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The Genesee Community Charter School's name spawned from the Genesee River, as did its curriculum. This charter school is a successful K through 6 elementary school located on the campus of the Rochester Museum & Science Center in Rochester, New York. Its unique curriculum framework, which centers on the history of Rochester and its scientific prehistory, is enhanced by the school's unusual location.

When initially creating a school to reflect its vision of an inquiry-based program, the board sought an exemplary school leader, highly qualified teachers, and the best programs it could find. Then, the board formed a relationship with two strong educational organizations, Expeditionary Learning and Responsive Classroom. Utilizing the unique backdrop of the school's location within the Rochester Museum & Science Center and adopting these progressive models helped the school leader and staff develop the kind of active academic and positive social climate they wanted to generate at GCCS. In addition, to intentionally build a strong vibrant culture, the board also sought to integrate arts into every aspect of the curriculum rather than residing in the periphery or marginalized as "special subjects," arts are at the very heart of learning at GCCS.

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The arts are not subservient to the academic subjects at GCCS because classroom teachers rely on the arts to deepen student learning, and arts teachers rely on classroom teachers to provide the content and context for students to develop their artistic sensibilities. The arts reveal what students learn at GCCS. The hallways are adorned with student artwork that reflect children's unique understanding of the world around them, and that is because the community and city around them is the focus of the curriculum. Students express their understanding of rivers, flowers, cities, industries, outer space, major events in history, and much more through music, visual own language, and the students spend their tenure at the school mastering the skills of that art form as well as using it to express their knowledge of academic subjects. Key design elements of a meaningful integrated approach are communication between classroom teachers and arts specialists, a schedule that allocates adequate time to arts, full participation in the arts, and the curriculum.

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Professional development is a high priority at GCCS, and since the charter allows the school to create its own calendar, multiple days are allotted for in-depth planning. During planning time, arts and classroom teachers collaborate to form something greater than they could in isolation. For example, complementary studies in dance, music, and art bring fresh perspectives to second

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Large blocks of time are built into the main schedule to support evocative learning through the arts at GCCS. This gives the staff the essential flexibility to determine what the students need to



of a story, and in music the connection is how opera communicates a story through song.

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- Hire well: A strong school leader and exemplary teachers are the foundation of a successful school
- Establish a clear and coherent vision
- Ensure that allocation of resources (people, time, and money) reflects the vision
- Leverage creativity provided by New York charter school law (e.g., distinct curriculum and extended school day)
- Identify high-value external partners (e.g., Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound, Responsive Classroom, and Rochester Museum & Science Center)

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- Expeditionary Learning Outward Bound: <http://elschools.org>
- Genesee Community Charter School: <http://www.gccschool.org>
- New York State Testing and Accountability Reporting: <https://www.nystart.gov>
- New York State Board of Regents, Charter School Office: <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/psc/>