to communicate, collect donations, and distribute before fall break and the holidays.

The way our community showed up was amazing. We collected over 3,000 items in just three weeks. Teachers, students, and families were all invested. Our NJHS students worked tirelessly, doing daily homeroom collections each morning, helping count and organize inventory, and ultimately bagging and distributing donations. It was one of those moments that really captured what service, leadership, and community look like in action.

**What keeps you coming back to GLA every day?**

The community is what keeps me coming back to GLA every day. We have incredible students, families, and faculty, and there's a shared belief that we all play a role in making our school great. That collective commitment really matters. I'm pushed and challenged here in the best ways, and it's helped me grow across all of my roles.

**Where are you originally from? (If Chicago, tell us what neighborhood!) What do you love about that place?**

I'm from Chicago Heights, and so were my parents. I still live nearby, and I love that I'm still around so many of the people I grew up with, including my best friends. We still visit

the same places we went as kids and reminisce about those carefree days. It's really special to stay connected to where you come from.

**We all know teaching can be a stressful job! What's your favorite way to unwind?**

My favorite way to unwind is to hangout with my friends and cook for them, play games on the switch with my oldest, or find a good movie/show to watch on my couch after my daughters go to bed for the night.

**What are your hidden or surprising talents?**

I am an amazing cook! I have been highly considering opening a restaurant one day.

## PRINCIPAL'S CORNER

Staff Appreciation Week is quickly approaching! From May 4th–8th, we will be celebrating and recognizing the incredible dedication of our teachers and staff. Showing gratitude is an important part of our school community, and we want our staff to know how much they are valued.

We invite families to join us in showing appreciation in a few meaningful ways:

- Gift Giving: We have included a [Staff Favorites Gift Guide](#) to help you select something special your student's teacher or staff will enjoy. If a staff member's name is not on the list, they did not submit answers.
- Messages of Appreciation: We have created an [appreciation form](#) for families to share kind words, notes of gratitude, or thank-you messages. These will be delivered to staff during Staff Appreciation Week. If you would like to include a message, please submit by Wednesday, April 29th.

More than anything else, our staff are motivated to serve our scholars and families with excellence. Your recognition of their work helps make this week truly special for our staff. Thank you for partnering with us to celebrate the work they do each day!



Principal Miller

## NEW ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Ebonie Durham, Executive Director x Charter School Insider Podcast**

"Schools are human development spaces—not just academic centers."

We're proud to share that our Executive Director, Ebonie Durham, is featured on the Charter School Insider Podcast in an episode titled *"From Vision to Village: Building Partnerships that Drive Student Support."*

In this conversation, she shares how Great Lakes Academy is working with partners to support the whole child—from behavioral health to nutrition and community-based services—so students have what they need to truly thrive.

Full episode available now:

Spotify | Apple Podcasts | Amazon Music | YouTube

Listen here: <https://bit.ly/47TFUjY>

**Top Secret: An Undercover Mission is Coming!**

An undercover secret mission is coming to GLA on Monday, April 27th. Scholars may dress down in spy gear! Think all black outfits, sunglasses, trench coats, fedoras, etc. Stay tuned for more information on this important mission!



### **Lost and Found**

Please tell your child to check the lost and found this week if they are missing a coat, sweatshirt, hat, gloves, or back pack. We also have several pairs of glasses at the front desk. Any items not claimed by the end of the day Friday, 4/17 will be donated.



**GLA x PTDYA Spring Performance**

Join us on Wednesday, April 22nd from 5:30pm-7:00pm for the 5th-8th Grade Spring Performance! We will be celebrating the onstage performances of Black artists of the Broadway stage as well as pop and recording icons.



