THE GRAHAM FAMILY OF SCHOOLS
The Graham School
The Charles School at Ohio Dominican University
Graham Elementary and Middle School

Attendance Policy (amended and approved by all 3 boards on 6/15/26)

Positive School Climate

The Graham Family of Schools (TGFS) aims to help all students grow in their academic and social-emotional learning, ongoing. All efforts are focused on preparing students to be successful in achieving this mission as they work toward full readiness for the next grade level and ultimately college and careers. Our aim is to continuously advance students' skills and demonstrate critical analysis and problem solving, collaborative teamwork, thoughtful reflection on experiences, sharing in responsibility for academic success, and creating a safe learning community for all.

In order to achieve this mission at our schools, TGFS will:

- Maintain and promote a growth-mindset toward all students and staff such that everyone has an expectation to grow in their intelligence, and display of it;
- Foster in students a commitment to self-direction about their own learning and to the school and wider community in which they live;
- Teach at all grade levels with sensitivity to brain development in children, including course and class lessons that focus on human brain development and its relation to learning, and grow students in their academic learning and social-emotional development;
- Utilize the community outside the school doors as a resource to advance experiential learning for our students;
- Treat all students and staff with compassion, honesty, and respect;
- View academic achievement as a reflection of both student and teacher jointly teaming for success;
- Create, state, and display norms for how people are expected to act at school regarding academic work and behavioral interactions;
- Design an operational strategy at each TGFS school for advancing our work in academic achievement, social and emotional learning, grade advancement, and college and career readiness.

Attendance Policy Overview

Students enrolled in the TGFS schools must attend school regularly in accordance with the laws of the State. The educational program offered by the school is predicated upon the presence and punctuality of the student and requires continuity of instruction and classroom participation. Student absences, whether excused or unexcused, take away from instructional time and have an adverse effect on student learning when classroom instruction is missed.

Attendance shall be required of all students enrolled at the School during the days and hours that the School is in session.

To support academic success for all students, TGFS will partner with students and families to identify and reduce barriers to regular school attendance.

TGFS utilizes a continuum of strategies to reduce student absence including, but not limited to:

- Notification of student absence to the parent or guardian;
- Counseling;
- Parent education and parenting programs;
- Mediation;
- Intervention programs available through juvenile authorities; and
- Referral for truancy, if applicable.

The Board has adopted the following terms and definitions that will be consistently utilized in our attendance-related work and reporting.

Compulsory school age: A child between 6 and 18 years of age is "of compulsory school age" and must attend school each day. A child under 6 years of age who has been enrolled in kindergarten also shall be considered "of compulsory school age."

Average Daily Attendance (ADA): A schoolwide measurement that shows the total hours all students attended school divided by the total hours all students could have attended the school year. It is an indicator of how many students typically show up each day. Average Daily Attendance tends to mask chronic absence and can make it difficult to see when a school or school has an attendance issue.

Chronic Absence: Missing at least 10% of instructional time for any reason in the school year. Student absences from school, whether excused, medically excused, unexcused, or out-of school suspensions, take away from instructional time and have an adverse effect on student learning.

Excused Absences

Absences due to the following will be excused:

1. Personal physical illness that prevents attendance at School (at the discretion of the Dean or his/her designee, a written statement from a physician/clinical nurse specialist/certified nurse practitioner will be required).
2. Personal mental illness such that the student will not benefit from instruction (at the discretion of the Dean or his/her designee, a written statement from a physician/clinical nurse specialist/certified nurse practitioner/mental health professional will be required).
3. Illness in the family necessitating the presence of the child (at the discretion of the Dean or his/her designee, a written statement from a physician and an explanation as to why the child's absence was necessary will be required).
4. Quarantine in the home (absence will be excused for the duration of the quarantine as determined by proper health officials).
5. Death in the family (absence will be excused for no more than eighteen (18) hours unless the Dean or his/her designee determines that a longer absence is reasonably necessary).
6. Medical, behavioral, or dental appointments (at the discretion of the Dean or his/her designee, a written statement from a physician, mental health professional, or dentist confirming the appointment may be required).
7. Observance of religious holidays or expression of religious beliefs consistent with the truly held religious beliefs of the child or the child's family for no more than three (3) school days (the Dean may require confirmation of the parent's signature requesting the absence, but may not inquire as to the sincerity of the student's religious or spiritual belief system).
8. College or university visits (at the discretion of the Dean or his/her designee, verification of the date and time of the visit may be requested).
9. Pre-enlistment reporting to military enlistment processing station (at the discretion of the Dean or his/her designee, a written verification confirming the date and time reporting may be required).
10. Absence due to a placement in or changes to a foster care placement or any court proceeding related to a student's foster care status.
11. Absences due to a student being homeless.
12. Absences due to deployment activities of a parent or custodian.
13. The existence of an emergency condition at home such as absence, illness, or death of the parent or custodian.

