



Weekly GLA Family Newsletter

August 5, 2026

PRINCIPAL'S CORNER

As shared in Executive Director Ms. Durham's email to families last week, Great Lakes Academy will not charge its annual student fee for the 2026–2027 school year. This decision reflects our commitment to reducing barriers, supporting families, and building a school community where every scholar has the opportunity to thrive. We are grateful for the partnership we share with our families and look forward to another great school year working together for the betterment of our students.

In the spirit of partnership and preparing for a successful school year, I would like to highlight a few important dates and opportunities for our GLA families to engage with our school community.

The Annual Back to School Block Party will take place on Wednesday, August 12th, from 3:30–5:30 p.m. at GLA. This celebration is a chance for scholars and families to meet teachers, enjoy food and games, and connect with community partners as we prepare for the year ahead.

GLA's **Parent Orientation** will provide families with an opportunity to learn more about GLA's expectations, operations, and logistics. Orientation sessions will be held from 5:00–6:00 p.m. on the following dates:

- **K-4th Grade:** Monday, August 17th
- **5th-8th Grade:** Tuesday, August 18th
- **K-8th Grade Virtual Make-Up Session:** Wednesday, August 19th

Parents who have students in both sets of grades (e.g. 3rd and 7th grade) should attend only one meeting, not both.

As a reminder, the first day of school for Kindergarten and 1st Grade students is Friday, August 14th, and 2nd–8th Grade students will return on Monday, August 17th. We look forward to partnering with our families, building meaningful connections, and continuing to create a strong and supportive community where every student can succeed.

Principal Miller

NEW ANNOUNCEMENTS

[A Message From The Executive Director on Annual School Fees](#)

At Great Lakes Academy, we believe that every decision we make should move us closer to becoming the school community our children deserve. **That is why I am excited to share that for the 2026–2027 school year, GLA will not charge an annual \$90 school fee.** While this annual fee has been a part of our school since our founding, we recognize that the cost of raising and educating children begins long before they ever walk through our doors. We cannot eliminate every financial burden families face, but we can choose not to add to it. Our hope is that removing this fee is one small way we can strengthen our partnership with families and continue building a school community rooted in equity, trust, and belonging.

This decision does not mean our work costs less. Like all Illinois charter schools, GLA continues to educate students while receiving significantly less public funding than traditional district schools. Every field trip, enrichment opportunity, celebration, and student experience still requires the generosity of people who believe in our mission. So while we are asking less of our families financially, we are asking even more of our community. Volunteer at an event. Join the Parent Advisory Committee. Attend school celebrations. Share your talents. Advocate for our students. And if you are in a position to give financially, every gift—of any size—helps create opportunities for our children.

Our vision has always been bigger than operating a great school. We are working to build a community where every child and every family can thrive. Thank you for believing in that vision and for continuing to partner with us as we create something extraordinary together.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ebonie Durham". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ebonie" being more prominent than the last name "Durham".

Ebonie Durham
Executive Director
Great Lakes Academy

Feedback Requested: After-School Enrichment



The Programs team is planning for the 2026-2027 school year and is requesting feedback regarding After-School Enrichment! Please [click here](#) to complete!

GLA x Build Coffee & Books

Join us this Sunday, August 9th, from 2:00 - 4:00 pm at Great Lakes Academy (8401 S. Saginaw Ave. Chicago, IL 60617) for a fun afternoon celebrating literacy and community! In partnership with Build Coffee & Books and Men of Color Read, GLA is excited to host Julian Randall, author of Shook, for a special meet and greet. Families can enjoy an open gym, connect with the author, and receive free books while supplies last.

Please RSVP [here](#) or use the QR code below. We hope to see you there!






BUILD COFFEE & BOOKS

SHOOK

LAUNCH EVENT + OPEN GYM




Meet & greet with author Julian Randall!

Open gym!

Free books while supplies last!

Sunday, August 9
2 PM - 4 PM

Great Lakes Academy
8401 S. Saginaw

presented in partnership with




RSVP:



GLA Annual Back to School Block Party!

The start of school is just around the corner! We have an opportunity for family engagement at our annual **Back to School Block Party on August 12th from 3:30-5:30 pm.**

Students will get the opportunity to meet their teachers while enjoying an afternoon filled with fun, food, and games. There will also be community vendors.

