



Graham & Parks

Alternative Public School

2019-20 FAMILY HANDBOOK





Graham & Parks School
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Dear Families,

Welcome to Graham and Parks Alternative Public School. We're delighted to have you as member of our community, whether you've been at Graham and Parks for many years or you are brand new to our school. At Graham and Parks, you'll find a multicultural learning community built on a profound respect for every student and every family.

It can be difficult to navigate a new school, so this manual is meant to familiarize you with our curriculum, policies, procedures, and important events that happen throughout the year. You can find additional information on our website: <http://grahamandparks.cpsd.us>. However, there is no better way to learn about a school than to get involved in its daily workings. In this handbook, you'll read about many opportunities for parent involvement. I strongly encourage you to get involved. Our students do best when educators and parents work together.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about this handbook or anything else. Just as your children learn from each other everyday, our school learns and improves through ongoing dialogue with the community it serves.

Best,

Tony Byers
Principal

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Graham & Parks is to educate the whole child: to help every child in our school fully develop his or her unique intellectual, social, and emotional capabilities.

CARES VALUES

The acronym "CARES" embodies the culture of caring that is at the heart of what our school is about... we care about each other, we care about learning, and we care about the world.

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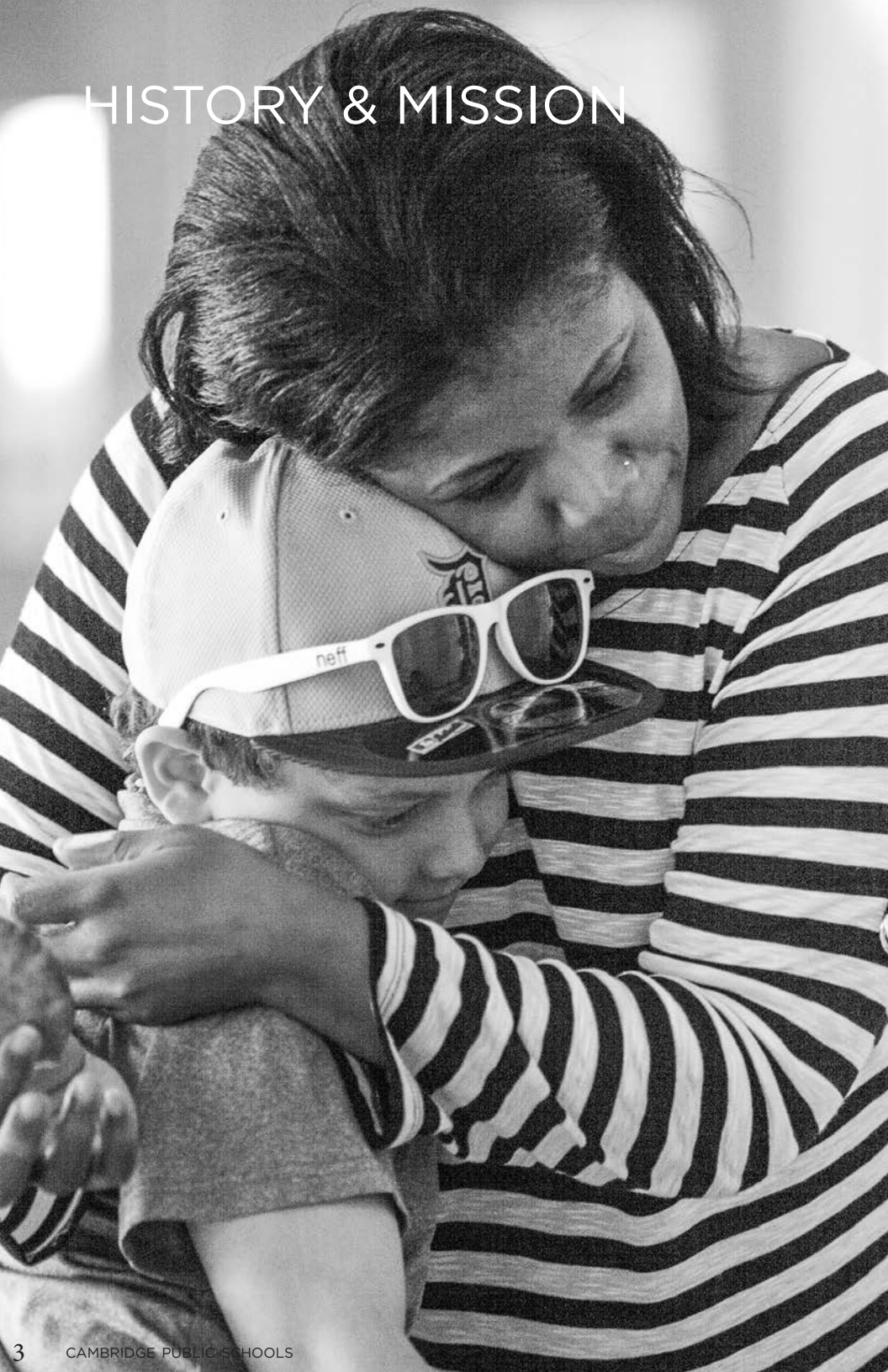
Graham and Parks
Family Handbook

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HISTORY & MISSION



History

Graham & Parks Alternative Public School was launched in 1972 as the Cambridge Alternative Public School (CAPS). Parents and teachers joined together to start the new school, striving to provide a child-centered, inquiry-based alternative to the traditional schools then prevalent in Cambridge. In 1981, the Cambridge Alternative Public School merged with the Webster School, which was a small, traditional neighborhood school. The School was renamed after Rosa Parks (1913 – 2005), inspiration for the modern civil rights movement, and Saundra Graham, a local activist for social, racial, and economic justice.

Graham and Parks was located on Upton Street from 1982 until 2003, when we moved to 44 Linnaean Street. In 2011, the School Committee voted to establish Upper Schools for 6th – 8th grade students across the district. As a result, in the fall of 2012, Graham & Parks became a JK – 5 school. Graham & Parks students now attend the Vassal Lane Upper School for grades 6, 7, and 8.

Our school's long history as an alternative school within a public school district is quite unique and something that we cherish.

Mission Statement

The mission of Graham & Parks Alternative Public School is to educate the whole child: to help every child in our school fully develop his or her unique intellectual, social, and emotional capabilities. Believing that all children can meet high standards and become lifelong learners, we foster a child-centered learning environment in which children build upon their individual strengths while always being challenged to expand their skills and reach for new goals. Because curiosity and focused inquiry drive genuine learning, we strive for a classroom experience that engages children as active learners who take full ownership of their educations. And we pursue our mission as a democratic school community that values and relies upon the ideas, experiences, and talents of all our members, working together—teachers, students, parents, administrators, and staff.

Community

Our community is incredibly diverse. Students and staff speak approximately 40 different languages, and we come from every continent but Antarctica. Our approach to education at Graham & Parks makes it important that we build a strong school community. The atmosphere of a school is crucial to the quality of the learning that occurs there. More particularly, in seeking to create a community of learners grounded in curiosity and inquiry, we recognize that no one individual has all the answers, and that we depend upon one another in the most fundamental ways for achieving our common goals.

