



# MENTOR MANUAL



encounter the world, engage the mind



## THE GRAHAM SCHOOL

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# OVERVIEW



## Who We Are

The Graham School (TGS) is a public high school with a charter granted by the State of Ohio. The school is open to all Ohio students. Our school's focus is experiential education in a small-school setting where all students are known by all staff members. Open since 2000, The Graham School enrolls no more than 230 students in order to keep classroom size small.



## TGS Staff



Staff members at TGS are dedicated educators distinguished by the energy, excitement, and creativity they bring to helping students learn. Out of our nineteen teachers and administrators, seven hold master's degrees and three hold doctorates. All teachers hold certification with the State of Ohio, in addition to their bachelor's degrees. Along with teaching and other duties, staff also serve as student advisors for small groups of twelve to fifteen students. Overseeing the same advisory group throughout the year enables teachers to guide all aspects of student development.



## What We Do

In keeping with our mission to "encounter the world, engage the mind," we offer students from the ninth grade forward experiential education opportunities both in and outside of the classroom. Students spend Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at the school and **Tuesday and Thursday at one of our community partner sites for a total of 8 to 10 hours per week. The internship lasts the entire school year.** Site partners include agencies, schools, hospitals, and a variety of local businesses. Students are encouraged to explore their interests and career options, as well as learn about their responsibility within our community. These partnering sites share a common vision with The Graham School by valuing mentorship and community engagement for high school students.



Classroom work in traditional and non-traditional courses helps students acquire conceptual and factual knowledge and develop critical thinking, research, and teamwork skills. Through the work at community partner sites, students learn to be professional, self-directed, and reflective. These internships develop students' confidence in their ability to do productive and significant work and form a tangible commitment to their community. The combination of classroom and internship work creates well-rounded students who are prepared for life after high school.





# THE EXPERIENTIAL PROGRAM\*

## The Graham Difference: Experiential Learning



In its most basic definition, experiential learning is *learning by doing*. It is a process by which learners gain knowledge and acquire skills through critically reflecting on a direct experience. Through reflection, the learner connects new knowledge to past experience, finds insightful patterns through analyzing the experience, and applies those new discoveries to everyday life situations. This leads to a change in thinking and behavior when encountering the next experience, whether in or out of the classroom.



At Graham, we provide students with experiential learning opportunities through research, teaching, and service learning experiences in community organizations and businesses as well as in the classroom. The Experiential Program presents students with real-world issues and problems to tackle in a structured work environment. Working with mentors at our partner sites, students recognize and use their strengths and interests to contribute to the community.



During their time at Graham, students take on increased responsibility for their own work and learning both in the classroom and at their internship sites. With this increased responsibility, we challenge students to reflect on what their experience is teaching them about themselves and their role in the community. In this way, Graham students build a solid foundation for their post-Graham life.



## 9th Grade: Community



All incoming freshmen participate in our Foundations program with experiential work and curriculum centered on the theme of *Community*. Students are introduced to the experiential curriculum through attending service-oriented internships with a small group of other Foundations students and their TGS advisor. Through teamwork and one-on-one interaction with Graham School staff and site mentors, students learn about the importance of safety and trust, taking initiative, self-advocacy, and serving their community. Students attend one of five sites every Tuesday and Thursday including Habitat for Humanity and a Columbus soup kitchen. Bussing to sites is provided for all Foundations students.





# THE EXPERIENTIAL PROGRAM\*

## 10th Grade: Service



Sophomore year, students focus on the theme of *Service*. In their sophomore year, students explore concepts of time management, professionalism, communication, conflict resolution, and emotional intelligence. Students choose from multiple partner sites including Grant Hospital and Franklin Park Conservatory. They attend their chosen site with a few other sophomore interns and work closely with a site mentor and their TGS advisor. Bus transportation is provided to all sophomore sites.



## 11th Grade: Leadership



Junior year students focus on the theme of *Leadership*, where students study various leadership definitions, theories, and styles. Junior students have a larger selection of internship opportunities to choose from including 100+ existing sites. Juniors may also set up their own internship with the approval of the Graham School Experiential Director. Junior students experience more freedom and therefore have more responsibility under the leadership theme. Advisors check in with juniors less frequently and work closely with them in advisory class. Juniors may need to provide their own transportation to and from their sites, depending on location.



## 12th Grade: Risk



Senior year students finish academic credit, create a Senior Capstone Project, and experience Walkabout, the culminating piece of the experiential program. Walkabout consists of two full-time, eight-week internships. Through Walkabout, students explore the concept of *Risk* in real-life situations. This is explained further on the next page.



In the first semester of senior year, students either complete academic credit needed for graduation or take college classes through the PSEO (Post Secondary Enrollment Options) Program. On Tuesdays and Thursdays they pursue a local internship of their choice. Second semester students embark on Walkabout.





