



# GRACE COVENANT ACADEMY

## PARENT - STUDENT HANDBOOK

### 2021 – 2022

*“Teach your children to choose the right path, and when they are older, they will remain upon it.” Proverbs 22:6*

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**NOTICE OF DISCLAIMER**

*This handbook is in no way contractually binding on Grace Covenant Academy or its employees. The handbook is subject to change without notice from the school’s governing body.*

## **ABOUT GRACE COVENANT ACADEMY**

### **Overview**

Established in 2001 as a ministry of Grace Covenant Church, Grace Covenant Academy is approved as an educational institution as defined by the North Carolina Constitution, the North Carolina General Statutes and the Rules and Regulations adopted by the State Board of Education of North Carolina. The Academy is a member of the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI) and the Greater Charlotte Association of Christian Schools (GCACS). GCA is pursuing accreditation through ACSI and serves students age 3 through Grade 8.

Grace Covenant Academy does not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, color or national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship, loan programs, athletic and other school administered programs.

### **Vision**

The Grace Covenant Academy students and staff will live out God's plans for their lives. They will fulfill His purposes, using their God-given talents and abilities, and follow the callings He has placed upon their lives.

### **Mission**

At Grace Covenant Academy, we equip students for life by releasing their God-given potential. We nurture decision making and problem-solving skills, enabled through the application of God's Word and excellent academics.

### **Philosophy & Purpose**

Grace Covenant Academy holds that education is designed to meet the needs of the total student. Our program will help the student grow and develop emotionally, intellectually, socially, physically and spiritually. Our desire is that each student will develop an eagerness and love for learning.

### **Statements of Faith**

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 Covenant Academy's faith, doctrine, practice, policy and discipline, Pastor Farrell Lemings and the Foursquare denomination are Grace Covenant Academy's final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application.

#### **Bible**

2 Timothy 3:16-17

We believe the Bible to be the authoritative Word of God — without error, God-inspired, and true.

#### **God**

Matthew 28:19

We believe in one true God that eternally exists in three persons — Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

## **Jesus Christ**

Isaiah 7:15, 1 Corinthians 15:3-5, Hebrews 9:27-28

We believe that Jesus Christ is God in his birth, his life, his death, his resurrection, and his return.

## **Salvation**

Acts 4:12

We believe that salvation is only available by grace, through faith and the renewing work of the Holy Spirit. We believe that salvation offers eternal life in heaven rather than eternal separation from God.

## **Holy Spirit**

Romans 8:5-6

We believe in the work of the Holy Spirit who lives within, guides us to repentance, and enables us to live Godly lives.

## **Spiritual Unity**

Philippians 2:1-4

We believe in the spiritual unity of believers, that all believers are members of His body, the church.

## **Gender, Marriage and Sexuality**

We believe that God wonderfully and immutable creates each person as male or female from conception until natural death. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God. (Gen 1:26-28) Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person.

We believe that the term "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, covenant, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture. (Gen 2:18-25; Mark 10:6-9) We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other. (1 Cor 6:18; 7:2-5; 7; Heb 13:4) We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman.

We believe that any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, 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 Covenant Academy, and to provide a biblical role model to GCA students and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by Grace Covenant Academy in any capacity, or are students of Grace Covenant Academy, agree to and abide by these Statements on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality. (Matt 5:16; Phil 2:14-16; 1 Thess 5:22)

## **Code of Conduct**

At Grace Covenant Academy, we build the following biblical truths into the life of each student, encouraging them to be more Christ-like.

**Honor God**

Genesis 1:27

Each person is made in the image of God and it honors God when we treat others with kindness and love.

**Be Respectful**

Philippians 2:3-4

Everyone that is a part of the GCA community is expected to show respect for others as well as their property and ideas, inside and outside of the classroom.

**Be Responsible**

Mark 12:31

All people are accountable to God and He holds each person responsible for their actions and words. We desire to see students not only take responsibility for themselves, but also look out for others.

**Do Your Best**

1 Corinthians 10:31

It brings honor and glory to God when students do their best, not only in their academics, but also in the way that they interact with others.

## **SPIRITUAL LIFE**

### **Spiritual Objectives**

1. We present the Bible as the only inspired Word of God, the final authority for all truth and knowledge.
2. We seek to win those who have not accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.
3. We educate students so that they successfully integrate Christian values into their daily lives.
4. We teach students to live Christ-like in the world.
5. We provide daily encouragement and Christ-like love to each child.

### **Chapel**

All students attend Chapel weekly on Wednesday mornings where God's Word is brought to life through worship and relevant teaching. This is a time when students and staff come together for prayer, worship and Bible study. Students are encouraged to apply the biblical truth they learn in GCA Chapel in their daily lives with family and friends that do not know Jesus Christ as Savior. Times for GCA Chapel vary by grade level, so check with your child's class regarding your specific Chapel time.

Each class is given the opportunity to lead the Bible lesson a minimum of one time each school year. Teachers and students will work together to develop and present the Chapel program.

Parents are welcome and encouraged to attend GCA Chapel but are asked to sit in the back along with any other visitors. If younger siblings become a disturbance, we ask parents to please excuse themselves, so the students are not distracted.

### **GCA On Mission**

The first Wednesday of the month the entire school celebrates GCA on MISSION as a Chapel focus. This is the time when students and staff celebrate the partnerships they have with local and global ministry partners. Students will be encouraged to wear their GCA on MISSION t-shirt on these days. A special offering is taken on GCA on Mission Day to support our ministry partners. This chapel time is dedicated to teaching, affirming, and celebrating practical acts of kindness and generosity as performed by students in their communities (Mark 9:36,41).

