



# The Weekly Wave

Weekly GLA Family Newsletter  
February 24, 2026

## STAFF SPOTLIGHT



**Jay Winters - Learning Behavior Specialist**

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

One of my favorite memories from my time here would have to be this past Black History Month assembly. Seeing the incredible talent on display, not just from our students, but from our staff as well, was truly inspiring. The energy, pride, and creativity throughout the performance were unmatched. Hands down, it was one of the best assemblies I've experienced and a moment that really captured the spirit of our school community.

**Tell us one of your proudest teacher**

**moments.**

My proudest moments working here was starting our girls flag football team last spring at. The overwhelming interest from girls led to the creation of a Lady Beacon squad, which was incredibly rewarding to see. In my 10+ years of coaching football, this was the first time I had the opportunity to coach girls, and their commitment, confidence, and competitive spirit were amazing from day one. Their buy-in showed on the field, finishing the season with a 7-1-1 record, an impressive accomplishment for a first-year program. I'm incredibly proud of what they built together and excited to see even greater success this upcoming spring.

**What made you want to become a teacher (or what made you want to work in a school)?**

What made me want to become a teacher was the impact I had on the first group of kids I coached in football back in 2016. Seeing the positive influence I had on those young boys' lives gave me a sense of purpose and fulfillment that my marketing career at the time simply couldn't provide. I recognized a real need for consistent, positive role models in their lives, and I felt called to step into that role. That experience made it clear to me that working in a school would allow me to make a meaningful difference every day, both in and out of the classroom.

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

What keeps me coming back every day is the feeling that I still have unfinished business. I truly believe my assignment here isn't complete yet. There is still more work to be done, more students to impact, more programs to build, and more growth to be a part of. Knowing that I'm meant to be here, continuing to serve, support, and push our students toward their full potential, is what motivates me to show up each day fully committed.

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

BEAR DOWN!!! Here we come Super Bowl 2026-2027! #KingoftheNorth #Iceman

**What's your dream vacation?**

50 yard line tickets to whatever Super Bowl the Bears go to.

## PRINCIPAL'S CORNER



Our school community came together for a high-energy Black History Month All-School Assembly celebrating Black art and artists. Students led the celebration with powerful performances, including Illinois and FAMU performing “Rockin' Robin” by Michael Jackson, under the artistic direction of PTDYA. The GLA Dancers impressed the crowd, and The GLA Celestials Drum Group showed off their percussion skills by filling the enrichment center with vibrant rhythms. It was moving seeing our students performing such powerful pieces with pride!

We were also honored to experience PTDYA's electrifying footwork exhibition and a moving scene from the movie *Fences*. Their contributions beautifully highlighted the richness and impact of Black artistic expression.

We also enjoyed stunning vocal performances by Ms. Hearst, Ms. Shamara, and Ms. Anna, whose powerful voices brought joy and inspiration to our celebration. We are grateful for the opportunity to gather as a community to celebrate history, culture, and the lasting influence of Black art in contemporary culture.



*Ashli Miller*

Principal Miller

## NEW ANNOUNCEMENTS

Save Up to \$25 on GLA Spirit Wear + Free Shipping!

Now is the perfect time to stock up on **Great Lakes Academy spirit wear** and save BIG!

- 🎉 **Save \$15 when you spend \$75**
- 🎉 **Save \$25 when you spend \$100**
- 🛍️ **Use code: SPIRIT308 at checkout**
- 🚚 **PLUS get FREE shipping on orders over \$85!**

Don't miss out — grab your hoodies, tees, hats, and more while this deal lasts!

Shop now: <https://1stplace.sale/115856>

Thank you for supporting Great Lakes Academy!

**GREAT LAKES ACADEMY**  
OFFICIAL SPIRIT WEAR STORE



**SAVE \$25 ON \$100**  
SPEND

**SAVE \$15 ON \$75**  
SPEND



**FREE Shipping on orders over \$85**

**SHOP NOW**

**SHOP AT: 1STPLACE.SALE/115856**

**Use Code: SPIRIT308**

### **Southside Literacy Fest**

On Saturday, February 28, 2026, Gary Comer Youth Center is hosting *Lit Fest: Celebrating the Power of Black Literacy & Liberation* — a Black History Month celebration exploring the many forms of literacy that shape our lives today and reimagining it as more than just words on a page. Through immersive workshops, performances, and conversations, Lit Fest explores literacy as a pathway to self-expression, wellness, financial empowerment, digital fluency, and cultural preservation.

The event will feature keynote discussions, performances, interactive workshops, author talks, and family-friendly activities designed to inspire curiosity, creativity, and a lifelong love of learning. If you are interested in attending, you can RSVP [here](#).

