



2020-21 Annual Report to the Community

Graham Elementary and Middle School

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Superintendent/Founder - Greg Brown

Executive Dean of The Graham Family of Schools Culture/Dean & Director – James Kutnow

Dean – Leah Ecaruan

Dean – Jordan Templeton

Associate Dean - Jisuka Cohen

Fiscal Agent – Jennifer L. Smith, CPA

School Year the School Opened – 2010-2011

Number of Students - 349

Grade Levels Served – K-8

Percentage of Students on IEP's – 31%

Percentage of Students eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch – 86%

Student demographic percentages – 64% African American, 29% Caucasian, 3% Hispanic, 2% multiracial, 2% Asian/American Indian

Percentage of Students for whom English is their second language – 1.4%

Dean's Message

For the safety and well-being of our school community we conducted our educational program virtually during much of the 2020-2021 school year. Virtual teaching and learning had been required during the previous spring due to the global pandemic and while we were proud of our efforts to maintain learning continuity, the staff worked hard with partner EL Education over the summer to prepare for a full year of online learning. We re-distributed chromebooks to students and staff as needed as well as provided hot spots for connectivity. GEMS remained in a virtual learning model through February and then brought the majority of our students back into the building for in-person classes in March and through the end of the school year.

Governing Authority

Graham Elementary and Middle School (GEMS) is chartered in the state of Ohio and as such, is overseen by the Ohio Department of Education. Our sponsor is the Educational Service Center of Central Ohio (ESCCO). The GEMS Board of Directors provides governance, meeting a minimum of six times per year. A schedule of meeting dates and times, as well as a record of actions taken, are kept in the school's office and are available for review by the public. Board members in 2020-21 included: **Sara Neikirk**, President; **Joyce Swayne**, Vice President; **Sarah Levels**; Secretary/Treasurer, **Kitty King**, and **Angela Stoller-Zervas**. GEMS partners with EL Education, national experts in effective educational practice using an expeditionary model.

The Graham Elementary and Middle School Mission

As a member of The Graham Family of Schools and partner with EL Education, Graham Elementary & Middle School's (GEMS) mission is to provide a rigorous and engaging education while developing a strong sense of character and community among a diverse group of learners.

Special Accomplishments/Achievements

GEMS partners with EL Education, a national network that provides support and innovative curriculum with a vision of student success that integrates academic achievement, character, and high-quality work. GEMS successfully delivers curriculum and expeditions for each of its three trimesters complete with fieldwork, partnerships with professionals and professional organizations, Celebration of Learning events and student-led conferences.

GEMS is located near The Ohio State University in an historic building purchased in May 2017. We partner with multiple OSU programs including: OSU Honors & Scholars' (Adopt a School provides over 100 undergraduate students as volunteer tutors); The Office of Student Life, and a variety of departments on campus to supplement learning in our curriculum.;

Launched in the fall of 2015, Play Us Forward, a partnership between ProMusica Chamber Orchestra, GEMS, and United Schools Network provided a shared music instructor and free instruments for 6th and 7th graders in partner charter schools. Play Us Forward's goal is to remove barriers of participation in individual instrumental instruction by providing instruction and instruments at no cost to students or their families. Through this partnership, we aim to create a model of musical instruction, and provide positive opportunities for artistic expression and overall academic enhancement for each student involved.

2020-2021 was an especially unique year as GEMS operated as a fully virtual school until Mid-March when about 60% of students returned to in-person learning again due to the pandemic. Much of the curriculum had to be adjusted to meet the needs of the online format and many students were not able to access the various testing opportunities typical of a normal school year.

Honors/Recognitions/Special Occasions

At the end of each term, an awards ceremony is planned for students in the 5th-8th grade. Students are recognized from each grade level for their contribution to the GEMS community as leaders. Awards include the Exemplary Citizen Award, the Expedition Leader Award and The Golden Ruler Award. GEMS also recognizes students who show more than 10 points of growth on their MAP assessments from Fall to Winter and from Winter to Spring.

We were not able to hold Community Meetings this past year due to COVID. In a normal year, Grades K-4 held its Community Meetings twice per month during which students, staff, and family members highlighted the five Habits of Learning: Responsibility, Perseverance, Quality, Thoughtfulness, and Teamwork. Meetings helped build school culture through highlighting quality work and student achievement. During Community Meeting, teachers recognized students by providing Habits of Learning certificates. In addition, students voted to recognize the highest achieving GEMS community members with Shooting Star Awards.

