



2019-20 Annual Report to the Community

Graham Elementary and Middle School

140 E 16th Ave.
Columbus, OH 43201
Phone: 614-253-4000
Fax: 614-643-5146
IRN – 011972

Superintendent, CEO - Greg Brown

Dean and Director – James Kutnow

Associate Dean of Middle Grades (5-8) – Leah Ecaruan

Associate Dean of Elementary (K-4) – Jordan Templeton

Director of SEL - Eileen Meers, PhD

Fiscal Agent – Jennifer L. Smith, CPA

School Year the School Opened – 2010-2011

Number of Students - 385

Grade Levels Served – K-8

Percentage of Students on IEP's – 29%

Percentage of Students eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch – 74%

Student demographic percentages – 62% African American, 28% Caucasian, 5% Hispanic, 4% multiracial, 1% Asian/American Indian

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

Dean's Message

The 2019-20 school year was disrupted in mid-March when school buildings were closed due to the global pandemic affecting every aspect of our lives. With the buildings closed our teachers and students pivoted to teaching and learning online. We distributed chromebooks to students who needed them and we all did our best to maintain a semblance of normalcy around academic and social and emotional learning. The safety of our students, families and staff has been our first priority and throughout the last months of the school year we followed the guidance from the Governor, the Departments of Health and the Department of Education to successfully complete the school year and celebrate that completion with our school community.

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 2019-20 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. *Governance/Organizational/Operational Performance for Sponsor – Top Rated – Leadership has been positive and supportive, all trainings have been completed.*

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 ("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 partnership between GEMS, The Ohio State University Department of Teaching and Learning, and Columbus City Schools, brought OSU courses and student interns to the GEMS site.

The GEMS leadership team was accepted for participation with five other EL Education middle schools in the Becoming Effective Learners (BEL) 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. This research is ongoing. Mr. Kutnow and Ms. Muller were invited to speak in a BEL presentation to partners and funders last fall.

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.

In Spring, 2020, Cassie Muller, 7th grade Mathematics teacher, was awarded the Martha Holden Jennings Foundation's George B. Chapman, Jr. Teacher Award for Excellence In Mathematics Education. In addition to this wonderful recognition of her work, she has been awarded \$7,500 to be applied to improvements in her curriculum for enhanced student engagement.

"We are crew, not passengers" is an essential belief at GEMS. Students meet daily in small groups (CREW) 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 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.

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. For example, 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.

Family Crew

Many parent volunteers assisted with a fall clean-up day, middle school dances, skating parties, fundraising events, holiday celebrations and fieldwork. GEMS families also participated in Breakfast with Books and Munchies with Math, monthly community gatherings where families enjoyed food with reading and exploring math together.

Additional Partners

Judy Alexander, Vanessa Allen, Kellie Gedert, Kent and Sally Johnson, Rich and Kitty King, Sara Niekirk, Yeon OK Ko, Corinna Owens, Amy Reese, Angela Stoller-Zervas, Joyce Swayne, and Betsy White.

City Campus Church, Communities In Schools, ECMC Foundation, Martha Holden Jennings Foundation, The Ohio State University, ProMusica Chamber Orchestra Play Us Forward Program, 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, University of Chicago's Trauma Responsive Educational Practices Project, University of Virginia's ExCEL Project.

The performance standards by which the success of the school was evaluated by the sponsor during the 2019-2020 school year by our Sponsor

Our sponsor evaluates the school with a high stakes review rubric that measures Academic Performance including mission specific goals; Fiscal Performance and Organizational/Operational Performance.

Names of Assessments Given at the School and the Results

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 captures objectives and 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 at different points of the terms to help inform 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.

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, K-3 Reading, and Progress Comparison of Lowest 20% to all community schools statewide. State testing and report card ratings were suspended due to the pandemic.

As part of our formalized initiative in Social and Emotional Learning, GEMS used the National School Climate Survey to help us identify student progress toward SEL goals.

The method of measurement that was used by the sponsor (ESCCO) to determine progress toward those goals during the 2019-2020 school year

The sponsor has established a 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 measures. The sponsor attends board meetings, has periodic meetings with leadership and initiates site visits during the school year.

Students in the state of Ohio are required to take Ohio's State Tests, however, because of the pandemic these tests were not administered. 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. *MAP assessments were suspended in the spring.

The school's activities toward and progress in meeting those contractually stated academic goals during the 2019-20 school year.

GEMS has completed its tenth 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 by establishing a partnership with the University of Chicago Network for College Success National Freshman Success Institute to focus resources towards the eighth grade transition year.
- Begun a focus around 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 30 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. As a culminating activity, students made stuffed animals to distribute to other children at GEMS who they thought might need a new toy. The kindergarten stuffies were distributed at the GEMS Winter Resource fair and were a hit!