### **Prayer in the Classroom**

Grace Covenant Academy believes in prayer in the classroom, and each teacher has the privilege and responsibility of conducting prayer with the class. Students are also encouraged to develop a personal prayer life by utilizing personal prayer journals and being given various opportunities throughout the day to pray. Prayer is not limited to specific times and is encouraged in accordance with 1 Thessalonians 5:17 and James 5:16.

### **Bible Version**

The New International Version is the version of choice for students at Grace Covenant Academy. However, you may see other versions of scripture passages come home, depending on the Chapel speaker or situation.

## **Biblical Integration**

At Grace Covenant Academy, we believe that the Word of God is not simply an additional book for us to study and understand. It is a tool for us to apply in every area of our life. For that reason, teachers at GCA will intentionally integrate biblical principles throughout their lessons in each course of study.

## **Pledges**

Each day our students begin with prayer and pledges to the American flag, the Christian flag, and the Bible. We believe these will build foundational truths in the hearts of our students, which are essential to their faith.

### **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 to 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 light unto my path. I will hide God's Word in my heart that I might not sin against God.

# ACADEMIC PROGRAM

## Intellectual Objectives

1. We facilitate mastery of the skills and standards taught at each grade level.
2. We provide a learning environment rich in opportunities for critical thinking, collaborative learning, and decision making.
3. We teach through hands-on learning, with a growth mindset, and differentiate to meet the needs of students.
4. We nurture competency in communication and leadership skills.
5. We prepare each student, through academic excellence, for success in their future.

## Curriculum & Teaching Methods

Various teaching methods and resources are used to provide an exciting, challenging, and fun learning environment based on GCA curriculum standards. We encourage innovation and creativity in the classrooms. Our early childhood program provides outside play, learning centers, music with movement, and hands-on manipulatives to help the student grow and develop fine and gross motor skills. Elementary and middle school students receive instruction in various core subjects such as math, language arts, science, social studies, and Bible; and enrichment classes such as fine arts, physical education, visual arts, library, STEM, and Spanish.

## Grading

There are four quarters during the year, and report cards are issued at the end of each quarter for students in Grades K-8. Grades are accessible online via RenWeb at all times for students in Grades 2-8. However, parents will be notified when final quarter report cards are completed and available for viewing.

## Academic Grades

All students (Grades K – 8) will be graded on their academic performance using the following reporting scale.

### Elementary Grades

#### *Kindergarten – Grade 1*

90 – 100%	M +
80 – 89%	M
70 – 79%	M -
Below 70%	N

#### *Grades 2 – 5*

90 – 100%	A
80 – 89%	B
70 – 79%	C
60 – 69%	D
Below 60%	F

### **Middle School (*Grades 6 – 8*)**

100- 90%	A
90 – 92%	A-
88 – 89%	B+
89- 80%	B
80 – 82%	B-
78 – 79%	C+
79- 70%	C
70 – 72%	C-
68 – 69%	D+
69- 60%	D
60 – 62%	D-
Below 60%	F

In addition to the above grading scale, all GCA middle school core subject grades will be weighted as follows:

- 70% tests, quizzes, and formal assessments grades
- 30% homework and classwork grades

### **Conduct Grades**

All elementary students (K – Grade 5) at GCA will receive a grade for overall conduct. Each student’s conduct for a grading period will be measured against the GCA Behavior Covenant.

- M + Meets or Exceeds Expectation
- M Meets Expectation
- M - Is Below Expectation/Needs Improvement
- N Does Not Meet Expectation

### **Grade Promotion & Retention**

Promotion of a student to the next grade (including PreK to K) is determined by satisfactory progress, developmental readiness, and the proper number of classroom days. A student may need to repeat a grade in order to master the material, as he/she may not be developmentally ready for the next grade. In addition, middle school students who fail multiple core classes may be at risk for retention. Parent conferences, along with analyzing measures of student progress, will be utilized in determining promotion or retention.

### **Homework**

At GCA, homework should meet the following standards:

1. Homework should be relevant.
2. Homework should have a purpose. It is not meant to be given just for the sake of having an assignment. The purpose should be recognizable to both parent and student.
3. Homework should be for reteaching, reviewing, or enriching.

Homework given to students should follow the guidelines listed below. These guidelines reflect the amount of time it would take the average student to complete the assignment and do **not** include independent reading.

Grade	Days Per Week	Maximum Time
K	M-T-TH-F	5 minutes
1st	M-T-TH-F	10 minutes
2nd	M-T-TH-F	20 minutes
3rd	M-T-TH-F	30 minutes
4th	M-T-TH-F	45 minutes
5th	M-T-TH-F	45 minutes
Middle School	M-T-TH-F	1 hour 15 minutes

During times of projects for students in Grades K-8, it is expected that approximately half of the work should be completed at school.

### **Academic Integrity and Plagiarism**

All students at Grace Covenant Academy commit to honor truth and maintain academic integrity, per their signature on the GCA Honor Code. Any misrepresentation of work via copying or allowing another to copy, cheating on tests, quizzes, or assignments, use of prohibited sources, or any form of dishonesty such as misrepresenting oneself or one's circumstances for an unfair advantage will be disciplined according to a Level 4 offense.