# ON STAGE 2026



## Great Lakes Academy

Wednesday, April 22, 2026

5:30 pm

8401 South Saginaw

Chicago, IL 60617

Celebrating the onstage  
performances of Black artists of  
the Broadway stage as well as  
pop and recording icons



## GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

### The BE GREAT Lighthouse Alumni Scholarship

We are proud to introduce the Be Great Lighthouse Alumni Scholarship, a \$5,000 award created to honor and support Great Lakes Academy's inaugural graduating class of 2022. This scholarship celebrates academic achievement, resilience, and leadership while continuing our commitment to investing in your future success. As our scholars transition through high school and beyond, we remain dedicated to being a beacon of opportunity every step of the way.

One deserving scholar will be selected to receive this award. The application deadline is Monday, April 27, 2026 at 9:00 AM. Please see the attached flyer for full details and application access or click this [link](#).

If you have any questions, feel free to reach out to Mrs. Long ([ylong@glachicago.org](mailto:ylong@glachicago.org)). We can't wait to celebrate the continued success of our Beacons.

# THE BE GREAT LIGHTHOUSE ALUMNI SCHOLARSHIP



## ABOUT THE SCHOLARSHIP

The Be Great Lighthouse Scholarship is a **\$5,000** award established to honor and support Great Lakes Academy's inaugural graduating class of 2022. Created to celebrate academic achievement, resilience, and leadership, this scholarship serves as a beacon of opportunity as our scholars transition to high school and beyond. Rooted in GLA's mission to empower students to change the world, the Lighthouse Scholarship reflects our commitment to investing in their continued success and bright futures. One scholarship will be awarded.

## CRITERIA

- Must be a 2022 graduate of GLA
- 2.5 GPA (upload transcript)
- Letter of acceptance (upload)
- Personal question essay
- Letter of recommendation from your high school or community leader (upload)
- Availability to accept the award on Thursday May 7, 2026

APPLY NOW >



**DEADLINE:**  
**MONDAY, APRIL 27, 2026 AT 9AM**

## MORE INFORMATION:

YANA LONG, DIRECTOR OF ENGAGEMENT  
(773)217-8193  
ylong@glachicago.org

### Save the Date: Spring Art Show!

The 4th Annual Spring Art Show will be hosted on Thursday, April 16th from 4-6pm.



All families are encouraged to attend! The show will feature art work from all Kinder-4th Grade as well as the Advanced Art and Creative Arts Enrichment Programs!

For questions, please contact Ms. Paull ([kpau11@glachicago.org](mailto:kpau11@glachicago.org))

### **Summer Programming at GLA!**



The GLA Summer Program will run from June 22nd to July 17th. All programming will take place Monday-Friday (exception July 3rd - building closed for July 4th holiday observance) for current K-7th graders.

The deadline to sign-up is Monday, May 25th. [Click here to enroll!](#)

The following options are available for enrollment:

- **K-2nd AM/PM Enrichment Camp (8:30 am - 4:00 pm)**
- **3rd-4th S.M.A.R.T Summer Camp (8:30 am - 4:00 pm)**

- **5th-7th S.M.A.R.T Summer Camp (8:30 am - 4:00 pm)**

Each program is \$400 per student.

If you have any questions, please contact Ms. O'Leary (coleary@glachicago.org) or Dr. Beck (sbeck@glachicago.org)

### **State Testing is Coming Up!**

Spring state assessments are right around the corner. Mark your calendars:

- **ISA (Science, grades 5 & 8): April 20–22**

### **How to help your student prepare:**

- Keep up with attendance — every day of instruction counts
- Talk to your child about why doing their best matters
- Make sure they're getting enough sleep each night
- Ensure they arrive to school on time on test days
- Encourage a positive mindset — remind them of how hard they've worked!
- Practice on the Student Readiness Tools: [srt.testnav.com/psrt/psrt.html](https://srt.testnav.com/psrt/psrt.html)


Questions? Reach out to Meagan Johnson. (mjohnson@glachicago.org)

