

STUDENT/PARENT HANDBOOK

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Elementary/2020 - 2021



**Our mission....Growing our
spirit, mind and body in
harmony with the
teachings of Jesus Christ.**

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***Memo

Due to Covid 19, areas of the 2020-2021 Student Handbook will be revised to accommodate the safety and wellness of our students, faculty, and school. More information will be provided and posted as we move forward to the start of the new school year.

Website: www.gcacougars.org
Email: schooloffice@gcacougars.org

School Mascot: Cougar

School Colors: Navy and Gold

School Motto: Truth, Honor, and Loyalty

GRACE CHRISTIAN ACADEMY ALMA MATER

Standing forth in triumph, holding forth your light
Learning, daily growing in your holy might
Grace, our Alma Mater, we give thanks for thee
Thanks for both your being, and the love we see

In these hallowed halls we feel Your presence here
Over and around us, shepherding us near
Giving us examples of how our lives should be
Preparing us for life and service, Lord, for Thee

Grace we will remember, great love we have for thee
The learning and the knowledge shown in us from thee
Through God's Word you've taught us how that we should live
Productive, kind and loving; honor to Him give.

Chorus:
Serving God the Father with our hearts and minds
Grace for our example, our love for thee to shine

GENERAL INFORMATION

Grace Christian Academy, a ministry of Grace Church, is a fully accredited, interdenominational Christian school serving students in pre-kindergarten through 12th grades. Since 1994, students from the southwest Georgia and north Florida have received a quality education that is not only academic but Christ-centered, by integrating biblical truth into the entire school program. The instructional program focuses on developing the whole child - mind, body, and spirit - from a biblical worldview.

MISSION STATEMENT

As a ministry of Grace Church, the mission of Grace Christian Academy is to partner with like-minded biblically defined Christian families, to grow the whole child (spirit, mind, and body) through a Christ-centered, rigorous college preparatory education.

VISION STATEMENT

The vision of Grace Christian Academy is to develop generations of leaders who bring glory to God.

We envision our graduates to become:

- Compassionate women and men of strong Christian character and deep faith.
- Lifelong servant leaders within their churches, homes, communities and the world.
- Bold and creative thinkers who have developed a love of learning and who pursue excellence in all they do.
- Active, healthy individuals who treat their bodies as the temple of the Holy Spirit.

SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY

As we work closely with parents, our primary goals are to assist each child in achieving his/her highest academic potential, in developing sound Christian work habits and character traits, and in growing in a personal knowledge of God within a loving, nurturing environment.

The philosophy of education for Grace Christian Academy is established on a Judeo-Christian understanding of man, based on the principles of the inspired Word of God. At Grace, education is understood to be a life-long venture which should engage the whole person - mentally, physically, socially, and spiritually - while equipping him/her to live a full and meaningful Christ-centered life.

In addition, education is seen as an opportunity to integrate facts with our understanding of God and ourselves as being created in His image. A constant connection must be made between academic pursuit and the life lived under the Lordship of Jesus Christ - the Creator and Sustainer of life and all life-systems - which results in the rejection of any philosophy or methodology that is against the knowledge of God. Finally, education is approached as a means to bring honor and glory to God through the pursuit of excellence, making the most of every situation with the abilities and resources available to us.

CORE VALUES

Grace Christian Academy is committed to be:

- Directed by God's Word as our Authority: The Bible is God's instruction book for life. It is not only the foundation of each's student's education, but also the school's primary standard of rule and practice. (Matthew 4:4) "Man does not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."
- Committed to learning as our priority: Each part of the entire school program works collectively to accomplish our vision and mission. Learning is the highest goal of every school activity, whether in academics, athletics, social activities or discipline. (Psalm 119:73) "Your hands made me and formed me; give me understanding to learn your commands."

- Characterized by excellence as our ministry: Excellence does not necessarily mean being the best. But it does mean being our best. As member of a Christian school community, we realize that everything we do bears a direct reflection on the Christ we serve. (Colossians 3:23) “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord.”
- Motivated by love as our testimony: Real Christian love understands how much God values each individual. It accepts our differences and appreciates the strength of our diversity. It recognizes the collective worth of each individual’s God-given uniqueness in accomplishing our mission and vision. (John 13:35) “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

STATEMENT OF FAITH

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- We believe that the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments, is the inspired Word of God without error in its original manuscripts. It is the written record of God’s supernatural revelation of Himself to man, serving as our ultimate authority for faith and life.
 - We believe that the God of the Bible is the only true God. As one God without beginning or ending, He has revealed Himself in three persons: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ), and God the Holy Spirit.
 - We believe that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God, existing equal with God. Coming to earth, He was miraculously conceived by the Holy Spirit in the Virgin Mary, thereby being both completely God and completely man. Jesus Christ lived a sinless life, was crucified, rose bodily from the grave on the third day, ascended to the Father’s right hand in heaven, and will personally come again.
 - We believe that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, possessing the full essence and attributes of God. He guides, teaches, and empowers believers while convincing unbelievers of sin and drawing them to salvation.
 - We believe that man was personally created by God in His image, yet at mankind’s first sin that image was permanently scarred. As a result, we are born sinful, spiritually dead, destined for eternal separation from God, and needful of a Savior.
 - We believe that salvation from sin is by grace through personal faith in the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. Through Him, the righteousness of God is satisfied, the sinner is rescued from Hell, his relationship with God is reconciled, his sin is forgiven, and his life is reborn.
 - We believe the Gospel of Christ and that there is no other way for salvation.
 - We believe the God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female, and these distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God. (Gen. 1:26-25) We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a biological man and a biological woman who are married to each other. (1 Cor. 6:18; 7:2-5; Heb. 13:4) We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged outside of a marriage between a biological man and a biological woman.
 - We believe that any form of sexual immorality (including adulterer, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest and use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God. (Matt. 15:18-20; 1 Cor. 6:9-10).
 - We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of Grace Christian Academy (a ministry of Grace Church as the local Body of Christ), and to provide a biblical role model to the Grace Christian Academy and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by Grace Christian Academy in any capacity, or who serves as volunteers agree to and abide by this Statement of Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality (Matt. 5:16; Phil. 2:14-16; 1 Thess. 5:22).