### **GCA Intellectual Property**

All GCA generated tests, handouts, reviews, etc. shared in GCA course work are the sole intellectual property of GCA and may not be shared, copied, photographed, or replicated by any means for any reason without the sole and expressed permission of the course teacher. Any student caught sharing GCA intellectual property for any reason will incur a Level 4 consequence.

### **Field Trips**

Field trips are part of the educational process at GCA, and each K-8 class will participate in field trips throughout the school year. The teachers and staff make every effort to ensure that all trips away from school are educationally relevant, interesting to students and safe. Full participation by parents and students is essential to make these experiences profitable.

#### **Forms**

A Field Trip Registration and Permission form must be completed and signed by a parent or guardian prior to each trip. This permission form includes a release for emergency medical services. Students will not be allowed to attend if the permission form is not returned or is not complete.

#### **Chaperones**

Before any class may leave for a field trip, an appropriate number of chaperones must be confirmed. This number is determined by the type of trip, size of class, etc. and may vary for each trip. GCA reserves the right to limit the number of chaperones for each trip.

Chaperones for the field trip must have an approved Background Check on file with Grace Covenant Academy two days prior to the trip.

Chaperones transporting children besides their own must annually complete a Volunteer Driver's Certificate. In some cases, older grades may have opportunity to use GCA bus transportation. If so, each student is expected to utilize the transportation provided by the school; otherwise, parents are responsible for transportation. Parents may not bring siblings or younger children on field trips, except for newborns.

Chaperones are expected to use discretion in providing supervision to students. They are expected to follow GCA policies and bring any concerns regarding student behavior to the attention of the teacher.

### **Field Trip Fees**

Academic field trips for early education and elementary students are incorporated into the annual enrollment fee for students. However, parents/chaperones are responsible to pay for their own fees.

### **Special Circumstances**

The administration reserves the right to amend or suspend the participation in any trip or activity for any child with behavior plans when the rules, regulations, and nature of the trip objectives conflicts too vastly with the child's ability to master stated expectations. In some cases, parents may be required to chaperone their child during a field trip.

### **Portable Technology**

Since the very nature of educational experiences outside of the classroom can be greatly diminished when students are distracted by electronic devices, students may be asked to leave electronic devices at home. GCA is not liable for the loss of or damage to any devices while on a field trip.

### **School Supplies**

School supply lists will be provided to students at the individual grade level. Lists are updated on the school website annually and may change from year-to-year. Middle School will publish a school supply lists by course.

### **Recess**

Recess is scheduled for approximately 30 minutes for all Early Education and Elementary students. There are always two adults at recess, one of them being a GCA staff member. Middle school will have a 35-minute break around the lunch hour.

Wind chill, precipitation, ozone level, temperature, and wet grounds are some of the factors that will be considered regarding cancellation or shortening of recess. In the event of questionable weather, always plan for your children to be outdoors. There will be no outside recess if the temperature and/or heat index is above 100 degrees or if the temperature and/or wind chill is below 32 degrees. Teachers are to use caution on other days when the temperature or heat index is high.

## **Distance Learning Days**

In order to stay prepared for the potential of a shift to and as a way of keeping skills sharp for distance learning, we have regularly scheduled distance learning days on the school calendar. These days will be at home learning days. Each student should be prepared with technology that can access the web as well as any needed supplies. You can expect an abbreviated day that includes live teaching, recorded teaching, submission of work, and attendance taken. As there will be no students on campus during distance learning days, before and after school care, clubs and hot lunch will not occur.

## **School Hours**

Classes begin and conclude at these times:

Early Education (3s & Pre-K)	8:30 AM to 12:30 PM
Elementary (K – Grade 5)	8:30 AM to 3:00 PM
Middle School (Grades 6 – 8)	8:15 AM to 3:10 PM

Early Education and K-5 students may enter the school 20 minutes before class begins. GCA is not responsible for any students dropped off prior to the allowed times. Middle school students will be offered an Advisory period which allows them to be in the building as early as 7:50 AM.

## **Attendance**

While law mandates school attendance in Grades K - 8, punctuality and dependability are learned qualities. Regular attendance is essential to a student's success in the classroom. Parents are asked to notify the child's teacher in case of an absence.

Parents are to sign the student in at the office when they arrive after the scheduled start time. If the student was at an appointment and can supply a note from the doctor's office, an excused tardy or absence will be recorded. **Parents are strongly encouraged to schedule appointments outside of school hours.**

### **Absences (Kindergarten – Grade 8)**

If a student exceeds 18 absences (10% of school days) in the school year, the administration reserves the right to retain the student in their current grade for the coming year. The possibility of retention or dismissal is reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Students who arrive after the amount of time allocated for tardies (see below) or depart more than one hour before the end of the school day will be considered a half-day absence.

### **Tardiness and Early Departure**

Promptness is the parent's responsibility. Students are to be on time. When a student arrives late for school or leaves early it disrupts the flow of the class. A student is considered tardy if they arrive at the following times. Three tardies will constitute a half absence to be counted toward the absence limit.

Early Education students	Arrival between 8:30-9:30 AM
Elementary students	Arrival between 8:30-9:30 AM
Middle School students	Arrival between 8:15-9:15 AM

### **Perfect Attendance**

Students in the Elementary and Middle School programs who have maintained a perfect attendance record – neither absent nor tardy – for the entire school year will be recognized at the end of the year.

### **Missed School and Make-Up Work**

Early Education parents can coordinate missed schoolwork with their child’s teacher. For all elementary students, make-up work will be sent home by each classroom teacher. Middle school students are responsible for communicating with teachers concerning missed work. They can check Ren Web, Google classroom, and communicate with teachers by email. Students have the number of days absent plus one additional day to complete missed work, unless otherwise noted by the teacher. If a student returns on the day a major project or assessment, and knew about it prior to the absence, they will still be responsible for the project or assessment upon their return to school.