We see it as vital that all relationships in our school be based on respect, trust, honesty, and caring. This applies not only to the relationships between students and teachers but to all the other relationships that constitute our community: among students, among teachers, between teachers and administrators, between parents and staff members, and so forth. In our classrooms, in staff and parent meetings, at school functions, in the hallways, we talk and listen to one another as if our talking and listening matter—because they do.

Governance

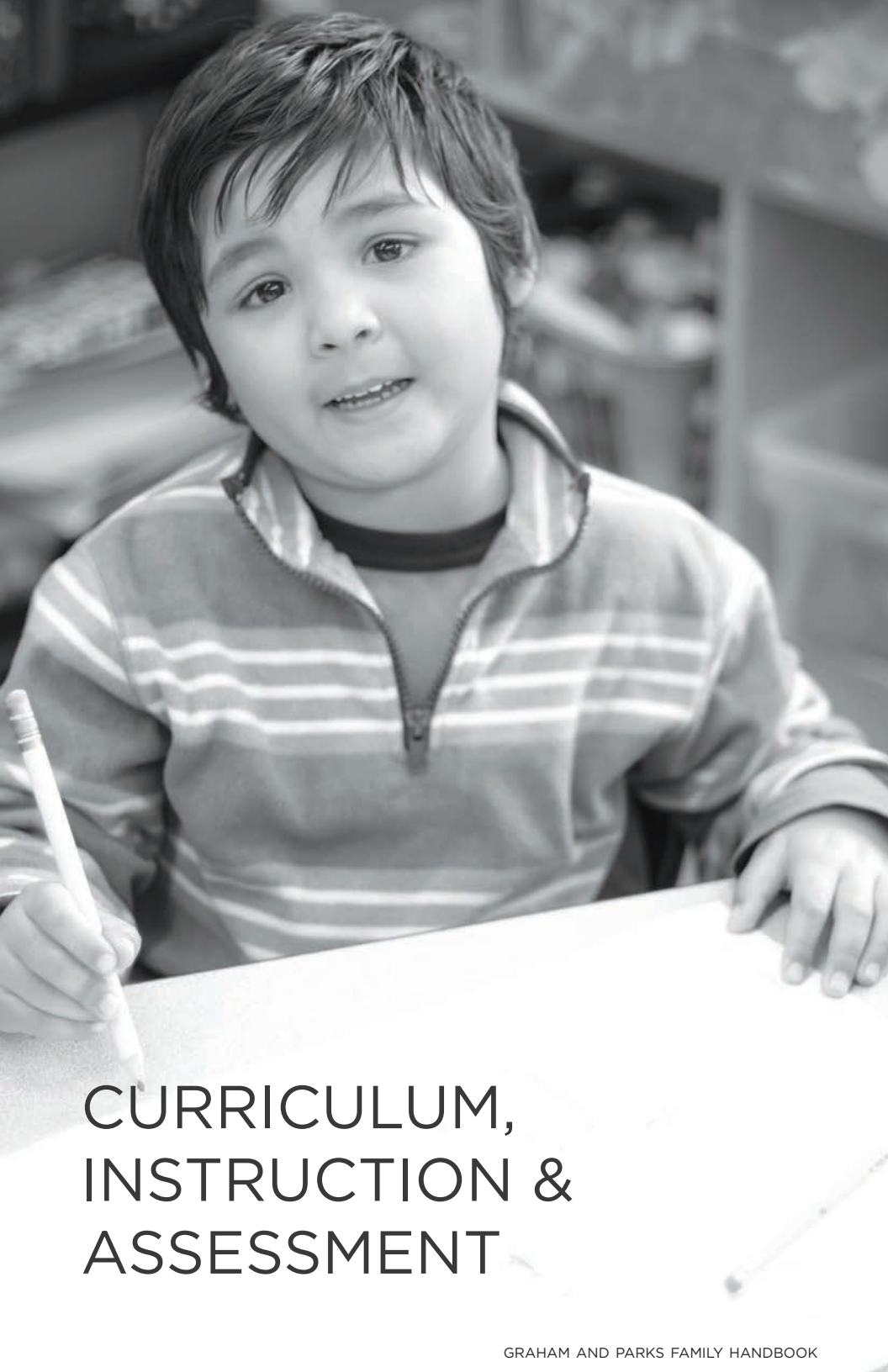
Our community is strengthened by a democratic form of governance in which decision making about important aspects of the school is shared among administrators, teachers, parents, and—where appropriate—students. Shared decision making grows out of, and depends upon, our shared values of trust and respect. Teachers and administrators, and parents and staff, respect one another's knowledge, competencies, and particular forms of responsibility. Realizing that all of us have a stake in the quality of our school and unique contributions to make to it, we trust one another to have the best interests of the whole school community in mind when working together to make decisions. We embrace disagreement and conflict as indispensable elements of life in a democracy.

One of the most significant parts of our heritage is that Graham & Parks itself was founded by both parents and teachers. In our monthly Steering Committee, our hiring committees, and other forums in which parents and staff share decision making, we work together to articulate and sustain our school's alternative approach to public education. Staff and parents share experiences and views to support one another in our dedication to the mission and values of the Graham & Parks Alternative Public School.

Classroom Configurations

Classrooms at the Graham and Parks Alternative Public School are singled graded, with the exception of JK/K classes and our Language-Based Learning Disabilities program, which both have mixed age groups. All classes are heterogeneously grouped in terms of academic achievement, socio-economic background, race, and gender.

In our SEI program, students are often combined across two grade levels during English Language Development blocks. For example, 2nd and 3rd graders who are newer English Language Learners would learn together, as would their more advanced peers.



CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION & ASSESSMENT

For a full description of the learning expeditions and curriculum for each grade level and specials class, please visit our website at: <http://grahamandparks.cpsd.us/academics>.

Academics

The educational program at Graham and Parks is highly individualized. Our learning is hands-on, project-based, interdisciplinary, and responsive to diverse family cultures and groupings. We emphasize cooperative learning since we believe that learning is primarily a social activity.

We are guided by the belief that success comes from hard work, and that all children have the ability to succeed academically. We share a “growth mindset:” we believe that our talents and abilities can be developed through perseverance. We know that intelligence is not a fixed trait; rather, our brains are constantly evolving as we experience new challenges. At Graham and Parks, we share a commitment to teaching this mindset to our children and to modeling it through our own actions as teachers. We strive to create an academic culture that honors risk-taking and mistake-making as a natural part of the learning process, a culture in which misconceptions are an inevitable stepping stone to deeper understanding. Our teaching practices are also designed to help students develop habits of mind such as grit, curiosity, and commitment. We nurture these habits of mind through universally high expectations for what students can achieve, through rich curriculum that motivates and engages students, through insistence on multiple drafts of student work, and through frequent celebrations of quality.

