The Graham School

encounter the world, engage the mind

2024-25 Annual Report to the Community

The Graham School
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IRN – 133421

Co-Superintendent– Ed Ingman
Co-Superintendent - James Kutnow
Dean - Trina Hurt
Dean - Laurel Wakeley
Fiscal Agent – Jennifer L. Smith, CPA
School Year the School Opened – 2000-2001
Number of Students - 132
Grade Levels Served – 9, 10, 11, 12
Percentage of Students on IEP's – 40%
Percentage of Economically Disadvantaged Students – 100%
Student demographic percentages – 40% Caucasian, 35% African American, 17% Hispanic, 8% multiracial
Percentage of Students for whom English is their second language – 4%

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 2024-25 included: **Scott Lesinski**, President; **Jessica Weithman**, Vice President and Treasurer; **Rayshawn Wilson**, Secretary; **Steve Gussler**, 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, college and career exploration, 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 challenges along the journey are 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 Responsive Educational Practices (TREP). 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 21st 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, college and 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 tenth year of its partnership with EL Education in 2024-2025. 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 2024-2025 school year we expanded opportunities in Pre-Apprenticeships through continued partnerships with Performance Columbus Automotive Group and Independent Electrical Contractors for either career training in auto mechanics or electrical fields. We continued to leverage our relationship with ESCCO(Educational Service Center of Central Ohio) in career and college resources and regional opportunities for our schools and students. The Business Advisory Council as one example provided guidance for our programs. Career focused work was also integrated into each grade level crew. The OhioMeansJobs backpack was one tool used for career exploration, budget calculators and the 15 professional skills established by the work readiness seal. We had over 90% of our graduating class earn the OMJ 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 Ohio graduation requirements and were all attainable by our students through these opportunities. We introduced a career and college aptitude and interest platform called YouScience for our students and staff to explore what aptitudes and career opportunities align for them individually. 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 2025, 26 students participated in The Graham School's culminating experiential internship: Walkabout. Walkabout provides students with the opportunity to participate in one sixteen-week internship. 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 businesses and organizations: Performance Columbus Auto Pre-apprenticeship Program, Public Defender's Office for the State of Ohio, Northbroadway Children's Day Care Center, Robbie's Hobbies, Columbus State Community College, Legal Aid Society of Central Ohio, Pilot Dogs, CRIS - Community Refugee and Immigration Services, Worthington Auto, Franklin County Dog Shelter, GEMS, Sexton Pizza, Bite This Bakery, Something Special Rock Shop, Cap City Diner, Ritzy's Diner, Schoedinger Funeral Home East, COSI, Columbus Rec Center East, I am Linden after school program, and Sally's Hair Supplies.

May Days
In May, 2025 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 2025 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 2024-2025 the following students were honored:

Award	**Student**
Habit - Adventure & Risk	Lila Morris
Habit - Self-Direction	Ivette Williams
Habit - Perseverance	Ta'Mya Jones
Habit - Service & Stewardship	Temperance Bryan
Habit - Teamwork & Collaboration	Isata Bun-Mansaray

Outstanding Senior	Georgia Nicklaus
Fine Arts	Maddie Carrington
Open Hand	Matt Bashur, Robert Murphy, Ivetter Williams, & Lila Morris
Open Heart	Nasira Mack & Jazmeyon Davis
Henry Stout Award	Jocelyn Williams
True North	Robert Murphy
True Dragon	Zay Hudson

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 2025 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 come together to celebrate the accomplishments of our amazing graduates.

As we ended another year at The Graham School we added 25 students to our list of graduates, which now totals more than 725 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, University of Cincinnati, and University of Northwestern Ohio. Several graduates have gone on to pursue careers in automotive technology, arts and film, criminal justice, and retail management.