### **Late Homework and Incomplete Work**

Late homework and late classroom assignments (for middle school students) will result in a 5-point deduction for each day late after the assignment due date appears on RenWeb. Students will have 7 calendar days to turn in late homework or assignments for partial credit.

### **Enrichment Program**

All students in the Elementary and Middle School program participate in the Enrichment program at GCA. Enrichment courses are additional opportunities for students to learn about various subjects that cannot be easily covered by the classroom teacher. The following courses are offered to our students:

#### **Visual Art**

Students will be provided with opportunities to express their creativity while learning more about art history and culture. Students will be working with different mediums and correlating with classroom learning as much as possible.

#### **Spanish**

GCA students will gain exposure to Latin and Latin-American culture, Spanish vocabulary and verb/sentence structure. They will also be given the opportunity to practice their Spanish knowledge in a variety of ways during the school year.

#### **Technology**

GCA students in the Elementary program will develop keyboarding skills and learn how to use the Microsoft Office Suite and Google Drive. They will also learn how to use technology as a tool and develop a life-long relationship with technology that will help them navigate future technological advances.

#### **STEM**

Students in Grades 3 – 8 participate in STEM, which stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. Students will integrate technology with the use of Chromebooks, tablets, circuits, coding,

robotics, computer animation, and more. Students will be given creative challenges that require cooperation and collaboration as they walk through the Scientific Method. This enrichment combines creativity, engineering, and technology to give students a hands-on approach to learning and trying new things.

### **Fine Arts**

Elementary students will learn to read music, engage with different instruments, understand the basics of stage presence, and work to complete performances. Middle school students will take on the challenge of learning instruments and learn more advanced music theory, history, and appreciation.

### **Library**

Students in all grades will have the chance to engage our school library through weekly library time for our younger grades, and library lessons taught in coordination with classroom teachers in the older grades. Students will be able to check books out of the library on a regular basis. Families will be expected to sign a Library Contract at the beginning of each school year in order for students to check books out in their name.

### **Physical Education**

All GCA Students will have regular times to move and learn how to play various sports and group games. In addition, students will learn life-long fitness skills. Physical Education is offered 3 days/week in Elementary school and 5 days/week (combined with Health) in Middle School.

#### **Elementary Students (K – Grade 5)**

Visual Art  
Technology/Keyboarding  
Physical Education  
Spanish  
Fine Arts/Music  
Library  
STEM (Grades 3 – 5 only)

#### **Middle School Students (Grades 6 – 8)**

Visual Art  
STEM  
Spanish  
Drama  
Fine Arts/Music  
Advanced Technology

6th grade students will have each of these courses taught in 6-week blocks. Students in Grades 7 – 8 will be given some choice into which 4 electives they would like to enroll in for the school year. Each enrichment will last one quarter. Physical Education/Health will be taken 5 days/week throughout the entire school year. Other courses may be added prior to the start of each school year.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Internet Use**

The use of the internet must be in support of education and academic research and consistent with the educational objectives of GCA. Students are permitted and encouraged to use the internet for investigation of specific topics being studied in school, investigation of opportunities related to community service, etc. Internet activities that are not permitted include:

1. Searching, viewing or retrieving materials that are not related to schoolwork or community service
2. Browsing or posting to social media
3. Copying or saving copyrighted material
4. Subscribing to any services or ordering of any goods
5. Sharing the student's home address, phone number or other personal information
6. Playing games or downloading any programs not approved prior by the teacher
7. Any activity that violates a school rule or a local, state or federal law.

All students in K – Grade 8 classes are required to sign and submit a Technology Contract at the beginning of the school year. Violations to these policies may result in disciplinary action and/or restrictions of technology equipment access privileges.

### **Chromebooks**

Each Grade 4 - 8 student is issued a personal Chromebook for the duration of their time at GCA. Upon graduation in eighth grade, the Chromebook is gifted to the student. Reference the specific Chromebook Policy which give information regarding usage, care, and replacement. Each student will sign a copy of the Chromebook Policy at the start of the academic year.

### **Monitoring**

GCA reserves the right to monitor and review any material on any device at any time in order for the school to determine any inappropriate use of technology resources. The staff will make a reasonable attempt to supervise student use of technology equipment, in a way that is appropriate to the students' age, circumstances of use, and classroom objectives.

### **Security**

GCA will implement security procedures on Internet access to protect against unacceptable use. Technology users are responsible for the security of their files and passwords. Sharing of any usernames or passwords to anyone, except for parents or guardians, is not permissible and may result in the loss of privileges. Technology users will be held accountable for any activity that occurs during their login session to technology equipment. Any security problems should be reported immediately to the school or administration.

### **Personal Electronic Devices**

Cell phones or personal electronic devices that can access the internet or be used for communication must be in backpacks/lockers and cannot be used during school hours (8:00-after PM car line) as well as during Extended Care times. Middle school students are allowed to have personal electronic devices during after school clubs and

intramurals. Violations of this policy will result in confiscation of the electronic device until the end of school on the following day. Only parents will be allowed to retrieve confiscated items from the school office. GCA is not responsible for loss and/or damage of personal property regardless of its value.

