



# Georgia Elementary and Middle School

"Where everybody is somebody"



Parent/Guardian/Student

## HANDBOOK 2025 - 2026

## Handbook Table of Contents

Welcome .....	Page 2
GEMS School Overview.....	Page 3-7
School/District Calendar.....	Page 8
Co Curricular.....	Page 9
Busing.....	Page 10
School Mission.....	Page 11
Statements of Inclusion.....	Page 12
Social and Emotional Learning.....	Page 13
Proficiencies & Transferable Skills.....	Page 14
Academic Offerings & Resources.....	Page 15-16
Family & Community Partnerships.....	Page 17
Family Rights and Resources.....	Page 18-20
Special Education.....	Page 21-24
Limited English Proficient, English Learner, Immigrant, Undocumented Students & Families.....	Page 25
PBIS.....	Page 26
Security System and Cameras.....	Page 26
Mandatory Reporting.....	Page 26
Enrollment Process & Procedures.....	Page 27
Student Vaccination Requirements.....	Page 27
Nutrition.....	Page 28
Health Office & School Nurses.....	Page 29-30
Counseling & Social Services.....	Page 31
Attendance.....	Page 32
Academic Guidelines.....	Page 33-34
Middle School Graduation.....	Page 35
Activities and Athletics.....	Page 36
Guiding Principles and Expectations.....	Page 37
Student Responsibilities.....	Page 38-40
Student Discipline.....	Page 41-43
Policies and Disclosures.....	Page 44-47

Dear Students and Families,

Welcome to a new school year at Georgia Elementary and Middle School (GEMS)! We are excited to welcome all our students back this fall. Georgia Elementary and Middle School is a special place where we work to create a place where every student receives quality instruction and the support required to learn and grow. We focus on more than just academics at GEMS - we work to foster each student's social and emotional skills that help them thrive both inside our school and beyond.

As part of the Franklin West Supervisory Union (FWSU), we ask all our staff, students, and families to embody our motto of "A Belief in What is Possible". We work to find ways to meet each student's particular needs through enrichment, intervention/support, innovation, and high-quality lessons that engage all our learners.

This handbook was created to share important information regarding our school. We hope it proves to be a great tool for parents and caregivers as we partner together to continue the GEMS tradition of a wonderful and caring school community.

Please check our website at [gemsvt.org](http://gemsvt.org) and the Georgia Elementary & Middle School facebook page for updates and announcements throughout the year. We wish you and those around you a happy and healthy school year!

Warmest Regards,

GEMS Administrative Team

Steve Emery, Karen Lehning, Melissa Fisher, Corrina Favreau

Georgia Elementary and Middle School  
 4416 Ethan Allen Highway  
 St. Albans, VT 05478  
 (802) 524-6358 phone  
 (802) 524-1781 fax  
[www.gemsvt.org](http://www.gemsvt.org)

<u>Administration</u> Steve Emery - Principal Karen Lehning - Director of Teaching & Learning Melissa Fisher - Dean of Students Corrina Favreau - Director of Communications  <u>Office Personnel</u> Aleta Burns - Administrative Assistant Jen Follensbee - Administrative Assistant  <u>Business Office</u> Carrie Hungerford - Accounting Clerk	<u>School Nurses</u> Jessica Driver - Elementary School Melissa Waterhouse - Middle School  <u>School Counselor</u> Michael Malinowski - Elementary School Laura Gabert - Middle School  <u>Behavioral Specialists</u> Ron Gratton - Elementary School Kathy Wieland - Middle School
--	--

### **GEMS School Day Hours**

8:00 a.m. - 2:45 p.m.- Kindergarten through grade 8

8:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. - Morning preschool session

12:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. - Afternoon preschool session

\*The school day begins when students board the bus in the morning and ends when they get off the bus after school, or when they are dropped off and picked up by a parent or guardian. During these times, all school rules and policies remain in effect.

### **Building Hours**

Main Office: 7:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Building Hours: 7:00 a.m. - 10:00 p.m.

### **GEMS Quick Facts**

Georgia Elementary and Middle School is the educational home for approximately 650 preschool age to grade 8 students. We offer a wide range of support for all students, and are a 1:1 Apple school.

Our data shows that our students have a strong history of success during and after GEMS at their high school of voice. GEMS is also lucky to have a great team of professionals that are dedicated to Georgia students and community.

**GEMS is a smoke-free building:** In accordance with Vermont State Law, smoking & vaping is NOT allowed on any public school grounds.

**Franklin West Supervisory Union**

4497 Highbridge Road, Fairfax, VT 05454

(802) 370-3113 (phone) (802) 370-3115 (fax) [www.fwsu.org](http://www.fwsu.org)

John Tague	Superintendent
Scott Thompson	Director of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment
Rachel McIntyre	Director of Student Support Services
Lisa Koval	504 Compliance Coordinator
Danielle Drogalis	Title IX Coordinator

**Georgia School Board**

The Georgia School Board is made up of five members elected at the March Town Meeting Day for either a one-year or a three-year term.

The Georgia School Board meetings are on the first Tuesday of each month starting at 6:00 p.m. unless otherwise noted. School Board agendas are posted inside of the school office and at the Georgia Town Clerk's office. Meetings are recorded and minutes are published on the FWSU website. Meetings are open to the public in accordance with Vermont's Open Meeting Law. You can request to be added to a school board agenda by contacting the Superintendent. You can email correspondence to the board at [gemsboard@fwsu.org](mailto:gemsboard@fwsu.org).

**See Something Say Something**

Help us keep our schools safe. To report an anonymous safety or emergency tip to school officials in Franklin West Supervisory Union, go to the FWSU Tip Line: <https://www.fwsu.org/page/tips>

## **GEMS Staff Directory**

**Emails:** first initial of the person's first name, followed by their full last name@fwsu.org.

Example: John Greene: jgreene@fwsu.org

<p><b><u>Administration</u></b> Emery, Steve Favreau, Corrina Fisher, Melissa Lehning, Karen</p> <p><b><u>Administrative Assistants</u></b> Burns, Aleta Follensbee, Jen</p> <p><b><u>Business Office</u></b> Hungerford, Carrie</p> <p><b><u>Nurses</u></b> Driver, Jess Waterhouse, Melissa</p> <p><b><u>Preschool</u></b> Brogle, Stephanie Garrow, Morgan Justman, Ella</p> <p><b><u>Kindergarten</u></b> Farmer, Pam Howrigan, Jessica King, Felicia Maggie Sorrentino</p> <p><b><u>First Grade</u></b> Dattilio, Melanie Lovelette, Emma Matas, Nancy Young, Erin</p> <p><b><u>Second Grade</u></b> Alarcon, Mandy Demar, Kilie Robb, Julia</p> <p><b><u>Third Grade</u></b> Mahl, Kelly Sikorsky, Heather Sullivan, Stacey</p>	<p><b><u>Fourth Grade</u></b> Lambert, Kati Lauer, Allison Potter, Karen</p> <p><b><u>Fifth Grade</u></b> Charland, Taylor Sandra Moulton Purcell, Rachel</p> <p><b><u>Sixth Grade</u></b> Davies, Emily Gray, Amy Mandigo, Mariah</p> <p><b><u>Seventh Grade</u></b> Francoeur, Amie Manahan, Aysha Miliziano, Hailey Peters, Grayson</p> <p><b><u>Eighth Grade</u></b> Nudd, Kelsey St. Peter, Logan Wolynech, Joshua</p> <p><b><u>Special Educators/Specialists</u></b> Allard, Shawn Biondi, Caitlin Branon, Kate Burns, Caitlin Casazza, Kyle Chadburn, Courtney Christie, Haley Clow, Patrick Crepeau, Sue DeAngelis, Jennifer Dow, Barb Durocher, Autumn Fagan, Kathryn Gabert, Laura Hadd, Eric Heth, Sara Hoffman, Kim Hogg, Dorsey Howrigan, Nicole Jenkins, Kristine Johnson, Julie Leclair, Sandy Lee, Kay</p>	<p><b><u>Special Educators/Specialists Cont'd</u></b> Maas, Amanda Malinowski, Michael Mathieu, Laura May, Krista Morse, Emily O'Brien, Melissa Rider, Amy Sarnowicz, Michelle Sweeney, Jessica Sweet, Brittany Toof Norton, Pam Wilson, Lauralee Wimble, Erin Woods, Danielle</p> <p><b><u>Support Staff</u></b> Campbell, Lucy Carson, TracyAnn Curtis, Emily Drinkwater, Ashley Gilbert, Deb Goyeau, Heather Gratton, Ron Jimenez, Emily Laroche, Diane Longley, Jane Lothrop, Krista Magnuson, Kim Mathieu, Kayla Miller, Justin Morin, Tanikka Nelson, Lillian Patch, Amanda Popovitch, Amy Reynolds, Lori Routhier, Moria Sarnowicz, Michelle Schoonejongen, Cat Schultz, Jan Sheltra, Hallie Shuttle, Shawna Sweeney, Meghan Taylor, Jessica Walker, Sara Wieland, Kathy Williams, Julie Zeno, Jasmine</p>
---	--	---

**Arrival and Departure:**

- Students arriving after 8:05 must check in at the main office before going to class
- Students departing before the end of the school day need to bring a note from home with the early pick up information. Parents will pick up their student(s) at the main office.
- Students who walk to and/or from school must provide a letter with parent permission for the school year.

