



GEMS

Graham Expeditionary Middle School



2015-2016 Annual Report





Our Mission

As a member of The Graham Family of Schools, GEMS prepares students for academic success, self-direction, lifelong learning, and commitment to community by providing intentional learning experiences that foster imagination, discovery, problem solving skills, and growing independence. With a particular mission to serve urban students, GEMS is a supportive community where students learn to care for themselves, each other and the natural world. As a school that values generosity, stewardship, and service, GEMS nurtures not only students' academic growth and confidence but also their development as compassionate citizens of a global world.



Governing Authority

Graham Expeditionary 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 2015-16 included: Sara Neikirk, President; Angela Stoller-Zervas, Vice President and Treasurer; Mari Sunami, Secretary; Lisa Chambers, Kitty King, and Kara Penniman. GEMS partners with EL Education, national experts in effective educational practice using an expeditionary model.

Celebrating our Work

Students exhibited work from expeditions during Celebrations of Learning each Trimester. These included an end-of-the-year 6th grade celebration for their work throughout the year at the Grange Insurance Audubon Center, a 7th grade presentation of their podcasts on the history of our building and neighborhood through partnerships with WOSU and Musicology Recording Studios, and an 8th grade American Revolution Oscar-style film festival.

EL Education Curriculum

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.

EL Education provides school leaders and teachers with professional development, curriculum planning resources, and new school structures to boost student engagement, character, and achievement. EL exists in over 152 schools in over 39 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.

Expeditions

Adventure and Survival – Guiding questions included the following: How can you survive an adventure? What makes a person a survivor? An adventurer? Students looked at literature, events in history and science projects that sought to answer these questions.

Watt's My Impact? – A look into the environmental impact we have on the world and an examination of energy sources. **Around the World in 60 Days** – Students explore foreign cultures, world religions and histories in this journey beyond Columbus, Ohio.

When Cultures Collide – Students studied the Cape Verde Islands in West Africa.

1908 – Students took the era when our historic building was erected and studied issues of the day including the work environment, labor unions, and inventors of the time.

Vernal Pools – In partnership with Glacier Ridge Metro Park, students studied the impact of vernal pools on our ecosystem. GEMS traveled four times to the metro park to work with a naturalist in collecting and cataloging data on salamander eggs, tree frogs and a variety of invertebrates.

Vote with Your Fork - Using *The Omnivore's Dilemma* as the expedition's anchor text, students examine the his-

tory of food and the process of where our food comes from on its way to our tables. Fieldwork includes visiting local grocers and farms. The culmination of the learning takes place at the end of the term when students present a Ted Talk where students argue why a chosen food chain is the best to feed this ever-growing world population.

The Evolution of the Revolution - Students read and learned about the American Revolution. Literature focused on individual experiences during this time period and the struggles in a developing country. The culmination of student work came in a three act play in which all 8th grade students took a part in performing a revolution story.

How We Roll - Students kicked off the trimester with a mini conference in which representatives from 5 different local bike-related non-profit organizations and bike stores came to present to students in workshop style. Students learned about simple machines throughout the term and spent fieldwork at BikeSource to learn the basics of bike repair as well as fueling a bike-powered generator. The culminating project included a bike expo in which students presented their research to a large audience in our gym.





Special Accomplishments/Achievements

GEMS continues to enjoy sharing its home near The Ohio State University with sister school, Graham Primary School and partnering with multiple OSU programs including: OSU Honors & Scholars' (Adopt a School provides over 100 undergraduate students as volunteer tutors); The Office of Student Life (“Stories for Students” providing each GEMS student with a new book); and Art Education 252 (holds class at GEMS in collaboration with GEMS students).

The Columbus Teaching & Learning Center (CTLC), a new partnership between GEMS, The Ohio State University Department of Teaching and Learning, and Columbus City Schools, brought the OSU Reading Clinic as well as OSU courses and student interns to the GEMS and GPS site. In partnership with the CTLC, University Area Enrichment Association, Summit United Methodist Church and Donatos, GEMS received an Ohio Community Connectors Grant to establish and after school mentoring program, GEMSCC. Serving GEMS students and including OSU student mentors, the program, operated Monday-Thursday from January through May 2016.