# CONDUCT & DISCIPLINE

## Social Objectives

1. We teach students to respect and relate to one another according to the principles of Jesus Christ.
2. We cultivate respect for those in authority in the home, school, and community, as outlined in scripture.
3. We provide students with opportunities for growth in social skills as they engage and interact with one another.
4. We teach and model decision making, problem solving, and conflict resolution.
5. We set age-appropriate standards of responsibility and independence, preparing each student for success in their future.

## Behavior

In order for learning to take place in a classroom, it is necessary for control and good order to be maintained. We expect students to adhere to a code of conduct, not only for their own benefit, but for the benefit of others as well. Our aim is to focus not only on the negative, but to acknowledge and encourage positive behavior as well.

Each classroom teacher will handle the discipline of the students under his/her care. This includes counseling, praying with students, warning those regarding unacceptable actions and attitudes, etc. Each teacher will use the following guide in handling student discipline in the classroom, which could include being removed from the classroom and sent to the office.

### Discipline Plan

The following is a plan for how teachers and staff will handle discipline as the need arises:

- |                |  |
|----------------|--|
| <b>Level 1</b> | <b>Issue:</b> Student does not meet the GCA Behavior Expectation<br><b>Consequence:</b> Verbal warning and redirection   |
| <b>Level 2</b> | <b>Issue:</b> Student continues to not meet the GCA Behavior Expectation<br><b>Consequence:</b> One-on-one conference with teacher and warning of loss of privilege if behavior continues  |
| <b>Level 3</b> | <b>Issue:</b> Repeated Level 2 offense OR disrespectful, aggressive, or intentional misbehavior<br><b>Consequence:</b> Loss of privilege and note sent home from teacher   |
| <b>Level 4</b> | <b>Issue:</b> Repeated Level 3 offense OR stealing, fighting, or other severe forms of aggression such as bullying<br><b>Consequence:</b> Sent to the Head of School's office with any of the following results:<br>Parent conference<br>Remediation Plan<br>Detention<br>In-School Suspension (ISS)<br>Out-of-School Suspension (OSS) |

## Expulsion

Parents will always be informed if a student is sent or invited to the Head of School's office.

We fully recognize the right of every parent in biblical methods of discipline. We support and work in cooperation with parents who place their children in our program. God gives children to parents, not to a school, church, or state. Therefore, when all forms of discipline patiently administered fail to result in an acceptable outcome, we will call the parent and ask them to come to the Academy within one hour to remove their student. GCA does not administer corporal punishment.

No financial reimbursements will be made for days of suspension. Students serving Out-of-School Suspension will be considered absent. Any work missed while on suspension will be graded on a reduced grading scale. Expulsion may be the result of an extreme offense, or a habitually repeated one, as deemed necessary by the administration.

### **Warrior Award**

Every month a character trait is highlighted in Elementary students that is exemplary of Christian behavior. A Warrior Award can be awarded by any GCA staff member to the student who is showcasing these traits. Students are honored and presented their Warrior Award during the monthly GCA On Mission chapel. These character traits include respect, responsibility, generosity, humility, kindness, diligence, compassion, honesty, service, self-control and love.

### **Weapons**

Weapons of any kind found in a student's possession that could cause harm to anyone will result in immediate suspension or expulsion. Depending on the severity of the circumstance, the police may become involved.

### **Discrimination, Harassment & Bullying**

GCA is committed to providing an environment that is conducive to learning, free from improper and illegal discrimination and harassment, particularly that which is based on race, religion, gender, ethnicity, national origin, disability, or any other legally protected classification. GCA is also committed to promoting the worth and dignity of all individuals.

Discrimination involves intentionally treating anyone in an unequal or disparate manner because of that person's inherent or natural personal characteristics when such treatment causes the victim to suffer adverse educational or other school-related consequences.

Harassment is any unwelcome offensive verbal, nonverbal or physical conduct that is sufficiently severe, persistent or pervasive as to significantly affect the conditions of a student's learning. Harassment includes but is not limited to the following: abusive jokes, insults, slurs, name-calling, threats, bullying or intimidation, unwelcome sexual advances, or the exchange of benefits for performance of sexual or other favors.

Behavior such as intimidation, harassment or bullying is viewed as a violation of the GCA Behavior Expectation. GCA defines bullying behavior as a pattern of picking on, teasing, threatening, or hurting someone physically or

verbally in front of people or when no one is looking. As a Christian school, intimidation, harassment, or bullying behavior will be addressed by reaching the heart of the student(s) involved through redemptive discipline. GCA proactively works to instill Christ-like attitudes and behaviors which acts as a deterrent to behaviors such as bullying.

### **Cyberbullying**

Students who communicate inappropriate, demeaning, harassing or threatening messages will be subject to disciplinary action and could end in suspension or expulsion. The police may also be contacted when/if necessary.

## **HOME-SCHOOL CONNECTION**

### **Parent Involvement**

We believe that parents play a vital role in the education of their children, and students are much more likely to reach their full potential when parents are involved. GCA asks that parents embrace the opportunity to volunteer as much as possible throughout the year to increase parent involvement and strengthen a sense of community. We offer many opportunities for parent partnership and volunteerism in a variety of areas including, but not limited to classroom and office volunteers, various teams and community service.

### **Parent Action Team**

The Parent Action Team (PAT) is a volunteer based, non-profit organization whose purpose is to enrich the school community by supporting and partnering with GCA staff. The PAT works under the leadership of GCA administration and commits to honoring the mission and vision of GCA while building community through parent/staff relationships and supporting school wide events.