In addition to our JK/K - 5 general education program, Graham and Parks is proud to house the district's K - 5 SEI program for students who are new to the United States. The program instructs students to speak, read, and write fluently in English and prepares English Language Learners (ELL) to enter mainstream programs as soon as they are ready. Our goal is to provide a safe environment for these students to learn English while also continuing their learning in the academic content areas. As much as possible, we seek to provide opportunities for students in SEI classes to integrate into mainstream classes through classroom partnerships, buddy classrooms, mixed-classroom specialist classes, and all-grade field trips and activities.

For students with special education needs, we have a team of learning specialists who collaborate with classroom teachers to provide individualized support to students. In addition, we are home to two language-based Learning Disabilities classrooms, which serve children who need additional, specialized instruction to access reading and writing across the content areas. We also include a Special Start classroom for pre-schoolers with disabilities and their typically-developing peers. We are proud to be a school that supports the learning of students with a wide range of learning needs.

Math

We believe in a balanced math program that encompasses problem-solving, computational flexibility, and fact fluency. Through lessons, discussions, rich problems, and games, students explore mathematical ideas in ways that stimulate curiosity, create enjoyment of mathematics, and develop depth of understanding. These ways of thinking are embodied in the Common Core Standards for Mathematical Practice.

Our math instruction K-5 focuses on a progression of interconnected concepts and skills as identified in the new Common Core standards. There are also a number of instructional practices that are common throughout the grade levels to foster mathematical thinking and reasoning, including whole group and partner discussions, use of manipulatives to explore and prove conjectures, and student sharing of strategies and mathematical thinking with others.

At Graham & Parks we strongly believe in heterogeneous classrooms where all students benefit from the questions, insights, and contributions of others. We also recognize there are times when students need to be flexibly grouped at different levels. We strive to provide opportunities for students to work on “just-right” problems that challenge them in different ways – whether it’s through understanding of specific concepts with the use of manipulatives and models, or working on their ability to think flexibly and hone their skills at analyzing and critiquing the work of others, or working on expressing their mathematical thinking both verbally and in writing.

We draw on the Common Core Standards for Mathematical Practice to guide our instruction and differentiation to meet diverse learner’s needs. (Please see the Common Core Standards for Mathematical Practice for detailed information – this information can be located under the Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math Department (STEM) at www.cpsd.us).

Our current math curricula, *Math in Focus*, provides for differentiation within the program, with concepts and problems at different levels of complexity, or with additional supports provided. We also draw from a variety of additional resources to provide students with the appropriate level of challenge.

We recognize that math concepts and content are taught at different grade levels and ages around the world. It is not our general policy to introduce curriculum or concepts from the grade above nor to place students in an advanced grade solely for math instruction. If a student’s academic performance is *significantly* above grade level, based on multiple measures and teacher observations he/she may be referred by his/her teacher or family to the Office of Academic Challenge and Enrichment to see if he/she qualifies for an Enriched Learning Plan (ELP).

Parents are strongly encouraged to first meet with their child's classroom teacher to discuss concerns before reaching out to the Office of Academic Challenge and Enrichment to initiate the process for an ELP. To reach the Program manager for Academic Challenge and Enrichment, please contact the Office of Student Services at 617.349.6500."

Literacy

Literacy instruction at Graham and Parks includes three blocks: Readers' Workshop, Writers' Workshop, and Word Study.

Readers' Workshop

We believe that children become successful readers when they read! To this end, students are provided ample time throughout the day to dive into high-interest books. Students read a wide variety of self-selected and teacher-selected texts that include a balance of fiction and non-fiction. Sometimes books extend content learning, at other times books amplify themes in our social curriculum, and often times students are encouraged to read books that appeal to their individual passions and curiosities. We teach students how to select books that are at a "just right" level of challenge, and we structure extended periods of reading in school and at home. Through mini-lessons, small group discussions, individual conferences, and regular assessment of skills, we guide students' gradual development of fluency, comprehension, and analytical thinking. During interactive read-alouds, we model and encourage students to make meaning, form connections, and construct inferences about texts in different genres.

Writers' Workshop

Our writing program emphasizes instruction that takes place in the context of students' ongoing writing process: gathering ideas, prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. Students analyze examples of highly effective writing in different genres to deconstruct elements of quality. We study narrative, expository, and persuasive genres, and we learn how to effectively write in different genres for different audiences and purposes. As students write their own pieces, they share works in progress with peers and teachers in order to continuously refine and polish their ideas. Students learn about the importance of grammar and punctuation in the context of clear communication. We frequently celebrate final products through curriculum breakfasts and "publications" in which students create a bound booklet that gives them the exciting experience of producing work for a real audience.

Word Study

In Word Study, we explore the complexities of the English language, including the spelling, structure, and meaning of words. The study of words allows students to develop their decoding skills (to sound out words they encounter in text) and their encoding skills (to accurately spell words in their own writing). Students derive principles of phonics

and spelling by analyzing groups of words, identifying patterns, and considering exceptions. Lessons are often differentiated to support students at different stages of language development. In K-2 classrooms, Word Study is structured using Foundations, a general education program based on the Wilson approach to teaching phonics and decoding.

Science and Social Studies

Our science and social studies curriculum is carefully crafted by teams of teachers and centers around core “Learning Expeditions.” Students often spend several weeks or months conducting an Expedition to explore one rich topic from the sciences or social studies that lends itself to interdisciplinary study (such as “E Pluribus Unum: From Many, One” which is a study of immigration in Grades 1 – 2, or “Eat Food, Mostly Plants,” which is a study of plants and their role in our diet during Grade 3).

During the course of Learning Expeditions, we engage in many types of learning: hands-on investigations, content-area research, fieldwork, and meetings with local experts in relevant fields. We demonstrate what we’ve learned through final projects or products that we share with the larger community. Often times projects include a piece of writing that students carefully draft, revise, and edit for publication. Projects can also allow students to show their learning through the arts.

Specials

Students at Graham and Parks participate in daily specials that include Physical Education, Art, Music, Library, and Technology.

Physical Education

During the school year, our students participate in many different types of activities in Physical Education class. Each class, students participate in jogging, upper body stretching, and core exercises. Along with this, students learn a variety of skills to enable them to pursue exercise outside of school. Our goal is to increase students’ fitness level and help them maintain a healthy body and mind. Students will learn about healthy eating habits and why exercise stimulates the brain to help them learn at a faster rate.

Art

The Art program at Graham & Parks focuses on four themes: identity, narrative, environment, and cultural literacy. Students explore a range of materials as they study elements of art such as color and space, and practice various methods of art-making. Art lessons are designed to challenge students to find creative solutions, develop problem-solving skills through individual and group work, and encourage the idea that mistakes are opportunities for growth and imagination. Students also strengthen their critical thinking skills by critiquing, comparing, and contrasting the styles, techniques, and functions of art from around the world and in the classroom.

Music

The Music program at Graham and Parks is based on the work of Zoltan Kodaly and John Feierabend. Both believe that singing is the foundation of children's musical development.