**Building Usage for Public Purposes:** Georgia individuals and groups may apply to use our facility for numerous reasons. Fees and certain restrictions may be part of the agreement if the application is approved. Contact Corrina Favreau at (802) 524-6358 or [cfavreau@fwsu.org](mailto:cfavreau@fwsu.org) for a copy of our Facility Use Application.

**Communications:** GEMS uses SchoolMessenger to automate important information such as school closings and delays, emergency notifications, administration newsletters, and community news.

**Early Release Days:** Early release days are on selected Wednesdays (09/24, 11/12, 01/28, 03/25, 05/13). On these days, dismissal is at 11:50, buses depart at 12:00.

**High School Choice:** GEMS students may choose a state approved public or private high school. The state tuition rate will be paid by the Georgia School District.

**Home Schooling:** Requests to home school children need to be sent to the Secretary of Education in Montpelier, Vermont. A copy of the procedures is available in the Vermont Education Lawbook, section T.16 166b.

We offer opportunities for homeschool students to participate in programs at GEMS. Complete details outlining application procedures are in the policy Regarding Requests for Services and/or Facilities for Home-Schooled Students. A copy of this policy may be requested from our school office or on our website.

When participating in school activities, students being homeschooled must comply with school rules. Parents must submit all necessary proof of immunization and sports physicals when needed. Parents should meet with the school nurse regarding any health concerns.

**Outdoor Facility Usage:** We welcome all visitors to make use of our outside walking path on the south side of the school. The loop is 0.6 miles long. We also have several playgrounds, outdoor basketball courts, and a frisbee golf course.

If you are wanting to use any of our outdoor fields for recreational sports programming, please contact Corrina Favreau to check for availability and a facility usage form. Priority will be granted to programs that serve Georgia students.

**School closings and delays:** Families will be notified of school closings and delays through the alert notification system. Closings and delays will also be announced on the radio, tv, and the GEMS Facebook page. If school is closed, then all school events and public use of the building is canceled as well.

**Teacher Communication Platforms:** Seesaw or Schoology to communicate about assignments and school work. For students in preschool through 5th grade, you will contact the classroom teacher to get a login code. For grade 6 through grade 8, you will contact Corrina Favreau to receive a unique code linked to your student.

**Updating contact information:** If your contact information changes during the school year, please log into your Powerschool parent portal to make the changes. You may also call the main office to communicate that information immediately.

**Visitors:** All parents and visitors must report to the main office before going to their destination. Georgia students may not bring friends or relatives from other school districts to visit the school when school is in session or to school dances.

**Volunteers:** Volunteers are important partners with us as we strive to provide our students with educational opportunities and experiences. To protect our school children, we require a background check on all volunteers. Our volunteer form is found on our website, [www.gemsvt.org](http://www.gemsvt.org) under the Parent/Student tab.



# FRANKLIN WEST SUPERVISORY UNION

## Common School Calendar 2025-2026

Bellows Free Academy Fairfax || Georgia Elementary & Middle School || Fletcher Elementary School

Approved 3/19/25

Student Days

Staff Days

Student Days

Staff Days

3 7

August 2025				
M	T	W	TH	F
				1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

No School				
Teacher Inservice (No School)				
Teacher & Paraprofessional Inservice (No School)				
Conferences (No School)				
Early Release Days				
No Evening Events				
First & Earliest Last Day of School				

January 2026				
M	T	W	TH	F
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23
26	27	28	29	30

19 19

95 102

21 21

24 28

September 2025				
M	T	W	TH	F
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30			

TBD: New Teacher Orientation (No School)  
 Aug 20-22 & 25: Inservice (No School)  
 Aug 22: Convocation  
 Aug 27: First Day of School

February 2026				
M	T	W	TH	F
2	3	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	26	27

15 15

110 117

20 21

44 49

October 2025				
M	T	W	TH	F
		1	2	3
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	31

Oct 1: Yom Kippur (No Evening Events)  
 Oct 2: Yom Kippur (No School)  
 Oct 23: Inservice (No School)  
 Diwali (No Evening Events)  
 Oct 24: No School

March 2026				
M	T	W	TH	F
2	3	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	26	27
30	31			

19 20

129 137

15 17

59 66

November 2025				
M	T	W	TH	F
3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28

Nov 12: Early Release  
 Nov 24: Inservice (No School)  
 Nov 25: Conferences (No School)  
 Nov 26-28: November Break (No School)

April 2026				
M	T	W	TH	F
		1	2	3
6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	

17 17

146 154

17 17

76 83

December 2025				
M	T	W	TH	F
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30	31		

Dec 24-31: Winter Break (No School)  
 Jan 1-2: Winter Break cont. (No School)  
 Jan 19: Martin Luther King Day (No School)  
 Jan 28: Early Release

May 2026				
M	T	W	TH	F
				1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

20 20

166 174

\*June 12 is the tentative last day of school... All missed/snow days will be added to the end of the school year.

\*\*June Inservice dates subject to change based on last student day.

Feb 23-27: February Break (No School)  
 Mar 2-3: February Break cont. (No School)  
 Mar 20: Conferences (No School, No Evening Events)  
 Mar 25: Early Release

Apr 20-24: Spring Break (No School)

May 13: Early Release  
 May 25: Memorial Day (No School)

June 12: Last Day of School\*  
 June 15-16: Teacher Inservice (No School)\*\*

June 2026				
M	T	W	TH	F
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30			

10 12

176 186

## **Co-Curricular**

It is our goal for all of our students to feel belonging and build connections through their school day and extended day offerings. Programs offered will be advertised and students are encouraged to join programming to explore their interests and build relationships with their peers. Our Middle School Athletic Director (AD) oversees the programming for middle school sports.

### **Our current middle school sports offerings:**

- Fall: Cross Country (Co-ed Grades 5-8)  
Soccer (Boys and Girls teams Grades 5-8)
- Winter: Basketball (Boys and Girls teams Grades 5-8)  
Cheerleading (Co-ed Grades 5-8)
- Spring: Baseball (Boys 7 and 8)  
Softball (Girls 7 and 8)  
Track & Field (Co-ed Grades 5-8)

**Sports Physicals:** Students are required to have a physical every two years. A “Well Exam Sports Participation Clearance Form” must be on file prior to practice.

**Health Insurance:** The Vermont Principals Association (VPA) requires that every student provides evidence that they are covered under some private or public health insurance program for medical care for injuries that may be suffered during that activity.

Georgia Middle School athletics uses TeamSnap to register athletes and communicate to our teams.

**Coaches:** We are often looking for coaches. Contact our athletic director, Dylan Weisert at [dweisert@fwsu.org](mailto:dweisert@fwsu.org), if you are interested in coaching.

## **Busing**

GEMS partners with Terricel Transit to provide bus transportation to our students. School staff will occasionally ride to monitor the bus to enhance the safety of all our students and drivers.

**Questions, concerns, or problems with the bus system?** Please contact Steve Emery, Ron Gratton, or Kathy Wieland at (802) 524-6358.