14. Necessary work in a family business or on a family farm (after proof of necessary absence is provided to the Dean or his/her designee.
15. Necessary work directly and exclusively for a child's parent, if the child is over the age of fourteen (14) and has been in regular attendance at school during the current school year (after proof of necessary absence is provided to the Dean or his/her designee).
16. Instruction at home from a person qualified to teach the branches of education in which instruction is required, and such additional branches, as the advancement and needs of the child may require (after adequate certification of home instruction has been provided to the Dean or his/her designee).
17. An emergency or set of circumstances which in the judgment of the School constitutes a good and sufficient cause for absence. Two excused days for family emergencies per semester with verbal or written communication from parent or guardian.
18. If a student is absent from School for the sole purpose of traveling out of state to participate in a School-approved enrichment activity or extracurricular activity, the School shall count that absence as an excused absence, up to a maximum of twenty-four (24) hours per school year that the School is open for instruction. The student must complete any classroom assignments he/she misses due to the absence. If the student will be absent for twenty-four (24) or more consecutive hours that the School is open for instruction, a classroom teacher must accompany the student during the travel period to provide the student with instructional assistance in order to count the student as in attendance.

The Dean or his/her designee reserves the right to verify statements and to investigate the cause of absence.

Excuses from future school attendance:

1. Shall be limited to a period not to exceed thirty (30) school hours and can be renewed at the discretion of the Superintendent or his/her designee for thirty (30) additional hours. Absences shall not exceed sixty (60) consecutive hours unless the child's parent has recently died or become totally or partially incapacitated and there is no older sibling living in the home who is out of school. At the discretion of the Superintendent or his/her designee, a written statement from a physician may be required.
2. May not materially endanger the child's educational welfare or scholastic advancement.

The parent, legal guardian, or custodian must provide an explanation for the absence, which shall be recorded by the approving authority of the school and shall include the date and time of the absence according to local policy.

Religious Expression: A student may have up to three days excused for religious expression. To receive these days, the building Dean must receive written notice from the student's parent or guardian within 14 days of the beginning of the school year or within 14 days of the student's enrollment date. A student absent in this way may still participate in after-school activities. The student will also receive reasonable accommodations for any academic requirement or testing missed.

A non-exhaustive list of major religious holidays, festivals, and religious observations is available on the school's website.

Postsecondary Visitation: Students are encouraged to explore postsecondary options (such as technical college or university), and sometimes this must happen during the school day. Parents and guardians must coordinate with their child's building administrator to receive approval and discuss accommodations before each visit. With building approval, each student will be marked as "present" for school for up to three days each school year.

Extracurricular Activities: In-state events sponsored by the school may be considered instructional opportunities for students. The superintendent or designee may determine under what conditions these opportunities allow for a participating student to be marked as "present" for school.

Habitual Truancy: Any student who is absent without legitimate excuse from the public school the child is supposed to attend for 30 or more consecutive hours, 42 or more hours in one school month, or 72 or more hours in one school year, unless the student's school or school determines the student and student's family are making satisfactory progress in improving the student's attendance at school. However, if the

student and the student's family cease to continue making progress in improving the student's attendance, a complaint in the juvenile court shall be filed.

Out-of-School Suspension: A disciplinary action that removes or excludes a student from their usual educational setting. This is different from in-school suspension, which may include an alternative learning opportunity for a student in a different setting and still may be counted as present. Truancy shall not be the sole reason for a student's suspension or expulsion.

Attendance Intervention Team

The purpose of the attendance intervention team is to establish a student-centered attendance intervention plan for every student who is habitually truant by identifying specific barriers and solutions to attendance.