Traditional folk songs and dance are used in order to help children both understand their culture and enjoy music. We instill a love of making music and moving to music through fun, interactive, age-appropriate activities. Children also develop cooperation skills, self-confidence, and motivation for achievement through individual and group music-making experiences.

Library

The library program is designed to support students' independent reading interests and help them develop research and presentation skills. We introduce students to a variety of literature and nonfiction through read-alouds, book talks, and special programs. The librarian also works with classroom teachers and the Instructional Technology Specialist to teach research skills and online safety, help students learn how to access, evaluate, and use information from a variety of sources effectively and responsibly, and to share their learning in a variety of ways.

Students in grades JK – 3 have a weekly library class. Children have approximately 10 – 15 minutes at the end of each library class to browse and borrow books.

Students in 4th – 5th grades may have scheduled weekly classes or may come as needed for book borrowing. Through collaboration with classroom teachers throughout the year, students will learn and use 21st century skills through research and other projects.

The library collection reflects the range of student reading interests and supports classroom learning in all subject areas. We have picture books, fiction, nonfiction, audio books in a variety of formats, magazines, online resources, and a small but growing collection of multi-lingual books.

Special events and activities in the library include:

- Kindergarten Public Library Card Sign-up: We have a strong relationship with the public library and a librarian visits every fall to introduce the Cambridge Public Library (CPL) and help students sign up for their own library cards.
- Massachusetts Children's Book Award: Reading program for 4th – 6th graders allows students to read from a list of 25 books and vote for their favorite. We have "Chat & Chew" book discussions and a pizza party in the spring to celebrate the winning book.
- Read Across America Celebration: Every year, we celebrate Dr. Seuss' birthday with an all-day "read-in" and special activities in the library.

- Book Fair: Our annual book fair in June creates tremendous excitement among students about reading and is an important fundraiser for the library.
- Author visits: Students love to meet real authors and hear them talk about their work.

We welcome families to use the library before and after school. Our hours are 8 – 2:45PM, Monday – Friday.

Technology

Learning experiences in the Computer Lab are collaborative extensions of the classroom curriculum. Weekly sessions may also include the use of FASTT Math, Lexia Reading and Building Blocks, math software for Pre-K to Grade 5 students. Keyboarding skills are taught beginning in 3rd grade.

In addition to working with classroom teachers and instructional aides, the Instructional Technology Specialist collaborates with the Library Media Specialist to prepare lessons that will help students meet educational technology and library media learning expectations for their respective grade levels. These learning expectations include basic operations, literature appreciation, research skills, processing and sharing, media literacy, and digital literacy and citizenship. For more details, you can access a PDF that outlines the expectations for the K – 2 and 3 – 5 grade clusters on the Library Services website:
http://www.cpsd.us/departments/library_media_services.

Students in Grades 3 – 5 also learn about Internet safety and digital citizenship using materials adapted from Common Sense Media (www.common Sense Media.org).

Student Assessment

Students are assessed in different ways depending on their grade level. At Graham and Parks, teachers believe that close observation of students and careful probing of their thinking through daily interactions is the most critical means of assessing student learning. In addition to ongoing classroom-based assessments, we use a variety of more formal tests to measure student progress. Cambridge Public Schools administer reading, writing, spelling, and math assessments several times during the school year. The purpose of these assessments is to assess student progress to inform further instruction and to identify students who may require additional support. We do this through a Response to Intervention (RtI) framework, in which students who need additional support receive additional one-on-one or small group instruction to target specific skills. Student progress is closely monitored, and any given academic intervention is discontinued when a student has made sufficient progress or another approach is needed.

The Math and Literacy coaches oversee these assessments and the RtI process. Beginning in third grade, students also take a state test, MCAS 2.0. In addition, English Language Learners take the ACCESS test, which is a state-mandated test of English language proficiency.

Other important forms of assessment include portfolios and presentations. We use all of these tools for students to demonstrate understanding in order to foster high standards for all and to engage each child in reflecting on the quality of his or her work and his or her individual strengths, challenges, and goals. We believe that with careful planning, our teachers can meet the Common Core curriculum and assessment requirements and also sustain our innovative, multidisciplinary, child-centered, curiosity-driven approach to learning.

Families receive detailed written report cards in early February and late June. These reports provide families with clear information on students' academic and social progress. Students are assessed on their proficiency with specific academic standards. In addition, teachers write a narrative description of students' progress that provides families with important information about children's academic and social strengths and challenges.



HOMEWORK



At Graham & Parks, we believe that homework should be predictable, meaningful, and developmentally appropriate. All students will be required to read regularly at home, with an adult and/or independently. Other homework assignments are carefully designed to allow students to reinforce academic skills and concepts and to guide students in developing increased independence and time-management.

Teachers have developed the following guidelines for homework expectations:

K	No assigned homework. Parent(s) encouraged to read to child,
Grade 1	15 minutes of reading nightly Combination of parent(s) reading to child and child reading to parent(s). No written homework assigned.
Grade 2	15 – 30 minutes Build up to 20 minutes reading and 10 minutes written assignments.
Grade 3	30 – 40 minutes 20 minutes reading and 10 – 20 minutes of written assignments.
Grade 4	40 – 50 minutes 25 minutes reading and 15 – 25 minutes of written assignments.
Grade 5	60 – 80 minutes 30 minutes reading and up to 30 – 50 minutes of written assignments. Additionally, fifth grade students will be responsible for daily instrumental practice.

Please note that we have a “No Tears” homework policy at Graham & Parks. If a parent observes that a child is becoming overly anxious about an assignment, they are asked to encourage their child to speak to his or her teacher so that the assignment can be modified.



SOCIAL CURRICULUM & STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Philosophy and CARES Values

At Graham and Parks, we believe in educating the whole child. For this reason, the social curriculum is as much of a priority as academic content and skills. Our school is committed to explicitly modeling, teaching, and nurturing students to embrace our core values, represented by the acronym CARES. The acronym “CARES” embodies the culture of caring that is at the heart of what our school is about... we care about each other, we care about learning, and we care about the world.

The Graham and Parks community CARES...

- C** Be **C**urious (ask questions, think outside the box, try new things)
- A** **A**im High (do your best, work hard, set goals, take risks)
- R** **R**espect Everyone (be a good listener, be inclusive, embrace differences)
- E** Be an **E**ngaged Learner (think deeply, be reflective, don't give up)
- S** **S**how Kindness (speak nicely to everyone, be friendly, help each other, be aware of others' feelings, reach out)

Our school motto is:

“Everyone is different; everyone belongs. Everyone succeeds.”

Teaching the CARES Values

We are all expected to uphold of our school values (CARES). We can't assume that all children know how to do these things. It is the teacher's responsibility to explicitly teach these behaviors, model them, and give children opportunities to practice them. Teachers devote several weeks at the beginning of a new school year to establishing classroom communities that ensure children understand behavioral expectations and practice classroom routines that reinforce them. There is also a whole school assembly at the beginning of each year that highlights our common vision and language for student behavior.