### **Bus Discipline:**

The GEMS bus discipline procedure has two purposes:

1. To ensure the safety of all of our students.
2. To teach students proper behavior.

**Any behavior that distracts the bus driver is prohibited!** This includes, but is not limited to, shouting, profanity, making loud noises, throwing objects, hitting or wrestling with other students, or putting any object or any body part out of the window. Students are to remain in their seats at all times while the bus is in motion.

Students who violate these rules will be written up by the bus driver. The write up is turned into Ron Gratton or Kathy Wieland. Each behavior and/or violation will be reviewed by the transportation committee and appropriate consequences will be implemented.

**1st offense:** Verbal warning with parental/guardian notification.

**2nd offense:** The student may be off the bus until their parents/guardians have had a conference with the Principal or designee. The parent/guardian and student need to assure the Principal that there will be no further misbehavior.

**3rd offense:** The student may lose riding privileges until the parents/guardians have a meeting with the Principal. A plan will be developed.

**4th offense:** The student may lose riding privileges until it can be determined IF and WHEN the student's privileges will be restored. Parents/guardians are responsible for transportation at this time.

*\*The Principal or designee may apply professional judgment and supersede the above steps based on the severity of the offenses.*

## **GEMS School Mission**

Our purpose as a school community is to develop confident, respectful, healthy individuals who connect learning and self-knowledge to understand their potential and make the most of future opportunities.

Our school values relationships and learning as the foundation for Competence, growth, and achievement.

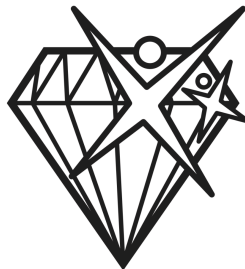
### **Meaningful relationships depend on:**

- Valuing individual differences
- Open and honest communication
- A universal sense of belonging

### **Learning depends on:**

- Questioning, investigation, and reflection
- Relevance to the learner
- Participation and ownership in the process

At Georgia Elementary and Middle School, we strive to create a culture of learning guided by the needs of our students.



## Statement of Inclusion

### **Nondiscrimination**

The Georgia Elementary and Middle School district does not exclude or deny participation in any program or activity to an individual(s) on the basis of race, gender, gender identity or expression, color, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, or national origin.

### **School Citizenship**

We recognize that students arrive at school with differing backgrounds, influences, and needs. We are committed to the concepts of fairness and justice which reflect a concern for each individual's development, dignity, and growth potential. It is our goal to promote behaviors that will empower students to respect themselves and others and thus make responsible decisions and ultimately demonstrate responsible citizenship.

### **Transgender and Gender Nonconforming Students**

All students - including transgender students- have a right to a safe and supportive environment to progress both academically and developmentally. A student's gender identity or expression is on such right, which should be respected especially in:

- **Privacy:** Unless the student chooses to disclose certain information, his or her transgender status, legal name, or sex assigned at birth is confidential medical information and protected by FERPA.
- **Name and pronouns:** Use the student's preferred name and pronoun will be honored.
- **Restrooms:** An all-gender restroom is available to all students.
- **Athletics:** Transgender students are allowed to participate in school sports consistent with their gender identity with parent permission

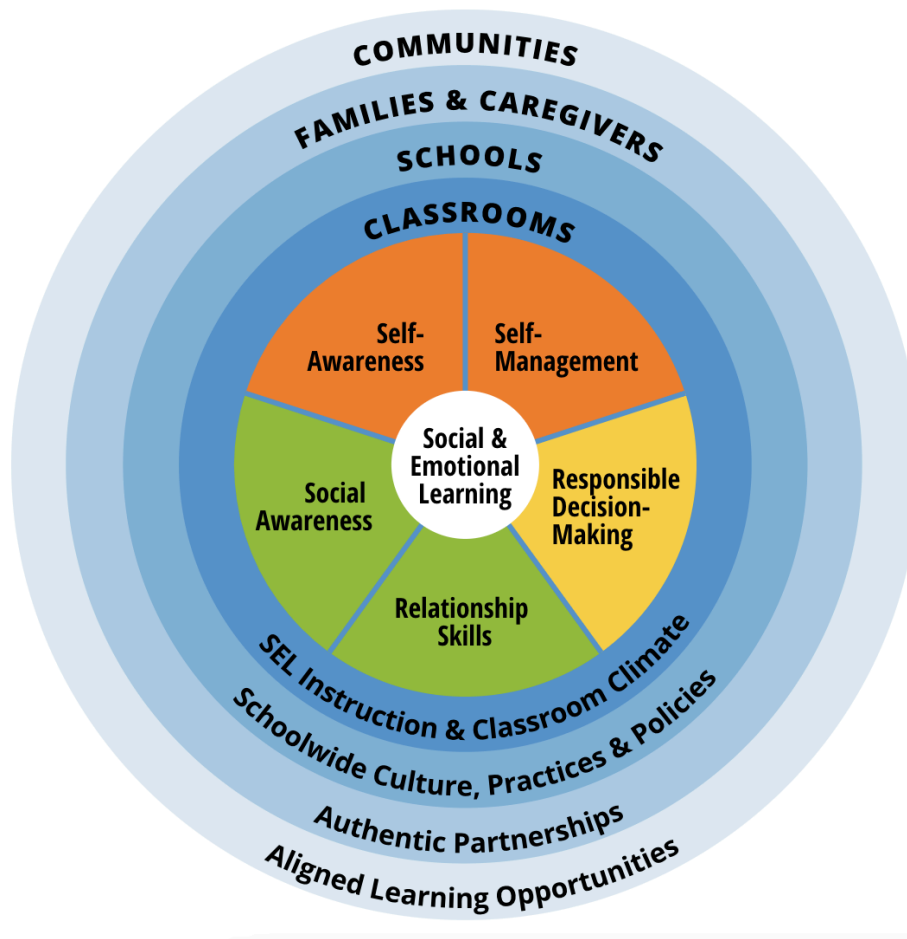
If a student or their parent notifies the administration of the decision to transition during the school year, a meeting will be held to discuss how to best support the student and family.

Unless the student and the parent/guardian has specified otherwise, we will use the student's legal name and the pronoun corresponding to the student's biological sex when contacting the parent or guardian of a transgender student.

## Social and Emotional Learning

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is an integral part of human development. SEL is the process through which all people develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions, create positive relationships, and make responsible decisions.

We work intentionally to foster the development of the whole child during their time at GEMS. For more information about SEL framework, visit the CASEL website at [casel.org](https://casel.org).



## **Proficiencies & Transferable Skills**

### **Proficiencies**

The focus of proficiency-based learning is on students' demonstration of desired learning outcomes. Students gain the skills, abilities, and knowledge required in an area of study, along with those necessary to be successful in college, career, and civic life. Proficiency-based learning is designed to identify and address gaps to provide equitable learning opportunities for every student. This is in contrast to traditional systems which advance students based on seat time. (Vermont Agency of Education)

### **Transferable Skills**

The Vermont transferable skills are the broad seat of knowledge, skills, and learning dispositions that are taught and assessed across contents or courses. Transferable skills are assessed and reported each trimester in middle school.

The transferable skills are:

- Clear and Effective Communication
- Creative and Practical Problem Solving
- Informed and Integrative Thinking
- Responsible and Involved Citizenship
- Self-Direction Scoring Criteria

## **Academic Offerings & Resources for GEMS Students**

### **Art**

Georgia has one elementary art teacher and one middle school art teacher. Art classes are taught in grades PK-8. Vermont adopted the National Core Arts Standards (NCAS) which focus on creating, producing, responding, and connecting.

### **Band**

Band is offered to students in grades 5-8 who want to play an instrument. Offerings differ each year based on enrollment and interest and focus on NCAS standards. Seventh and eighth grade students are encouraged to participate in the yearly Music Festival. Instrumental lessons are offered to students during the school day. Instrumental rentals are available from Ellis Music.

### **Core Classes**

Core classes refer to the three main academic subject areas: Math, Science, and Humanities.

### **Health**

Health education is taught to all students in grades 5 through 8. Vermont has adopted the National Health Education Standards (NHES) to promote personal, family, and community health.

### **Library**

The school library is open every school day during regular school hours.

Students are responsible for taking care of the books they borrow from the library. If a book is lost or ruined, the student is responsible for the replacement cost of the book. Students are responsible for returning their books by the due date (stamped on the inside cover). Overdue notices are printed on a regular basis and given to students with overdue books. If the overdue book is not returned, a bill may be issued for the replacement cost of the book. Students with overdue books may not be allowed to borrow additional books from the library.