# WALKABOUT



## What is Walkabout?

The idea of Walkabout is based on the rite of passage from adolescence to adulthood practiced for centuries by aborigines in the Australian outback. A sixteen-year-old aboriginal boy goes through a period of testing under real-life conditions, knowing that during the Walkabout experience every decision and every action will have a tangible consequence for which he alone is responsible. At the end of the Walkabout, he will have demonstrated to himself and the members of his community that he is ready to accept the responsibilities of adulthood.



At The Graham School, Walkabout is an educational program designed for seniors who want to continue to grow and develop their skills and abilities outside of the traditional classroom setting. In doing so, many students gain the personal confidence, direction, and independence needed for college and life in the real world. The students have a voice in the creation of a personal course of study that allows them to be in charge of their own activities, with the guidance of an on-site mentor and in-school advisors. Walkabout is based on the belief that being tested in a classroom setting does not always prove the ability to apply knowledge. *Walkabout, and life, is not a test of what a student can do under a teacher's direction, but a test of what he or she can do as an individual.*



Seniors at Graham take great risks and learn greatly from these risks because they are supported strongly by teachers, administrators, site mentors, families, and peers. Because each year at Graham students gain more autonomy, self-direction, and real life skills, seniors can step confidently into these challenging and life-changing experiences. Walkabout prepares our seniors for life after high school in dramatic, meaningful ways and we look forward to what they will accomplish next.



## What have our students experienced during Walkabout?

### Traveled globally to...

- Spain
- The United Kingdom
- Germany
- The Bahamas
- Taiwan
- Australia
- The Netherlands
- Brazil
- France
- Canada
- The Galapagos Islands

### Interned nationally at a...

- Theater production company in Washington, D.C.
- Fashion design firm in New York City
- National park in Washington
- Meditation center in Vermont
- Navajo Indian Reservation in Arizona
- Restaurant in Hawaii
- International school in Minnesota

### Interned locally with...

- The Division of Fire
- Riverside Hospital
- Thurber House
- Ohio's Governor's Residence and Heritage Gardens
- Judge Ann Taylor
- Cameron Mitchell Restaurants
- Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association (ESL teaching)
- American Community Gardening
- Franklin County Animal Control





# THE MENTOR'S ROLE \* \* \* \* \*



Our community partners serve as concerned adults for our students to interact with and represent a special feature of our school. Because the mentor is outside the schools walls, he or she holds an important position in the students' lives to guide them into what it means to be a self-directed learner who works respectfully and effectively with others. Ongoing conversation exists between TGS advisors, mentors, and students to outline, design, and implement the work for students at sites.



## Experiences at our partner sites are designed to:

- Build students' confidence that they can contribute important work that changes and/or adds to an organization, thus fostering a sense of accomplishment.
- Provide students with appropriately responsible tasks, creating deeper responsibility to the partner site and the larger community.
- Generate discussion and evaluation of how the internship informs the students' professional goals.
- Provide opportunities to create products that demonstrate student learning, such as reflections, projects, research results, oral presentations, and artistic displays.



## Responsibilities of a Site Mentor:

- Meet with the student's advisor on a regular basis to discuss observations, concerns, overall progress of student, and upcoming projects and deadlines.
- Inform the student about the partner site by participating in an interview conducted by the student for the Organizational Analysis Paper (explained on following page).
- Keep an eye open for various projects the student could complete for the mid-year and end-of-year experiential projects. This should be something that demonstrates the student's understanding of the site or could meet a specific need at your work place. Brainstorm possible projects with the student and share ideas with the advisor.
- Complete an evaluation of the student each semester.
- Observe the student and give feedback on what needs to be improved and what is done well.





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# PROJECTS, EVALUATIONS AND DEADLINES

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## Organizational Analysis Paper

Each year students complete an organizational analysis paper of their current site. Students interview their site mentor and gather information about the site including its history, mission, and organizational structure. This provides students with a deeper understanding of where they intern and how they fit into the bigger picture of the partner site.

**Due Date:** Early November



## Mid-Year Project

In November students begin planning their Mid-Year Experiential Project. This project either demonstrates what the student has learned thus far at the site or meets a need the site has. For example, a student at an elementary school could present a lesson to the class or design a bulletin board. A student at a hospital could do a research project on a specific area of medicine or learn about health insurance. A student working with gardens could compare the success of native Ohio plants versus invasive species.

**Due Date:** End of January



## Mid-Year Evaluation

At the end of the first semester mentors are asked to evaluate the student's progress thus far using an evaluation form provided by the school advisor. Please take time to review this evaluation with the intern and provide feedback. Your constructive encouragement and suggestions are invaluable in the experiential learning process.