All parents are invited to be a part of the PAT. Participation can be on a volunteer basis per event or recurring role. The PAT consists of event teams, staff appreciation teams, room parent teams and classroom care teams. For more information on the governance of the Parent Action Team please see the PAT handbook.

### **Parent/Teacher Conferences**

All Early Education students will be offered a Parent/Teacher Conference in January of each school year. For Elementary and Middle School students, a mandatory parent/teacher conference occurs after first quarter for Elementary and Middle School students. Either at the end of the 2nd quarter or beginning of the 3rd quarter another scheduled parent/teacher conference is offered. Parent/teacher conferences are also scheduled on an informal basis throughout the year. Conferences may be requested at any time by a parent or the teacher.

### **Communication**

GCA desires greatly to keep an open line of communication between parents and staff. At GCA, parents can expect communication from the school regarding your child, special events, and other school information in a variety of ways.

#### **E-Mail**

E-mail is the primary means of school communication and will be used for all regular information, such as the Weekly Warrior, notes from the Head of School, etc. Please do not click on "unsubscribe" for any emails or you will be opted-out of receiving important communications from GCA.

Because GCA staff are busy working with students throughout the day, immediate responses should not be expected from teachers. However, parents should receive a response within 24 hours during the workweek.

**School Website**

The school website provides information about the school, including a calendar of school events. Students' grades, attendance and conduct records can be accessed on ParentsWeb.

**Social Media**

GCA utilizes both Facebook (Grace Covenant Academy) and Instagram (gracecovenantacademy and gca\_preK) to communicate with families and share the activities of the school. This is where families can see recaps of past events, get a heads-up on activities, or find out about school closings.

**Phone/Text Alerts**

Phone calls and text alerts will be used only for emergency situations. These will include but are not limited to school closings, evacuations or other emergencies. All parents should accept calls/texts from this system so as to not miss any urgent notifications.

GCA requires approval from administration prior to the dissemination of information to students or families. No items can be put in teachers' boxes for distribution to students or families without the approval of administration. Informational papers for a particular business or personal service will not be approved for distribution.

**Written Communication**

In the Early Education and Elementary programs, information about your child's progress, special events and after school activities, along with classroom notes may be sent home in written form in your child's backpack.

**Social Media**

We recognize the connections that happen between parents through social media can be valuable, and therefore do not either encourage or discourage the use of social media to connect with others. However, all GCA students and parents are expected to behave in an honorable and respectful way in regard to their communication with others regarding the programs, staff, or students of GCA. Parents who are found using social media to communicate negatively about GCA or its constituents in any way, will be considered for dismissal from GCA.

## **DRESS CODE**

The GCA dress code is established to encourage high Christian standards in our school and for our students. GCA, through its dress code, seeks to encourage its students to think and act in a God-honoring manner.

All students (EE – Grade 8) will wear GCA uniforms Monday – Thursday and at all school-sponsored, special events. All attire must comply to the following guidelines (see below for specific uniform options).

### **Uniform Days**

1. Only shirts from the vendor selected by GCA are to be purchased (find links on GCA website).
2. Tops must completely cover the midriff even when arms are raised.
3. All garments must be modest, neat and clean.
4. Jeans, or any other denim article of clothing, should be free from rips and tears, either above or below the knee.
5. Camouflage and athletic pants of any color are not uniform attire.
6. Pants are to be worn at the waist.
7. Skirt, skort, and short length must be no more than 5 inches above the knee.
8. All layered clothing (shirts and leggings) should be red, white, or navy blue; however the outer garment must be uniform attire (shirt, sweatshirt, jumper, or jacket) while inside the building.
9. Hats are not permitted to be worn indoors during school hours, except on appropriate school spirit days.

### **Casual Days**

1. Leggings are appropriate for girls on Fridays and Casual Days when worn with shirts/dresses that are no more than 5" above the knee.
2. On Fridays, GCA on Mission days, and Casual Days, uniform shirts are not required and pants do not have to fall within the GCA color guidelines.
3. Athletic shorts, no shorter than 5" above the knee, are permitted on Fridays and Casual Days.
4. Graphic printed shirts should be honorable and be representative of the character expected of GCA students.
5. Jeans, or any other denim article of clothing, should be free from rips and tears, either above or below the knee.

### **Early Education (3s – PreK)**

In addition to the above policy, students may wear any combination of the following:

#### **Girls**

Girls may wear solid navy, khaki, or blue denim pants (leggings are acceptable), jumpers, skirts, skorts, capris, and shorts (shorts should be worn with jumpers and skirts so that girls may sit comfortably and decently on the floor). The plaid items identified on Lands' End and FlynnO'Hara as GCA approved

#### **Boys**

Boys may wear solid navy, khaki or blue denim pants or shorts.

## **Shoes**

Students should wear comfortable shoes for running. Sandals may be worn but must have a heel strap.

## **Elementary & Middle School (K – Grade 8)**

In addition to the above policy, students may wear any combination of the following:

### **Girls**

Girls may wear solid navy, khaki, or blue denim pants, jumpers, skirts, skorts, capris, and shorts. Shorts should be worn with jumpers and skirts so that girls may sit comfortably and decently on the floor. Leggings and jeggings are not considered appropriate attire as the outer garment for K-5 girls. Leggings in red, navy blue and white may be worn as a layering item under skirts and dresses. The plaid items identified on Lands' End and FlynnO'Hara as GCA approved are appropriate for girls.

### **Boys**

Boys may wear solid navy, khaki or blue denim pants or shorts.

### **Shoes**

Comfortable shoes are encouraged. Sandals may be worn but must have a heel strap.