### **Music**

GEMS has two music teachers. General music is taught in grades K-6. Chorus and Band are available to middle school students. Vermont adopted the National Core Arts Standards (NCAS) which focus on creating, producing, responding, and connecting.

### **Physical Education**

All GEMS students in grades K-8 receive physical education instruction from a certified teacher. Proper shoes and clothing are required as outlined by the PE teacher.

### **World Language**

All students in grades 5 & 6 will begin an exploration of Spanish language and culture. Seventh and eighth grade students may choose to take a year long course in Spanish.flex class to explore a variety of language.



## **Academic Supports & Enrichment**

GEMS has specialists that provide academic support and enrichment to students who may need additional support as well as work with teachers to provide specialized expertise to support our teachers and students.

## **Family & Community Partnerships**

### **Family Engagement**

GEMS welcomes and encourages all parents, guardians, and caregivers to be involved in your student's education. We know that families are the first and most influential teachers, and consistent family involvement helps all children to do better in school.

We work hard to create a welcoming environment in our schools, provide the needed information to our families, and include them in the decision making of our school.

### **Parent Teacher Conferences**

Parent conferences are scheduled twice a year. Parents are encouraged to contact their teachers at any time to set up a meeting. Student progress can also be monitored through Seesaw or Schoology.

### **PTCO**

The Parent, Teacher, Community Organization (PTCO) is our parent-led organization that works to support our school. For more information on getting involved in the PTCO, email them at [GeorgiaPTCO@gmail.com](mailto:GeorgiaPTCO@gmail.com). Their Facebook page is Georgia Parent Teacher Community Organization. There is also a mailbox in the main office if you would like to leave something for them.

## **Family Rights and Resources**

### **FWSU Annual Notification of Rights for Elementary and Secondary Schools**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students over 18 years of age ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student's education records.

These rights are:

1. The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days of the day the School receives a request for access. Parents or eligible students should submit to the principal a written request that identifies the record(s) they wish to inspect. The School official will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.
2. The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate or misleading. Parents or eligible students may ask the School to amend a record that they believe is inaccurate or misleading. They should write to the School principal, clearly identify the part of the record they want to be changed, and specify why it is inaccurate or misleading. If the School decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the school will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and advise them of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.
3. The right to consent to disclosures of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent. One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. A school official is a person employed by the School as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person serving on the School Board; a person or company with whom the School has contracted to perform a special task (such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist); or a parent or a student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks. A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility. Upon request, the School discloses education records without consent to officials of another school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll.
4. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the School to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administered FERPA are:

**Family Policy Compliance Office  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202-5901**

## Parent Guardian Rights

### Child Custody

Please contact our principals if you have concerns with child custody. Custodial and non-custodial parents have the same rights of access to their child's records unless specifically prohibited by a court order.

### FERPA & Student Privacy

FERPA is the Federal Family Rights and Privacy Act of 1974. Under FERPA, parents have a right to:

1. Inspect and review the student's education records;
2. Request the amendment of the student's education records to ensure that they are not inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy or other rights;
3. Consent to disclosure of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that the Act authorizes disclosure without consent;
4. File with the U.S. Department of Education a complaint cornering alleged failures by the school to comply with requirements of the Act; and
5. Obtain a copy of the school's policy and written procedures or protocols related to student records.

If you would like to request a review and inspection of your student's education records or if you have any questions concerning your rights in the matter, please contact the principal. Schools must respond to requests within 45 days.

**The Protection of Pupil Rights Act (PPRA)** requires parental notification in a number of respects. The Georgia Town School District Board has adopted several policies to remain in compliance with PPRA. You can click on the policy name to access that file.

[Student Privacy Policy](#) regarding student surveys, analyses, or evaluation.

## **Parent Guardian Rights**

### **FWSU Annual Notification of Directory Information**

To: All parents or guardians of eligible students, and eligible students currently attending schools in Franklin West Supervisory Union (including Bellows Free Academy - Fairfax, Fletcher Elementary School, Georgia Elementary & Middle School)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), a Federal law, requires that Franklin West Supervisory Union, with certain exceptions, obtain your written consent prior to the disclosure of personally identifiable information from our child's education records. However, the schools in Franklin West Supervisory Union may disclose appropriately designated "directory information" without written consent, unless you have advised the District to the contrary in accordance with District procedures. The primary purpose of directory information is to allow the School District to include this type of information from your child's education records in certain school publications. Examples include, but are not limited to: The annual yearbook, honor roll or other recognition lists, graduation programs, and sports activity sheets.

Directory information, which is information that is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if released, can also be disclosed to outside organizations without a parent's prior written consent. Outside organizations include, but are not limited to, companies that publish yearbooks. In addition, two federal laws require local education agencies (LEAs) receiving assistance under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) to provide military recruiters upon request, with three directory information categories - names, addresses and telephone listings - unless parents have advised the LEA that they do not want their student's information disclosed without their prior written consent.

If you do not want the School District to disclose directory information from your child's education records without your prior written consent, you must notify the principal in writing by September 15. The following types of personally identifiable have been designated as directory information:

Student's name - Address - Telephone listing  
Participation in activities and sports - Honors, and awards received  
Date and place of birth - Dates of attendance  
Grade level - The most recent education agency or institution attended

## **Student Support & Special Services**

### **Student Support Team**

Special Education services are provided by the Student Support Team. This team includes special education teachers, speech and language pathologists, and compensatory teachers.

There are a variety of supports that can be provided to your child throughout our school. Below is a description of each of the supports:

#### Education Support Team: (EST)

Act 157, which used to be Act 230, requires that schools develop a support system to provide a range of social, academic, and behavioral support to students. This is called the Educational Support Team or EST.

- The EST team consists of classroom teachers, guidance counselors, special educators, the principal, etc.
- A referral may be made by your child's classroom teacher, guidance counselor, planning room teacher, any other school personnel, or by the parents/guardians.
- The information discussed at these meetings is kept confidential.
- The team is given information from the referring person and anyone else at the meeting that has information about your child.
- The team acts as a "think tank" and brainstorms ideas and interventions to help the student.
- Parents/Guardians are often notified when an EST meeting is being held, but usually do not attend.
- Information is typically shared with parents/guardians about the outcome of the EST meetings.
- Follow-up meetings are set up, as needed to review how the interventions are working and to discuss any new steps that need to be taken.
- The EST is used for children that are not on 504 plans or on IEPs.

## **Student Support & Special Education**

### **Section 504**

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 protects people with disabilities from discrimination in any program or activity receiving federal funding, including schools. A student who is identified as a qualified individual with a disability under Section 504 may require modifications, support, or services to access their education and school-sponsored activities.

The District will evaluate any student who, because of disability, needs or is believed to need special education or related services to meet their individual educational needs as adequately as the needs of students without disabilities are met, regardless of whether those needs are characterized as academic. In evaluating whether a student is a qualified individual with a disability under Section 504, the District will determine whether the student has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits a major life activity. The District will not consider the ameliorative efforts of mitigating measures (such as medications, assistive devices, learned behavior, or adaptive neurological modifications that an individual may use to eliminate or reduce the effects of an impairment) when determining how a student's impacts the major life activities under consideration. The evaluative process under Section 504 will not be delayed or denied while other supportive measures are attempted.

If your child is determined to be a qualified individual with a disability under Section 504, the 504 Team will determine the appropriate placement, accommodations, and services that your child needs to gain equal access to the District's academic and extracurricular programs, activities, and services.

If you have questions or believe that your child should be evaluated under Section 504, please contact the school's 504 Coordinator.

The GEMS 504 Coordinator is: Karen Lehning, Director of Teaching and Learning; [klehning@fwsu.org](mailto:klehning@fwsu.org).

The District's 504 Coordinator is: Lisa Koval, [lkoval@fwsu.org](mailto:lkoval@fwsu.org), (802) 370-3113

Please refer to the FWSU website for the District's Notice of non-Discrimination Policy (A22) and Policy on Section 504 and ADA Grievance Protocol for Students and Staff (C14)

## **Special Education**

Special Education Law, also known as The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), was first passed in 1975. It is the law that states that all handicapped children are guaranteed a free and appropriate education (FAPE). This law covers children and adolescents between the ages of 3 and 21. It also includes the Infant and Toddler Program which funds the services to children from birth to 2 years old.

