



# The Graham School

encounter the world, engage the mind

## 2023-24 Annual Report to the Community

### The Graham School

3950 Indianola Ave.  
Columbus, OH 43214  
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IRN – 133421

**Superintendent/Founder** - Greg Brown

**Assistant Superintendent**– James Kutnow

**Assistant Superintendent** - Ed Ingman

**Dean** - Kathryn Livingston

**Dean** - Laurel Wakeley

**Fiscal Agent** – Jennifer L. Smith, CPA

**School Year the School Opened** – 2000-2001

**Number of Students** - 139

**Grade Levels Served** – 9, 10, 11, 12

**Percentage of Students on IEP's** – 35%

**Percentage of Economically Disadvantaged Students** – 70%

**Student demographic percentages** – 41% Caucasian, 36% African American, 14% Hispanic, 8% multiracial, 1% Asian/American Indian

**Percentage of Students for whom English is their second language** – 5%

### Governing Authority

The Graham School (TGS) is chartered by the state of Ohio and as such, is overseen by the Ohio Department of Education & Workforce. Our sponsor is the Educational Service Center of Central Ohio (ESCCO). The Graham School 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 2023-24 included: **Steve Gussler**, President; **Scott Lesinski**, Vice President and Treasurer; **Jessica Weithman**, Secretary; **Bill Dawson**, and **Nancy Kuhel**. TGS partners with EL Education, national experts in effective educational practice using an expeditionary model. TGS is a member of The Graham Family of Schools.

### The Graham School Mission

The Graham School has a particular mission to urban students in Central Ohio preparing them for lifelong learning and informed citizenship through real-world experiences and rigorous academics. Fostering ownership and responsibility for their education prepares our students to be successful in college, the workplace, and other endeavors they undertake upon leaving The Graham School.

### The Graham School Vision and Values

The Graham School's vision is to be an innovative leader in the education world by engaging students in authentic academic work, networking with community partners, and nurturing social and emotional growth to empower future citizens and leaders.

At Graham we...

- Have a safe, positive school climate
- Solve problems together in a peaceful, restorative way
- Embrace diversity

- Reflect on our experiences in order to gain fresh perspective and inform future outcomes
- Encourage a growth mindset for students and staff
- Believe that learning is our priority and time spent in class and in the community is essential
- Create belonging within our school and honor our connection to the world community
- Celebrate an open mind, an open heart and an open hand
- Are CREW, not passengers
- Use Habits of Learning as foundational principles --**Self-Direction, Perseverance, Teamwork & Collaboration, Service & Stewardship, and Adventure & Risk**
- Believe that cultivating these habits has a profound impact on student achievement and the ability to thrive, both in school and beyond

### **Habits of Learning**

**Self-Direction:** We are dedicated to the learning process and set goals for our learning and behavior. We take ownership of our work and our actions; take initiative when we are supposed to, and especially when there is no one looking. We strive for mastery and expertise through the process of revision and pride in craftsmanship, ultimately seeking to become artisans.

**Perseverance:** We never give up. We work hard and keep trying, even and especially when it gets tough. We recognize when we need help and elicit it. We are resourceful and work to solve problems creatively. We understand that some things are going to be hard- yet we persist to achieve more than we thought we could. We can adapt to challenges, remaining diligent and establishing a network of social and academic supports. We continue to revise our work until expectations are met or exceeded.

**Teamwork & Collaboration:** “We are crew, not passengers.” We work together to meet our goals, supporting each other through the journey. We celebrate each other’s successes and problem solve, when necessary. We are a team. We hold each other accountable for our actions, goals, and achievements. We cultivate relationships to enhance and strengthen bonds of commitment to our community.

**Service & Stewardship:** We “get smart to do good” in our community. We see service not as an isolated action, but as a way of being a member of a community. We take responsibility for our community and the environment around us by caring for each other and our surroundings. Our campus reflects our talents, creativity, and commitment to maintaining beautiful spaces. We think about how our words and actions affect the people around us; work to be kind and considerate to others; and seek to understand and relate to diverse perspectives.