Many teachers implement the Responsive Classroom approach to building community, social skills, and emotional well being. We begin each day with a Morning Meeting where we greet each other and prepare for a new day of learning. Sometimes we sing; sometimes we play cooperative games that challenge us to work together as a team. We regularly reflect on the health of our classroom communities, and collaboratively problem solve any conflicts that may arise. We believe that children are

capable of playing a lead role in solving their own problems when they are trusted to do so and given tools to develop their problem-solving skills and supported to use them.

We also believe that an emphasis on proactive steps ensures that students learn and practice positive behaviors before conflicts arise.

Proactive steps at the beginning of the year include:

- Teaching positive classroom behaviors
- Modeling the use of classroom and playground materials
- Getting to know children's social and academic needs
- Differentiating to meet the needs of children with social thinking differences
- Providing positive feedback when students expected behaviors
- Providing quiet spaces for student breaks, including buddy classrooms
- Modeling and posting strategies for problem-solving and handling difficult emotions

We also use the first weeks of school to create a community that is safe from bullying. We define what bullying looks like and sounds like. We teach children how to be “allies” if they witness incidents of bullying. We teach all children how to work together to prevent instances of bullying and how to enlist the help of adults whenever necessary.

Whole School Morning Meetings

We have a number of Whole School Morning Meetings in the gym (we do not all fit in the auditorium). Usually once a month, assemblies are held to foster a sense of community and tradition. An early assembly focuses on teaching and celebrating our CARES values. Others include a dance assembly organized by the PE teachers, a poetry/song assembly, and a end-of-year assembly to say good-bye to our fifth graders. A committee of teachers helps to plan and organize our assemblies.

Whole School Morning Meetings are designed to be for students and staff. Since many students have families who are working during assembly hours, structuring assemblies as school events rather than family events allows all children to feel equally affirmed and represented.

Children also participate in annual concerts organized by the music teacher in grade level clusters. Families are invited to these concerts.

Buddy Classrooms

Another way we build community across the school is through Buddy Classrooms, in which a class of older children is paired with a class of younger children for academic and social activities throughout the year.

Schoolwide Expectations for Behavior

At Graham and Parks, students will...

- Show respect to all classmates and adults.
- Care for our school and classroom materials.
- Walk in a silent line in the hallways, so we do not disturb students working in classrooms.
- Follow directions of adults the first time they are given, without talking back or arguing.

In addition to these general expectations, students are taught specific rules for conduct in the lunchroom and on the playground during the first weeks of school.

Logical Consequences and Restorative Practices

Sometimes children will have trouble meeting these expectations or will choose to challenge them for a variety of reasons. Because each situation is unique, teachers will use their judgment in the most appropriate way to respond. We believe that “logical consequences and restorative practices” are an important way to help students learn to manage their own behavior.

A “logical consequence” is a consequence that helps a child learn from and make amends for a poor choice. Restorative practices allow children to rebuild or reaffirm relationships after a conflict has taken place. Examples include:

- If a child speaks disrespectfully to an adult in the cafeteria, she might be asked to write the adult an apology. (*Restorative Practice*)
- If a child leaves a messy area after a classroom project, he might be asked to clean it up or, if this is not possible, to take on a clean-up project for the classroom community. (*Logical consequence/restorative practice*)
- If two children are involved in a conflict with each other, they may be asked to participate in a peace talk mediated by an adult. (*Restorative practice*)
- If a child is late lining up for the end of recess, she might be asked to start her recess a few minutes late the next day and practice lining up appropriately. (*Logical consequence*)
- If a child is disruptive during a lesson, he might be asked to “take a break” in a quiet place until he is ready to return. (*Logical consequence*)

- Whenever possible, teachers will work to resolve behavior challenges directly. However, in some instances, teachers will also enlist the support of administrators and/or the school counselor. Sometimes, direct follow up with families will also be necessary.

Consequences: Necessary But Not Sufficient

We believe that following through with consequences for misbehavior is critical in helping children learn positive behaviors in school. However, consequences alone are rarely enough to completely turn around misbehavior. It's important to identify the root cause of the student's misbehavior in order to address the long-term reasons and prevent the child's anger/pain/frustration from coming out in another way.

Useful questions to think about and discuss:

- Does the child need a better sense of belonging within the class? With peers?
- Is the child engaged in a power struggle? How can the child feel powerful in positive ways?
- Does the child feel incompetent in areas of the classroom? How can the child feel a greater sense of competence and skill during the school day?
- Are students experiencing stress outside of school? If so, how can we best support this child?

Behavior on the Bus

Transportation is a privilege. Students are expected to treat bus drivers and bus monitors with respect and follow their directives. When students board the bus, they are expected to choose a seat quickly and remain in that seat. Switching seats while the bus is in motion or during stops is strictly prohibited. If the driver or bus monitor feels that a student is being unsafe, the student may be assigned to a seat in the front of the bus. As per district policy, "Students who fail to comply with the rules may be suspended and/or removed indefinitely from his/her bus if the violation warrants." For more information, please visit www.cpsd.us/departments/transportation/transportation/rules/.





Mandated Reporters

All employees of Graham & Parks are obligated to report any concerns about abuse and/or neglect by a caretaker. This includes physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. For more information about Massachusetts General Law 51A, please visit <http://www.mass.gov/dcf>.

Additional G & P Policies

Hats and hoods

Hats and hoods are not allowed in classrooms, except when worn for religious reasons. Students may wear hats out to recess and take them off when returning to the building.

Candy/Soda/Gum

Except for special occasions, candy and soda are not allowed. Gum chewing is generally not allowed. However, in a few classrooms, teachers may allow gum chewing within specific guidelines (for example, during testing).

Telephone Use/Cell Phones

The use of cell phones by students during school hours is prohibited; cell phones should be “off and away” (in backpacks or otherwise out of sight). Students who need to contact their parents during the school day should go to the main office and obtain permission to use one of the school phones. Parents who wish to contact their children during the school day should call the school’s main office, and the school will deliver the message to the student. Cell phones seen or heard in the school building will be confiscated and delivered to the main office for the remainder of the school day. If a cell phone is confiscated for the second time, a parent or guardian will be asked to retrieve it from the office.

Dress Code

Graham and Parks adheres to the standards stated in the CPS Rights & Responsibilities Handbook: <http://bit.ly/cps-rr-handbook>. Parents/guardians will be notified and students will be sent home to change if their clothing is not suitable for school.



FAMILY PARTNERSHIP

Ongoing Home-School Communication

We believe that educating a child involves a deep partnership between teachers and families. As parents and family members, you are the experts on your child and his or her needs. For this reason, we view communication between home and school as two-directional. While it is important for us to share information with you, it is equally important for us to be active inquirers so that we may learn from you about your child.

Our view of collaboration between educators and families is rooted in the belief that we have shared goals. We all want each child in our community to experience social, emotional, and academic success.