Special education is an instruction that is specially designed to meet a child's individual needs. It is provided at no cost to parents/guardians and can include regular classroom instruction, alternative residential settings, and case management services.

There is a process that must be followed for children to qualify for special education services.

### **Special Education Process**

- A referral can be made by anyone working with the student or a parent/guardian. The referral is usually done through the support service person at each grade level, but can also be done through EST, the principal, or other support service staff.
- Parents/guardians must be contacted and must be invited to a meeting, but do not have to attend. A meeting notice and parental rights will be sent to the parent/guardian.
- An evaluation planning team meeting is held where questions that will be answered in the evaluation are determined.
- Parents/guardians must give written permission for the evaluation to be completed.
- Parents/guardians may revoke consent at any time subsequent to the initial provision of special education and related services. The revocation of consent shall be in writing, on a form provided by the LEA or in any other written form, and should indicate the date of revocation.
- When testing is complete another evaluation planning team meeting is held to review results and determine eligibility.

### **Special Education Eligibility Criteria**

There are three parts to determining eligibility:

- Determination of a disability
- Adverse effect on academic performance
- Need for specialized instruction

### **Determination of a disability:**

There are several areas that a child can be found eligible in. They are as follows:

1. Learning Disability - a discrepancy between ability and achievement
2. Speech and/or Language Impairment - a discrepancy between a mean of 100 and language scores (70 or below)
3. Health Impairment - ADHD or other doctor diagnosed medical condition
4. Learning Impairment - both cognitive and achievement scores are at or below 78
5. Visual Impairment
6. Deafness or Hard of Hearing
7. Autism Spectrum Disorder
8. Deaf-Blindness - dual diagnosis
9. Multiple Disabilities
10. Emotional Disturbance
11. Traumatic Brain Injury



## 12. Developmental Delay - EEE

### **Adverse Effect**

A negative impact of -1.0 standard deviation from the mean, or the 15%ile or below or the equivalent must be noted in at least three of the following areas:

- Nationally normed achievement tests
- Grades
- Curriculum-based measures
- Group administered norm-referenced tests
- Student work samples

### **Need for Special Education:**

A student is in need of special education or specialized instruction if they need services that cannot be provided by regular education alone. This may include direct service/instruction in an academic area, speech therapy, etc.

### **If not eligible:**

1. The team develops recommendations based on needs and findings from the evaluation.
2. The student is referred back to EST where a determination can be made for a section 504 plan.
3. If the student is put on a 504 plan, the case manager for the student becomes the contact person. The EST is no longer a part of the team.
4. If the student is not eligible for a 504 plan then the EST team can develop a plan to assist the student based on the determined needs and availability of support etc.

### **If eligible:**

1. A meeting must be held and an Individualized Education Program (IEP) must be written within 30 days.
2. A parent/guardian can refuse some or all of the services for an initial IEP. Due process can be pursued if the school feels strongly enough.
3. The case does not go back to EST if a child is found eligible. The special education case manager is now the contact person.
4. The GEMS designee, referred to as LEA (Local Education Agency), assists in making major decisions.

### **Individualized Education Program (IEP)**

An IEP is a written education plan for a child that describes the special education and related services the child will receive.

Parents/guardians are members of the IEP teams but can give input over the phone or in writing if they choose to. They must be invited to all IEP meetings and attempts must be made to work out a meeting time that works for the parent/guardian as well as others.

IEP's must include present levels of performance, annual goals, short-term objectives, related services, support for state-wide assessments, information about child's progress, and transition services beginning at age fourteen.

IEP's must be reviewed and revised at least once a year.

For more information regarding the Special Education process, contact a school administrator.

## **Limited English Proficient, English Learner, Immigrant, and Undocumented Students and Families**

### **English Learners**

Georgia Elementary and Middle School faculty and staff work to ensure that students whose primary or dominant language is not English, and who therefore have Limited English proficiency (LEP), have equitable access to school programs as required by law.

### **Undocumented Students and Families**

Under state law, all Vermont children, including undocumented children, are required to attend school until the mandated age of 16. Under Federal law, undocumented children and young adults have the same right to attend public primary and secondary school as do U.S. citizens and permanent residents. To see the letter on the State's responsibility to protect the rights of undocumented Vermont students go to:

<https://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/edu-memo-immigration-guidance-2025.pdf>

## **Building a Safe School Environment**

### **Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (PBIS)**

PBIS is an approach that GEMS uses to promote positive behavior. PBIS is a framework and tool for teachers, administrators, and parents to teach kids about behavioral expectations.

- PBIS recognizes that a student can only meet behavior expectations if they know what the expectations are. A hallmark of a school using PBIS is that everyone knows what's appropriate behavior. Students are explicitly taught these expectations in the first 6 weeks of school & reinforce them throughout the year.
- The framework provides an opportunity to teach student behavior expectations as well as plan supports or interventions for students who struggle.
- There are times where the PBIS Behavior Expectations and Disciplinary processes intersect. Discretion of the principal or designee will be used based on the severity and type of behavioral infraction on the appropriate actions required to support both the reparation of harm and consequences.

### **Security System and Cameras**

Student, faculty, staff, and public safety and the protection of school facilities/property and equipment are primary responsibilities of the School District. To better achieve these goals, our building is monitored by an electronic security system. If someone were to break into our school, it would be detected immediately and the proper authorities would be notified. School Board has authorized the installation of security cameras in the schools. All privacy laws are followed in the use of the cameras. Parents are not allowed to review footage per school policy.

### **Mandatory Reporting**

School personnel are mandated reporters and are therefore required to file a report with the Vermont Department for Children and Families (DCF) if they have knowledge of or observe a child whom the reporter knows or reasonably suspects has been the victim of child abuse or neglect. The report must be made immediately or as soon as practically possible by telephone.

## **Enrollment Process & Procedures**

### **Enrollment Procedures**

Student enrollment is facilitated by our school registrar, Corrina Favreau. Please go to our website, [www.gemsvt.org](http://www.gemsvt.org), and click on the tab for registration. You will find information about registering a student at GEMS, ACT166 for Prek, and the High School registration process. The registration packets have all of the required information and residency requirements for enrollment.

### **Student Vaccination Requirements**

Vermont Immunization Law requires all students have immunizations in accordance with the Vermont Department Health's recommended schedule. Exceptions are cited in the Vermont Education Lawbook (T.18 1121). The principal may exclude any student that does not show proper documentation of immunization or exemption. Please forward a copy of your child's most recent immunizations to the Health Office.

The Vermont Department of Health sets vaccination requirements for students. There are vaccinations required:

- Prior to Kindergarten: [Kindergarten Immunization Entry Requirements](#)
- Prior to Grade 7: [Vaccines for PreTeens](#)

## Nutrition

### **Student Nutrition & School Meal Program**

FWSU partners with The Abbey Group to help nourish our students with healthy food options for breakfast and lunch. More information can be found at [www.abbeygroup.net](http://www.abbeygroup.net)

### **Free and Reduced Breakfast and Lunch**

All students receive free meals at GEMS. We ask that you complete the Household Income Data Form that will be sent home each year as this is how schools receive federal funding.

### **Meal Program**

Breakfast Program: Our breakfast program is called the brown bag breakfast and it is available to all students daily.

School Lunch Program: School lunch is available to all students in grades K-8 daily. There is a nut-safe table in the cafeteria designated for students with nut allergies. (See Allergy Policy)

School Lunch Menu: The menus can be viewed on The Abbey Group's website. Occasionally, an item needs to be substituted due to unforeseen circumstances. We apologize in advance for any inconvenience that this may cause.

## **Health Offices & School Nurses**

Health services are provided to our students by Registered Nurses. We have two full-time nurses at GEMS.

### **Allergies**

It is the policy of the Georgia School District to take reasonable steps to provide an environment through accommodations to enable all students to participate in all school programs and activities. The emphasis of this policy is to work with staff, students, and parents in order to reduce a person's risk of exposure to known allergens; to provide a procedure for developing accommodations, and to have an appropriate individualized response plan in place for each such child, in the event of an exposure or an allergic reaction. (See GEMS Policy)

### **Annual Screenings**

Screenings are done for vision and hearing according to the Vermont Standards of Practice and are recorded on each student's health record. Referrals for further evaluation by the child's physician may be made to the parents or physicians as needed. Parents not wishing their child screened must notify the nurse in writing at the beginning of each school year.