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 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:

First graders began the year learning about Tools for Infinity and Beyond. They studied the habits of character that help people work (Initiative, Collaboration, Perseverance). They researched using books, images and videos to learn about the patterns of the sun, moon, and stars. With this knowledge they continued to learn about the different tools that scientists use to study the sun, moon, and stars by talking to experts. After learning more about Neil Armstrong, they finally wrote a narrative poem about what the moon "sees" at night.

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?" They began by paying close attention to different types of beaks and feathers and how each of these body parts helped a species of birds. While learning from home, we hatched and raised chickens.

This helped the students have real-life experience with seeing how the beak and feathers were used by real birds. This led to researching what kind of shelter and food people can provide the birds in their community. They then used this information to make bird houses and feeders, and plant gardens to bring native birds to their own backyards!

2nd Grade:

In the fall, second graders learned about schools around the world. After learning about different challenges faced by students and communities in different parts of the world, students corresponded with pen pals in Ghana to compare and contrast their school experiences. The classes each published a book that showed the similarities and differences between our school and their pen pals' school and even mailed a copy of the final book to their pen pals.

In the spring, second graders learned all about butterflies. Students studied the life cycle and body parts of butterflies and learned to identify different adaptations and defense mechanisms. Then, students broke into expert groups, where they each studied a special Ohio butterfly in depth. This led to students discovering that some butterflies (monarchs, in particular) are facing habitat destruction. Students became concerned and searched for solutions. Students were inspired by the book Butterfly Park by Elly MacKay, where a community comes together to plant flowers to attract butterflies.

3rd Grade:

For their first module of study, 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 to learn about how librarians all over the world overcome challenges to get books to children. Students created beautiful watercolor bookmarks listing how to overcome their own learning challenges.

During their second module, 3rd graders became herpetologists. They studied the habitats and adaptations of various "Freaky Frogs." After building their background knowledge about frogs, each student became an expert in one species. Students read the book Bullfrog at Magnolia Circle and used this book as a model to create their own informational narrative about the freaky frog they studied.

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

To Planet or Not To Planet (5th Grade) -- In this expedition, students discovered our solar system, with specific emphasis on what constitutes a planet. In science, students read multiple texts, along with the anchor text, How I killed Pluto and Why it had it Coming, and delved into the essential question: "What should be considered a planet in our solar system?" In English, students read expedition novels about outer space and learned about quoting, point of view, how visuals impact understanding of a story, and how we can best convince an audience. In math, students looked at place values of numbers in thousands and millions in order to find the distance between the planets.

For the final product, students wrote an opinion paragraph using evidence from articles answering the question “What should be considered a planet in our solar system?” They used their paragraph to create a YouTube script stating their opinion with evidence. The students then turned that script into a hand illustrated YouTube film.

Human Rights (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 theme, and comparing and contrasting how different texts address the topics and themes of human rights. Students wrote an analytical essay in which they described how a character in the novel responds to challenges. During Humanities and Art, students researched refugees to build empathy for refugees in the Columbus community.

Adventure and Survival (6th Grade) – Students explored the dichotomy of adventure/survival. Both of these things are an integral part of what it means to be human and both rely heavily on the environment. “What makes adventure different from survival?” “When do the lines blur?” “What happens when either of these things go too far?” “What does it mean to survive middle school at GEMS?” In English they wrote their narrative about adventure OR survival as a student at GEMS. In social studies they wrote their rough drafts of the intro to GEMS civilization and edited/published it for the *GEMS Survival Handbook*. In science, students learned about Mt. Everest geology. In art, they created maps of the 3rd floor to add to the handbook. The handbooks were given to new 5th grade students at back to school night to help with the transition to middle school.

Watt’s My Impact? (6th Grade) – In this expedition, students looked at human’s impact on the natural world. They learned about recycling, pesticides used that harm the environment such as DDT, and how our building responsibly uses or wastes energy. Students welcomed expert visits from a falcon handler who spoke about DDT’s impacts on the birds, and an engineer who conducted a school tour to point out energy efficient areas of the building, and areas for improvement. For the final product, students studied an energy audit of the building, analyzed our energy usage, and made suggestions for how our consumption could be improved. Their suggestions were presented to GEMS board members.

When Cultures Collide (7th Grade) – Students explored cultures colliding through texts and experts to create a photojournalism project documenting the story of a person in Columbus that regularly communicates/interacts across cultures. Students listened to a panel of experts and then selected one person from the panel, or from the larger community to interview at a local coffee shop. Students set up a photo with the community member to express something they’d like Columbus to know about their story. Photos were showcased along with a short story of the community members with the focus “How can we have courageous conversations across cultures?”