**Adventure & Risk:** We honor and model our school motto, “Encounter the World and Engage the Mind” by pursuing challenges and opportunities outside of our comfort zone that allow us to grow. We are courageous, passionate, and attentive to our self-discovery. We understand that there are many routes to knowledge and realize that failure along the journey is essential to learning. We believe that success without the experience of adversity brings only a limited sense of accomplishment.

### **Philosophy**

The Graham School believes that it is the role of education to facilitate learning by making connections. These connections include: connections between academic content and real world experience, as well as across generations, cultures, and socio-economic levels. The Graham School believes that the most impactful learning is both interdisciplinary and interactive.

The Graham School is committed to the ongoing social and emotional growth of all of our students. Research shows that there is a significant connection between academic learning and Social Emotional Learning (SEL). Studies over the past 30 years also connect trauma, including the stressful environment of continuous, pervasive poverty, as a significant factor in many children's school struggles. Therefore, our entire staff participates in ongoing training in trauma sensitivity. Our SEL focus incorporates work in daily, small group community advising, the use of Restorative Practices, and the use of mindfulness to equip our students with

strategies, skills, experiences and mindsets to enable success both in the classroom and in their lives beyond school.

### **TGS Program Goals**

- Provide practical real world experience for students through experiential internship opportunities, expedition fieldwork, service learning projects, and curriculum that connects traditional high school standards to 21<sup>st</sup> century skill sets and career pathways.
- Create a learning environment that is safe, encouraging, reflective, and community conscious.
- Maintain small learning environments that develop relational aptitude and provide opportunities for growth and self-awareness through Habits of Learning focused around self-direction, perseverance, teamwork and collaboration, service and stewardship, and adventure and risk.
- Foster an atmosphere that promotes Restorative Practices for community building and conflict management.
- Construct mentoring and crew groups per academic level in which students are guided to solve problems and establish goals related to their internships, fieldwork, social emotional learning, and academic environments. Through intentional curricula students have the opportunity to make larger connections between school and the world outside.

The learning goals are to: help students further develop the ability to imagine and create, think, and reason analytically; solve problems; integrate and synthesize complex information; use language clearly and persuasively; self-advocate; and make responsible decisions. This requires skills of: communication, research and investigation, critical thinking, reflection, interpersonal relationships, career exploration, exploring values and time management. These learning goals will be addressed through curricula in three areas: academic, experiential/expedition, and crew.

### **EL Education**

The Graham School completed the ninth year of its partnership with EL Education in 2023-2024. EL Education is one of the nation's leading K-12 education organizations committed to creating classrooms where teachers can fulfill their highest aspirations and where students can achieve more than they think possible. EL exists in over 152 schools in over 35 states nationwide. For more than 20 years, EL affiliated schools have striven for a vision of student success that joins academic achievement, character, and high-quality work.

The EL model is characterized by: Active instructional and student-engaged assessment practices that build academic skills and students' ownership of their learning; Rigorous academic projects connected to real-world issues that meet state and national standards; A culture of learning that builds persistence, collaboration, critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and independence in every student.

EL's approach is grounded in respect for teachers and school leaders as creative agents in their classrooms. Stakeholders build their capacity to ignite each student's motivation, persistence, and compassion so that they become active contributors to building a better world and succeed in school, college, career, and life.

### **Academic Curriculum Requirements**

The Graham School staff creates classroom work in traditional and non-traditional courses in order to help students acquire conceptual and factual knowledge and to develop students' study habits, self-discipline, research skills, and teamwork. The Graham School curriculum includes courses in all required academic areas as designated by the State of Ohio for graduation. Students must progress experientially and academically in order to meet the requirements for graduation. Academic requirements include a state minimum of 20 credits across specific subjects: English Language Arts 4 credits; Mathematics 4 credits; Science 3 credits; Social Studies 3 credits; Electives 5 credits including 1 credit in Fine Arts, 0.5 credits in Health, 0.5 credits in Physical Education and 0.5 credits in Financial Literacy. Between 1.5 and 4.5 credits are required in Experiential Education depending on how many years the student has been attending The Graham School.