- We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. (Acts 3:19-21; Rom. 10:9-10; Cor. 6:9-11).
- We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31) Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of Grace Christian Academy.
- We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in his image. Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage of condition from conception through natural death. We are therefore called to defend, protect, and value all human life. (Ps. 139).
- The statement of faith does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. The Bible itself, as the inspired and infallible Word of God that speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind, is the sole and final source of all that we believe. For purposes of Grace Christian Academy's faith, doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline our Grace Church O+Board of Elders is Grace Christian Academy's final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application.

Expected Student Outcomes

Students who graduate from Grace Christian Academy will meet the following outcomes:

Spiritually

- Establish and maintain a relationship with Jesus Christ through the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- Know and accept the Bible as truth and apply it to daily life.
- Justify and defend the Christian faith and Christian worldview while having a basic understanding of opposing world views.
- Embrace the Great Commission by using the fruit of the spirit and spiritual gifts as Godly servant leaders at home, in church, and in the community.

Physically

- Treat the body as a temple of the Holy Spirit.
- Develop lifelong healthy lifestyles to support active Christian living.

Intellectually

- Perform at or above grade level in reading, math, science, social studies, and foreign language based on course assessments.
- Develop effective communication skills: listening, speaking, and writing based on course evaluation.
- Discover and develop an understanding and appreciation of the fine arts as demonstrated through performance.
- Find, analyze, and evaluate information through the responsible use of resources to facilitate problem solving and wise decision making.
- Demonstrate proficient use of technology across the academic disciplines.
- Demonstrate college/career readiness and commitment to life learning.

Socially/Emotionally

- Use biblical and moral judgement when engaging in social and community activities.
- Exercise leadership and a desire for mission work by discerning where God is working and by joining in.
- Value Christian work ethic and be good stewards of finances, time, resources, and God's creation.
- Practice biblical integrity as it relates to justice, mercy, respect, hospitality, and peacemaking in all ventures of family, work, play and society.
- Value, appreciate, and respect all people as uniquely and wonderfully created in the image of God.

ACCREDITATION

GCA is accredited with the Georgia Accrediting Commission (GAC), the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI), AdvancEd, and SACS.

ADMISSION PROCEDURES

Grace Christian Academy is a community Christian school and is open to all students whose parents desire to have their children taught in an environment that encourages them in their Christian walk. Students and school families are held to high standards and are expected to adhere to all school policies and procedures. Registration begins in February of each year for the following August. Parents will be reminded of exact dates. Grace's admission policy strives to give special attention to keeping families together in the same environment. Therefore, registration priorities include presently enrolled children and siblings of presently enrolled children. Re-enrolling families must fill out a complete application, keep immunization records current, and pay all enrollment fees in order to ensure a place for the next school year.

REGISTRATION (NEW STUDENTS)

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1. Complete and submit a New Student Application Form.
 2. Submit the Enrollment Fees.
 3. Submit an up-to-date immunization certificate. (Georgia form 3231)
 4. Submit a copy of the student's birth certificate.
 5. Submit a copy of student's most recent report card and attendance records.
 6. Submit a copy of the student's school discipline record (if applicable).
 7. Students applying for the K4 and/or K5 program will be screened with a baseline assessment (GELDS). this instrument assesses language and literacy development, number concepts, motor skills, and social development. Students must score at or above the developmental level. Parents will be notified of the screening results and whether the student is eligible for admission.
 8. Students applying for grades 1-12 must submit the results of a nationally-normed standardized test, taken within the last 12 months. Eligible students must score above average or at grade level on the nationally-normed standardized test or at the "Exceeds Level" on the CRCT. If current testing records are not available, a testing date will be scheduled.
 9. Each student (K3-12) must submit a Pastor/Church Leader Questionnaire (recommendation form) from his/her pastor, youth worker, or Sunday School teacher. A student in grades 6-12

must submit a letter of recommendation from his/her former principal or counselor. If the application is deemed eligible, an interview will be scheduled with the administration.

10. NOTE: Many classes fill up quickly. Forms and fees must be received before a child is considered fully registered. GCA does not reserve places until the proper forms and fees are completed.

PROBATIONARY PERIOD (NEW STUDENTS)

All first-time students serve a nine-week probationary period. If academic, attendance, or behavior problems should arise during this period, parents will be contacted for a conference to help eliminate problems immediately. If necessary, parents may be asked to withdraw their child from Grace Christian Academy.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

Admission to Grace Christian Academy is open to any student who meets the entrance requirements. GCA admit students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. GCA does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. GCA does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, admission policies, and athletic or other school-administered programs.

CUSTODY AGREEMENTS

In order to accommodate the special requests and arrangements often necessitated by situations of marital separation or divorce, a copy of the most recent custody agreement contracted between the parents is required to be on file with the child's registration records. Our goal is to assure the safety and well-being of the child. If the marital difficulties interfere with the education of the child or, in extreme cases, with the classroom, the administration will meet with the parents and discuss the best course of action for the student.

REQUEST FOR TEACHER

It is the policy of Grace Christian Academy not to accept parental requests for a child to be assigned to the classroom of a specific teacher. However, the school values parental input about the needs, interests, and abilities of children of which the school otherwise may not be aware. It is our goal to provide the maximum opportunity for learning and growth for all children.