2025 graduates of The Graham School include
Matthew Bashur, Olive Bova, Temperance Bryan, Isata Bun Mansaray, Madison Carrington, Charneisha Cofield, Jazmeyon Davis, Saul Fernandez-Salinas, Timothy Ford, Quinton Fralick, Olexis French, Exzavier Hudson, Ta'Mya Jones, Nasira Mack, Lilla Morris, Robert Murphy, Georgia Nicklaus, Fez Quigley, AJohnnie Simms, Amber Spriggs, Israel Stafa, Lily Trager, Ivette Williams, Jocelyn Williams, and Zyauna Wise

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, Mr. Seth Becker and Ms. Janet Meltzer, Mrs. Shirley Brown, The Columbus Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. Tom Copeland, Mr. and Mrs. Paolo DeMaria, Peggy Fein, Clay and Alice Graham, Ms. Rebecca Gurk and Mr. Stuart Mangel, Maggie Molnar, Mr. Stephen Gussler and Ms. Melody Steely, Shauna Heyman, Hildreth Family Foundation, Roxanne Holonitch, Mr. and Mrs. David Hull, Mr. Chris Ingram, Ingram-White Castle Foundation, Ms. Patricia Brown James, Kent and Sally Johnson, Scott Lesinski, Ms. Cheryl Long, Mr. Mark K. Merkle, Jr., Darren Patton, Refugio Portillo, Jennifer Smith, T. Marzetti Company, TRC, WEN Ohio, Bob Weiler, and Sharon Wellman.

Local businesses and organizations: Performance Columbus Auto Pre-apprenticeship Program, Public Defender's Office for the State of Ohio, Northbroadway Children's Day Care Center, Robbie's Hobbies, Columbus State Community College, Legal Aid Society of Central Ohio, Pilot Dogs, CRIS - Community Refugee and Immigration Services, Worthington Auto, Franklin County Dog Shelter, GEMS, Sexton Pizza, Bite This Bakery, Something Special Rock Shop, Cap City Diner, Ritzy's Diner, Schoedinger Funeral Home East, COSI, Columbus Rec Center East, I am Linden after school program, and Sally's Hair Supplies.

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, resources for students with disabilities, TREP, and well rounded education opportunities including fieldwork. Federal funds this year included Title IA, Title IIA, Title III, Title IVA, IDEA-B, and Stronger Connections Grant.

The performance standards by which the success of the school was evaluated by the sponsor (ESCCO) during the 2024-25 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 (FY25-FY27)
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% over the next three years.
3. Mathematics: Increase the number of students proficient or higher in Math end of year course exams by 5% over 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 across grade levels.

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 including TREP. 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; 1 star for Graduation measuring the 4 and 5 year graduation rate from the previous school year, and 1 star for the new measure: College, Career, Workforce, and Military Readiness.

Highlights include: maintaining steady scores with overall improvements to the Performance Index and more than doubling our percentages for helping students being prepared for success.

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 2024-25 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 ongoing social emotional trauma, 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 2024-25 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 2024-25 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 Responsive Educational Practices (TREP). 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.
- 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 2024-25 school year included: Debbie Addison, Cathy Baney, Kiara Banks, Jennifer Bricker, Kisha Byrd, Jacob Carlton, Randi Channel, Edward Chatman, Haley Crook, Candace Dubose-Coward, Kevin Elliott, Leonard Farquharson, Susan Frank, Katarina Hagan, Valerie Hessler, Cameron Hughes, Trina Hurt, Edmund Ingman, Rebecca Jackson, DaliaKhalil, Alexandra Konet, James Kutnow, Sidney Leatherman, Taylor Limbert, Katie Logan, Cheryl Long, Polly Long, Alena Looser, Diana Marcil, Amanda Mccain, Nolan Mcclung, Jack Murphy, Evan Rulong, Mary Slaback, Jennifer Smith, Chris Spackman, Zachary Steinberger, Cassidy Taylor, Shaina Thompson, Gabriela Torre De Vizuet, Jennifer Waddell, Laurel Wakeley, Jeff Wiseman, and Greg Zacharias

Financial Status
In fiscal year 2024-25 the school received $1,906,681 in state funds. The school also received $267,102 in federal funds, and $174,432 in development funds, among other separated categories. The school also received $7,627,583 in management fees. Sources of income totaled $9,975,798. In fiscal year 2024-25 the school paid $8,995,715 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 $10,003,143. When the current cash in bank was added to the sources, the year-end adjusted cash balance was $345,060 to be carried over to 2025-26. 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.