1ST ANNUAL LITERACY FESTIVAL:

# LitFest

CELEBRATING THE POWER OF BLACK LITERACY & LIBERATION

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2026 | 10AM-4PM  
GARY COMER YOUTH CENTER | 7200 S. INGLESIDE

FINANCE      TECHNOLOGY  
HEALTH      EDUCATION

DFSS  
 Department of Family and Support Services  
 BMRC  
 QR code  
 GCYC  
 My CHI My Future  
 Habitat for Humanity Chicago  
 TRiO

## GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Inclement Weather Day - Calendar Change

- Because we had to cancel school on Friday, January 23rd, we are turning a non-school day into a school day to meet the state minimum number of in-session school days.
- **Thursday, April 30th, which was originally scheduled as a Wellness Day, will now be a school day.**

### Class of 2026 Graduation

The Programs Team is excited to announce information regarding 8th Grade End of Year Events and 8th Grade Graduation! Please review the information below and mark your calendars.

*Great Lakes Academy* | **Class of 2026**  
**8th Grade Events**

**17  
APRIL**

during school hours  
scholars only

**Graduation Portraits\***

Scholars will take individual photos in their cap & gown, as well as a Class of 2026 photo. Families can access these photos online - printed photos for an additional cost.

**15  
MAY**

9:00am - 10:30am  
families invited

**HS Decision Day**

Each 8th grader will announce which high school they will be attending in the Fall. Families encouraged to attend - no ticket needed.

**26  
MAY - 29  
MAY**

overnight  
must meet requirements

**Atlanta Trip**

Scholars will travel to Atlanta, Georgia. Please reach out to Ms. Lifka for more information.

**01  
JUN - 05  
JUN**

during school hours  
scholars only

**Spirit Week**

Scholars will vote on spirit day themes, and days will be announced in May.

**02  
JUN**

11:00am - 1:00pm  
ticketed event

**Celebration Cruise\***

Celebrate with a cruise & lunch around Lake Michigan.

Adult tickets must be purchased (\$80) - 1 Adult Ticket per student until 04/01. After 04/01, additional tickets can be purchased on a first come, first serve basis until 04/29.

during school hours  
scholars only

**04  
JUN**

5:30pm - 7:00pm  
families invited

**Clap Out**

K-7 scholars will cheer on our 8th graders on their final walk through the halls of GLA!

**K-8th Lighthouse Awards Night**

Celebrate all of the accomplishments from this school year!

Families encouraged to attend - no ticket needed.

**05  
JUN**

4:00pm - 5:30pm  
ticketed event

**Graduation**

Eligible scholars will participate in the graduation ceremony.

Attendees 5 years old + must have a ticket. Tickets are limited to 4 guests.

\*Optional, with purchase of Events Package

# 8th Grade END OF YEAR EVENTS PACKAGE\*



PAY BY APRIL 29TH VIA:



(773) 530-3040



PowerSchool  
Parent Portal

## \$100

### INCLUDED ITEMS:

- Class of 2026 T-Shirt
- Yard Sign
- Celebration Cruise Ticket - Scholar only
- Cap & Gown Portraits + Digital Access
- Graduation Day Photos + Digital Access

### OPTIONAL EVENT

- Celebration Cruise - Adult
  - \$60 per adult
  - 1 adult per student until April 1st
  - If more available - first come, first serve until April 29th
  - Transportation not included

\*Optional



# 8th Grade GRADUATION CAP & GOWNS



PAY BY APRIL 29TH VIA:



(773) 530-3040



PowerSchool  
Parent Portal

## \$20

- Cap, Gown, & Tassel
  - Delivered in April
  - Yours to take home

### GRADUATION TICKETS

- Pick up available May 4<sup>th</sup> - May 29<sup>th</sup>
- Guaranteed four tickets per scholar at no cost
- Need Extra Tickets?
  - Request additional tickets starting May 4<sup>th</sup> in email to Ms. O'Leary to be added to the waitlist ([coleary@glachicago.org](mailto:coleary@glachicago.org))

Reach out to Ms. O'Leary([coleary@glachicago.org](mailto:coleary@glachicago.org)) for any questions!

### 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.

### 2026–27 Intent to Return

We are excited to announce that the **2026–27 Intent to Return form** is now available online! This replaces the paper forms used in past years.

To help us plan enrollment, **all families must complete an Intent to Return form for each currently enrolled student**, even if you do not plan to return.

**Intent to Return emails are sent weekly**, so please check your email for a **personalized snapcode link** and detailed instructions to complete the form.

All forms must be submitted **no later than Friday, March 6, 2026.**

If you need assistance, please contact **Ms. Thunherst at 773-530-3040** or **[sthunherst@glachicago.org](mailto:sthunherst@glachicago.org)**.

### **Spring Sports Sign-Ups**

Spring sports will be starting with Co-ed Track on 2/19, girls & boys flag football will be starting 3/9!