The attendance intervention team is cross-sector and includes the participation of the student and the parent or guardian or parent appointed designee. If a parent or guardian or parent appointed designee is non-responsive to the attendance intervention team's outreach, then the attendance intervention team will assess if the non-response requires a mandated referral to the child protective services agency.

When a student is habitually truant, the following will occur:

1) Within seven (7) days of the triggering absence, TGFS will do the following:
   a) A member of the School's Attendance Intervention Team (AIT) will make three (3) meaningful attempts to secure the participation of the student's parent or guardian or appointed designee on the attendance intervention team.
2) Within ten (10) days of the triggering absence, the student will be assigned to a specific member of the AIT;
3) Within fourteen (14) days of being assigned a member of the AIT, TGFS will develop the student's attendance intervention plan **and send a copy of the attendance intervention plan to the parent or legal guardian**;
4) If the student does not make progress on the plan within sixty-one (61) days or continues to be excessively absent, TGFS may file a complaint in the juvenile court.
5) When a student is identified as having excessive absences and/or being habitually truant, TGFS will inform the student's parent or guardian that the student has been placed on the attendance intervention team and make three meaningful attempts to secure the participation of the student's parent, legal guardian or parent appointed designee on the attendance intervention team.

TGFS must notify a child's parent, guardian or custodian if the child has "excessive absences" which shall be defined as when *nonmedical* excused absences and unexcused absences exceed 38 hours with or without a legitimate excuse in one school month or 65 hours in a school year. This notice shall be made in writing within 7 days after the date of the absence that triggered the notice. A "medical excused absence" shall include:

(1) personal illness;
(2) illness in the family necessitating the student's presence;
(3) quarantine of the home;
(4) death in the family;
(5) appointment with a health care provider (doctor, dentist, orthodontist, mental health provider, etc.); or
(6) on a case-by-case basis, any other set of circumstances the School deems to be a good and sufficient cause for medical absence from school.

Disciplinary Action for Unexcused Tardiness

Repeated unexcused absences/tardiness may be grounds for disciplinary action that will not include suspension or expulsion.

A student is tardy when a student is more than five (5) minutes late for School or for a class. If a student misses more than half a class, the student will be marked absent for the class. When tracking hours of missed instruction for excessive absence and truancy purposes, the School shall:

- Track tardiness and early dismissal times based on the precise amount of missed instruction, tracked to the nearest minute (e.g., if a student is thirty-five (35) minutes tardy to school and leaves school forty-five (45) minutes early, the student shall be counted as absent for eighty (80) minutes of that day).

Students shall not be considered absent for purposes of habitual truancy calculations while out of class for a legitimate reason, including but not limited to restroom breaks, visits to the nurses office, counselor meetings, or remediation sessions.

Any student who, due to a medically-documented physical or mental impairment, is absent for an extended period will not be disciplined. Such students may be entitled to receive an education tailored to their individual needs or abilities as provided for under federal and/or state law.

Truancy and Absence Intervention Strategies

The Dean or his/her designee may act as the School's attendance officer or delegate that duty as permitted by law. The School's attendance officer shall investigate possible School attendance violations, and is authorized under Ohio law, to serve warrants, to enter places where children of compulsory School age are employed, and to take such other actions as may be necessary to enforce the compulsory education laws.

A student is chronically absent from school if a student is absent from the School for ten percent (10%) or more of the minimum number of hours required in the school year with or without legitimate nonmedical or nonreligious excuse. When a student misses five percent (5%) of the minimum number of hours required in the school year, the attendance officer shall notify the student's parents of the student's absences.

The School shall employ absence intervention strategies for all students who are chronically absent from School. Such strategies shall include the following tiered systems of supports, which shall provide more intensive interventions and supports for students with greater numbers of absences and include resources to help students and families address root causes of absences:

1. Providing a truancy intervention plan for any student who is chronically absent or at risk of becoming chronically absent from school;
2. Providing counseling for a habitual truant;
3. Requesting or requiring a parent to attend parental involvement programs;
4. Requesting or requiring a parent to attend truancy prevention mediation programs; and
5. Taking legal action under R.C. 2919.222, 3321.20, and/or 3321.38.