ARRIVAL / DISMISSAL

If you are parking to walk your child inside, please use the entrance closest to Lake Douglas Road. If you are dropping your child off, please use the gym entrance. The school will be open every morning at 7:30am. Any student who arrives between 7:30am and 7:50am needs to report to the school dining hall. A bell will ring at 7:50am for students to report to their first class.

1st - 2nd grade will be picked up in the front of the church at 3:00pm. Please use the entrance closest to Lake Douglas Road. Pick-up will take place in front of the church. 3rd grade through fifth grade will be picked up at 3:00pm near the side porch of the church. Older siblings will be walked over to the younger siblings pick up area. If any of the 1st through 5th grade students have older siblings, teachers will hold them on the side porch of the church until the middle and high school release time.

At 3:10 p.m., parents of middle and high school students enter the gym entrance for pick-ups. Parents should not block traffic by parking in the pick-up or drop-off lines. Rainy day pick-up is the same as regular pick-up.

Any parent who needs to come inside the building between 7:30-8:00am should park in the lot in front of the church auditorium and walk in. The side parking lot should be kept available for senior parking. Parents should please refrain from talking on cell phones during pick-up or drop-off. The parking lot is congested, and it is vital that we work together to insure the safety of all.

ELEMENTARY

Elementary school hours are from 8:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. daily. Students are tardy after 8:00 a.m. Students may begin arriving at 7:30 a.m. and report to the dining hall. Students should not arrive earlier than 7:30 unless prior arrangements have been made. Supervision does not begin until 7:30 a.m. Students arriving after 7:50 will go directly to their classrooms. Beginning at 7:50, all students in the dining hall will be dismissed to go to their classrooms.

Grades 1 – 5 are dismissed at 3:00 p.m. Students will be escorted to the grassy area in front of the church building for pick-up. Parents should be on time for pick-up, remain patient as cars are loaded, and refrain from pulling out of line unless directed by staff. Students waiting on older siblings can wait on the side porch of the church under teacher supervision. If a parent is ten (10) or more minutes late for pick-up, his/her child will be taken to the A+ program for supervision. There will be an additional charge for the A+ program. EXTENDED CARE

The A+ program is available for K4 through 5th grade from 3:00 p.m. until 5:30 p.m. each day. No A+ care is available for three-year-olds. An additional fee is charged for the A+ program.

CHECK-IN / CHECK-OUT PROCEDURES

When a student arrives after the morning bell or leaves school during the school day, the following procedures are to be followed:

- If arriving late to school, students need to go to the school office and complete the sign-in.
- If a student needs to leave early, please send a note to their teacher. Please come into the school office and sign your child out.

EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSINGS

Announcements of school closing will be posted on social media, broadcast on local area radio stations, and posted on the school website (www.gcacougars.org).

CLOSED CAMPUS POLICY

In order to provide the highest level of safety and security for students, Grace Christian Academy operates under a closed campus policy. This means that once a student arrives at school, he/she cannot leave campus without permission from the administrative office until the end of the school day. Parents should refer to Check-in/Check-out procedures for guidelines concerning student check-out.

VISITORS/ENTRY TO THE SCHOOL AFTER 8:05AM

Parents are always welcomed at school. However, for security reasons all doors leading to the classrooms will be locked to the outside during the school day. Visitors and students will need to enter through the main (flagpole) entrance to be buzzed in by the secretary/receptionist. All visitors should receive a visitor's sticker so that they are easily recognized by school staff and students. Prospective students from other schools are welcomed to visit for a day if they have obtained prior approval from the administration.

GCA permits a visit to the classroom only with advanced notice and proper administrative approval. Guests should check at least one day in advance with the classroom teacher to make sure that the visit will not conflict with a field trip or other class plans.

CHAPEL

All students will have a weekly chapel.

ASSEMBLIES

Students will also have assemblies as needed to enrich to students' academic curriculum in such areas as enrichment, spirituality, missions, and/or fine arts.

BIBLE STUDY

At Grace Christian Academy, the Bible is not simply another textbook. God's Word serves as our ultimate authority for faith and life. Because the Bible is at the heart of GCA's curriculum, each student studies the Bible every school day with the main focus being on life application of Christian principles. Generally, the New International Version is used in the classroom for memory verses and collective reading in order to have everyone together. Other versions are allowed for personal study and projects.

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

The term "Enrichment Activities" is preferred over "extra-curricular" because every part of the school program at Grace Christian Academy works together toward fulfilling our mission and vision. Field day, Fun Run, special presentations, special guests, pep rallies, Homecoming, along with field trips are scheduled throughout the year.

CLASS PARTIES AND SPECIAL EVENTS

CELEBRATING LIFE IS ENCOURAGED AT GCA!

Parties will comply with the following guidelines:

- The teacher will approve the date, time, length, food, and activities in advance.
- A parent's assistance is required unless other plans are worked out with the teacher.
- No one likes to be excluded from a party. To be sensitive in this matter, parents should not distribute invitations at school for out-of-school socials or parties unless the whole class is invited.

SPECIAL DELIVERIES

All flowers, balloons, packages, etc. must be delivered to the office. The student will be notified to come to the office to receive the delivery before the last bell.

LOST AND FOUND

Students are responsible for their personal property. The school does not accept responsibility for personal items brought to school. All personal items used at school should be clearly marked with the student's name. Lost and Found should be checked periodically for belongings. At the end of the month, items not claimed will be given away. The Lost and Found box/rack is kept in the dining hall.

PROPERTY DAMAGE

Excellence requires that students and faculty alike need to be good stewards of the school facilities. If school property is broken or destroyed due to horseplay or deliberate actions, involved students will be held liable for the cost of repair or replacement.