### **Career Pathways Work and CTE**

It has become increasingly apparent that the diversity of our students needs a diversity of options as they move through high school toward careers and college. We recognize the necessity of expanding upon our academic and experiential offerings with additional career focused opportunities that give students multiple paths to gain and demonstrate knowledge and skills required for future life in career and/or college. Our career pathways initiative allows us to provide more educational and graduation options to our students increasing engagement, perseverance and their belief in a positive future. Our belief and experience in hands-on learning through experiential opportunities lends itself to expanding our career and college pathways.

For the 2023-2024 school year we introduced a third CTE course in the N3 pathway of Information Technology Software and Computer Programming. Students had the opportunity to take Information Technology, Programming, or Web Design. We had a total of 47 students take the courses in our N3 cohort. New opportunities in Pre-Apprenticeships were developed through partnerships with Performance Columbus Automotive Group and EcoPlumbers for either career training in auto mechanics or plumbing. Career focused work was also integrated into each grade level crew. The OhioMeansJobs backpack was a central tool throughout, using everything from career exploration, budget calculators and the 15 professional skills established by the work readiness seal. The OhioMeansJobs work readiness seal, Technology Seal, Community Service seal, and the Industry Credential seal all count towards the two required seals needed to graduate under the new graduation requirements for 2024. As our program grows we continue to explore new avenues for our students to engage with the community and prepare for life after high school.

### **Walkabout**

In Spring of 2024, 27 students participated in The Graham School's culminating experiential internship: Walkabout. Walkabout provides students with the opportunity to participate in one sixteen-week or two eight-week, 30 hour per week internships. The objective of Walkabout is to provide seniors with significant real world experiences that they design themselves and embody our Habits of Learning. Seniors worked with mentors at some of the following local businesses and organizations: Robbie's Hobbies, Franklin County Animal Shelter, Author - Saira Priest, Home Health Aide Shadowing, Camp Bow Wow, Construction, Columbus Children's Theater Costume Shop, Public Defender's Office, Legal Aid Society of Columbus, Visit to Ettal, Germany to create a video documentary of a student's roots, Columbus Children's Choir, Reale Dog Training TGS Art Assistant, Stereo Lab, WCBE Radio, Columbus State Community College, Art Assistant at GEMS, North Broadway Children's Center, Automotive Repair, and Real Estate with TGS graduate Bill Finkhauser.

### **May Days**

In May, 2024 TGS students participated in May Days courses; these courses delve deeply into particular topics of interest ranging from Fishing, Game Theory, World Language Explorers and Mindfulness in Movement. Throughout the month students spent their days encountering the world and engaging their minds through hands-on, authentic work. Additionally opportunities for academic support and enrichment were an integrated thread.

### **CCP**

The Graham School is an active participant in the College Credit Plus (CCP) programs available through Columbus State Community College and The Ohio State University. Students are encouraged in their third or fourth year to take at least one CCP class prior to graduation from TGS. Several Class of 2024 seniors took CCP classes for their Walkabout experience.

### **Honors/Recognitions/Special Occasions**

The Graham School presents several awards in May to students who exhibit achievement and leadership in a variety of categories. In 2023-2024 the following students were honored:

<b>Subject Awards</b>	<b>Student</b>
Fine Arts	Nadiyah Smith
Foreign Language	Madeline Woods
Math	Haily Sifuentes

Science	Nadiyah Smith
Social Studies	Delia Bidwell
Technology	Austin Quinatilla

<b>Experiential &amp; Habit Awards:</b>	<b>Student</b>
Adventure & Risk	VaNeyah Vazquez, Tianna Vasami-Cook, Lily Trager
Outstanding Student Award 9	Max Rager
Outstanding Student Award 10	Elaine Strauss
Outstanding Student Award 11	Robert Murphy

<b>Recognition Awards:</b>	<b>Student</b>
Outstanding Senior Award	Izzy Fralick
Self Direction Award	Maria Almstedt, AJ Terry, Brian Woods
Henry Stout Award	Qua Taylor
Perseverance Award	Eric Branch-Harwood, Anthony Vines, Zyauna Wise
Teamwork & Collaboration Award	Emija Barnett, Pedro Fernandez, Quinton Fralick
Service & Stewardship Award	Dionni Branch, Matthew Holonitch, Geogia Niclaus
Open Hand	Ashlei Peeples
Open Heart	Bri Harmer
Open Mind	Kristen Cavazos
True North	Hattie Edinger
True Dragon	JJ Holinitch