The Back to School Block Party will be held on campus at Great Lakes Academy, 8401 S. Saginaw Ave. Please RSVP [here](#) or using the QR code below.

Note: Please plan accordingly for the weather and bring umbrellas, chairs and sunscreen. This event will be held outside.

For any questions, please contact the front office, 773-530-3040.

We look forward to seeing you there!



GREAT LAKES ACADEMY

BACK TO SCHOOL²



8/12/26

3:30PM

5:30PM

**Meet your
Teachers,
Snacks, Games,
and it's FREE!**

RSVP:



8401 S. Saginaw Ave. Chicago, IL 60617

Anchor's Up! Field Trip 08/21

GLA scholars will be starting the year strong by attending their first field trip on Friday, August 21st! Grades 3rd through 8th will participate in team building programs outside of the building at ClimbZone and Windy City Fieldhouse! Kindergarten through 2nd grade will build relationships with staff and peers right here at GLA. We can't wait to pull our Anchor's Up!

→ If you have a 3rd or 4th grade scholar, complete [this waiver](#) by Wednesday, August 19th in order for your scholar to participate.

SCAN HERE

8/21 FIELD TRIP
WAIVER

3RD-4TH
GRADE ONLY



Scan to check if your scholar has a waiver on file....

If not, complete the waiver.

If a waiver is not signed by Thursday, 08/19
your scholar cannot participate.

Please reach out to Caitlin O'Leary, coleary@glachicago.org with any questions!

Required for All 5th–8th Grade Families

Please complete the [Student Technology Agreement Form](#) to select your child's Technology-Free or Yondr status for the school year.

Family Income Information Form – 2026–27

GLA families, please complete the **CPS Family Income Information Form**, **linked below, for the 2026–27 school year**. Only **one form per household** is needed, and it takes just **2–3 minutes** to complete.

This form helps determine school funding that supports important programs at GLA, including our **free lunch program**.

Completed forms can be:

- Dropped off to the GLA front office

- Emailed to sthunherst@glachicago.org

Paper forms are also available in the front office for families who are unable to complete the form electronically.

Thank you for taking a few minutes to complete this important form and for your continued support of GLA!

[English Form](#)

[Spanish Form](#)

Mobile Dental & Vision Visits – 2026–27

GLA is happy to announce that our **mobile dental and vision providers will be returning during the 2026–27 school year** to provide services to our students! Mobile dental providers are scheduled to visit GLA **Monday, January 26th through Wednesday, February 3rd** to provide dental services to students who sign up.

Vision providers will be scheduled once we have enough students registered for the service. **A minimum of 30 students must sign up before a vision provider can be scheduled.**

In order for your student to be seen during these visits, a **completed consent form (front and back)** must be on file. Consent forms can be completed in either of the following ways:

- **Online: Complete the form and email it to sthunherst@glachicago.org**
- **In Person: Complete the form at the GLA Front Office, Monday–Friday, 8:00 AM–2:30 PM**

Please note the following **Illinois state requirements**:

- **Kindergarten, 2nd Grade, and 6th Grade: An updated Illinois Dental Exam is required.**
- **Kindergarten: A completed Illinois Vision Exam Form is required.**

We encourage families to complete the required forms as soon as possible so students are ready to participate when the mobile dental and vision providers visit GLA. Thank you for helping us keep our students healthy and ready to learn!

[Dental - English](#)

[Dental - Spanish](#)

[Vision - English](#)

[Vision-Spanish](#)

Important Medical Requirements – 2026–27

Please be aware of Illinois medical requirements for the upcoming school year:

- **Incoming Kindergarten: Physical, required immunizations**
- **Incoming 6th Grade: Physical, required immunizations, and dental exam.**

All required medical documentation must be submitted to the school by **Thursday, October 15, 2026, to avoid medical exclusion.**

If the required documentation is not received by this deadline, your child **will be medically excluded from attending school** until all outstanding health requirements have been completed and the school receives the appropriate documentation.

Medical exclusion is not a disciplinary action or suspension. It is a health requirement that schools are required to follow under Illinois law.

We encourage families to schedule appointments early and submit required documentation as soon as possible.

Family Medical Resources: [Click Here](#) for a list of local health centers and clinics that may offer free or reduced-cost services to assist families with physicals, immunizations, and other basic medical needs.