DELIVERY OF ITEMS TO SCHOOL

Parents who deliver forgotten items to their students should bring the items to the window of the receptionist's office in the main entrance. So that interruptions are kept to a minimum, parents and visitors should not go straight to the classroom.

PARENT-TEACHER COMMUNICATION

Parent-teacher communication is a very important component of GCA. Communication is attained through the use of RenWeb, emails, phone calls, Cougar Clips, gcaougars.org, and parent-teacher conferences. **Faculty members are not permitted to leave the class for phone calls during the school day. Anyone who would like to speak to a teacher during the day may contact the office to leave a message or send an email asking him/her to respond during a free period or after school is dismissed.**

HEALTH POLICIES

Grace Christian Academy will make every effort possible to protect the health and safety of students through the following policies:

- A child with a sore throat, chronic cough, and fever over 100°, rash, ear ache, diarrhea, or other physical ailment must be kept at home. If such signs develop at school, a school representative will contact all appropriate parties. A school representative will supervise the child in the office until someone can come and pick him/her up.
- A child must be free from fever (without medication), diarrhea, and other ailments for 24 hours prior to returning to school.
- When a student has been absent for any reason, he/she must bring a written note stating the cause of the absence. NO absence will be excused at any

time without a written note. If a student is absent from school due to a medical appointment, a note from the doctor is required.

- **All medication must be brought to the office and checked in with the secretary. No medication is to be taken to the classroom. Prescription medication must have the pharmacy label on it with the student's name and dosage clearly typed. All over-the-counter medication must have a written note from parent of the student stating name and dosage information clearly attached.**
- All medical -related issues need to be clearly written on the registration form along with appropriate emergency numbers for the school to contact in case of emergency. Parents should update the school office as soon as possible if there are changes with doctors, emergency numbers, and health concerns, etc.
- Parents are requested to notify the teacher regarding a significant change in home routine such as hospitalization of a parent, divorce, death of relative, etc.
- If a child has an accident/injury, a parent will be notified immediately. Depending on the seriousness of the injury, an ambulance may be called. An accident report form is completed whenever a child is injured on school property.

UNAPPROVED ITEMS AND MATERIALS

Unless special permission is granted, the following list tells items that are forbidden during normal school hours and that will be confiscated if found. Parents must come to the office to claim the item. If the same item is confiscated a second time, that item will remain in the school office until the end of the semester.

1. Backpacks, lunch boxes, school supplies, etc., depicting violence or questionable activities and products
2. Any personal toys
3. Weapons of any description

PATRIOTISM AND PLEDGES

Students regularly recite the words of the pledges given below as a continual reminder of the honor and privilege we have, both as American citizens and as Christians:

PLEDGE TO THE AMERICAN FLAG

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands--one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

PLEDGE TO THE CHRISTIAN FLAG

I pledge allegiance to the Christian flag and to the Savior for whose kingdom it stands -one Savior, crucified, risen, and coming again, with life and liberty for all who believe.

PLEDGE TO THE BIBLE

I pledge allegiance to the Bible, God's Holy Word. I will make it a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. I will hide its words in my heart that I might not sin against God.

SCHOOL PICTURES

Professional photographers take group and individual pictures during the school year. Students will have the opportunity to purchase picture packages. Other photos may be taken occasionally for use on our website or in other promotional media. Parents who prefer that we avoid using pictures of their child may complete a form available in the school office.

SCHOOL LUNCHES

A contracted vendors provides lunches daily. Students may either purchase lunches from the vendor or bring their lunch from home. Information is available through the school office.

Parental Support

Parents are asked to support Grace Christian Academy in the following areas:

- Supporting discipline, dress code, and educational policies
- Recognizing the authority of the teacher in the classroom
- Supporting fund raising efforts by selling products and working at events to enable GCA to keep tuition affordable
- Regular attendance at school events and activities
- Prayer, knowing that our faithfulness is what brings glory to God
- Good behavior at sporting events

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE FOR THE PARENT

In order to model scriptural principles, Grace Christian Academy follows the principles of Matthew 18:15-20 as its standard for dealing with differences. The best chance for clarifying the situation or bringing resolution is to speak only with the one most directly involved, with an attitude of respect. Some differences are not inherently right or wrong; they are simply the result of God-given diversity and personal preferences. When handled properly, disagreement in these areas can stimulate productive dialogue, promote helpful change, and encourage creativity.

At Grace Christian Academy, this means that parents are encouraged to first schedule an appointment with the teacher to address real issues. If the problem cannot be resolved, then the next step is to arrange a meeting with the administrator and teacher. If the problem still cannot be resolved, arranging a meeting with the parent, Head of School, and Grievance Committee is the next step. As a last resort, the school board as a whole will meet with the Head of School, teacher, and parent to seek a God-honoring resolution.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE FOR TEACHERS

Teachers have many responsibilities throughout the day. In teaching each child, the teacher is responsible for all tasks related to the classroom, to parent communication, and to Grace Christian Academy's mission, vision, and core values. Teachers also have personal responsibilities with their families that must be respected.

If a problem arises, the teacher will schedule an appointment with the parent to seek a resolution. If the problem persists, the teacher will schedule an appointment with the parent and administrator. If the problem still cannot be resolved, the Head of School will arrange a meeting with parent, teacher, Head of School, and School Board Grievance Committee. As a last resort, the school board as a whole will meet with the student, parent, teacher, and Head of School.

ATTENDANCE POLICY GRADES 1-5

A priority at Grace Christian Academy is to use instructional time productively. Regular attendance is critical if the results of the teaching and learning tasks are to be maximized. It is essential that each student recognizes the sequential nature of instruction and that any unnecessary and/or excessive absence severely impedes the educational process. Therefore, GCA attendance regulations have been established with the best interests of Grace Christian Academy and the students/parents in mind.