The administration will have the final decision concerning any questionable appearance presented by a student at any time. Parents will always be notified if any student arrives at school and is not found to be in compliance with the GCA dress code. Students will be given one of the following choices:

1. Wait in the school office until clothes that are in alignment with GCA dress code can be brought to school by a parent or guardian. Any missed class time will have to be made up.
2. Change into gym clothes (middle school only).
3. Select clothes from the emergency school uniform bin. Students will wear these for the day, then return clean within 2 days.

## **Dressing for Weather**

Parents should ensure the student is dressed appropriately for the weather, especially students who have regularly schedule outdoor recess.

## ENROLLMENT & TUITION

### Admissions Requirements

GCA provides excellent educational learning environment by hiring caring, committed Christians who are spiritually and academically qualified to provide an education with a Christian perspective, along with a passion for students. GCA recognizes that it cannot meet the needs of all students and is not equipped to meet certain special needs of students, so we do not admit students whose special education, behavioral, or physical needs cannot be met by our existing program, services, or staff. In the best interest of the student and their classmates, we reserve the right to dismiss a student if they are unable to continue successfully.

Grace Covenant Church and Academy are committed to ministering in relevant ways to both our congregation and our community however administration reserves the right to refuse admission to the Academy to anyone not meeting the following:

1. The student and parents must want to be a part of the GCA community and abide by the standards set forth in this handbook.
2. Students and parents agree with and support the values and biblical truths taught at GCA.
3. After reading this handbook and all forms for enrollment, the parents must agree to abide by and support the educational philosophy, biblical doctrines, practices, standards, policies, rules, regulations, etc. of the Academy.
4. All GCA PreK, Elementary and Middle School students must successfully complete the academic testing and assessment as required by GCA.
5. All students must be able to consistently and independently use the restroom (see Potty Training Policy).
6. Prior school records must document successful completion of requirements for each preceding grade/school year.
7. At the time of enrollment, parents shall provide all relevant documents concerning custody or visitation of each student enrolled at GCA. Parents of enrolled students shall have an ongoing duty to provide any documents and information relevant to a change in current custody or visitation rights to GCA within seven days of change or at the time of reenrollment if the school has dismissed for summer break.
8. GCA is a religious institution providing an education in a distinctly Christian environment, and it believes that its biblical role is to work in conjunction with the home to mold students to be Christ-like. On those occasions in which the atmosphere or conduct within a particular home is counter to or in opposition to the biblical lifestyle the school teaches, the school reserves the right, within its sole discretion, to refuse admission of an applicant or to discontinue enrollment of a student. This includes, but is not necessarily limited to: living in, condoning, or supporting sexual immorality; practicing homosexual lifestyle or alternative gender identity; promoting such practices; or otherwise having the inability to support the moral and biblical principles of the school (Leviticus 20:13a, Romans 1:27, Matthew 19:4-6).
9. Students must have reached the minimum age for their class by August 31. Exceptions for birthdays through the first week of September may be granted by GCA Administration based upon the student successfully completing the GCA entrance assessment and observations of the student.
10. GCA may grant provisional enrollment to students that are behind in grade level progress, have had significant behavior or discipline issues in the past or at previous schools, or in any other instance where

it is deemed necessary by GCA administration. GCA administration and parents will set mutually agreed upon terms before the child can begin school.

Students are considered registered when the online enrollment packet is submitted, all applicable fees are paid in full, and all steps of the enrollment process are completed.

### **Protected Enrollment**

Current GCA families receive priority enrollment for the following year. Annually, families will be given the month of January to re-enroll their children into appropriate classes for the following year. After January 31, Open Enrollment begins and any new applying families may begin to fill any available seats in our classes.

### **Tuition & Enrollment Fees**

	<b>Tuition</b>	<b>Enrollment Fee</b>
3yr Olds	\$2550	\$100
3-day PreK	\$2550	\$100
4-day PreK	\$3200	\$100
5-day PreK	\$3850	\$100
Elementary (K - Grade 5)	\$7750	\$350
Middle School (Grades 6 – 8)	\$7750	\$350

Tuition rates are based on payments over 10 months. The Enrollment Fee is nonrefundable and is assessed per student.

\*Technology Resource Fee due by first day of school, charged to RenWeb as follows:

Grades 4 – 5 \$50/year

Grades 6 – 8 \$100/year

### **Tuition Discounts**

Grace Covenant Academy offers discounts in tuition for the following individuals:

#### **Grace Covenant Church Partners**

Grace Covenant Church partners receive a discount of \$250. This applies to official church partners as determined by church records. Official partnership is obtained through participation in a GCC Partnership class and completion of all required forms.

#### **Senior Pastor**

GCA chooses to honor senior pastors of area churches by offering a 50% tuition discount.

#### **Multiple Siblings**

For families with more than one student enrolled at GCA a multi sibling discount will be extended. The second enrolled sibling will be given a 3% discount, third or more students will receive a 5% discount.

## Payment Options

There are multiple options for paying the tuition.

### Annual

A single payment through FACTS account is made to the Academy for the entire year's tuition. A 2% tuition discount is given for annual payment. The annual payment deadline is June 20, 2021. Failure to make tuition payment arrangements will force forfeiture of the student(s) spots.

### Semi-Annual

Families will be required to utilize FACTS in order to make two semi-annual payments. If this option is chosen, half is due in June, and the remainder will be drafted in October. Families will incur a yearly FACTS administrative fee in order for funds to be drafted from the bank account.