Questions? Contact **Ms. Thunherst** at **773-530-3040** or sthunherst@glachicago.org.

2026–27 GLA Uniform Information

Please review the **2026–27 GLA School Uniform Policy** linked below for approved uniform items and expectations.

GLA Online Uniform Store is OPEN!

Available Items:

- Short Sleeve T-Shirts – \$13
- Long Sleeve T-Shirts – \$16
- GLA-Branded Polos – \$16
- Crewneck Sweaters – \$20

Ordering & Pick-Up:

Orders placed Monday–Thursday are ready for pick-up the following Wednesday.

Pick-Up Hours:

Monday–Thursday: 8:30 AM–2:00 PM

Friday: 8:30 AM–1:00 PM

Need your uniform sooner? **All available uniform items can also be purchased directly from the GLA Front Office** during pick-up hours.

[Uniform Policy](#) | [Shop the GLA Uniform Store](#)

Questions? Contact the GLA Front Office at **773-530-3040**.

Help Us Spread the Word, GLA Families!

Applications for the upcoming school year are now open at Great Lakes Academy, and there's no better recommendation than one from our current families!  

If you love the GLA experience, tell your friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers about our amazing school community. From strong academics and year-round support to a culture that empowers scholars to thrive, we're proud to offer an education where the best is truly in your backyard.

 Now enrolling Kindergarten–8th Grade

 8401 S. Saginaw Ave., Chicago, IL 60617

 (773) 530-3040

 www.glachicago.org

Thank you for being our biggest ambassadors!



Great Lakes Academy



APPLICATIONS ARE NOW OPEN!



**APPLY
NOW**
WWW.GLACHICAGO.ORG

**8401 S. SAGINAW AVE.
CHICAGO, IL 60617
(773)530-3040**

2026-27 Returning Student Annual Registration Paperwork

Annual registration paperwork for returning students is now **past due** and should be completed as soon as possible.

Annual registration paperwork needs to be completed each school year to ensure we have the most accurate and up-to-date information for your student for the 2026-27 school year.

Each student has a personalized registration link that was emailed to parents/guardians. Please check your email to retrieve the link and complete the annual registration paperwork for your student(s) as soon as possible.

If you have not received the link or have any questions, please contact Ms. Thunherst at sthunherst@glachicago.org or 773-530-3040.

GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

School Supply List

The 2026-27 school supply list has been posted to GLA's website. Please [view it here](#).

2026-27 School Calendar

The 2026-27 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

Summer Office Hours - June 8-July 31

Monday-Friday, 8:00-2:30 pm

GLA Breakfast, Lunch, and Supper Menus

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

August 2026

Great Lakes Academy

Breakfast

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	21
• Honey Cheerios WG • Seasonal Fruit Daily Milk • Fat Free Milk • Milk 1%, low fat, 8 fl oz. • Chocolate Low Fat Milk • Strawberry Milk	• Pancake Bites WG • 100% Juice Daily Milk • Fat Free Milk • Milk 1%, low fat, 8 fl oz. • Chocolate Low Fat Milk • Strawberry Milk	• WG Apple Cinnamon Muffin • WG Goldfish Graham Crackers • Seasonal Fruit Daily Milk • Fat Free Milk • Milk 1%, low fat, 8 fl oz. • Chocolate Low Fat Milk • Strawberry Milk	• Breakfast Pizza • 100% Juice Daily Milk • Fat Free Milk • Milk 1%, low fat, 8 fl oz. • Chocolate Low Fat Milk • Strawberry Milk	• Cherry Frudel WG • Seasonal Fruit Daily Milk • Fat Free Milk • Milk 1%, low fat, 8 fl oz. • Chocolate Low Fat Milk • Strawberry Milk
24	25	26	27	28
• WG Blueberry Bread • Seasonal Fruit Daily Milk • Fat Free Milk • Milk 1%, low fat, 8 fl oz. • Chocolate Low Fat Milk • Strawberry Milk	• WG Cinnamon Glazed Pancakes • 100% Juice Daily Milk • Fat Free Milk • Milk 1%, low fat, 8 fl oz. • Chocolate Low Fat Milk • Strawberry Milk	• WG Bagel • Plain Cream Cheese • Seasonal Fruit Daily Milk • Fat Free Milk • Milk 1%, low fat, 8 fl oz. • Chocolate Low Fat Milk • Strawberry Milk	• WG Buttermilk Biscuits • Turkey Sausage • Seasonal Fruit Daily Milk • Fat Free Milk • Milk 1%, low fat, 8 fl oz. • Chocolate Low Fat Milk • Strawberry Milk	• Danimals Strawberry Banana yogurt • WG Goldfish Graham Crackers • Seasonal Fruit Daily Milk • Fat Free Milk • Milk 1%, low fat, 8 fl oz. • Chocolate Low Fat Milk • Strawberry Milk
31				
• WG Trix Cereal • Seasonal Fruit Daily Milk • Fat Free Milk • Milk 1%, low fat, 8 fl oz. • Chocolate Low Fat Milk • Strawberry Milk				