SCHOOL DAY

Staff is on duty each day at 7:30 a.m. for student supervision. For elementary classes, school begins at 8:00 a.m. and concludes at 3:00 p.m. Middle and high school classes begin at 8:00 a.m. and conclude at 3:10 p.m. All students are tardy after 8:00 a.m. Students who are out more than four hours in a day are considered absent for the day.

ABSENCES

A letter from a parent stating the reason for the absence should be sent with the student to the front office receptionist on the first day he/she returns in order for the absence to be considered excused. If a letter of excuse is not turned in within

three (3) days of an absence, the absence will be considered unexcused and will not be changed at a later date.

Planned absences for extended periods of time (vacation, extended holiday trips, etc.) need to be approved by completing a planned absence request form and sending it back to the office for administrative approval in advance of the absence. Parents should note that even with an approved extended absence, the total number of absences may not exceed ten (10) days per semester. No excused absences will be granted during finals, standardized testing, or spiritual emphasis events. Students are subject to failure for the year if they are absent from school more than ten (10) days or ten (10) days in an individual class in a semester. Students with over ten (10) absences will be referred to the attendance committee.

In case of an extreme emergency, such as a death in the family, serious illness, etc., parents should inform the office as soon as possible. We would consider it a privilege to uphold the family in prayer and practical help during this time.

TARDIES

Students are expected to be on time to all classes and school activities during the day. When a student is late to class, the whole class suffers as well as the individual. Time is lost getting the individual caught up on the lesson. Interruptions cause students to lose focus, which is not fair to classmates. All students are expected to be in each class prepared when the bell rings.

Students who arrive late to school should go immediately to the school office to secure an attendance or tardy slip. A tardy to school may be considered excused if the student has a medical condition, a doctor's appointment or an unexpected emergency situation detailed in a note from the parent. On the fourth tardy, the administrator will call the parents to discuss the situation. If a student has an excessive number of tardies, the parents will be called in for a conference to determine what the best course of action should be to fix the problem.

All questionable tardies will be referred to the Head of School.

EXCUSED ABSENCES

There are, of course, legitimate reasons for being absent from school. The following list, although not totally inclusive, details valid reasons for student absences:

1. Personal Illness: Student absenteeism for personal illness is considered excused. The administration reserves the right to make a final determination in any questionable cases.
2. Death within Family: A death within a student's immediate or extended family is considered excused. The length of such absence may vary from case

to case. Therefore, the administration reserves the right to make individual judgments regarding total days excused.

3. Family Emergency: This category refers to cases of family illness, hardships, and unexpected circumstances. Because of the nature of these cases, the administration reserves the right to make individual judgments concerning the validity of the requests and actual number of days excused.
4. Professional Appointments: Professional appointments (medical/dental) are legitimate reasons for student absenteeism. The administration reserves the right to request notes from any professional if confirmation of the absence is needed. Whenever possible professional appointments need to be made after school hours.
5. Approved School Activities: (NI- non-instructional absence) Students missing classes for school approved field trips, athletic games, etc. will be considered excused if such activity is approved by the administration. These absences will not be recorded on the student's attendance record.
6. Miscellaneous: It is possible that occasions may arise other than those listed in this section, necessitating that a student miss school. The administration shall make the sole determination if such an absence is excused or unexcused. NOTE: Excused absences will not be given during the following times except for medical or family emergencies:
 - Exam days (nine week and semester)
 - The week of achievement testing
 - Spiritual emphasis events (Freedom Dive)

All absences other than those mentioned above will be approved/unapproved by the Head of School.

UNEXCUSED ABSENCES

On the fourth unexcused absence, students will be referred to the Head of School for a conference. The parents may be called in for a conference to determine what the best course of action should be to fix the problem. At the end of the semester, if the student has ten (10) unexcused or excused absences the student will be referred to the Attendance Committee to determine if they should receive credit for the class or move to the next grade level.

MAKEUP WORK

Students who are absent will have three (3) calendar days to complete the classwork and homework they missed, without penalty.

ATTENDANCE COMMITTEE

The Attendance Committee, consisting of the Head of School and other faculty and/or administrative personnel, will determine whether a student that has missed more than ten (10) days in school or in a particular class should or should not receive credit. Excessive tardies will also be subject to referral to the attendance committee.

Cell Phones/Electronics Policy

We recognize that cell phones have become a common tool for communication. However, they have also become a major distraction to the learning environment and are vulnerable to theft. We ask that you allow your child to carry a cell phone only if absolutely necessary. Students are allowed to carry cell phones to school, however, phones must be turned off and stored out of sight during school hours. Phones may not be used to talk, take pictures, play games, record or text during school hours, including recesses. Parent permission to carry a phone must be on file in the school office. If a student violates the cell phone policy, they will have the following consequences:

- **First Infraction** - Students will have their cell phone taken away and returned at the end of the day.
- **Second Infraction** - Students will have their cell phone taken and locked up in the office until a parent can come to school to retrieve it.
- **Third Infraction** - Students will no longer be allowed to bring a cell phone to school until a parent conference with the principal is held.

ACADEMIC POLICIES – ELEMENTARY SCHOOL (1st-5th)

FIELD TRIPS

The teacher arranges field trips for the classes. During the year teachers will notify parents in advance of field trips and will give the appropriate details. Students will be required to wear a seat belt. GCA t-shirts should be worn on all field trips. A one-time field trip permission slip will be given at the beginning of the year. Parent chaperones and drivers may not bring along siblings, as full attention is needed to help the teachers supervise the class.

LIBRARY / COMPUTER LAB

Our library and computer lab are available for student use each school day. A wide variety of selections, from leisure reading to specific studies, is available for student use. Books in our library are carefully selected. A decision to put a book on the shelf is not an endorsement of all viewpoints espoused by that author.