**Due Date:** End of January



## End-of-Year Project

Similar to the Mid-Year Project, the student completes another demonstration of site knowledge or meets a need at the site. This project acts as a culmination piece and is presented at the school's Community Presentation Day in June, attended by teachers, parents, classmates, site mentors, and other community supporters.

**Due Date:** End of May



## End-of-Year Evaluation

This is the second evaluation done by the mentor at the conclusion of the internship.

**Due Date:** End of May







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# WHAT OUR STUDENTS SAY

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## Give us real work!

Students desire to be a part of something significant. Helping directly with the mission of the business or organization gives students a sense of satisfaction and value, as well as trains them for the future.



## We like feedback!

Remember that interns are students, and they may not have yet acquired helpful business skills and experiences. Continue to let the intern know how he or she is doing, and don't hesitate to share constructive criticism when necessary. They are there to learn!



## Please explain.

When you assign work, make sure you provide a detailed explanation. While the work may seem obvious to you, it may not be obvious to someone who has never before experienced it. Patience and a few extra minutes at the beginning will pay off later when your intern can produce good work independently.



## A minute of your time please!

Keep in mind that, as newcomers, interns may not speak up if they need help, so make sure to check in with the student as needed. If this is difficult to do informally, schedule regular meeting times to improve communication.



## Um...I need a chair.

One thing sometimes overlooked is the need for the intern to have a resourceful space in order to do the task assigned. A desk, chair, phone, and computer may be helpful tools to increase the intern's effectiveness.



## Challenge us!

Students desire a challenge, and by setting high standards and maintaining those expectations with firmness, Graham school interns will be able to fulfill our mission to "encounter the world, engage the mind."





# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



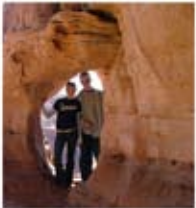
## How do students get to their sites?

Students have a few transportation options. They can provide their own transportation to their site by driving themselves, being driven by a parent or guardian, or taking the COTA bus. If their site is within our transportation routes, TGS provides a bus for them.



## What if the student gets sick?

If the student is ill and unable to come to the site, the student is responsible for calling the site to notify the mentor. The student's parent is responsible for calling the school to excuse the absence. If the student becomes ill while at the site, he or she must call a responsible adult for pick-up, and also notify the school.



## How does attendance work?

When a student arrives at the site, whether or not the Graham bus was taken, he or she must call the school before 10:30 a.m. to notify the school of arrival. If the student does not call, the school will call the site to determine where the student is. Students risk missing the afternoon bus if they neglect calling the school to report arrival.



## How often can I expect to see the student's advisor?

The frequency of advisor visits depends on the needs of the site and the grade of the student.

- **9th Grade:** Advisor is present with students all day on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
- **10th Grade:** Meet with advisor every Tuesday or Thursday.
- **11th Grade:** Meet with advisor once every two to three weeks on Tuesday or Thursday.
- **12th Grade:** First semester, meet with advisor once a month. Second semester, meet with advisor as scheduled.



## What do I do if there is a problem with the student?

Call the student's advisor or the Experiential Director at 262-1111.



## What do students do about lunch?

Students should either bring a lunch or have money to buy lunch at the site. Depending on the student, he or she can walk up to a block away from the site to purchase lunch. The student is also allowed to accompany the mentor to lunch off-site.





# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



## Can I hire a student?

During school hours, the internship is unpaid. If you would like to hire students on the weekends or during the summer, you may do so.



## Can I dismiss a student from site?

If the student does not meet your expectations, you may dismiss the student from the site at any time. This results in a failing grade for the student experientially. The Graham School also can dismiss a student from site at any time. Conversations between the site mentor, advisor, and Experiential Director will determine what is best for the student. Sometimes a real-world consequence of dismissal is the best learning experience for a student.



## Am I liable for this student when he or she is working with me?

At the beginning of the school year, parents sign a liability agreement that covers all aspects of the school, including time at the student's experiential site. If you would like to see a copy of the Parent/Guardian Release Form, please ask the student's advisor. The Graham School also has an insurance policy for our students that covers most incidents that happen at volunteer sites. You are liable for a student when driving, so please keep this in mind when/if transporting a student.



## Do I need to enforce any rules with the student?

Yes. All school rules apply at site, so if you find the student smoking, looking at inappropriate internet sites, or behaving disrespectfully, please notify the advisor immediately. Ask the student's advisor for a Student Handbook if you would like information on the school's policies.



## What about snow days?

If Columbus Public Schools (CPS) declares a snow day, The Graham School is also closed. Because of the tremendous amount of transportation services our school uses on Tuesdays and Thursdays, our administration may call off school when CPS does not. If this is the case, the advisor will notify you.