What you can expect from us:

- Unflagging commitment to your child's success at Graham and Parks
- Preparation for your child to leave G&P with the academic and social skills needed for success at the Vassal Lane Upper School
- Ongoing communication about what's happening in your child's classroom and how your child is progressing academically and socially
- Ample notice about school and classroom events
- Prompt responses to phone calls or emails (within 48 hours)
- Deep respect for families' diverse cultural and linguistic traditions
- Deep respect for families of all shapes and sizes
- Availability to discuss your child face-to-face
- Respect for parents' time constraints
- Open, honest, and direct communication

What we expect from you:

- Support for students' daily reading and homework requirements, including a quiet place for your child to work and a regular time for your child to complete assignments
- Participation in family conferences, curriculum celebrations, and other school and classroom events
- Respect for teachers' professional expertise, including the expertise of newer teachers
- Courteous language
- Respect for teachers' time constraints
- Respect for teachers' need to balance meeting your child's unique needs and meeting the unique needs of all learners in the classroom
- Open, honest, and direct communication

Please note: Parents or family members may not be disrespectful to school staff. Yelling, cursing, or threatening language will not be tolerated. If parents are inappropriate or disrespectful to staff members, administrators may be required to be present for future communication.

Staying Informed

- Please check your child's backpack each day for important notices.
- Visit our website at <http://grahamandparks.cpsd.us>.
- There is one email lists associated with Graham & Parks – School Messenger. If you provided your email at registration or on your emergency card, you are automatically subscribed to the School Messenger list, which posts official school announcements.

Communicating with Your Child's Teacher

- Whenever you have a question or concern about your child's experience, please speak directly with your child's teacher. You may leave a voice message at their extension or a voice or written message with the main office. Staff can be emailed using this protocol: first initial, last name@cpsd.us (jsmith@cpsd.us).
- For quick questions, feel free to utilize email. Email is usually not a good medium for dialogue. When you need to speak with your child's teacher, please set up a time to talk on the phone or in person. It is important to schedule these conversations at a time when the teacher can provide undivided attention, rather than at arrival or dismissal time.
- Encourage your children to become problem-solvers. When they talk to you about challenges at school, help them think about what they can do to solve the problem. It is tempting for parents to try to solve the problem for children, but in many cases it is more empowering for children to think about the role they can play in problem-solving themselves.
- If you have worked with your child and his or her teacher but feel that you need additional support to resolve a concern, please get in touch with the Principal or Assistant Principal.

If you have questions about...	Please contact...
School and family events	Lauren Morse, Family Liaison 617.349.6577 x1182 Mildrid Gédéon, SEI Family Liaison 617.349.6577 x1003
Transportation	Claudie Jean-Baptiste Assistant Principal 617.349.6577 x1001
Special Education services	Sylvia Kinn, School Psychologist 617.349.6577 x1183
Math at Graham and Parks	Claire Dahill , Math Coach 617.349.6577 x1141
Literacy at Graham and Parks	Christina Astrove, Literacy Coach 617.349.6577 x1141
Library books and/or access to online resources	Ann Niederkorn, Library Specialist 617.349.6577 x2000
School policies	Dr. Anthony Byers, Principal 617.349.6577 x1000

Communicating with Your Child During the School Day

- It is stressful for children when they arrive at school unclear about plans for the afternoon. Please make every effort to firm up your afternoon plans before students arrive at school in the morning.
- Please note: it is not possible for teachers to relay messages to children during the school day. Teachers do not always have the opportunity to check email or phone messages during the school day. Please do NOT email or call teachers with messages for children or about changes in after-school plans.
- For emergencies requiring immediate assistance, please call the front office at 617.349.6577.

Family Conferences

Parent conferences at G&P take place in the late fall and the spring. Conferences are generally about 30 minutes long with each family. Conferences vary in some ways from one classroom to another. Some teachers do conferences jointly with the parents and child present. Others do conferences with parents only. However, all conferences include:

- Concrete examples of the child's work.
- Information sharing from both parties. This is an important time to hear from parents about their child's experience in school.
- Collaborative goal-setting with the family.

Whenever possible, special educators who work with a child will be also participate in these conferences.

Other Opportunities for Family Involvement

Parents play a vital role at Graham and Parks. Our goal is to establish a community in which all members feel a sense of inclusion and belonging. We rely on families to reach out to each other, and especially to families who are new. Children benefit when families feel connected to our school and to each other. There are many ways to get involved in your child's classroom and in our school as a whole. G & P has always benefited from the volunteerism of its parents. Whether you are able to make a dish for a classroom breakfast, chaperone a field trip, or work on one of our many active committees, your contribution enriches our school as an academic and social community.

These are some of the committees that support our school:

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee, which represents both staff and parents, is the policy-making body of the school. The Steering Committee guides all matters affecting the school, except with issues which are decided exclusively by the School Committee, Cambridge Teachers' Association, and the Superintendent of Schools.

The Friends of Graham and Parks

This is a fundraising organization which raises money for teachers to cover the costs of enriching curriculum projects, including field trips, visits from guest experts, costumes for performances, consumables for artistic products, etc.

Room Parents

Each fall, at least one parent (and often several) volunteers to be a room parent for each classroom. These parents can help the classroom teacher in many ways such as creating classroom contact lists, organizing potlucks, communicating with families about family breakfasts and other classroom activities, recruiting field trip chaperones, and organizing rides for families to attend school events.

Family Cultural Exchange Program (FCEP)

This committee seeks to support immigrant families' experiences at our school and to facilitate a mutually beneficial exchange between families new to the US and domestic families already at G & P.

Arts Council

This committee supports music and art teachers and organizes special arts events and opportunities for students.

Compost/Recycling Committee

This committee monitors our school lunch composting program and thinks of other ways to reduce waste at school.

Garden Committee

This committee works with CitySprouts to engage students and families with the garden.

*See website or contact your Room Parent or Family Liaison for Committee contact information.

Family Breakfasts

At Graham and Parks, we celebrate student work throughout the year. All of our classrooms structure opportunities for students to share high quality work with the larger community, usually in the form of Family Breakfasts, which sometimes include "museum" fairs, poetry slams, and plays/theater productions. Each class will have at least three Family Breakfasts every year.

We encourage siblings to attend breakfasts in other classrooms. We expect that when siblings attend a family breakfast they will show respectful behavior, engage with the student work in the classroom, and complete a checklist before returning to class. We ask that siblings return to their own classrooms by 8:50AM. Students who are not siblings are only allowed to attend breakfasts in another classroom by teacher request.

Holidays

A central theme of G & P is that we are a multicultural school with a multicultural curriculum. This means that we celebrate and affirm all religions, cultures, languages, and backgrounds. We read stories about all different holidays and have children share traditions from all different holidays.

It's important to note that we don't preference (or give more priority to) one holiday over any other. For example, we don't give Christmas assignments ("write a letter to Santa") or make Christmas displays (Christmas trees on bulletin boards or in classrooms).

While some classes may have small celebrations on American holidays such as Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Valentines Day, we generally keep the school day focused on learning. We do not dress up for Halloween.