Celebrating Our Work Together

Students exhibited work from expeditions during Celebrations of Learning (COL) each trimester. In the past, during our first COL, 7th graders presented their podcasts that explored the effect of industrialization and scientific progress on Americans and how innovation shaped Columbus in the past 100 years. To develop their stories, seventh graders learned about the history of our building and neighborhood and podcast development skills through partnerships with the Ohio Historical Society, WOSU, and Musicology Recording Studios. This past year, due to the pandemic, each grade level hosted virtual COLs in which teachers and their students hosted virtual rooms in which they were able to present their learning.

Partners

Thank you to our generous partners. Your support makes it possible for us to continue providing a high quality experiential and early college education to our students!

Judy Alexander, Vanessa Allen, Kellie Gedert, Kent and Sally Johnson, Rich and Kitty King, Yeon OK Ko, Sara Neikirk, Corinna Owens, Amy Reese, Angela Stoller-Zervas, Joyce Swayne, Sara Tobin, Betsy White, City Campus Church, Communities In Schools, Martha Holden Jennings Foundation, The Ohio State University, The Joshua Perry Family Foundation, ProMusica Chamber Orchestra Play Us Forward Program, Nita M. Lowery 21 st Century Community Learning Center grant through the Ohio Department of Education, University of Chicago's Trauma Responsive Educational Practices Project, and University of Virginia's ExCEL Project.

Family Crew

During this unprecedented year of online learning, GEMS joined with The Charles School and The Graham School to pursue more robust family engagement. Together we chose to expand upon our highly successful student Crew structure and newly developed staff Crew to create Family Crew. A diverse group of staff met regularly and developed five Family Crew sessions individualized for each school focusing on: Mindfulness, Restorative Practices, Social and Emotional Learning, Trauma Responsive Educational Practices and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports. All three schools plan to expand upon this initiative next school year. This was made possible through a grant received by The Graham School from Ohio's Collaborative Fund for Educating Remotely (OCER), a partnership between Philanthropy Ohio and the Ohio Department of Education.

School-wide Title Program

GEMS is designated as a School-wide Title program, enabling us to receive Federal Funds to ensure that all of our students receive the support they need to reach and exceed grade level goals in reading and math. Federal funds this year included Title IA, Title IIA, Title III, Title IVA, IDEA-B, CRF, Broadband and ESSER.

The performance standards by which the success of the school was evaluated by the sponsor during the 2020-2021 school year, and the method of measurement that was used by the sponsor (ESCCO) to determine progress toward goals.

The sponsor has established a high stakes rubric with which it evaluates its schools annually which includes evaluating Academic Performance, Fiscal Performance, and Organizational/Operational Performance. The sponsor uses the annual state report card, MAP scores, fiscal and operational rubrics, and other mission specific measures. The sponsor attends board meetings, has periodic meetings with leadership and initiates site visits during the school year.

Academic Performance is measured using the state report card, MAP scores, and Attendance. GEMS is meeting standards when it comes to progress and "Mission Specific Goals" which include MAP, Attendance, and K-3 Reading. GEMS did not receive report card ratings this school year in the typically measured achievement and growth areas based on state testing as testing was not used in school ratings due to the pandemic.

Names of Assessments Given at the School and the Results

To monitor student academic achievement and progress in the classroom, GEMS has established an assessment cycle that includes classroom-based formative assessments in core subject areas in 6-8 week cycles and NWEA MAP. MAP Math and Reading assessments are administered fall, winter, spring to students in grades K-8 and are used to analyze and monitor student growth, guide instructional practices in the classroom, and summarize school performance. MAP Normative and Comparative Data is used by school leader(s) and staff for identifying and qualifying students for various instructional strategies and class schedules. NWEA's methodology includes a large and reflective sample using nine terms of data and a new model for estimating student growth. GEMS uses this data to monitor and analyze student growth in the classroom towards proficiency on Ohio's State Tests. As part of our formalized initiative in Social and

Emotional Learning, GEMS used the Panorama Survey to help us identify student progress toward SEL goals. Students in the state of Ohio are required to take Ohio's State Tests, however, because of the pandemic these tests were counted towards school evaluation. The GEMS staff meets in data teams throughout the year to evaluate student progress as well as set teaching and learning goals.