Students at GCA also have access to a variety of computer based programs and Internet access through our computer network. Use of any computer is a privilege, and students are expected to abide by certain rules of conduct. In general, this requires efficient, ethical, and legal utilization of all network resources. If a student violates any of these provisions, possible consequences may include denial of future access.

Ultimately, parents and guardians of minors are responsible for setting and conveying the standards their children should follow when using media and information sources. GCA has taken available precautions to restrict access to controversial and inappropriate materials; however, it is impossible to totally prevent access to such material.

Damage to books or equipment will result in charges to recover costs of repair or replacement, as well as disciplinary action. Any attempt to breach the security of the computer network, or to disrupt the operation or function of the system in any way, will also result in disciplinary action.

CHEATING

When a student is determined to have cheated on a test, quiz, or homework – either by observations on the part of a teacher or by the student’s own admission – he/she will be given an automatic zero for the test, quiz, or assignment. Additional incidents of cheating will result in a referral to administration. Likewise, the willfully assisting student will also receive the same punishment.

ACHIEVEMENT TESTS

Each spring, students in the 1st through 8th grades are given the Terra Nova.

HOMEWORK/MAKE-UP WORK

The teacher assigns homework and will communicate expectations for homework and homework routines to the parents. Students should be able to complete their homework with minimal help from parents. There is generally no homework on Wednesday evenings for elementary students. Some exceptions may occur.

Parents of elementary students may request homework assignments for students who are absent by calling the school office no later than 10:00 a.m. the day of the absence. Homework will be provided within twenty-four (24) hours. This advance notice is needed so the secretary and teachers will have time to assemble the information and books for parents to pick up in the office at the end of the day.

GRADING

Grades are based upon work completed during each nine-week grading period. Four report cards are sent home each year, as well as mid-quarter progress reports online. The teacher will notify parents when student academic performance is poor.

1st Grade:

Numeric Grades will be received in the following subjects:
Reading, Math, Phonics, Spelling

Letter Grades will be received in the following subjects:
Art, Bible, Music, P.E., Writing, Science, History, Spanish

2nd Grade:

Numeric Grades will be received in the following subjects:
Reading, Math, Phonics, Spelling

Letter Grades will be received in the following subjects:
Art, Bible, Music, P.E., Writing, Science, History, Spanish

3rd Grade:

Numeric Grades will be received in the following subjects:
Reading, Math Spelling, Language, Health, Science, History

Letter Grades will be received in the following subjects:
Art, Bible, Music, P.E., Spanish, Writing

4th and 5th Grade:

Numeric Grades will be received in the following subjects:
Same as 3rd except no health and writing is numeric, Letter Grades same as 3rd.

ELEMENTARY PROMOTION POLICY

In 1st and 2nd grades, students must pass Reading, Phonics, and Math to advance to the next grade level. In 3rd through 5th grades, students must pass Language Arts and Math. A 3rd through 5th grade student will not pass if he/she fails more than two of any academic subjects. Teachers, parents, and administrators will work together to assess individual student needs. The administrator must approve exceptions to the Language Arts and Math standards.

SUMMER SCHOOL/REMEDIAL WORK

Grace Christian Academy offers no Summer School sessions. If a student has a failing grade in a subject, a remedial work plan may be outlined by the school administration to help bring the student's course work to grade level and prevent subsequent academic struggles the following school year. Promotion will be at the discretion of the administration, and a decision will be made after a conference with teachers and parents.

ELEMENTARY HONOR ROLLS

Note: Art, music, and physical education classes **are not included** in Honor Roll calculation; however, students cannot be considered for Honor Roll if a failing grade is received in one of these enrichment courses.

A HONOR ROLL

Elementary students must earn all E's in subjects for which a letter grade is given and earn a 90% average or above in **all** subjects with numerical grades. Conduct grades must be Excellent, Good, or Satisfactory.

A/B HONOR ROLL

Elementary students must earn all E's and/or S's in subjects for which a letter grade is given and earn an 80% average or above in **all** subjects with numerical grades. Conduct grades must be Excellent, Good, or Satisfactory.

TRANSFER CREDIT (HOME SCHOOL)

All home school students will be considered transient students. Transcript grades earned by a home school student will be recognized and awarded if the student's transcript is from an accredited Christian/private school that has a home school umbrella program. If a student is registered with a local home school association and the association regulates testing and provides an official transcript, the transcript will be recognized at the time of transfer.

If the conditions above are not met, a portfolio assessment will be used to determine acceptance and placement of the student. This includes documentation provided to GCA from the parent. Documentation must include the following information:

- Curriculum used (names of text and publisher per grade level)
- Daily lesson plans
- Assessment/Evaluation - daily quizzes, weekly and quarterly tests, book reports, term papers, projects, etc.
- Annual achievement testing scores (Stanford, Terra Nova, Iowa Basic Skills, etc.)
- Students will be given a placement test and/or other assessments to ensure the appropriate class levels.

HOSPITAL / HOMEBOUND POLICY

Purpose: The Hospital/Homebound Program is a service for students who are physically unable to attend school for a period of ten (10) days or more.

Who Qualifies: Any GCA student who has a physical condition medically diagnosed by a licensed physician, which restricts them to their home or hospital.

Procedure: The hospital/homebound request form must be completed in its entirety and returned to an administrator. This includes the medical certification section of the form, which is completed by the physician. Once completed, GCA administration will determine if the student is eligible for the program. If eligible, the student will begin the program immediately.

Policy: The primary objective of hospital/homebound instruction is to enable students with medically diagnosed conditions to continue a planned educational program during the time when regular school attendance is not possible.

The physician should be able to project that the student will be absent a minimum of ten (10) school days and is physically able to profit from educational instruction.

Students are not eligible if the absences are due to expulsion or suspension.

High school students who request homebound instruction must be passing all classes and be on target to graduate.