GRAHAM & PARKS ALTER

STARTING THE YEAR

Class Placement

Graham and Parks has a careful process for determining class placement each year. First, students' current teachers thoughtfully establish new class groupings. A variety of factors influence these groupings, including:

- Well-balanced cohorts in terms of gender, culture, academic strengths and needs, and social-emotional strengths and needs
- Whenever possible, family requests concerning friendships (as identified on the G & P Placement form which is sent home each spring)

Once well-balanced class groupings are developed, each grouping is assigned at random to one grade-level teacher. Please note that we cannot honor requests for specific teachers, regardless of sibling history. Given the complexity of classroom placement, a single reassignment would require that we redo placement for an entire grade, so we do not move children once a placement decision has been made. A note on kindergarten placement: our goal is to establish one junior kindergarten class and two kindergarten classes each year (our SEI kindergarten is always a mixed-grade class). However, our ability to do so depends on enrollment, which often shifts over the summer. Therefore, we wait until the end of August to decide whether we will have mixed or single-graded kindergarten classrooms. Placement letters are mailed out shortly after a decision is made.

School Forms

For the first time, you can complete almost all of your required forms online! Save time and save paper by filling out all of your forms via our new Annual Forms & Registration Gateway. Visit the system online at: https://cas.cpsd.us/cas_CambridgeMA/login.

Every year a new Emergency Card for each child must be completed. The "emergency card" provides the school with names and numbers of those to reach in case your child becomes sick or injured at school. Include friends or neighbors willing to take your child home if you can't be reached. Please be sure to fill in all the information requested.

Back to School Night

We hold a "Back to School Night" each fall in order for families to meet their child's teachers and learn about curriculum expectations. It's also a great opportunity for families to get to know one another.

School Supplies

In most classrooms, teachers provide all of the supplies that students need for learning (pencils, paper, notebooks, etc.) Families may be asked to help by donating community supplies such as tissue boxes.



DAILY ROUTINES

School Day Hours

First bell is at 8:15AM. The second bell is at 8:25AM and dismissal is at 2:25PM.

On Early Release Days school dismissal is two hours early, at 12:25PM. Please note these dates in your calendars. The district calendar can be found on the CPS website at www.cpsd.us.

Absence/Tardiness Procedure

Students arriving after 8:25AM must go to the main office to obtain a “late slip” before entering the classroom. Teachers ask that you make every effort to have your child in school on time. Chronic latecomers not only miss out on important instructional time, but also disrupt the learning of others. Please note that School Committee regulations impose academic consequences for those who are late on a regular basis.

If your child will be absent or tardy (late), call the absent or tardy number at 617. 349.6577 x1234. An answering machine will pick up. Identify yourself, your child, teacher, classroom, and whether your child will be absent or tardy. Please arrange medical & dental appointments before or after school hours if possible.

Please remember to call the absent or tardy number. If you don't call you'll receive an automated message to let you know your child is not at school. If you believe the message is in error, please call the office to confirm.

Students with an unexcused absence will still receive an automated message, even if the school has been informed of the absence. Please see the CPS Student Rights and Responsibility Handbook (<https://bit.ly/2KmbQmJ>) for a description of unexcused and excused absences. Please note that family trips or vacations during school are considered unexcused absences and are discouraged. You may apply for extended family leaves (more than 10 days) by completing a sabbatical application on the CPS website at https://secure1.cpsd.us/forms/Sabbatical_Leave_Forms.pdf.

Family Vacations

- Families should plan vacations so students do not miss school. Family trips or vacations during school are considered unexcused absences.
- Teachers cannot prepare work in advance for students who miss school due to family vacations.
- Students are responsible for completing missed classwork and homework when they return.

- Families are responsible for supervising the completion of missed work.
- Teachers will send home a folder of missed work when students return from vacation.

Sabbatical Leaves

- Families considering a sabbatical leave from Graham and Parks should first schedule a meeting with the Principal to discuss the academic and social implications of missing school for an extended period of time.
- After meeting with the Principal, families should fill out a sabbatical application and return it to the school Clerk, who will submit the application to the Superintendent for approval.
- Graham and Parks cannot provide alternate assignments for children who are on sabbatical.
- Families on sabbatical are responsible for providing a comparable educational experience.

Getting To and From School

Drop-Off

For safety reasons, children may not be dropped off by car in front of the school. If you are driving, you may drop your child off a block away from the Linnaean Street entrance (a crossing guard is stationed in front of the Linnaean Street entrance). The front of the school is reserved exclusively for school buses. If you would like to park and escort a child inside, please allow plenty of time to find legal parking. This is a serious safety issue for children, pedestrians and other drivers.

- Children who wish to eat breakfast may enter the cafeteria as early as 7:45AM.
- At 8AM students may go onto the playground or stay in the cafeteria.
- Students may enter classrooms at 8:15AM. Class begins at 8:25AM.

Pick-up

- School doors are unlocked at 2:15PM. Caregivers waiting to pick up their children should wait in the lobby until 2:22PM before going to the classrooms for pick up. Students will be dismissed at 2:25PM.
- Walkers in grades K – 3 must be picked up in the classroom by a parent or designated caretaker. Classroom teachers must have written notification if another adult is going to be picking up your child.
- Walkers in grades 4 and 5 may be dismissed independently.

Bus Riders

- All JK – 2 students who ride the bus will receive a bus tag that must be attached to his or her backpack.
- A designated parent/guardian must be at the afternoon bus stop to meet kindergarten, first, and second graders. The driver cannot drop off a student when the appropriate person is not waiting for the student.
- Children who are not met at the bus stop will be taken to the Security Office at Cambridge Rindge & Latin High School, after the driver completes the bus route. Please be patient the first few weeks, as buses are sometimes delayed.

Busing to destinations other than home

The school system is responsible for busing from home-to-school and school-to-home only. Although busing your child to an afterschool program or other destination is not part of the busing service, we try to accommodate your child provided seats are available. Arrangements need to be made in advance through the Assistant Principal at 617.349.6577.

What to do if your child does not come home on the bus as expected

First, call the school at 617.349.6577 and then the Transportation Department at 617.349.6862. If there is no answer, call the Safety & Security Office at 617.349.7787. The Security Office is where students are brought when they get on the wrong bus, miss their stop, etc. The office is in the High School, 459 Broadway.

Safety

Children's safety is our paramount concern. Safety procedures include:

- The side doors on Avon and Walker Streets are locked at all times. Please enter and exit through the front door at arrival and dismissal.
- Administrators supervise the front door during arrival and dismissal times.
- Visitors must check-in at the main office before admittance to the school.
- Staff and students participate in periodic lock-down and fire drills.

Picking a Child Up Early

As part of our commitment to safety, we ask for your cooperation in following this protocol when releasing a child early from school.

1. Report to the office to sign out your child. Mrs. D will call the classroom and have your child sent down to the office.
2. If you return to school later in the day, check your child back in at the main office before returning to class.

Medications

All medications must be given to the school nurse in a labeled container with your child's name and a letter from the doctor. Epi pens and asthma medications should be accompanied with clear directions. No student should bring medication to school without telling the nurse or main office. Inform BOTH the nurse AND the classroom teacher of your child's allergies and severity of reaction.