The school's activities toward and progress in meeting those contractually stated academic goals.

GEMS has completed its eleventh year and is actively engaged in continuing to meet academic goals. New curriculum was introduced for ELA and Math. A supplemental math course was implemented, providing two additional math periods per week, and a reading initiative continues with all students independently reading during two full crew periods each week. GEMS teachers meet regularly after school in grade level teams to collaboratively build and implement cross-disciplinary expeditions. GEMS teachers also meet regularly in teams to discuss and integrate student data. GEMS teachers participate in over 10 scheduled professional development days annually led by our EL school designer and guided by our school's work plan with EL. As a brief review of our initiatives to address our improvement needs, we have:

- Built a school improvement plan that encompasses goals in Social and Emotional Learning, English Language Arts, and Mathematics aligned to our EL work plan.
- Empowered our Director of Social and Emotional Learning to help us better understand our students' non-academic needs that directly impact their ability to learn, and to design strategies that help our students become more aware of their own needs and available resources.
- Expanded our efforts in SEL through a partnership with the University of Chicago Network for College Success National Freshman Success Institute to focus resources towards the eighth grade transition year.
- Focused on understanding the impact of trauma on children and their learning in partnership with the University of Chicago Department of Comparative Human Development, TREP project. New research in this area has been very helpful to understanding the impact of trauma on a child's brain and his or her ability to learn.
- Expanded work around Restorative Practices, helping us find new ways to address school culture and student behavior that's the most instructive for a child's growth.
- Hired a Director of Career Pathways to provide more intentional career focused activities and options for students and staff. The purpose of multiple programs and options is to address student preparedness for career and college success after high school.
- Maintained our strong partnership with EL Education to continuously improve our expeditionary focus integrated with academic growth and achievement goals in all core curricular areas based on Ohio and Common Core Standards.

Academic Curriculum Requirements including EL Education Curriculum

GEMS' academic and expeditionary curriculum fully incorporates Ohio and Common Core Standards. Interim and end of course assessments are part of our model. Our focus is on preparing students for high school by helping all of our students achieve or supersede grade level expectations in math, reading and writing. Our goal is to build lifelong learners.

EL Education provides school leaders and teachers with professional development, curriculum planning resources, and school structures to boost student engagement, character, and achievement. EL exists in over 150 schools in over 33 states nationwide. The EL model is a proven success in supporting schools in developing a positive school culture and higher achievement scores when compared to the school districts in which they exist. EL and GEMS together developed the school's habits of learning: perseverance, responsibility, thoughtfulness, teamwork, and quality.

As an EL Education school, we define success as having three dimensions: "Knowledge and Skills," "Character," and "High Quality Work." Our CREWs and intensives have been focusing not only on academic support for our students but also on social and emotional learning depending on a student's needs. Social and

emotional learning (SEL) is based on the understanding that the best learning emerges in the context of supportive relationships that make learning challenging, engaging, and meaningful.

Expeditions for K-4th Graders

Kindergarten:

Kindergarten students began the year by learning about toys, play, and sharing. Students studied different attributes of toys, such as a shape and color. Then students shifted their focus to discussing what their favorite toys are and why.

Kindergarten built their literacy and science skills as they engaged in a study of weather. Students began by building knowledge of different types of weather and then moved to how weather differs around the world and how it affects people. A local meteorologist visited our students on Zoom and shared how the weather works. Students created their own video forecasts, where they explained the weather and gave advice on how to prepare for it.

Kindergarten students then learned about the importance of living things by studying plants and trees. Students explored the life cycle of a plant and how a tiny seed becomes a tree. Then, students learned about what trees need to survive and the different parts of a tree. While students were learning from home, they were able to observe, describe, and draw trees in their own neighborhoods!

1st Grade:

In the spring, first graders became ornithologists (scientists that study birds). They completed research using books, images, and videos in order to answer the guiding question: “How can people care for birds and their environment so they can live and grow?” First graders had to pay close attention to different types of beaks and feathers and how each of these body parts helped a species of birds.

2nd Grade:

In the fall, second graders learned about schools around the world. They studied how schools have adapted and changed when communities are faced with disasters or hardships. This year, students then moved to a new topic to focus on that was closer to home! Second grade students studied how GEMS changed our approach to school due to the pandemic. Students wrote a book comparing and contrasting different aspects of school before and during the pandemic.

