

ABSTRACT

Graham Primary School (GPS): Planning and Implementation

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The Graham School

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As the fourth member of The Graham Family of Schools (TGFS), Graham Primary School will prepare elementary school-aged students (K-5) using a successful combination of experiential education and expeditionary learning. Being planned to open in the fall of 2012, GPS will be: 1.) a member of successful, highly regarded community of charter public schools in Columbus, Ohio and share the core values of TGFS: hands on, real world learning experiences; rigorous academics; connection to community; self-directed, life long learning 2.) a partner of Expeditionary Learning (EL) schools, where students learn to care for themselves, each other, and the natural world as citizens in a global society. EL Schools was formed 25 years ago and continues to grow as a network of schools. Currently, there are about 150 EL schools (primary, middle, and secondary) within the US.

Graham Primary School will target urban, low income, primarily minority students who seek a school that nurtures not only students' academic growth and confidence but also their development as individuals and members of their communities. As a charter public school in the State of Ohio, GPS is open to all age-appropriate youth in good academic standing; it will be located in and adjacent to dense urban neighborhoods that are low-income and heavily minority. The curriculum integrates the engaging, real world aspects of expeditionary learning with hands-on, service based education, successfully developed at The Graham School. Highly qualified elementary school teachers with professional development from EL staff will create an interdisciplinary curriculum that meets core standards using age appropriate learning expeditions; learning expeditions are investigations of compelling topics, based on state standards, and include several subject areas.

By 2016, Graham Primary School will reach full enrollment and it will be sustainable charter public school – as are the other members of The Graham Family of Schools – in order to reliably serve urban, low income elementary school students and the metropolitan Columbus community. As a charter public school, it will prepare generations of young citizens to be more self-directed in their work, successfully progress through school, care for their communities, and the natural world. In serving students K-5, we will address the urgent local and national need to better prepare students for academic progress, whether that be in elementary school, middle school, high school, or higher education. The result will be a learning community of highly regarded charter schools serving urban students (and their families) in grades K-13.