### **Celebrating Our Work Together**

The school typically has many events that celebrate our work together including: Open House, May Days presentation night, Prom, Community Presentation Days, Student Led Conferences, Walkabout presentations, and of course, the commencement ceremony. Many individuals and groups make these celebrations possible including staff, students, parents, and other friends of The Graham School. All of us affiliated with TGS are grateful to the many individuals dedicated to our work in support of educating students through our academic and experiential programs.

### **Graduation: Another Class of Life-Long Learners**

The Graham School Class of 2024 Commencement Ceremony was held at Tree of Life High School's Northridge Campus. Seniors were presented with diplomas and a red Walkabout ribbon. TGS staff and families were thrilled to be able to come together to celebrate the accomplishments of our amazing graduates.

As we ended another year at The Graham School we added 27 students to our list of graduates, which now totals more than 700 over the last twenty years. Graham graduates have gone on to universities within Ohio including: Columbus College of Art and Design, Central State University, Columbus State Community College, Ohio University and University of Northwestern Ohio. Several graduates have gone on to pursue careers in automotive technology, arts and film, criminal justice, and retail management.

### **2024 graduates of The Graham School include**

Trinity Allgood, Maya Bridges, Kristen Cavazos, Hattie Edinger-Von Netzer, Nia Marie Edwards-Johnson Izabelle Fralick, Ayeesha Goldsboro, Manuel Gonzalez, Brianna Harmer, Jadin Harmer, Penn Hazelton, JJ Holonitch, Sarah Kaiser, Mariah Lawrence-Smith, Cat Lewis, Ava Luc, Zero Martinez, Briann Moore, Lucia Pedro, Ashlei Peeples, Jaeden Peoples, Kevin Perez Morales, Alexandria Scharnhorst, Phoenix Shepard, Qua'Jenee Taylor, Hope Thomasson, Oscar Vazquez Diaz, Kamar Williams, and Atlas Zara.

### **Family Crew**

Family Crew is a natural extension of Student Crew and Staff Crew. Family Crew hosted evening meetings with families to discuss pertinent school issues and engage family members in helping with new and ongoing

programs and projects; classroom donations; and fundraising activities. Parent volunteers donated time, food, and energy to a variety of school events supporting both staff and students.

### **Partners**

Thank you to our generous partners. Your support makes it possible for us to continue providing a high quality experiential education to our students! Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Addison, Ms. Louise Antony and Mr. Joe Levine, Mrs. Mary Babcock, Robert T. Barkley, Mr. Seth Becker and Ms. Janet Meltzer, Mrs. Shirley Brown, Mr. and Mrs. Tom Copeland, Mr. and Mrs. Paolo DeMaria, Peggy Fein, Meghan Gergis, Clay and Alice Graham, Mr. Stephen Gussler and Ms. Melody Steely, Mr. and Mrs. Bill Ingram, Mr. Chris Ingram, Ms. Patricia Brown James, Kent and Sally Johnson, Justin and Yvonne Kale, Mr. Gary Kiefer, Scott Lesinski, Ms. Cheryl Long, Mr. Mark K. Merkle, Jr., Dr. George Norris, Darren Patton, Mark and Sue Real, and Jennifer Waddell.

Local businesses and organizations: Robbie's Hobbies, Franklin County Animal Shelter, Author - Saira Priest, Camp Bow Wow, Columbus Children's Theater Costume Shop, Public Defender's Office, Legal Aid Society of Columbus, Columbus Children's Choir, Reale Dog Training, Stereo Lab, T Marzetti Co., WCBE Radio, Columbus State Community College, North Broadway Children's Center, and Real Estate agent Bill Finkhauser.