For their second expedition, 2nd grade dug into the world of fossils and dinosaurs. They became paleontologists, studying the work of Mary Anning in order to learn about the kinds of things paleontologists do. Reading the book Stone Girl, Bone Girl by Laurence Anholt also allowed students to study the structure and craft of narrative writing. Finally, students produced a detailed drawing of a fossil and wrote their own narrative piece about a fictional paleontologist of their design!

During their final expedition of the year, second graders studied the “secret world of pollination.” They learned to navigate informational text and deepened their understanding of how plants grow and thrive. They then became entomologists, studying pollinators such as bees, hummingbirds, and butterflies in their expert research groups.

3rd Grade:

For their first expedition, 3rd grade students learned about the power of literacy and how people around the world overcome learning challenges. Students studied the book My Librarian Is a Camel by Margriet Ruurs to learn about how librarians all over the world overcome challenges to get books to children. Students enjoyed learning new technology skills when they created comic strips about how they overcome their own learning challenges at school.

During their second expedition, 3rd graders became herpetologists. They studied the habitats and adaptations of various “Freaky Frogs.” 3rd graders studied pourquoi tales and informational text about frogs and practiced using both narrative and informational writing.

4th Grade:

At the beginning of the year, fourth graders became poets. Students learned about the history and power of poetry, alongside different types of poems and their features. Students studied Love That Dog by Sharon Creech, as well as The Red Wheelbarrow by William Carlos Williams and Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening by Robert Frost. Students learned about what inspires writers to write and explored their own inspirations. 4th grade poets finished the module by hosting a poetry night, inviting the community in to hear their own original verse.

4th grade’s second module of the year allowed them to build their skills as scientists and researchers. Students studied defense mechanisms of animals. After digging deeply into research in their expert groups, students produced an informational writing piece to describe their animal’s physical characteristics, habitat, predators, and defense mechanisms.

Expeditions for 5th-8th Graders

Human Rights Revolution! (5th Grade) -- “What are human rights, and how do real people and fictional characters respond when those rights are challenged?” Students developed their ability to read and understand complex text as they considered this question. Students began to build knowledge about human rights through a close read of the introduction and selected articles of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)*, paired with short firsthand accounts of people around the world who currently face human rights challenges. In Unit 2, students did an extended study of Esperanza Rising (740L) by Pam Muñoz Ryan, applying their new learning about human rights as one lens through which to interpret the character and theme in this rich novel—a complex coming-of-age story set in Mexico and rural California during the early 1930s. Through close reading, interpretation, and analysis of fiction and nonfiction texts, students synthesized their understanding of human rights. The specific literacy focus was on supporting understanding through quoting directly from text, inferring themes, and comparing and contrasting how different texts address the topics and themes of human rights.

For the final product, students created a calendar showcasing resources, events, weather and other important details about living in Columbus to help connect refugees to the experience of living in the Columbus community. Students showcased refugee and immigrant owned businesses in Columbus and interviewed refugees to share their stories within the artwork and writing featured in the calendar.

Everybody’s Zoon’ It! (5th Grade) – Through this expedition students learned about animal rights and the needs of animals at the Columbus zoo. The students learned about different habitats and how animals need different habitats to sustain themselves. Students discussed and created a habitat that needed to be redone for a new animal coming to the Columbus zoo. The habitat will be reviewed by the Columbus zoo staff and they could pick the idea of the habitat for the incoming animal. Students worked on this habitat project with a budget in mind, along with knowing the parameters that the zoo has space for. Students learned about the food webs, different characteristics of animals based on their diet.

Trashley Ever After (6th Grade)- In our expedition Plastic and Waste Pollution students focused on how our plastic and waste impacts the environment. In unit 1, students tracked their families own plastic/waste and read Trash Vortex by Danielle Smith-Llera, analyzing the history and the reasons why we have a plastic/waste pollution problem and how it impacts the world. In the next unit students continued to focus on our second guiding question of “How is plastic/waste pollution hurting the world?” by reading Flush, by Carl Hiaaseh. During this unit students learned about renewable and nonrenewable resources in science. In the final unit students created and presented a TedTalk on a topic related to our guiding question of “How does plastic and waste impact our world and what can we do about it?”