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Just A Dash
FOOD SERVICE GROUP

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	21
- Sloppy Joe on a Bun - WG Burger Bun - Tater Tots - Baby Carrots - Seasonal Fruit - Milk & Condiments - Fat Free Milk - Milk 1%, low fat, 8 fl oz. - Strawberry Milk - Chocolate Low Fat Milk	- Walking Taco - Turkey Taco Meat - Nacho Cheese - WG Fritos - Golden Corn - Seasonal Fruit - Milk & Condiments - Fat Free Milk - Milk 1%, low fat, 8 fl oz. - Strawberry Milk - Chocolate Low Fat Milk	- Boneless Chicken Wings WG - WG Dinner Roll - Fresh Celery Sticks - Hummus - Seasonal Fruit - Milk & Condiments - Fat Free Milk - Milk 1%, low fat, 8 fl oz. - Strawberry Milk - Chocolate Low Fat Milk	- Beef Spaghetti - Fresh Broccoli Bites - WG Garlic Toast - Seasonal Fruit - Milk & Condiments - Fat Free Milk - Milk 1%, low fat, 8 fl oz. - Strawberry Milk - Chocolate Low Fat Milk	- Turkey Pepperoni Pizza WG - Fresh Cucumber Slices - Grape Tomatoes - Seasonal Fruit - Milk & Condiments - Fat Free Milk - Milk 1%, low fat, 8 fl oz. - Strawberry Milk - Chocolate Low Fat Milk
24	25	26	27	28
- Cheeseburger - WG Burger Bun - Oven Fries - Fresh Cucumber Slices - Seasonal Fruit - Milk & Condiments - Fat Free Milk - Milk 1%, low fat, 8 fl oz. - Strawberry Milk - Chocolate Low Fat Milk	*Loaded Taco Fries* - Beef Taco Meat - Potato Wedges - Nacho Cheese - Golden Corn - WG Dinner Roll - Seasonal Fruit - Milk & Condiments - Fat Free Milk - Milk 1%, low fat, 8 fl oz. - Strawberry Milk - Chocolate Low Fat Milk	- WG Chicken Tenders - WG Dinner Roll - Fresh Carrot Sticks - Hummus - Seasonal Fruit - Milk & Condiments - Fat Free Milk - Milk 1%, low fat, 8 fl oz. - Strawberry Milk - Chocolate Low Fat Milk	- Chicken Alfredo - Steamed Broccoli - WG Garlic Toast - Seasonal Fruit - Milk & Condiments - Fat Free Milk - Milk 1%, low fat, 8 fl oz. - Strawberry Milk - Chocolate Low Fat Milk	- Cheesy Breadstick WG - Zesty Marinara - Seasonal Fruit - Milk & Condiments - Fat Free Milk - Milk 1%, low fat, 8 fl oz. - Strawberry Milk - Chocolate Low Fat Milk
31				
- Bosco Sticks - Zesty Marinara - Fresh Broccoli Bites - Seasonal Fruit - Milk & Condiments - Fat Free Milk - Milk 1%, low fat, 8 fl oz. - Strawberry Milk - Chocolate Low Fat Milk				

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IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES

IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES

August 3 - August 21, 2026

3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14
		Back to School Block Party 3:30-5:30 PM		First Day of School K-1 1:50 Dismissal
17	18	19	20	21
First Day of School All Scholars: K-8th 1:50 Dismissal	1:50 Dismissal	1:50 Dismissal	1:50 Dismissal	1:50 Dismissal
24	25	26	27	28

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