### **Medications**

Most medications may be administered in the home. However, any student who is required to take medication during the regular school day must comply with the school medication procedure.

All medication must be brought to school in the original, labeled contains, and given to the school nurse or principal immediately upon entering the building. Most medications are to be kept in the Health Office. Medications brought to school in baggies or other containers are NOT allowed by school policy. Students are NOT allowed to carry or self-administer their own medicine unless emergency medication for life-threatening allergies or asthma and authorized signatures are on file.

Prescription medications may be administered at school with a doctor's signature, a parent's signature, and a pharmacy labeled prescription container. Please see the nurse for more details.

Non-prescription (over-the-counter) medications may be administered by the school nurse with a parent's signature. Please do not send cough drops or throat lozenges to school. Homeopathic remedies and vitamin preparations will not be administered at school. Students requesting Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or Ibuprofen (Motrin) need to have a signed permission form. Tylenol forms are sent out to all students at the beginning of the school year. They are valid for one school year only.

### **School Notification of Illness**

Parents should contact the school if their child has a contagious condition. Persons that are ill or have a communicable illness should remain out of school until there is no longer any contagion. Examples: fevers, impetigo, strep infections, ringworm, chickenpox, pink eye, etc. The GEMS administrators, upon the recommendation of the school nurse, shall have the right to exclude any child from school if the child shows symptoms of having a communicable disease.

### **Unwell Students**

If a child becomes ill at school and it is determined they are too ill to remain, parents/guardians may be asked to pick the child up. Please make alternative arrangements in advance so your child will have a place to go

## **Health Office and School Nurses (cont.)**

when ill and you are unavailable. Two backup people/phone numbers should be on file at school in case of emergency.

### **General guidelines: Returning children to school**

- Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye): When eyes are clear or have been treated with antibiotics for 24 hours.
- Undiagnosed fever: When symptoms are gone for 24 hours without the use of fever reducers (i.e. Tylenol or Motrin).
- Vomiting or Diarrhea: When symptoms are gone for 24 hours.
- Scabies (body lice): 24 hours after start of treatment
- Strep Throat or Scarlet Fever: 24 hours after start of treatment
- Impetigo: When skin is clear or the child has been under treatment for 24 hours.
- Head lice: Students may return after treatment. Every effort should be made to ensure lice are dead and nits removed. Contact the school nurse before returning to school.
- Any undiagnosed rash: When symptoms are gone for 24 hours.

## **Counseling & Social Services**

### **School Counselors**

Our school counseling program assists students in the development of the following skills: decision-making, listening, discussion, communication, self-discipline, responsibility, interpersonal relationships, learning and study skills, time management, self-esteem development, and stress management. These skills may be taught with a classroom teacher, in a small group, or individually.

We have two full time counselors:

- Mike Malinowski
- Laura Gabert

Both counselors are available to assist students in dealing with immediate personal concerns, crises, and goals. They also assist students and parents in making transitions from different schools.

Our counselors are available to discuss any concerns with you. Please contact the counselors to make an appointment if the need arises.

### **School Counseling Partnerships**

GEMS collaborates with the Northwestern Counseling & Social Services (NCSS) and other providers to create a space for therapeutic support for our students. Most students access this support as part of a student support plan. Our school based clinician is Caitlin Smith.



## **Attendance Guidelines**

### **Attendance Expectations**

Students at Georgia Elementary and Middle School are required to attend school for 176 days per year. Good attendance is always encouraged.

However, if your child has an illness that keeps them from learning, or is contagious, please keep your child home. Please email Jen Follensbee at [jfollensbee@fwsu.org](mailto:jfollensbee@fwsu.org) or call the office at (802) 524-6358 to let us know by 8:30 a.m. If we do not hear from parents or guardians, someone from the school will make a reasonable attempt to contact you in order to verify your child's absence. Sometimes this may require calling a parent or guardian at work.

Students who are absent all day or leave school early and do not return to school are not eligible to attend/participate in after school or evening activities.

All students who miss school for unusual circumstances or illness will be required to make up all missed schoolwork.

### **Attendance Interventions & Truancy**

Under Vermont Department of Education policy, Franklin West Supervisory Union must track attendance. The District procedures require that we notify you of student absences although you may have already discussed the absences with your child's school. The school will notify you via letter in 5 day increments starting at 10 absences. After 15 absences, the school may reach out to you to discuss ways to reduce future absences.

We do understand that there are circumstances where students are unable to attend school such as illness, a death in the family, religious or cultural observances, etc. However under Vermont Education Department policy, we are still required to send this letter regardless of the reason(s) why your child is absent and whether or not the absence(s) are considered excused or unexcused.

Our goal and the intent of Vermont state law, is to ensure students are in school and learning. We are concerned absenteeism can affect your child's academic, social and emotional growth. A big gap in learning occurs when students are not present to receive consistent instruction. Therefore, we need your assistance to ensure that your child is attending school.

## Academic Guidelines

### Academic Honesty

All students are expected to complete their own academic assignments and assessments. Any type of academic dishonesty, including but not limited to cheating, plagiarism, forging signatures, submitting work done by another as your own, or using unauthorized technology is prohibited. A violation eliminates a teacher's ability to determine a student's proficiency level. Possible consequences to violating our Academic Honesty expectation includes but are not limited to an after school detention, a remake of the same or similar assignment, or may affect a student's proficiency level as reported on a trimester or end of year report card.

### Assessing Student Performance

Students are assessed by the teacher of the course. Determinations of proficiency or skill as reported in the report card are only an indication of a student's proficiency at that particular moment. It is our goal and hopes that students are continually growing in the skills, knowledge, and application of that knowledge each day.

Georgia Middle School reports student progress using proficiencies. The proficiency levels are reported at the following levels:

<b>E</b>	<b>Expanding</b>	Evidence indicates the student is extending beyond proficiency based on the learning targets at this time.
<b>P(+)</b>	<b>Proficient (Extending)</b>	Evidence indicates the student can fully comprehend, analyze and apply their knowledge in this proficiency.
<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient (Strategic Thinking)</b>	Evidence indicates the student can fully comprehend and apply general principals with independence.
<b>P(-)</b>	<b>Proficiency (Basic)</b>	Evidence indicates the student is proficient based on the learning targets at this time. Student evidence shoes a comprehension and application of general principals within this proficiency or skill.
<b>M(+)</b>	<b>Making Progress (Nearing)</b>	Evidence indicates the student has basic comprehension and are close to the basic proficiency level.
<b>M</b>	<b>Making Progress (Developing)</b>	Evidence indicates the student is making progress towards proficiency based on the learning targets at this time.
<b>M(-)</b>	<b>Making Progress (Emerging)</b>	Evidence indicates the students is beginning to make progress with the knowledge and understanding needed in this proficiency at this time.
<b>G</b>	<b>Getting Started</b>	Either insufficient evidence at this time or evidence indicates the student is beginning to work toward proficiency

## **Academic Guidelines (cont.)**

### **Grading Period & Report Cards**

Georgia Elementary and Middle School have three marking periods or trimesters. Report cards are sent home shortly after each grading period. Those report cards provide information to parents about their student's progression, the skills and knowledge outlined within our curriculum (proficiencies in middle school).

Trimester 1: August 26th to November 15th

Trimester 2: November 18th to March 7th

Trimester 3: March 10th to last day of school

### **Homework**

Students at the middle school may at times have some homework to be completed outside of their regular class times. Teachers should only assign tasks that can be performed independently. If a student is struggling to complete their homework, please contact the teacher by email.

The following are guidelines for homework:

- Grades 5 & 6: Homework tasks combined between all classes (excluding reading) should take no more than 30 minutes
- Grades 7 & 8: Homework tasks combined between all classes (excluding reading) should take no more than 45 minutes\*.

*\*Students taking advanced course work may have an additional 30 minutes per day.*

## **Middle School Graduation**

### **Academic Requirements for 8th Grade Graduation**

All GEMS students are expected to meet the required proficiency levels in their academic courses to demonstrate their readiness for high school. Students who are not proficient will be given opportunities and support to help them achieve proficiency prior to graduation.