A student is habitually truant if the student is absent without a legitimate excuse for thirty (30) or more consecutive hours, for forty-two (42) or more hours in one (1) school month, or seventy-two (72) or more hours in one (1) school year.

Legitimate excuses for the absence of a student otherwise habitually truant include but are not limited to:

1. the student was enrolled in another school;
2. the student's absence was excused in accordance with applicable law or policy; or,
3. the student has received an age and schooling certificate.

The attendance officer shall examine cases of supposed truancy within the School, and shall warn the child and the parent in writing of the legal consequences to being truant. When the child is not attending school, the attendance officer or his/her designee shall notify the parent of that fact and require the parent to cause the child to attend school immediately.

The attendance officer shall file a complaint with the juvenile court against a student if the student is a habitual truant, unless the attendance officer determines that the student is making satisfactory progress in improving the student's attendance at school. If a student is not deemed to be making progress to improve attendance at school, or ceases to continue making progress to improve attendance, the attendance officer shall file a complaint in the juvenile court against the student. Any complaint filed under this policy shall alleged that the child is an unruly child for being a habitual truant and that the parent has violated Section 3321.38 of the Revised Code.

The Superintendent or his/her designee is also authorized to establish a parent education program for parents of students who are habitually truant. Any parent assigned to the program who does not complete

the program is to be reported to law enforcement authorities for neglect of parent education, a fourth class misdemeanor if found guilty.

Zero Tolerance

TGFS has a zero tolerance policy for violent, disruptive or inappropriate behavior by students per Ohio Revised Code 3313.534. TGFS has removed "excessive absences" from its zero tolerance policies. TGFS will not suspend or expel students for being absent from school.

Suspension

TGFS will not suspend (out of school) or expel students for truancy. TGFS will be proactive in working with families and community organizations to break down barriers that prevent students from attending school.

Withdrawal

A student who fails to participate in seventy-two (72) consecutive hours of learning opportunities will be automatically withdrawn, unless the student's absence is excused. Otherwise, a parent may withdraw a student voluntarily. A record request with a start date must be received by the new school in order to officially withdraw the student, otherwise the 72 hour rule will take effect.

Whenever a student withdraws from the School voluntarily, the Registrar shall attempt to ascertain the reason for withdrawal and shall immediately inform the Superintendent or his/her designee of the reason for the withdrawal. If the Student voluntarily withdrew from the School as a result of a change in residence, the Superintendent or his/her designee shall notify the superintendent of the school to which the Student has moved of all essential information regarding the Student, including the Student's new address.

If the Superintendent or his/her designee becomes aware that a Student who has withdrawn from the School for reasons other than a change of residence is not enrolled in another school, the Superintendent or his/her designee shall notify the juvenile judge of the county in which the School is located of the Student's likely violation of the State's compulsory education laws. Notice shall be given within two (2) weeks and shall include the Student's name, address, date of birth, School, and the school where the Student resides. Any notice given in error shall be immediately rescinded by the Superintendent or his/her designee.

An Integrated Multi-Tiered System of Supports as Part of an Attendance Strategy

The Board maintains that students must be present and engaged to learn, and attendance is a critical factor for academic success. The Board is committed to a problem-solving approach to improving attendance and uses legal action as a last resort. When absences are the result of community and school challenges, a punitive approach is not likely to be effective and can undermine partnering with students and families to identify and address the underlying reasons for absence.

Instead, the Board endorses an integrated multi-tiered system of supports that is inclusive of universal prevention and early intervention before students become chronically absent. A continuum of supports will be in place with different types of evidence-informed instruction and interventions to meet the diverse needs of students and address the range of barriers that prevent students from participating and engaging in learning. More intensive supports are provided for students with greater numbers of absences, along with resources to help students and their families address the root causes of the absences. The school shall have teams work with students at risk of becoming chronically absent and their families to improve the students' attendance at school. The Board encourages the superintendent to integrate the school's attendance improvement strategy within existing initiatives and teams whenever possible.

These components will inform the school's use of an integrated multi-tiered system of supports:

Universal Screening: School and building teams will regularly review attendance data alongside other student data using an early warning system. This proactive, systematic process helps identify areas of need early on, allowing for timely interventions.