An adult must be present in the home during the instructional period. Regular instructional personnel and parents should be made aware that full credit is given for work completed during the hospital/homebound instruction. The school liaison works closely with the student's regular classroom teachers and the parent to provide continuity of the educational program for the student. Parents should follow lesson plans posted on RenWeb (middle and high school) to ensure that the student is moving at a proper pace. Unit tests or chapter tests should be taken either at school by appointment or in the presence of the school liaison.

Elementary student assignments will be provided weekly by the classroom teacher. Some deviations may be required. For example, physical limitations may increase the time needed to complete assignments or may require that all or part of the work be done orally with the school liaison. The student will be counted present each day if he/she is receiving instruction. Grades are determined by the classroom teachers, school liaison, and parent records. Grades are posted on the permanent records by the classroom teacher.

Any student on homebound status who is not making adequate progress or not completing the assigned work will lose his/her homebound status, and his/her absences will be counted as unexcused. The student will have ten (10) days after each semester to complete his/her work including final exams or an amount of time reasonable to complete assignments (approved by an administrator). Otherwise, the grade will be changed permanently to an F.

As soon as the student is physically able to return to his/her normal routine and functioning, regular school attendance must resume. In some cases, dual instruction through regular attendance and hospital/homebound may be used in returning the student to full day instruction.

All forms are available through the school office.

DRESS CODE

ELEMENTARY

All students are to be neat, modest, and appropriately dressed for school. The following refers to time at school and GCA events:

- Hair must be clean, neatly groomed, and not extreme in hairstyle or color. Boys' hair should be no longer than collar length and appropriately styled so that it does not call undue attention to the individual student. Hair may not cover the eyes in the front nor the ears on the sides.
- Shoes will be worn at all times. Gym shoes are required for PE classes.
- Shorts/pants are to be clean, without holes that allow skin to show or excessive fraying, and neither tight fitting nor excessively loose. Shorts are to be fingertip length.
- Leggings are permitted only if the shirt fully covers the buttocks.
- Blouses and tops for girls are not to expose the midriff and must cover the shoulder (sleeveless is acceptable, but not thin straps. Straps on blouses must be at least 2 inches wide.).
- Jewelry should be worn in moderation. Body piercing is not allowed, excluding earrings for girls.
- No hats, caps, sunglasses, coats can be worn in the classroom, unless special permission is given by the teacher.
- There should be no offensive pictures or wording on shirts.

- Students who violate the dress code will be sent to the office to confer with the Head of School.
- The administration may restrict clothing items deemed unacceptable, inappropriate, or disruptive at any given time during the school term. If a student does not follow the dress code at GCA events, they will be given a warning for the first offense. If it continues, the parents will be called in for a conference.

DISCIPLINE CODE

Students are expected to behave in a manner that brings credit to the individual, the family, the school, and God. While we encourage students to become self-disciplined in the area of personal conduct, there are times when it is necessary to enforce school policy through teacher or administrator correction.

ELEMENTARY (GRADES 1st – 5TH)

Teachers in elementary classes develop a discipline plan and exercise discipline measures for minor offenses, communicating with the parents to produce an environment conducive to learning. Behavior expectations and consequences are posted in each classroom. Major offenses will be brought to the administrator's attention immediately. Please note that the list of offenses may not be all-inclusive.

MINOR OFFENSES

- Violating Classroom Discipline Plan
- Dress code violation
- Rough-housing (horseplay)
- Chewing gum
- Teasing or name calling
- Disrupting class
- Rude or discourteous behavior
- Talking without permission

- Out of seat without permission

Consequences: The consequences for the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd offenses will be determined by the teacher and communicated to the parents at the beginning of the school year. At the 3rd offense, the parent will be re-notified of the consequence. At the 4th offense, the student will be referred to the Head of School. Note: If minor offenses become repetitious or excessive, the student may be referred to the administrator for disciplinary action (such as Detention, In-School Suspension, or Behavior Probation) before the 4th offense.

MAJOR OFFENSES

- Reaching 4th minor offense
- Lying
- Cheating
- Profanity or Vulgarity
- Stealing
- Disrespect
- Defiance of authority
- Damaging school property
- Pattern of dress code violations
- Invasion of privacy (being in someone's personal belongings without previously obtaining that person's or administration's permission)
- Going through a teacher's desk or storage closet without permission
- Fighting or aggressive behavior toward another student
- Having unapproved items at school
- Bullying
- Possession of a weapon (suspended from school at the discretion of the administration)
- Cell phone violations

The following consequences are subject to the severity of the violation which will be determined by the Head of School:

Student Conference, Parent phone call, Parent conference, Teacher Detention, Administrative Detention, In-School Suspension, Out of School Suspension, Probation, Expulsion.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Grace Christian Academy has a long history of support and cooperation from parents. This tradition has created a family atmosphere often commented on by parents and friends of GCA. We work diligently at creating this family atmosphere, and we encourage a high level of parental involvement.

G-TEAM

The G-Team is the school's parent organization, giving parents direct opportunities to support the school through the following purposes:

- Promote the involvement of parents in the stated purposes for which GCA exists, "Growing our spirit, mind and body in harmony with the teachings of Jesus Christ."
- Encourage open communication and cooperation among parents, teachers, and administration
- Provide parents and teachers with the information to know, identify with, and positively influence the goals and vision of the school
- Make recommendations and provide input to the administration and School Board
- Help make the school more widely known within the southwest Georgia and north Florida regions

PARENT VOLUNTEERS - SEVEN HOURS YEARLY PER FAMILY IS REQUIRED

Parents are encouraged to volunteer to help their child's teacher in any way they can. Parents often volunteer to put up bulletin boards in the classroom, serve as chaperones on field trips and at class parties, help the teacher in an art or a craft project, prepare refreshments for special activities, read to the class, or be a guest speaker on a topic of special interest, or assist with school-wide projects such as: Winter Festival, Fun Run, Bloom, etc.