### **Procedure for Students Who Are Not Meeting Academic Requirements for Graduation**

In January, the school principal or Dean of Students will meet with individual students who consistently are not meeting proficiency benchmarks in one or more classes for the year to create an Improvement Plan. This plan is shared with parents/guardians and the student's teachers. The principal and/or Dean of Students will check regularly with teachers for progress updates. Should a student not show evidence of improvement by the end of the second trimester, a meeting will be scheduled with the student and parents/guardians to modify the existing plan. If no significant progress has been made, the following will occur:

- Students may not be promoted to 9th grade and will not participate in the 8th grade graduation activities or any other 8th grade end of year activities. The receiving high school will be notified of the student's pending enrollment status. Please note this may affect freshmen course offerings.
- Students may, at the family expense, take an approved summer school or an approved summer correspondence course in any 8th grade courses where they are far from meeting the standard. Successful completion will allow the student to be enrolled as a full time 9th grade student.
  - Another option is for the student to complete assigned work from his/her 8th grade teacher that approaches proficiency in 8th grade standards. The student would meet with the principal throughout the summer to help ensure the successful completion of the coursework.

## **Activities and Athletics**

### **Eligibility for Extracurricular Activities**

Students participating in extracurricular activities such as school sports teams, school sponsored clubs or activities are subject to school policies and behavioral expectations for student conduct. Students who violate those rules are subject to the appropriate disciplinary procedure as outlined in the GEMS Athletic Handbook.

GEMS follows all Vermont Principals Associate (VPA) guidelines and rules around middle school sports. Students need to remain in good academic standing in all their classes in order to maintain eligibility in athletics.

## **Guiding Principles and Expectations**

### **Guiding Principles**

Georgia Elementary and Middle School believes that everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. The foundation of our expectations and disciplinary processes is to enable our students to learn to become caring people that make a positive impact on their community and the individuals who make up that community. As such, we want students to learn to become responsible for their decisions and actions. We expect our staff to model these principles and to teach/reinforce the needed skills to contribute positively to their community and resolve conflicts in caring and respectful ways.

### **Learning Behavior Supports**

Positive behavior supports include the teaching and reteaching of student expectations and responses to student misbehavior. They are taught, modeled, and practiced daily.

Emphasis is on meeting the needs of those affected by the harm, building empathy, and making amends in ways that strengthen the relationships within the community where it may have been damaged.

### **School Expectations**

Georgia Elementary and Middle School has three school expectations which we teach regularly in all settings within our school:

Be Respectful  
Be Responsible  
Be Safe

### **Student Expectations**

All students have the responsibility to:

1. Arrive at school and class on time.
2. Be prepared for learning with appropriate materials.
3. Participate in all class activities.
4. Follow classroom procedures.
5. Complete assignments with pride, including assigned homework (Middle School)
6. Show respect towards others and their property.
7. Follow reasonable requests of adults in the building.
8. Avoid using rude, disrespectful words or gestures - including hate motivated speech, words that are discriminatory or negative about another students' race, ethnicity, culture, disability, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, or physical/mental attributes.
9. Care for our building and equipment, including iPads, lockers, and books.
10. Encourage your peers to make good decisions at all times.

### **Student Rights**

All students have the right to:

1. A meaningful education with high expectations.
2. Physical & emotional safety to be in the best space to learn.
3. Respect from all staff.
4. Seek support and assistance as needed from staff.

## **Student Responsibilities**

### **Dress Code**

Our dress code seeks to ensure that all students are treated equitably regardless of race, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, cultural observance, household income, disability, or body type/size.

GEMS expects its members to come to school dressed appropriately for being in a public space, community, and work environment. This is defined as follows: Certain body parts must be covered for all students at all times. Clothes must be worn in a way such that private areas, midriff, and chest are fully covered with opaque fabric. All items listed in the “must wear” and “may wear” categories below must meet this basic criterion.

#### **Students Must Wear:**

- A shirt (with fabric in the front and back), AND
- Pants, skirts, sweatpants, leggings, dresses or shorts, AND
- Shoes (activity-specific shoe requirements are permitted, for example, sports and PE). Note that footwear should support a student’s ability to move quickly across campus including stairs and across school grounds in the event of an emergency.
- Necessary outerwear appropriate to weather and temperature conditions for outdoor learning/recess.

#### **Students May Wear:**

- Hats and hoodies, as long as they don’t interfere with learning
- Fitted pants, including opaque leggings, yoga pants, and “skinny jeans”
- Ripped jeans, as long as underwear and buttocks are not exposed
- Tank tops, spaghetti straps, or other shirts in which shoulders/back are visible
- Athletic attire
- Visible waistbands/straps on undergarments worn under other clothing.

#### **Students Cannot Wear:**

- Clothes with violent language or images
- Images or language depicting drugs or alcohol (or any illegal item or activity)
- Hate speech, profanity, pornography
- Images or language that creates a hostile or intimidating environment based on any protected class or consistently marginalized groups
- Swimsuits, unless on a school trip involving swimming
- Accessories that could reasonably be considered dangerous or could be used as a weapon

### **Handling Dress Code Violations**

Potential dress code violations will be handled:

- In a manner that does not pull a student out of an instructional class
- Through a private conversation
- With a trusted adult that has a relationship with the student
- Without shaming the student

If there is a violation, the student will be asked to cover up or change using their own clothing. Parents/guardians may be contacted to request clothing items necessary to meet the dress code.

## **Student Responsibilities**

### **Cellphones and Electronic Devices (NEW policy)**

We have made some changes to our cellphone and electronic devices policy to be in alignment with the Vermont legislation that was signed into law in June. New to GEMS is the requirement that students must place cellphones in their lockers (middle school) or backpacks (elementary) during school hours, and they must be turned off. School hours are defined as the time when students board the bus in the morning and ends when they get off the bus after school, or when they are dropped off and picked up by a parent or guardian.

If a cellular device is used during the day, it will be confiscated and the student will need to retrieve the device at the end of the day. A second offense, a parent will need to come to retrieve the device. Further offenses will be dealt with at the school's discretion.

**Energy, Caffeinated, Specialty Drinks:** As we strive to promote a healthy environment for our students we prohibit students from drinking any energy, caffeinated or specialty drinks during the school day and school-related activities. Consumption of such beverages can lead to various health concerns and distract from our students' learning experiences.

By working together, we can promote a healthier school atmosphere that allows our children to focus on their studies and maintain their well-being. Drinks that are brought to school will be confiscated by school staff and will be returned at the end of the day.

### **Internet Use & Safety**

The same expectations and rules for all students during the school day also apply to the use of IT resources. Student conduct and communications, including but not limited to the District's harassment and bullying policies. The District's computer and network resources are the property of GEMS. Users shall have no expectation of privacy in anything they create, store, receive, or display on or over the school's equipment or network resources, including personal files and electronic communications, whether using school-issued equipment or personal devices. The principal or designee reserves the right to examine any computer, imaging, or recording device, including but not limited to laptops, desktops, netbooks, tablets, cell phones, cameras, and any other electronic devices with built-in computing, imaging or recording devices or network if there is reasonable suspicion that any of the above guidelines are being violated. This includes any device onsite including both personal and school-owned devices. Violations of these guidelines will result in loss of network privileges and/or disciplinary review.

### **Lockers**

All students grades 5-8 are assigned a locker for storage of their outerwear, instruments, and other necessary items. We highly encourage students to lock their lockers. Combinations or a spare key will be kept by the school.

Students should understand that lockers provided by the school are the property of the school. They are loaned to the students for convenient storage of school supplies. Desks, book bags, backpacks, and lockers may be searched at any time to help assure the safety of all students. Students should realize that there is a lesser expectation of privacy in matters of school safety and that on occasion, searches may be necessary to protect the student body.



**Other**

The school is not responsible for any personal items that are damaged, lost, misplaced or stolen.

**Personal Property**

Students should not bring personal property with them to school. This includes collectibles (trading cards or times) & Airpods or wireless headphones.