1908 (7th Grade) – Students explored the guiding questions:

- What was life like in America in 1908?
- What was the effect of industrialization and scientific progress on Americans?
- How has innovation shaped Columbus in the past 100 years?
- How do you engage an audience with only sound?

Students studied issues of the day from the era when our historic building was erected including the work environment, labor unions, and inventors of the time. We visited the Ohio History Connection archives to look at primary source newspaper publications, photos, books and maps to learn about industrialization, scientific progress, and immigration in Columbus. In partnership with WOSU and Musicology Recording Studios students learned how to write, edit, and produce their own podcasts.

Vote with Your Fork (8th Grade) - Using The Omnivore's Dilemma as the expedition's anchor text, students examined the history of food and the process of where our food comes from on its way to our tables. Fieldwork included visiting local grocers and farms. The culmination of the learning took place at the end of the term when students presented during an informational fair where students shared about food chains, how to best feed our ever-growing world population most effectively, and healthy food options in our communities.

Take a Stand (8th Grade) - Students looked at the guiding question: "Is it worth taking a stand for yourself/others?" "How do you know?" Students read Harper Lee's "To Kill A Mockingbird" to explore situations when they would want to take a stand. Students used this learning to create Public Service Announcements related to topics they were invested in.

Wheels of Change (8th Grade) - Students in all content areas focused on the Guiding Question, "What forces change the world around us?" In Science, students learned about the mechanics of biking, focusing not only on forces, but on how science itself changes how we view the world. In Social Studies, students analyzed the forces (diplomacy, railroads, slavery, post-Civil War) that changed the landscape and perspective of the United States of America. In Math, students learned about volume (cylinders, spheres, and cones) and completed a project to design a water bottle that can change the world. Later in the trimester, students looked at scatterplots to analyze the correlation between two variables related to the Puerto Rico hurricane (time taken to recover vs. population, time taken to recover vs. money spent to recover). In English, students analyzed the archetype of a hero. They focused on heroes in history who have changed the world around us. Students identified local heroes and interviewed them for a narrative story of that hero's life. The narratives were compiled into a professional book.

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.

Staff Members

The full-time and part-time staff roster in the 2019-20 school year included: Debbie Addison, Jane Addison, Alen Auguste, Melissa Bachorski, Carolyn Baginski, Heather Baker, Cathy Baney, Nicole Becks, Kevin Beery, Karen Blain, Jennifer Bricker, Greg Brown, Lavidia Chapman, Cassy Clawson, Jisuka Cohen, Eileen Collins, Christina Conrad, Keri Dana, Keegan Donovan, Rosa Dixon, Leah Ecaruan, John Eckenrode, Monica Eppler, Montana Fout, Susan Frank, Sydney Frazier, Nora Goss, Valerie Hessler, LeMoyne Jackson, Susan Jimison, Kaitlyn Justice, Noelle Klein, James Kutnow, James Lawlor, Jamie Lenzo, Katie Logan, Cheryl Long, Sarah Lopienski, Katherine Luikart, Allison Maynard, Kyleigh McCune, Melinda McFann, Eileen Meers, Cassie Muller, Anne Murphy, Michael O'Donnell, Kelli Orians, Wesley Owen, Angel Peaks, Michael Piteo, Hannah Reese, Victoria Ringwald, Evan Rulong, Jennifer Smith, Chris Spackman, Zach Steinberger, Jordan Templeton, Dodie Thebeault, Cynthia Tishue, Colleen Vaughan, Jennifer Waddell, Stephanie Waldeck, Jessica Watson, Jeanne Weinberg, Sharon White, and Jeff Wiseman.

Financial Status

In fiscal year 2019-20 the school received \$4,204,123 in state funds. The school also received \$660,146 in federal funds and \$120,930 in development and rental income funds, among other separated categories. Sources of income totaled \$4,985,199. In fiscal year 2019-20 the school paid for employee salaries and benefits, including payroll taxes and retirement, through The Graham School, GEMS's financial manager, and paid \$160,109 in loan payments for the purchase of the 16th Avenue building and a short term loan for building improvements. Uses, including the aforementioned items along with classroom support expenses, utilities, insurance and assorted services to and purchases for the school, totaled \$4,832,182 in expenses. When the current cash in bank was added to the sources, the year-end adjusted cash balance was \$254,049 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.

Fiscal Performance for Sponsor: All fiscal reports and documents have been successfully submitted to the sponsor on time.

Sponsor Review Comments

It is a pleasure working with the school and the cooperation and professionalism of all involved is appreciated. The school continues to do a nice job in all areas of compliance and timely submissions related to performance framework (academic, fiscal, organization/operational, and governance).