



Graham Expeditionary Middle School

2016-17 Annual Report to the Community

The Graham Expeditionary Middle School

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Co-Superintendent, CEO - Eileen Meers, PhD

Co-Superintendent, CEO - Greg Brown

Dean and Director – James Kutnow

Assistant Dean – Hadley Bachman

Fiscal Agent – Brian G. Adams MBA, CMA, CFM, CrFA, CGFM; Ohio Community School Consultants, Ltd.

School Year the School Opened – 2010-2011

Number of Students - 137

Grade Levels Served – 6,7,8

Percentage of Students on IEP's – 29%

Percentage of Students eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch – 66%

Student demographic percentages – 53% African American, 38% Caucasian, 4% Hispanic, 4% multiracial, 1% Asian/American Indian

Percentage of Students for whom English is their second language – 1.5%

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 2016-17 included: **Sara Neikirk**, President; **Angela Stoller-Zervas**, Vice President and Treasurer; **Mari Sunami**, Secretary; **Lisa Chambers**, and **Kara Penniman**. GEMS partners with EL Education, national experts in effective educational practice using an expeditionary model.

The Graham Expeditionary Middle School 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.

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.

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GEMS continues to enjoy sharing its home near The Ohio State University with sister school, Graham Primary School. GEMS purchased its school building 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 ("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 in 2016 and 2017.

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 and 7th 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.

Honors/Recognitions/Special Occasions

At the end of each term, an awards ceremony is planned. 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.

Celebrating Our Work Together

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.

Athletics

Students participated on basketball teams in partnership with the Charter School Athletic Association of Ohio.

Parent Group

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 3rd Annual Food Truckathon, a fundraiser for the school.

Staff Members

The full-time and part-time staff roster in the 2016-17 school year included: Debbie Addison, Hadley Bachman, Carolyn Baginski, Cathy Baney, Harmony Barnett, Greg Brown, Paige Chapman-Layland, Keri Dana, Nancy Diley-Smith, Monica Eppler, Cassie Farrell, Kayla Geyer, Nora Goss, Lauren Greenspan, Jisuka Hessler, Alicia Koester, James Kutnow, Jamie Lenzo, Katie Logan, Cheryl Long, Sarah Lopienski, Stephen Lynch, Joanna Malachowsky, A'Leah

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Martin, Eileen Meers, Myra Molnar, Christopher Occhiuto, Wesley Owen, Adam Philpott, Karen Rickrich, Courtney Rizek, Zach Steinberger, Cynthia Tishue, Jennifer Waddell, Stephanie Waldeck, and Jeff Wiseman.

Names of Assessments Given at the School and the 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 48 - 8th graders and 60% scored proficient or higher; 41 - 6th graders took the Social Studies test and 34% scored proficient or higher; 41 - 6th grade students took the ELA assessment and 27% scored proficient or higher; 40 - 6th grade students took the Math assessment and 28% scored proficient or higher; 40 - 7th grade students took the ELA assessment and 60% scored proficient or higher; 39 - 7th grade students took the Math assessment and 44% scored proficient or higher; 48 - 8th grade students took the ELA assessment and 44% scored proficient or higher; and 48 - 8th grade students took the Math assessment and 50% scored proficient or higher.

This year's report card rating for GEMS included an B 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 fourth 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.

The performance standards by which the success of the school was evaluated by the sponsor during the 2016-2017 school year by our Sponsor

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 students. 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 halfway 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 to evaluate student progress as well as set teaching and learning goals.

GEMS began administering STAR assessments in 2016-2017; short cycle assessments help us measure student progress and place students in 9 week intensives.

As part of our formalized initiative in Social and Emotional Learning, GEMS partnered with Future Ready to use DESSA. The assessments help us identify students' progress toward SEL goals

The method of measurement that was used by the sponsor (ESCCO) to determine progress toward those goals during the 2016-2017 school year

The sponsor has established a rubric with which it evaluates its schools annually which includes evaluating the annual state report card, MAP scores and other measures. The sponsor attends board meetings and initiates site visits during the school year.

The school's activities toward and progress in meeting those contractually stated academic goals during the 2016-2017 school year.

GEMS has completed its seventh 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

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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.

As a brief review of our initiatives to address our improvement needs, we have:

- Hired a Director of Educational Data Analysis to make best use of the various data points we create and collect, and to help us with more intentional, targeted teaching strategies.
- Hired a Director of Social and Emotional Learning to help us understand better our students non-academic needs that impact directly their ability to learn, and to design strategies that help our students become more aware of their own needs and resources.
- Signed an agreement with Learning Circle, a Columbus-based organization, designed to collect metrics on our students' academic work, behaviors and attendance, and provide early information about students' progress. Learning Circle works with Columbus City Schools, and a few other select charter organizations.
- Instituted work in all our schools around restorative practice, helping us find new ways to address school culture and student behavior that's the most instructive for a child's growth.
- Begun a focus around understanding the impact of trauma on children and their learning. Much new research in this area has been very helpful to understanding this impact on a child's brain and his or her ability to learn.

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 Standards.

EL Education Curriculum

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. EL and GEMS developed the school's habits of learning: perseverance, responsibility, thoughtfulness, teamwork, and quality.

This year at GEMS, we implemented a new structure during 9th period called "Intensives." As an EL Education school, we define success as having three dimensions: "Knowledge and Skills," "Character," and "High Quality Work." Our intensives have been focusing not only on the academic support for our students but also on the social-emotional learning depending on a student's needs. Social-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. Our primary goal for our students to build lifelong learning as the whole child. To this end, we use the Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) assessment, the Star Reading and Math assessments, the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA), student academic interim grade reports, and student self-assessments to place students in appropriate Intensive classes. Below are some of the Intensives we will offer at GEMS:

- Math skills Intensive
- Reading skills Intensive
- Study skills Intensive
- SEL Intensive: focusing on self-regulating emotions, personal decision-making, goal-directed behavior and more
- Attendance Intensive: focusing on building responsible habits as a scholar

Expeditions 2016-2017

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

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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 history 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.

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.

Financial Status

In fiscal year 2016-17 the school received \$1,207,105 in state funds. The school also received \$181,402 in federal funds and \$544,197 in development and rental income funds, among other separated categories. Sources of income totaled \$1,936,472. In fiscal year 2016-17 the school paid for employee salaries and benefits including payroll taxes and retirement through The Graham School, GEMS's financial manager and paid \$76,765 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 \$1,675,061 in expenses. When the current cash in bank was added to the sources, the year-end adjusted cash balance was \$318,805 to be carried over to 2017-18. 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