



GISB Campus Expansion | Frequently Asked Questions

This is a living document, and we will continue to update it as new questions arise. Please submit any additional inquiries to campus-expansion@gisbos.org.

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Facilities & Infrastructure

Will there be a cafeteria at LC?

Yes, the LC has a lunch room as well as a kitchen in the Early Education area. Preschool and Pre-K students will enjoy their meals in the Early Education area, while students in Kindergarten through Grade 3 will dine in the lunchroom. This setup encourages both age-appropriate socializing and a welcoming atmosphere for all grade levels.

Will the new campus have a library, art room, music room, or other specialty rooms?

The new campus will have a library specifically designed for our younger students, offering a wide range of age-appropriate German and English books to support their reading and learning needs. The music room is integrated into the auditorium, which serves as a flexible space for both music lessons and performances. Currently, there is no separate art room; instead, art activities are integrated into the classrooms, allowing students to engage in creative projects as part of their regular curriculum.

Will there be toilets in the early ed classes?

Most rooms in the Early Education area have ensuite bathrooms for easy access. In addition, the building includes additional restrooms, including non-binary bathrooms, to ensure that all students have convenient facilities available throughout the school.

Can you provide details on the HVAC systems at both the current and new locations? Specifically, how are heating, ventilation, and air conditioning managed in each building, and are there any planned upgrades or improvements?

Currently, we are not able to update the central HVAC systems in the buildings. Both campuses are former Catholic school buildings that have undergone upgrades over the years. Each building has a mix of central air systems in some areas and local cooling systems in individual rooms. At the Belmont Street campus, rooms are individually temperature-controlled, and we are in the process of upgrading this system at the Upper Campus to improve climate control across all learning spaces.

Will both locations have a kitchen available for cooking projects, similar to the one at the current Lower Campus?

In the first phase, only the Lower Campus will have an educational kitchen available for cooking projects. We recognize the value of hands-on culinary learning and are planning to upgrade the Upper Campus in the future to include a similar space.

Will both locations have a school nurse or healthcare facilities?

Yes, both campuses will have a health office, and our school nurse will cover both buildings, with a primary focus on the Lower Campus due to the younger age of the children. Additionally, we are fortunate to have our camp nurse, who often serves as a substitute and can be available as needed to provide extra support.

Will the Watertown campus have on-site parking for parents?

The Watertown campus is smaller than the Holton Street building, and as a result, the number of available on-site parking spots is more limited. There will be a small number of visitor parking spots, but we encourage families to utilize street parking in the neighborhood whenever possible.

Are you including gender-neutral bathrooms and locker rooms in your plan? (added 3/31/25)

Our plans include gender-neutral bathrooms on both campuses, ensuring safe and welcoming options for all. While we currently do not have dedicated gender neutral changing rooms due to space constraints within the building design, we are actively exploring alternative solutions to provide private, comfortable options for students who need them.

Logistics & Operations

How will drop-off and pick-up work at the Watertown campus?

We are currently planning two separate drop-off and pick-up loops to ensure a smooth and efficient process:

Preschool, PreK & Kindergarten: Drop-off and pick-up will take place at the back side of the building off Mount Auburn Street, leading directly to the Early Education entrance.

Elementary School: Families will use the Belmont Street entrance, with access through the main entrance in the parking lot.

For families utilizing the **ASP program**, pick-up will be flexible, allowing parents to collect their child from a central location anytime between 2:10 PM and 6:00 PM.

These designated loops will help manage traffic flow and ensure a safe and organized transition for students at arrival and dismissal. More details will be shared as we finalize logistics.

Will there be any changes to school hours or schedules due to the move and renovations?

There will be no changes to the core school hours as a result of the move and renovations. However, the school will offer an additional morning drop-off window that families can use for their convenience, providing more flexibility in the morning routine. To better align with the Middle School schedule, Grade 4 will follow a revised timetable, with the school day extending until 3:00 PM instead of 2:10 PM.

How will faculty and administrators split their time between the two campuses?

Some staff members, such as the Facility Manager, Front Office staff, and most teachers, will be based at a single campus. However, school leadership, administrators, and a small number of teachers will split their time between both locations. We believe this approach is essential for maintaining a cohesive organizational culture and reinforcing the sense of being one school across two campuses. By having key staff members present at both locations, we can ensure strong communication, consistency, and a shared school experience for all students and families.

How will school communications be handled across two campuses?

Maintaining strong communication and a sense of community across both campuses is a top priority. We are implementing a combination of school-wide communication to keep everyone informed, along with section-specific updates to ensure families receive relevant information for their child's grade level.

In addition to regular updates, we are planning to host events at both campuses to help students and families feel connected and develop a sense of belonging in both spaces. Our goal is to keep our community engaged, informed, and united as we transition into this new chapter.

Is there a backup plan if renovations don't go according to plan or the move-in date gets delayed?

At this point, we do not foresee any delays in the renovation timeline. However, if unforeseen circumstances were to impact the schedule, our backup plan would be to remain in the current buildings until the renovations are complete and the new campus is ready for use.

Academics & Student Experience

What are the class sizes like at the new campus?