### **Federal Funding**

The Graham School 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. Funds also support professional development for teachers and administrators, additional support for students affected academically, socially and emotionally by the pandemic, and improvements to our campus spaces, sanitation, safety, air quality and infrastructure. Federal funds this year included Title IA, Title I SSI, Title IIA, Title III, Title IVA, EOE, IDEA-B, ESSER II, ARP ESSER, ARP IDEA, ARP Homeless, Stronger Connections.

### **The performance standards by which the success of the school was evaluated by the sponsor (ESCCO) during the 2023-24 school year and the method of measurement that was used by the sponsor (ESCCO) to determine progress toward those goals.**

The sponsor has established a high stakes rubric with which it evaluates its schools annually by evaluating Academic Performance, Fiscal Performance, and Organizational/Operational Performance. The sponsor uses the annual state report card, MAP Assessment scores, fiscal and operational rubrics, and other mission specific measures. These rubrics are also used for sponsor contract renewal, a process successfully completed during FY24 resulting in a renewed 3 year contract. The sponsor attends board meetings, has periodic meetings with leadership and initiates site visits during the school year.

### **Contractual goals aligned with the ONE Plan**

1. Safe and Healthy Schools: 50% or more of TGS students will have a “favorable” perspective in Growth Mindset, Self-Efficacy and Sense of Belonging as measured two times per year with Panorama.
2. English/Language Arts: Increase the number of students proficient or higher in ELA end of course exams by 5% each year for the next three years.
3. Mathematics: Increase the number of students proficient or higher in Math end of year course exams by 5% each year for the next three years.

### **Names of Assessments Given at the School and the Results**

To monitor student academic achievement and progress TGS uses NWEA MAP, Panorama and Ohio State Tests. MAP Math and Reading assessments are administered fall, winter, spring to students in grades 9-12 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, scheduling, and screening students for special instruction. NWEA's methodology includes a large and reflective sample using nine terms of data and a new model for estimating student growth. TGS uses this data to monitor and analyze student growth in the classroom towards proficiency on Ohio's State Tests as well as projected college and career readiness on

the SAT. TGS staff meets in data teams throughout the year to evaluate student progress as well as set teaching and learning goals.

NWEA/**MAP** data shows improvement in growth targets met.

As part of our formalized initiative in Social and Emotional Learning, TGS used the **Panorama Survey** to help us identify student progress toward SEL goals. Panorama data focused on our priorities of Growth Mindset, Self-Efficacy and Sense of Belonging showed consistency and our goal is to increase in these areas by 5 points each year. We have not reached our goals yet but are seeing progress. Teacher-student relationships and school safety are consistently among the greatest areas of strength at TGS. We continue to work with EL Education as we build school culture, with a specific focus on Sense of Belonging through Crew - our small group advisory program. We maintained lower enrollment to continue rebuilding school culture. As we continue to offer Panorama SEL surveys twice each year, we are establishing a stronger understanding of our students' SEL skills as they connect to our goals.

Students in the state of Ohio are required to take Ohio's State Tests, the results of which are presented on the state report card.

### **The Ohio State Report Card**

The Ohio State Report Card rates schools with a 5 star system. TGS received 2 stars Overall; 2 stars for Achievement on the Ohio State Tests; 2 stars for Progress measuring student academic growth as compared to the previous year; 1 star for Gap Closing measuring a variety of measures including achievement, progress, and attendance; 2 stars for Graduation measuring the 4 and 5 year graduation rate from the previous school year.

Highlights include: our maintaining the performance index; improvements in US Government, US History and Geometry; and improvements in both 4 (85%) and 5 year graduation rates (90%).

Compared with the State of Ohio, The Graham School has an above average percentage of teachers with a bachelor's degree and an equivalent percentage of teachers with a master's degree. The Graham School teachers are 100% certified and highly qualified.

The 2023-24 Report Cards give us a snapshot of student achievement and growth as well as teacher effectiveness. During this school year we set new goals for our students and teachers academically, socially and culturally. We created work-plans to address the ongoing social emotional trauma and learning loss, and challenges of attendance, engagement and self-direction. Progress equals Growth. Our primary focus is growth every day. Having a Growth Mindset amongst students and staff is also a mantra. We meet students where they are, differentiate instruction and move them forward academically.