If you would like to sign your student-athlete up for either sport click [here](#). **The participation fee for each sport is \$150 per student-athlete.**

If you have any questions or concerns please reach out to Coach P ([tperez@glachicago.org](mailto:tperez@glachicago.org)).

### **K-4th Black History Month Performance**

Join us on Thursday, February 26th from 1:30-2:30pm for the Kinder-4th Grade Black History Month Performance. Each K-4 homeroom will be practicing all month long to showcase their performance to families!

# BLACK HISTORY MONTH PERFORMANCE



KINDER-FOURTH GRADE  
FEB. 26TH 1:30-2:30 PM  
FAMILIES WELCOME

*\*Note: Early Dismissals will be unavailable until all performances are complete & scholars return to classrooms.*

**Spread the Word: GLA Spring Open House**

Families, help us share the news! Great Lakes Academy will host our **Spring Open House on Tuesday, March 3rd, from 5:00–7:00 PM**. This is a chance for prospective families to tour our campus, meet our staff, and see why GLA is one of the top schools in Illinois. Additionally, applications are now open for the 2026-27 school year. Any applications completed by Wednesday, March 18th will be eligible for the March 19th lottery.



GREAT LAKES ACADEMY



2026-2027

# OPEN HOUSE

*Our mission is to empower children today to change the world tomorrow.*



**Tuesday,  
March 3, 2026**

**5pm-7pm**

8401 S. Saginaw Ave.  
Chicago, IL 60617

- ✓ Tour the school
- ✓ Meet staff
- ✓ Learn about our academic, enrichment and student support
- ✓ Ask questions



For more info:

**773-530-3040**



Visit us:

**[www.glachicago.org](http://www.glachicago.org)**

**2026-27 Applications are now open!**

**You're invited: Great Lakes Academy Kindergarten Prom**

Calling our future and current scholars! Celebrate with us on Saturday, March 7th as we create a magical day for our Pre-K AND current Kindergarten stars! Put on your best formal fit and walk the red carpet like the royalty you are! Dancing, memories, and unforgettable moments await. [RSVP](#) today and let's make it a day to remember.



Great Lakes Academy

YOU ARE INVITED TO THE  
**Kindergarten  
Prom**

For grades Pre-K- Kindergarten

Formal attire encouraged!

FREE

**SATURDAY, March 7, 2026**

12pm- 3pm

**Great Lakes  
Academy**

8401 S. Saginaw Ave

RSVP:

<https://bit.ly/3LjhGaE>



**Race to 10 is On!**

A huge congratulations to UIC for racing to 10 and winning Heat 4! They will be going on a free field trip of their choice. Also, congratulations to the two parents who won our gas raffle. Race 5 started on 2/10.

As a reminder, the first homeroom to achieve 100% attendance 10 times will win a free field trip. Parents will also have the chance to win raffled gas or Uber gift cards as an added bonus. Our fourth race started Friday, December 5th and all homerooms were reset to 0 days. The Race to 10 tracker shows our progress and highlights the top 5 homerooms as of February 3rd. Let's keep working together to make every day count! Attendance matters!



# RACE TO 10



Swim Classes - [sign up here](#)

# DEEPLY ROOTED

*Where Culture Meets the Water*




## FREE Swim Classes


### SPRING 2026


Culturally affirming, beginner-friendly swim lessons for families in Chicago.





- Anticipated Start Dates:
- Wed, March 4 at 6PM (Adults 18+)
- Saturdays, March 7 at 11:20AM (Youth & Parent+Child)

 6-Week Program | South Side YMCA  
6330 S. Stony Island Ave, Chicago, IL

LEARN MORE & COMPLETE OUR INTEREST FORM 

LINK IN BIO | SPOTS LIMITED! 

 872-216-1276

 [theinfinitebloom.com](http://theinfinitebloom.com)  
[@TheInfiniteBloom](https://www.instagram.com/TheInfiniteBloom)

[TheInfiniteBloom1@gmail.com](mailto:TheInfiniteBloom1@gmail.com)

in partnership with



#### 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

Click [here](#) to access (these are also linked on our website's [Parent and Student Resource Page](#))

# IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES

February 23 - March 20, 2026

23	24	25	26	27
		Fire Evacuation Drill #3	K-4th Black History Month Performance, 1:30 pm	
2	3	4	5	6
Women's History Month → Wave 3 Enrichment Begins	Spring Open House, 5:00-7:00 pm			8th Grade: GoCPS High School Results Round 1 Acceptance Offer Deadline
9	10	11	12	13
ANet & Navigator IA#3 Assessments Spring Athletics Begins	ANet & Navigator IA#3 Assessments	ANet & Navigator IA#3 Assessments	ANet & Navigator IA#3 Assessments End of Quarter 3	<b>No School, Parent Teacher Conferences</b>
16	17	18	19	20
<b>Wellness Day, Building Closed</b>	<b>Staff PD, No School</b>	Q4 Begins	2026-27 Lottery	

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