### **You're Invited: 11th Annual Be Great Benefit**

Please join us on Thursday, May 7th for the 11th Annual Be Great Benefit in support of Great Lakes Academy. Hosted from 6 - 9 pm at the Chicago History Museum, this exciting evening will bring together community leaders, supporters, and friends for a memorable night of fun and giving. Guests will enjoy access to the Chicago History Museum exhibits, open bar, dinner, and a silent auction all while supporting the continued success of Great Lakes Academy scholars. Tickets are \$250 and tables of 10 are \$2,500 and can be purchased here: <https://bit.ly/47ge4he>

Can't make it but still want to support our scholars? You can make a donation here: <https://glachicago.org/donate>

We hope you will join us for a great night in support of our scholars.



**11th ANNUAL BE GREAT BENEFIT**

**POWERED**  
by **PURPOSE**

HISTORY IN THE MAKING

**JOIN US!**

**THURSDAY MAY 7, 2026**  
Chicago History Museum, 1601 N. Clark  
6p-9p

2026 BE GREAT COMMITTEE

Christine Chen	Katie McClay	Larissa Siberberg	Aniyah Fisher
Brad Karsh	Kirsten Villers	Ebonie Durham	Yana Long

## Beacon Dash Pass

Our next **Beacon Dash Pass** is here for all grade levels, with grade-specific celebrations! K–2nd-grade scholars can earn a ticket to a Magic Show with live animals and interactive fun. 3rd and 4th-grade scholars can earn a celebration with a bouncy house, music, and games. 5th–8th-grade scholars will participate in an Escape Room experience. Scholars must meet expectations from March 20 to April 16 to attend their event.



## Great Lakes Academy's Uniform Expectations

Recently, we have seen an increase in scholars arriving to school out of uniform, and we want to ensure families are aware of expectations and next steps. [Uniform Policy](#) can be found here. Repeated out-of-uniform violations will result in scholars being ineligible for incentive events and referral documentation.

## Race to 10 is On!

A huge congratulations to Purdue and UIC for racing to 10 and winning Heat 5! Both homerooms secured their second win and will be going on another free field trip. Also, congratulations to the four parents who won our gas raffle. Thank you for helping your student and their class win the race! Race 6 started 4/3. Let's keep up the momentum and continue working together to make everyday count! Attendance matters.





### **Team Illinois Youth Police Camp**

A free summer camp will take place June 21–27 at Lewis University for boys and girls ages 13–17.

This is a highly structured, paramilitary-style team-building camp focused on leadership, discipline, and growth.

**Applications are due May 9, 2026. Limited spots available.** [TIYPC Mission & Goals 2026 TIYPC Cadet Application \(2\).pdf](#) If you have any questions, you can contact Trooper Duane Chappell (312)-630-417-5892 or email: [duane.chappell@illinois.gov](mailto:duane.chappell@illinois.gov)

### **2025-26 School Calendar**

The 2025-26 school calendar has been posted to GLA's website. Please [view it here](#).

### **School Year Office Hours**

Monday-Thursday, 7:30-4:30 pm

Friday, 7:30-2:00 pm

### **GLA Breakfast, Lunch, and Supper Menus**

Access April's [Breakfast](#), [Lunch](#), and [Supper](#) menus here (these are also linked on our website's [Parent and Student Resource Page](#))

## **IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES**

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**April 13 - May 8, 2026**

13 Spring Cultivate Survey	14	15	16 K-4 Spring Art Showcase Open House, 4:00-6:00 pm	17 8th Grade Graduation Portraits
20 Illinois Science Assessment	21 Illinois Science Assessment	22 Illinois Science Assessment  5th-8th Grade PTDYA x GLA Performance, 5:30 pm	23	24 Wellness Day, No School
27 Undercover Mission Day- Dress Down Day (see above)	28	29 ABC Countdown to Summer Begins!	30 El Dia Del Ninos!	1 Principal Appreciation Day  Wellness Day, No School
4	5 Cinco de Mayo	6	7 GLA Spring Benefit, 6:00 pm	8

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