With our new campuses, we are committed to maintaining optimal group sizes that support both academic growth and social-emotional development. In Early Education and Elementary, smaller groups allow for a nurturing and focused learning environment. As students progress to higher grade levels, class sizes remain limited, generally not exceeding around 20 students, ensuring a balance between individual attention and opportunities for collaboration and social interaction. Additionally, GISB is fortunate to have a robust team of support staff, which means that many classes will have more than one educator working with students. This ensures that each child receives the support they need, both academically and emotionally, helping to create a nurturing and collaborative learning environment across all grade levels.

How will students interact with older grades who are staying at the Upper Campus?

To foster connections between students across different grade levels, we will implement several initiatives designed to encourage interaction and mentorship. One key program is our buddy system, where older students will be paired with younger ones. For example, high schoolers may read to preschoolers, offering a wonderful opportunity for students to interact and build relationships. Additionally, we will organize events such as Step-Up Day, where students can visit and interact with other grade levels, helping them become more familiar with the school environment and fostering a sense of community across both campuses. We already have experience running similar programs between our two campuses, and we're excited to continue building these connections as we expand. Transportation between campuses for these activities will be managed like a field trip, ensuring a safe and structured experience for all students. These initiatives will help create strong bonds among students of all ages, ensuring that everyone feels supported and part of a unified GISB community.

Playgrounds & Outdoor Spaces

What are your plans for the new playground at the Lower Campus? (added 3/31/25)

We are planning a safe and engaging outdoor space that will be fully fenced in and designed for play, physical activity, and social interaction. This area will include a playground with two play structures, designated asphalt game spaces, a separate section for physical activity, and a shaded picnic area where students can also eat their lunches. Located near the main entrance, this playground will be closed off to cars, ensuring a safe and accessible environment for students throughout the school day. As part of a second phase of development, we plan to add additional play structures and create an outdoor classroom on the terrace, which will connect directly to the playground. This expansion will offer even more opportunities for play, exploration, and hands-on learning in an engaging and well-designed outdoor setting.

How many playgrounds will we have at the Lower Campus (added 3/31/25)

The Lower Campus will have two dedicated playgrounds designed for different age groups.

The Preschool & Pre-K playground will feature a sandpit and a play structure designed specifically for our youngest learners, providing a safe and engaging space for early childhood play and development.

The Kindergarten–Grade 3 playground, located near the main entrance, will be fully fenced in and include two play structures, designated asphalt game spaces, a separate section for physical activity, and a shaded picnic area where students can also eat their lunches. This space will be closed off to cars, ensuring a secure and accessible environment throughout the school day.

Will preschoolers have access to both the main playground and their designated preschool playground?

Yes, preschoolers will have access to both the main playground and their designated preschool playground. However, please note that some equipment on the main playground may have age restrictions to ensure safety. We will ensure that preschoolers have plenty of space and age-appropriate options to play and explore in both areas.

Are there nearby parks or playgrounds that will be used for outings, similar to Artesani Park?

Yes, there are several nearby parks and playgrounds that we plan to utilize for outings, similar to Artesani Park. We are also working closely with the City of Watertown to explore additional opportunities for collaboration and ensure that students have access to safe and engaging outdoor spaces. In Watertown, we have several excellent options, including Filippello Park and Sullivan Playground. Additionally, we plan to explore nearby spaces in Cambridge, such as Fresh Pond Reservation and Glacken Playground.

Transition & Community Building

When will the move take place?

We are currently on track to move into the new building at the beginning of August. This timeline allows us to set up classrooms and facilities in time to welcome students for the start of the new school year. We will continue to provide updates as we get closer to the move.

How will GISB ensure a smooth transition for students, staff, and families?

To support a seamless transition, GISB will organize Information Nights for different sections in April and May to discuss logistics, answer questions, and help families prepare. We also regularly update the Campus Expansion website with the latest information and will feature different topics related to the move in the Weekly Update. Additionally, we are carefully planning the move to ensure classrooms and facilities are ready before the start of the school year.

Will there be an open house or tour available for families to visit the Watertown campus before the move?

Due to ongoing construction and renovations throughout the summer, we will most likely not be able to offer in-person tours before the move. However, we will share photos and updates to keep families informed about the progress. To welcome everyone to the new campus, we are planning a special Back-to-School Picnic, which will include school tours to help students and families get familiar with the new space before the school year begins.

How will the school maintain a sense of community across two campuses?

Maintaining a strong sense of community is a priority for GISB, and we are committed to fostering connections between both campuses. We will continue to bring the entire school together through all-school events, traditions, and celebrations, such as the Back-to-School Picnic, Oktoberfest and the Christkindlmarkt. Additionally, we will organize cross-campus activities, including buddy programs and shared extracurricular opportunities to keep students engaged with their peers across grade levels. For parents, we will provide opportunities to stay

connected through community gatherings and volunteer opportunities at both locations.

Will there be a special orientation or welcome event for families at both campuses?

To welcome everyone to the new campus, we are planning a **special Back-to-School Picnic**, which will include **school tours** to help students and families get familiar with the new space before the school year begins.

Will there be a formal event to celebrate the opening of the Watertown campus?

Yes! Our Back-to-School Picnic will serve as the official opening celebration for the Watertown campus. This event will bring together students, families, and staff to mark this exciting milestone. The picnic will include school tours, opportunities to connect with the community, and a warm welcome to the new space.