Voices (7th Grade) – Students created a podcast answering the questions “Is the USA a land of opportunity for all?” and “How can we use our voices to help others?” Throughout the expedition students interviewed experts, wrote scripts, and recorded a podcast at a local recording studio as their final product. Students gained skills in posing interview questions that elicited elaboration, researching opportunity gaps in the USA, and articulating their arguments with relevant evidence. Students realized the power of their voice and the impact of sharing their stories to build connections and community.

Wetlands (7th Grade) - Students partnered with Alum Creek Lake to study and restore a wetland habitat. We focused on the importance and impact of water quality to the ecosystem. Through this study they explored the 4 spheres of the Earth: Biosphere, Hydrosphere, Atmosphere, and Geosphere and how they are connected to each other. Students analyzed the impacts humans have on wetlands and how communities are disproportionately impacted by environmental issues such as climate change.

Take a Stand (8th Grade) - Gandhi once said, “Be the change you wish to see in the world.” It’s time for students to ask the question, Who am I? Through this unit they studied identity groups and discovered their voice. They learned how historical, biological and statistical details affect each individual's identity, the school community, and the world. Students partnered with The Juvenile Justice Coalition and Kaleidoscope, where they learned to create laws, and web content in the form of written word for a youth run website. Students read To Kill A Mockingbird, by Harper Lee to explore situations dealing with social justice and discuss topics interwoven into identity. During their fieldwork they learned about curating an exhibit for a museum in collaboration with their ending project of creating a collaborative piece of art that hung in the school hallways. The piece was an expression of their identity and will influence others for years to come.

Food Justice (8th Grade) - In this expedition, students used the school garden to learn about nutritious eating and the injustice in food choices in schools and historically excluded communities. We looked at the history of agriculture as it relates to society and culture. We also analyzed the policies behind school lunches in the US and compared our school lunches to the national guidelines as well as global policies.

Staff Members

The full-time and part-time staff roster in the 2020-21 school year included: Debbie Addison, Alen Auguste, Carolyn Baginski, Heather Baker, Cathy Baney, Nicole Becks, Kevin Beery, Karen Blain, Katelynn Brewster, Jennifer Bricker, Greg Brown, Taylor Bush, Jisuka Cohen, Loren Collins, Michelle Conkel, Christina Conrad, Keri Dana, Joshua Davis, John Eckenrode, Monica Eppler, Brendan Erb, Kathariena Foster, Montana Fout, Susan Frank, Sydney Frazier, Nora Goss, Lemoyne Jackson, Susan Jimison, Kaitlyn Justice, Noelle Klein, Alexandra Konet, James Kutnow, James Lawlor, Jamie Lenzo, Katie Logan, Cheryl Long, Sarah Lopienski, Katherine Luikart, Rosa Markward, Eileen Martin, Allison Maynard, Kyleigh Mccune, Kathryn Mcdaniel, Melinda Mcfann, Angela Meabon, Leah Mejia, Madeline Mulhall, Cassie Muller, Kelli Orians, Wesley Owens, Angel Peaks, Michael Piteo, Victoria Ringwald, Rachel Rutkowski, Evan Rulong, Jennifer Smith, Audrey Snyder, Chris Spackman, Zachary Steinberger, Hunter Stewart, Jordan Templeton, Dodie Thebeault, Cynthia Tishue, Colleen Vaughan, Jennifer Waddell, Stephanie Waldeck, Jeanne Weinberg, Sha'ron White, and Jeff Wiseman

Financial Status

In fiscal year 2020-21 the school received \$3,666,857 in state funds. The school also received \$692,454 in federal funds and \$29,500 in development and rental income funds, among other separated categories. Sources of income totaled \$4,388,811. In fiscal year 2020-21 the school paid for employee salaries and benefits, including payroll taxes and retirement, through The Graham School, GEMS's financial manager, and paid \$82,814 in loan payments for the purchase of the 16th Avenue building. Uses, including the aforementioned items along with classroom support expenses, utilities, insurance and assorted services to and purchases for the school, totaled \$4,167,222 in expenses. When the current cash in bank was added to the sources, the year-end adjusted cash balance was \$475,638 to be carried over to 2020-21. The school

conducts its own on-going internal financial audit under the direction of its Board Audit Committee and treasurer Jennifer Smith, CPA. Finances also were audited by the school's sponsor, The Educational Service Center of Central Ohio. And, the school is audited annually under the auspices of the State of Ohio Auditor's Office. All found the finances to be accurately and appropriately accounted for.