The GEMS leadership team was accepted for participation with five other EL Education middle schools in the

Becoming Effective Learners research conducted by Dr. Camille Farrington of the University of Chicago. This partnership included three on-site professional development meetings with Dr. Farrington to engage in her research and understand what our school's data can show us to help improve student learning experiences through the use of her survey tool.

Launched in the fall of 2015, Play Us Forward, a partnership between ProMusica Chamber Orchestra, The Graham Family of Schools, United Schools Network, and KIPP provided a shared music instructor and free instruments for 6th graders in partner charter schools. Play Us Forward's goal is to **remove barriers of participation** 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.

“We are crew, not passengers” is an essential core belief at GEMS. Students meet daily in small groups (Crews) to establish relationships, build community, focus on character goals, literacy, and academic challenges.

Activities and Progress

GEMS has completed its sixth year and is actively engaged in continuing to meet academic goals. 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 lead by our EL school designer and guided by our school's work plan with EL.

GEMS is a member of an OAPCS Consortium that received a 5 year Straight A grant to fund the use of Illuminate, an IIS system enabling teachers to collect and use classroom data efficiently and effectively.

Parent Volunteers

Many parent volunteers assisted with a fall clean-up day, two middle school dances, fieldwork, and the annual TGFS event Have a Heart, a fund raiser for all of the TGFS entities. GEMS partnered with Graham Primary School to have combined FTO meetings and events – together they hosted the 2nd Annual Food Truckathon, a fundraiser for the school.



Thank you!

We gratefully acknowledge the following generous individuals who help make our work possible:

The Ohio State University Department of
Teaching & Learning
City Campus Church
Donatos
GEMS/GPS FTO
Ohio Community Connectors Grant
Program
ProMusica
Summit on 16th United Methodist Church

UAEA
Albert Chapman-Layland
Sandra Crum-Rogers
Kent and Sally Johnson
Rich and Kitty King
Barbara Lehman
Craig Morris
Corinna Owens
Dianne Purdy

Negla Ross
Angela Stoller-Zervas
Mari Sunami
Cindy Tishue

All of the generous individuals who supported Have a Heart and Food Truckathon through volunteering, donating, purchasing auction items,

Assessments and Results

Students in the state of Ohio are required to take Ohio's State Tests. GEMS administered ELA and Math assessments for 6th, 7th, and 8th graders, Science assessments for 8th graders and Social Studies assessments for 6th graders.

GEMS administered the Science test to 46 - 8th graders and 54% scored proficient or higher. 32 - 6th graders took the Social Studies test and 28% scored proficient or higher. 33 - 6th grade students took the ELA assessment and 30% scored proficient or higher; 32 - 6th grade students took the Math assessment and 38% scored proficient or higher; 42 - 7th grade students took the ELA assessment and 38% scored proficient or higher; 41 - 7th grade students took the Math assessment and 41% scored proficient or higher; 46 - 8th grade students took the ELA assessment and 50% scored proficient or higher; and 46 - 8th grade students took the Math assessment and 50% scored proficient or higher.

This year's report card rating for GEMS included an A in Progress, which looks at the growth that all students are making based on their past performances. GEMS received a D in Achievement, which measures the number of students who passed the state tests and how well they

performed on them. GEMS received an F in Gap Closing, which shows how the school is meeting the performance expectations for the most vulnerable populations of students in English language arts and math.

Our scores on this year's report card are in general lower than last years, as are virtually every school's and district's across the state. This is the third year in a row the state tests have changed, and there were no preparatory materials available to schools to get ready for them, nor any previous exact tests with which to compare them. Also, the bar for passing was greatly increased at the same time so, scores naturally dropped. This is more a reflection on these changes than on the teaching and learning that has occurred in our and other classrooms. However, we absolutely support the raising of standards in a way that supports our students growing in their learning and intend to work hard to raise these scores in the years ahead. GEMS is committed to ongoing improvement, and will continue to work hard every day on behalf of our students. The State Report Card is but one indicator of a school's work, and we take it seriously.