### **The school's activities toward and progress in meeting those contractually stated academic goals during the 2023-24 school year.**

The Graham School, founded in the year 2000, is dedicated to preparing students to be life-long learners through rigorous academics and experiential learning. Academics at TGS integrate standards based course work that provides coverage and mastery of required content with perspectives and skills that are designed to make them effective participants in the world outside the classroom. In the 2023-24 school year The Graham School continued its mission to educate students who seek significant learning through focused academics, self-directed learning, and meaningful internships throughout Columbus. As a brief review of our ongoing initiatives to address our improvement needs, we have:

- Built a school improvement plan aligned with our EL Education work plans and the ONE Plan that encompasses goals in Social and Emotional Learning, English Language Arts, and Mathematics.
- Empowered our Director of Social and Emotional Learning to help us better understand 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 including infusing Crew with daily SEL curriculum.

- Focused on understanding the impact of trauma on children and their learning and the use of trauma informed practices. 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.
- 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.
- Used block scheduling and standards based grading to enable deeper learning opportunities, credit recovery, and more classroom co-teaching.
- Expanded our work in 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.
- Continued to expand our partnership with EL Education enhancing our expeditionary focus integrated with academic growth and achievement goals in all core curricular areas based on Ohio and Common Core Standards.
- Refocused efforts in student attendance, providing additional supports and communication.

The Graham School academic curriculum fully incorporates Ohio and Common Core Standards. Interim and end of course exams are part of our model. Students with disabilities are involved in all classroom lectures, laboratory activities, and experiential opportunities. We use standards based grading and our evaluations are not grades in the traditional sense, because they do much more than sort and rank students. Instead, our evaluation system describes what work looks like when it approaches, meets, or exceeds our expectations. Moreover, our evaluations are presented in narrative form so that students, parents/guardians, and other interested parties will have a greater understanding of the totality of the students' performance in a variety of identified essential skills, academic objectives, and experiential abilities. Experiential curriculum is measured by a specific rubric built to evaluate achievement in each grade level program.

### **Staff Members**

The full-time and part-time staff roster in the 2023-24 school year included: Debbie Addison, Cathy Baney, Kiara Banks, Greg Brown, Kisha Byrd, Randi Channel, Edward Chatman, Andrea Dubose, Candace Dubose-Coward, Kevin Elliott, Leonard Farquharson, Susan Frank, Zachary Franklin, Roberta Gier, Lori Hansen, Valerie Hessler, Cameron Hughes, Trina Hurt, Edmund Ingman, Rebecca Jackson, Alexandra Konet, Bryan Kossmann, James Kutnow, Sidney Leatherman, Taylor Limbert, Kathryn Livingston, Katie Logan, Cheryl Long, Polly Long, Alena Looser, Madison Mathias, Nolan McClung, Jack Murphy, Hannah Phillipi, Evan Rulong, Kristen Sever, Mary Slaback, Jennifer Smith, Chris Spackman, Zachary Steinberger, Cassidy Taylor, Shaina Thompson, Gabriela Torre De Vizuet, Paul Van Dop, Jennifer Waddell, Laurel Wakeley, Jeff Wiseman, and Greg Zacharias

### **Financial Status**

In fiscal year 2023-24 the school received \$1,954,190 in state funds. The school also received \$410,748 in federal funds, and \$117,342 in development funds, among other separated categories. The school also received \$7,948,072 in management fees. Sources of income totaled \$10,430,352. In fiscal year 2023-24 the school paid \$9,244,370 in employee salaries and benefits, including payroll taxes and retirement; and \$55,743 in mortgage and loan payments on the purchase of the building. Uses, including the aforementioned items along with classroom support expenses, utilities, insurance and assorted services to and purchases for the school, totaled \$10,281,924. When the current cash in bank was added to the sources, the year-end adjusted cash balance was \$372,405 to be carried over to 2024-25. 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 Educational Service Center of Central Ohio, the school's sponsor. And, the school is audited annually by the State of Ohio Auditor's Office. All found the finances to be accounted for accurately and appropriately.