PARENT – TEACHER CONFERENCES

Various parent-teacher conferences are scheduled as needed. These meetings are designed to be a time for discussing the strengths and areas to be developed of each student. This is also a good time to reinforce the relationship with the student's teacher. Parental attendance is very important. Parents may also request an additional meeting with the teacher at any time throughout the school year by calling the school office to set up a time.

TUESDAY PACKETS/COUGAR CLIPS

Each Tuesday in grades 1-3, and every 2 weeks in grades 4-5, an information folder known as the "Cougar Clip" will be sent home. This packet will contain classroom information, graded papers, and other information for parents. Any

papers requiring a parent's signature will be noted by the teacher and should be sent back to school each Wednesday in the same folder. Teachers will inform students and parents of any special instructions regarding the use of Tuesday Packets for their classroom. Parents will be responsible for purchasing new folders should originals become lost or damaged.

CLASSROOM VISITS

Visitors must first stop at the school office for a classroom pass in order to visit a class. Conferences, even very short ones, must be scheduled in advance as the teachers' daily schedules do not allow time between 7:30 a.m. and 3:15 to meet with a parent unless it has been previously scheduled.

CONTACTING FACULTY MEMBERS

Parents who need to talk with a faculty member may call the school office (243-8851) and leave a message with the receptionist. The call will be returned as soon as possible. Teachers are not permitted to leave a class for a phone call. Most faculty members also have email addresses through the school's website which may be used for correspondence. GCA requests that parents not call faculty members at home unless it is an emergency. **Please do not call or text a teacher during school hours.**

STUDENT INSURANCE

Each year Grace requires that parents take a low cost student accident insurance policy through the school on each child. The cost of this insurance is included in the enrollment fees. Should a student sustain accidental injury on campus during school hours or while participating in or attending a school-sponsored activity, he/she is covered by the insurance policy. This policy provides secondary coverage for those students who are covered under another insurance program. It becomes the primary carrier if there is no other insurance company. The insurance covers accidental injuries only.

PRIVATE VEHICLE COVERAGE

GCA's school insurance policy is a secondary provider for parents who drive personal vehicles to transport their child and/or other children on a field trip or an athletic event. A parent's personal insurance serves as the primary provider. Prior to leaving for any event, the parent must have on file in the school office a copy of his/her current Georgia Insurance Card listing the insurance company, policy number, agent, and insurance coverage information.

NON-COVERAGE

Non-educational gatherings, class socials, or other extracurricular activities not approved by the school administration are not covered by Grace Christian Academy or by any of its insurance carriers.

FINANCIAL POLICIES

Grace Christian Academy encourages parents to conduct proper financial planning in advance of enrolling their child(ren). Christian education requires a serious financial investment. Parents should plan in advance to meet their financial commitment in full and on time. This allows the school to do the same. Complete financial information, including registration and tuition fees, is available in the school office.

Tuition is due on the 1st of each month. GCA uses the automatic draft method for tuition payments. The draft system is a secure and confidential transaction. It is easily arranged and helps eliminate several bookkeeping steps for the office. Monthly payments are automatically withdrawn on either the 3rd or the 18th of each month, or payments may be divided by HALF payments on BOTH dates. Authorization forms are available in the school office.

LATE FEES / RETURNED CHECKS

A \$15 late fee will be added to the account for payments received after the 10th of the month. A \$30 fee will be added to the account for any check returned by the bank unpaid. A \$30 fee will be charged to an account if the bank refuses an automatic draft payment.

PAST DUE ACCOUNTS

Grace Christian Academy does not permit a student to remain enrolled in school when his/her tuition account balance becomes more than thirty (30) days past due, unless satisfactory arrangements are made to restore the account to current status. Proverbs 22:7 teaches, "...the borrower is servant to the lender." Therefore, we do not want to encourage indebtedness.

RELEASE OF SCHOOL RECORDS

Grace Christian Academy does not release the school records (report cards, achievement test scores, immunization records, etc.) of any student whose account is not paid in full.

WITHDRAWAL POLICY

Immediate notice must be given to the office if a child is withdrawn from school after enrollment. If a student is withdrawn from school after the first day of school, parents are responsible for prorated tuition through the end of the month in which the student withdraws. There are no refunds of tuition fees except for extenuating circumstance.

Acceptable Use Policy for Technology **Acceptable Use Policy- Grades 1-5**

Approved by Grace Christian Academy School Board

Grace Christian Academy supports the rights of students and staff to have reasonable access, in school, to various information formats and believes it is incumbent upon students and staff to use this educational advantage in an appropriate and responsible manner.

1. I will only use the Internet when there is an adult in the room with me.
2. I will not give out any information about myself, my family, or my friends on the Internet.
3. I will not speak to strangers on the Internet without my teacher's permission.
4. I will tell my teachers and parents if anyone on the Internet asks personal questions about me.
5. I will use only appropriate language when using the Internet.
6. I will tell my teacher if I see anything on the Internet that makes me uncomfortable.
7. I will not copy anything from the Internet and claim it is my work.

I have read and understand the above rules. I understand that if I break any of these rules, I may lose the privilege of using the Internet and may have other consequences.

This user agreement will be renewed each academic year.

For Parents/Guardians

Students and parents will be asked to sign the following statements.

I have read the Acceptable Use Policy for computer use with my child. I understand that access is for educational purposes I accept responsibility for my child's computer use.

I give permission for my child's name to appear on the student, school, and/or school web pages should one be developed. I understand the school will not publish my home address or phone number.

I give permission for my child's photo to appear on the student, school web pages should one be developed.