## Student Discipline

### School Practices and Philosophy

As stated previously, Georgia Elementary and Middle School believes that everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. The foundation of our expectations and disciplinary processes is to enable our students to learn to become caring people that make a positive impact on their community and the individuals who make up that community. As such, we want students to learn to become responsible for their decisions and actions. We expect our staff to model these principles and to teach/reinforce the needed skills to contribute positively to their community and resolve conflicts in caring and respectful ways.

Therefore, our disciplinary processes are designed to create learning opportunities for students to understand how their decisions and actions impact others and find ways to restore and repair the harm created by their actions.

### Behavioral Supports & Interventions

#### Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (PBIS)

Many school-wide programs and interventions are already in place to create a strong positive community within the classroom and school to teach conflict resolution and build skills that promote positive student behavior. Some examples of these programs or interventions include:

- **Behavioral Intervention Plan:** A formal plan created to support students based on their needs from a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) performed by a school psychologist.
- **Check-in, Check-out:** A mentor-based intervention in which a student will check-in and out at the beginning and end of each day with a trusted adult. They will review the behavioral goals and review the student's success that day.
- **Environmental Observation:** The process of identifying factors in the spaces or environment that may be contributing to challenging student behavior.
- **Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA):** An assessment of student behavior and environmental factors in order to determine the function of the behavior and provide appropriate interventions or accommodations as needed.
- **Skill Groups:** A series of lessons targeting specific areas of skill deficits and opportunities to learn and practice new skills.

## Behaviors Involving Defiance/Disruption

These behaviors will most likely be addressed in the classroom without removing the student from the educational setting, as well as behaviors that may result in and out-of-class referral, such as when the safety of the students or staff is threatened.

<p><b>Abusive Language/Obscenities:</b> Inappropriate comments or gestures that are offensive or abusive.</p> <p><b>Behavior or comments that disrupt learning for others</b></p> <p><b>Insubordination/Talking back:</b> The refusal to follow directions</p> <p><b>Leaving without permission</b></p> <p><b>Lunchroom Infractions</b></p> <p><b>Wandering:</b> Not being where one is expected</p>	<p>Classroom Interventions may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Corrective feedback</li><li>• De-escalation</li><li>• Teach/Reteach appropriate skills</li><li>• Communication home to parent/guardians</li></ul> <p>Out of Class Referrals may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Corrective Feedback</li><li>• Reteach appropriate skills</li><li>• Restorative practice conference</li><li>• Detention</li><li>• Parent notification/conference</li></ul>
--	--

## Behavioral Supports & Interventions

### Disciplinary Procedures

#### BEHAVIORS INVOLVING CHEATING, PROPERTY, HARASSMENT/BULLYING, THREATS, VIOLENCE, DRUGS, ALCOHOL, OR WEAPONS

These behaviors will be addressed outside of the classroom

**Academic Dishonesty:** Cheating, plagiarism, forging signatures, submitting work done by another as your own, or using unauthorized technology.

**Property:** Vandalism & Stealing

**Harassment/Bullying/Hazing:** Intimidating witnesses, bullying, harassment of any kind, & intimidation (see policy)

**Threats (Verbal or Physical):** Threatening statements insinuating harm, assault or aggressive action with the intent to do bodily harm.

**Violence or Weapons:** Assault, biting, fighting, physical aggression, grabbing, shoving, pushing, tripping, spitting, or weapon (see policy)

**Drugs, Alcohol, or Tobacco:** including any instruments which can be used to carry tobacco or illegal substances, including but not limited to vaping materials and tools. (see policy)

**Board policies are always followed first.**

For actions that fall outside of policy guidelines, disciplinary actions may include but are not limited to:

- Corrective feedback/warning
- Reteach appropriate skills
- Detention
- Parent notification/conferences
- Financial compensation for damages
- Suspension, in-school or out of school

## **Discipline and School Safety Policies**

**Click the link below to access school and district policies:**

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1E5B6aC9Kc1rioEW3UJE9aGmp8-kZ2IT-7EqoAj\\_-lb0/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1E5B6aC9Kc1rioEW3UJE9aGmp8-kZ2IT-7EqoAj_-lb0/edit)

**Click the link below to access the State of Vermont seclusion and restraint policy:**

<https://education.vermont.gov/documents/state-board-rules-series-4500>

## **Mandated Reporting**

<https://education.vermont.gov/documents/memo-mandated-reporting-law>

## **Procedures for Concerns/Complaints**

### **Chain of Command**

Questions, concerns, and problems should be brought to the appropriate person.

1. Classroom problems should be addressed with the classroom teacher.
2. If you do not feel satisfied after doing this, please bring the matter to the appropriate administrator.
3. If you still are not satisfied, bring the concern to the Superintendent.
4. Finally, if you feel that you have a problem or concern that is unresolved, please contact our school board.

If you are not sure whom to take your concern to, please call the office and you will be referred to the appropriate person.

## **Policies and Disclosures**

### **Asbestos Management**

The Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (40 CFR 763.93 (g) (4)) requires that written notice be given that the Georgia Elementary and Middle School has a Management Plan for the safe control and maintenance of asbestos containing building materials found in their buildings. This Management Plan is available and accessible to the public at the Georgia Elementary and Middle School office and at the office of Franklin West Supervisory Union.

### **Surveys**

Surveys are often used by the administration and staff as an avenue to collect information regarding various school related services. Students, parents, guardians, or community members may be asked to fill out surveys.

On occasion, these surveys come from sources outside of our school. A form will be sent home at the beginning of the year for all parents/guardians to sign before a third-party survey may begin.

### **ACT 1**

In March 2009 the State of Vermont Legislature enacted Act 1 to increase child sexual abuse prevention efforts. This law took effect on July 1, 2011. State of Vermont schools are required to provide instruction on how to recognize and prevent sexual abuse and sexual violence in comprehensive health education. School boards must ensure that adults employed in schools in their district receive orientation on the prevention, identification, and reporting of sexual abuse and sexual violence. School boards also must provide opportunities for parents, guardians, and other interested persons to receive the same information. See also ACT 60

For more information, you can go online to the Vermont Department of Education, [education.vermont.gov](http://education.vermont.gov) or the Vermont Department of Children and Families, [www.dcf.vermont.gov](http://www.dcf.vermont.gov) or [www.protectkids.vt.gov](http://www.protectkids.vt.gov).

### **ACT 43**

(H.508 Adverse Childhood Events Bill) Act 43 aims to create “trauma-informed” systems in public health and education. The Act creates a position in AHS dedicated to policy and programs that support building resilience for individuals experiencing adverse childhood experiences to help mitigate the effects and reduce the profound public health and societal implications. For more information go to: [education.vermont.gov/weekly-field-memo/volume-11-issue-21](http://education.vermont.gov/weekly-field-memo/volume-11-issue-21).

### **ACT 46**

The primary goal of Act 46 is to provide additional support to towns to merge with other school districts by allowing for greater flexibility in the merger structures and extending the timelines for unification to the place. For more information go to [education.vermont.gov/Vermont-schools/school-governance/options#act46](http://education.vermont.gov/Vermont-schools/school-governance/options#act46).

### **ACT 60**

All school employees are mandated reporters. This means that each school employee is legally required to report suspected child abuse or neglect to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) within 24 hours.

See also Act 1. For more information you can go online to the Vermont Department of Education [education.vermont.gov](http://education.vermont.gov) or the Vermont Department of Children and Families [www.dcf.vermont.gov](http://www.dcf.vermont.gov) or [www.protectkids.vt.gov](http://www.protectkids.vt.gov).

### **ACT 77**

The Flexible Pathways Initiative, created by Act 77 of 2013 and found in 16 V.S.A. § 941, has charged Vermont secondary school educators to create personalized learning environments that offer flexible pathways to graduation and a planning process by which students and educators can reflect on and document student learning over time. We encourage all educators to access, modify, adapt these resources to provide a personalized experience for all students.

### **ACT 177**

(Act 177 was enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont in the spring of 2000.) The goals of Act 117 are to: 1.) increase general education capacity to meet the needs of all students; 2.) improve the consistency and cost effective implementation of special education programs across the state; 3.) to improve cost containment and cost effectiveness; 4.) address the shortage of special educators; 5.) assess the extent to which school districts have absorbed health and human service costs for children receiving special education; 6.) provide assistance to school districts with unusual special education costs; and 7.) identify external factors affecting special education costs.