Lunch

There are two options for lunch:

1. Children may bring lunch from home. Pack lunches that do not need refrigeration.
2. Children may purchase lunch.
 - A monthly menu goes home for families to consider and is posted on the District's website.
 - Lunch with milk costs \$2.85 per day.
 - Milk alone costs \$.50 cents.
 - Children may choose an alternate lunch. (Peanut butter & jelly, cheese sandwich, or yogurt and vegetables/fruit).

Lunch and fresh air times are as follows:

Junior Kindergarten and Kindergarten: 10:40AM (lunch)
Grades 1 and 2: 11:25AM – 12:10PM
Grades 3 and 4: 12:10AM – 12:55PM
Grade 5: 12:55 – 1:40PM

Breakfast

Children may also purchase breakfast. Breakfast is free.

Paying for Meals

Food and Nutrition Services automatically sets up payment accounts for all students, and requests that families pay in advance. A computerized checkout system displays your child's school photo to help ensure accuracy as funds are deducted from this account when your child goes through the lunch line. If your child's account has a negative balance, you will receive a bill.

Students are never asked for payment or denied access to meal items. There are three ways to pay for your child's lunch.

1. Pay by Cash or Check

- You may pay cash using envelopes located at the school lobby lunch payment station and the Cafeteria Drop Box located in the school lobby.
- Make checks payable to Cambridge School Department. Checks may be left in the cafeteria drop box or mailed with the name of your child or children to: Food Service Office, Kennedy-Longfellow School, 158 Spring Street, Cambridge, MA 02141.

2. Pay Online by Credit Card or Bank Debit Card

- Go to myschoolbucks.com and follow the easy steps to set up an account for your child. The system will remind you when your account balance is low and will allow you to set up automatic deductions from a credit or debit card.
- You will need your child's student ID number in order to set up an account. This ID number is mailed to families each fall, but you may also contact the school office if you don't know your child's student ID number.

3. Apply for Free or Reduced Price Meals

- To participate in this federal program simply complete a Free & Reduced Meals Program application each fall or as soon as you learn that you qualify. This application is mailed out to all families in a special mailing from Food and Nutrition Services. You may also apply online on the CPS website, request a copy from the office, or download a copy from the CPS website.
- You need to re-apply every year by September 9, but you only need to complete one form for your entire household - you may list all of your children on the same form.
- Your family's income will remain strictly confidential. Because all students use the same checkout system, the method of payment and amount paid is invisible to the other students in line.
- A number of grants and funding decisions are made based on the percentage of students who qualify for free or reduced price meals, so applying for this benefit will not only help your family, but will also help our school! You do not have to accept school lunch even if you qualify.

Recess

All students have 20 minutes (30 minutes in kindergarten) of “Fresh Air” either before or after lunch, and many classroom teachers schedule additional recess time during the day. Students should come to school with appropriate outerwear for the weather. In extreme rain, snow, or cold, students will have indoor recess in the cafeteria and/or in their classrooms.

Field Trips

Every time that a class goes on a field trip, you will receive a permission slip. Please note that children may not participate in field trips without signed permissions slips. Occasionally families may be asked to contribute to the cost of field trips. In these instances, contributions are welcome but not required. No child will be excluded from a field trip if the family is not able to contribute. For field trips, our first priority is student safety. In rare cases, and in accordance with district policy, a parent/guardian may be required to serve as a chaperon on a field trip if their child’s behavior constitutes a risk to their own safety or the safety of others. Every effort will be made to provide timely notification of such a request, with the acknowledgment that student behavior is variable, and so early notification is not always possible.



AFTERSCHOOL OPTIONS AT GRAHAM & PARKS

The Dragonfly Afterschool Program

This privately-run program provides childcare from 2:25 – 5:45PM, for 39 grade JK – 4 students, who are at least age 5 in September. Contact Director Jodi Rich at jodisrich@gmail.com or 617.547.1116.

Linnaean Community School

This program is part of the citywide enrichment programs run by the Department of Human Services. Many interesting classes are offered for children and adults on afternoons and evenings. There are three sessions during the school year and a summer camp. The Fall Session begins in mid September. For more information, contact Director Mary Ellen Breen at mbreen@cambridgema.gov or 617.349.6267.

Citywide Afterschool Options

There is a Community School at each of the public schools and many other Afterschool Child Care programs in the city. For more information go to Cambridge Public Schools website at www.cpsd.us or to www.cambridgesomervilleresourceguide.org.

APPENDICES



Important Calendar Dates

Sept. 2: Labor Day
Sept. 3: First Day of School Grades 1-12
Sept. 4: JK/K Orientation | 9 - 10AM
Sept. 5: First day of School Pre-K, Junior K and Kindergarten
Sept. 6: Friends of G & P Meeting
Sept. 12: Steering Committee | 5:30PM
Sept. 13: Room Parent Orientation
Sept. 18: JK-8 Early Release Day
Sept. 18: Back to School Curriculum Night
Sept. 27: Parent Coffee Talk | 8:30AM
Oct. 14: Indigenous People's Day
Oct. 23: JK-8 Early Release Day
Nov. 20: JK-8 Early Release Day
Nov. 11: Veterans' Day
Nov. 27: All Schools Early Release Day

Nov. 28 & 29: Thanksgiving Break
Dec. 23 - Jan. 1: Winter Break
Jan. 20: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
Feb. 17-21: February Vacation Week
Mar. 18: JK-8 Early Release Day
Apr. 10: Good Friday
Apr. 15 - 19: Spring Vacation Week
May 13: JK-8 Early Release Day
May 23-24: Eid al-Fitr
May 25: Memorial Day
June 3: JK-5 Early Release Day
June 16: Last Day of School
(180th day; with no snow days)
June 23: Last Day of School
(with 5 storm days included)

Important Contact Information

To send an email to school staff, use their first initial and last name @ cpsd.us.

School Website:	http://grahamandparks.cpsd.us
District Website:	www.cpsd.us
Absent or Tardy Line	617.349.6577 x1234
School Closing Announcements	617.349.6513
MAIN OFFICE	617.349.6577
Secretary, Cheryl DePasquale	x1000
Principal, Dr. Anthony Byers	x1000
Assistant Principal, Claudie Jean-Baptiste	x1000
Family Liaison, Lauren Morse	x1182
SEI Family Liaison, Mildred Gédéon	x1003
Nurse, Jennifer Rollins	x1181
School Psychologist, Sylvia Kinn	x1183
Haitian Family Liaison	617.349.6468
Transportation Office	617.349.6862
School Fax	617.349.6590
Dragonfly Afterschool	617.547.1116
Linnaean Community School	617.349.6267
Security & Safety*	617.349.6772

**Students are brought to the Security & Safety office when they get on the wrong bus, miss their stop, etc. The office is in Cambridge Rindge & Latin School at 459 Broadway.*



grahamandparks.cpsd.us



44 Linnaean St. ■ Cambridge, MA 02138 ■ 617.349.6577