Data-Based Decision-Making: Collecting, analyzing, and using various forms of data to inform student needs and allocate resources. This approach ensures that decisions are grounded in evidence and tailored to the specific needs of students.
Continuum of Supports: Organizing evidence-based academic and non-academic instruction and supports across three tiers:

- Core: Universal attendance messaging and engagement practices provided to all students and families to establish the expectation of daily attendance.
- Targeted: Early intervention for students who miss 5% - 19% of instructional time. The Board requires schools to begin communication and supportive outreach as soon as absence patterns indicate a concern which can be missing just 2-3 days per month.
- Intensive: Individualized supports provided to students missing 20% or more of instructional time.

This structure allows for a range of interventions to address the diverse needs of students and prevent chronic absenteeism before it affects achievement.
Progress Monitoring: Ongoing and frequent collection of data to assess student performance and evaluate the effectiveness of instruction and supports. This continuous feedback loop helps in adjusting strategies to better support students and improve attendance.
Team-Based Problem Solving: A collaborative, responsive, and systematic process for understanding and addressing complex problems impacting students. This approach involves personalized outreach to students and families, intentional engagement strategies, and ongoing progress monitoring.
Shared Leadership: A collaborative approach to providing strong, ongoing leadership for implementing an integrated multi-tiered system of supports, including infrastructure, professional development, and monitoring. This ensures that staff have the skills and support to create strong foundations for learning. The school believes that all adults have an opportunity and responsibility to support attendance, and the school will provide regular and embedded professional development opportunities to support this understanding and drive action.
Professional Capacity: Ensuring staff members are knowledgeable, organized, and equipped to deliver effective instruction using an integrated multi-tiered system of supports. The school will continually review and evaluate practices and skills to ensure they align with attendance improvement for all students.
Communication and Collaboration: Essential processes to promote and support engagement and shared responsibility for creating conditions for effective instruction for all students through a strengths-based lens among all teaching and non-teaching staff, administrators, families, caregivers, and students. This reinforces the importance of attendance and fosters a supportive community.

Data and Accountability

The Board requires the superintendent to create and maintain real-time attendance reports that allow school and building staff to access and use attendance data throughout the year. Such data shall be disaggregated and used to identify:

- Schoolwide patterns and trends for the development of annual student attendance
- Engagement goals and strategies for inclusion in the school's strategic and/or improvement plan and individual school improvement plans The Board requests that the superintendent provide the Board with attendance and chronic absence data, for each school, each grade, and each student group. The superintendent shall periodically report to the Board, at least quarterly, on the school's progress in improving student attendance and meeting school goals.

The superintendent shall ensure building leaders and school teams collect and review chronic absence data to:

- Identify positive, school-wide messaging and expectations that make regular attendance a priority
- determine what systems of support and resources are needed to engage chronically absent students, students at risk of becoming chronically absent, and their families,
- use attendance data to promote continuous improvement, and

- assess the effectiveness of attendance improvement strategies and the impact on educational outcomes.

The Board expects the superintendent to develop administrative protocols and training for how all staff will contribute to improving attendance and student engagement and thus maintain a chronic absence rate under 5%.

Absence Notifications

School begins promptly. Students who are not with their teacher when the first bell rings are considered unexcused without a legitimate excuse. A student who is returning from an unexcused absence must be signed in at the front office by a parent and/or legal guardian along with appropriate documentation for the student's absence.

TGFS expects all students to be in their appropriate class when the bell rings, and prepared for instruction. The family of the student should contact the school by 8:00am with advance notice of their student's pending absence on a given day. If no notice of the student's absence is received by the school, the school will attempt to contact the student's parent and/or legal guardian within the first 120 minutes of the school day. The attempt may be made via a live telephone call, automated telephone call, a notification through the school's automated student information system, a text message, email, home visit, or another notification procedure adopted by the school.

Attendance is an extremely high priority at TGFS and Ohio law. **TGFS has an overall attendance rate goal of 96% for the school year**!

This Board consulted with the juvenile court of the counties in which the School is located, parents of students attending the School, and state and local agencies deemed appropriate by the Board prior to adopting this policy.

R.C. 2151.011; R.C. 2151.27; R.C. 3314.03(A)(6); R.C. 3314.11; R.C. 3321.01; R.C. 3321.041; R.C. 3321.13-.191; O.A.C. 3301-69-02.