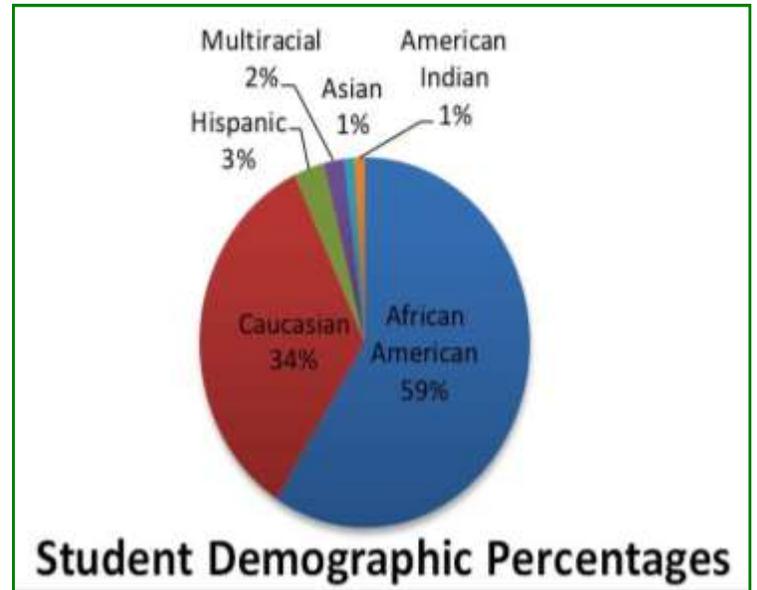
Academic Curriculum Requirements

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. We strive to see our students advance, well-prepared, to high school. Academic and Expeditionary curriculum are aligned to the Ohio and Common Core State Standards.



Performance Standards

GEMS uses the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) Assessments at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year to correctly place, evaluate and support student work. MAP also captures an additional objective data set to evaluate academic growth in relation to the state mandated value added measure. A variety of assessments are given in the classroom throughout the year to measure Learning Targets met. At the end of each trimester students make presentations demonstrating their learning. GEMS also has an internal assessment calendar for teachers to administer interims half-way through and at the end of each trimester to help inform their teaching and assess student learning. The GEMS staff meets in data teams throughout the year evaluate student progress as well as set teaching and learning goals.



Financial Status

In fiscal year 2015-16 the school received \$1,070,137 in state funds. The school also received \$173,176 in federal funds and \$13,020 in development funds, among other separated categories. Sources of income totaled \$1,430,454. In fiscal year 2015-16 the school paid for employee salaries and benefits including payroll taxes and retirement through The Graham School, GEMS's financial manager and paid \$85,105 in lease payments to Columbus City Schools for the use 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 \$1,407,686 in expenses.

When the current cash in bank was added to the sources, the year-end adjusted cash balance was \$63,628 to be carried over to 2016-17. The school conducts its own on-going internal financial audit under the direction of its Board Audit Committee and treasurer Brian Adams, MBA, CMA, CFM, CGFM. 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.

Staff for the 2015-16 school year

Debbie Addison	Director of Advancement
Hadley Bachman	Language Arts Teacher
Harmony Barnett	Business and Development Assistant
Greg Brown	Co-Superintendent/CEO
Robert Caldwell	Director of Afterschool Program
Cathy Carrico	Business Administrative Assistant
Nancy Diley-Smith	Intervention Specialist
Monica Eppler	Social Studies Teacher
Cassie Farrell	Reading and Math Teacher
Kayla Geyer	Paraprofessional
Sarah Hans	Intervention Specialist
Jisuka Hessler	Language Arts Teacher
Alicia Koester	Language Arts & Science Teacher
James Kutnow	Dean & Director
Jamie Lenzo	Director of Special Education
Katie Logan	Business Office
Cheryl Long	Business Manager
A'Leah Martin	Front Desk Associate
Eileen Meers	Co-Superintendent/CEO
Myra Molnar	Dean
Wesley Owen	Adventure Education Teacher
Adam Philpott	Science teacher
Courtney Rizek	School Counselor
Zach Steinberger	IT Specialist
Cynthia Tishue	Science and Social Studies Teacher
Jennifer Waddell	Development & Testing Coordinator
Stephanie Waldeck	Math Teacher
Jeff Wiseman	Lead Network Engineer



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.