### Monthly

The monthly payment plan allows budgeting for school tuition over ten months as follows and are due on the first of each month:

#### Due Date

Payment #1	May (after enrollment is complete)
Payments #2 - 7	July – December
Payments #8 - 10	February – April

The January tuition draft will be skipped so families may pay for the following year's registration payment during that month. If the December FACTS draft was not successful, tuition will be due in January, and this case would be an exception to the policy.

By choosing a monthly payment plan, FACTS is authorized to draft a checking or savings account on either the 5th or 20th of each month. At no time does GCA or FACTS have knowledge of a bank account balance. The FACTS contract should be completed on-line using [FACTSTuitionMgt.com](http://FACTSTuitionMgt.com). Families will incur a yearly FACTS administrative fee in order for funds to be drafted from the bank account.

Special Note About Credit Cards: FACTS has elected to make credit and debit card payment options available for enrollment via telephone. If you elect to pay by credit or debit card your annual, semi-annual, or monthly payment a convenience fee will be automatically charged to the card you designate. The convenience fee is in addition to any non-refundable enrollment fee or FACTS charges.

### Missed Tuition Payments

If checks written to GCA are returned with insufficient funds, a \$30 returned check fee will be charged to the student's family. An invoice will be sent from Grace Covenant Academy requesting payment.

FACTS will charge a \$30 Non-Sufficient Fund fee (NSF) for each tuition payment or reattempt of a missed tuition payment. FACTS will reattempt collection for missed payments and NSF fees on the next scheduled payment date (either the 5th or the 20th). If two consecutive payments to FACTS are missed, the account becomes delinquent and parents will be contacted by the accounting department.

## **Delinquent Accounts**

GCA is dependent upon the prompt payment of student accounts for its operating finances. It is very important that all families keep accounts current. If an account becomes delinquent, FACTS will notify parents via email. If an account remains delinquent more than 60 days after notification, the student(s) will not be allowed to return to classes until the account is made current or a plan has been worked out with administration. Accounts that become delinquent after three subsequent withdrawals from FACTS are subject to a late fee of 10% per month in addition to any other penalties applied by GCA administration. Days missed will be counted as absences. A student's records will be withheld until the account is paid or arrangements made. An evaluation of the financial situation will be done prior to the student's re-enrollment. A student with an outstanding balance will not be allowed to re-enroll and records will not be released.

Beyond tuition fees, all other fees are charged to the family RenWeb account. Potential fees include: library book replacement fee (\$5 per book), replacement of textbook or other school materials (varies), GCA lunch option fees (\$5 per lunch), extended care fees (varies) and other miscellaneous fees as incurred by the student. All outstanding fees left unpaid by the end of the year will result in the office holding final report cards and school records until the balance is cleared.

## **Tuition Refunds**

By signing the Parent Enrollment Agreement, parents agree that the Enrollment Fee is non-refundable. If parents choose to withdraw their student, their decision must be presented in writing including the withdrawal date.

## **Financial Penalty**

Withdrawal Date before April 1	Non-refundable registration fee
Withdrawal Date after April 1	Non-refundable registration + 10% annual tuition
Withdrawal Date on or after Day 1	Non-refundable registration + tuition for days attended + half of remaining days

An exception will be made for students who move their residence to a location outside of the school area and a distance greater than or equal to 50 miles from the school. In case of relocation, the financial penalty may be waived; however, the registration fee remains non-refundable. The financial agreement should be entered into as seriously as any other legally binding agreement executed in good faith. The financial health of GCA depends on the commitment of parents to uphold the contract.

## **Scholarships**

Grace Covenant Academy offers financial assistance for families who qualify based on financial need as determined by an outside service (FACTS Grant & Aid Assessment). The financial aid application process requires detailed financial information, including a copy of the most recent tax documents. Financial assistance applications are to be completed online by the specified deadline. Families who have completed the application will be interviewed by members of the Financial Aid Committee. Financial assistance is based on financial need and is awarded to students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin. Scholarship recipients and their families

are expected to adhere to school and classroom rules. The administration reserves the right to suspend remaining awards should a student fail to follow stated guidelines and expectations.

Residents of Mecklenburg County seeking scholarship dollars can apply to: [www.csfcharlotte.org](http://www.csfcharlotte.org). Please check their website periodically for specific release dates.

### **Tax Reporting**

The Tax ID for Grace Covenant Academy is 56-1217531.

## **HEALTH & SAFETY**

### **Medical Emergency**

In the event of an emergency, 911 will be called. If necessary, students will be transported to the hospital/emergency room designated on their medical permission form. Parents or a designated emergency contact will be called immediately and informed of any emergency situation. Designated emergency contacts are essential in case a parent/guardian cannot be contacted.

### **First Aid**

GCA faculty and staff are all certified in First Aid and CPR. GCA is only quipped to administer simple first aid (bandaids, ice, etc) except in the case of an emergency. When a student becomes ill or sustains an injury, the student will be taken to the school office, where an assessment of the situation will be completed. If it is necessary for the student to go home, a parent or emergency contact will be called. The parent or designated person must come to the school office to sign the student out. Students must be picked up within 45 min, after which families will be charged \$1/minute to their RenWeb account.

### **Communicable Diseases**

Parents are expected to contact the office if their student has contracted a communicable disease or virus so we can monitor this for the welfare of our other students. We appreciate full cooperation in an effort to provide the safest learning environment possible. Every effort will be made to protect the student's identity if they are diagnosed with a communicable disease. The administration reserves the right to contact a parent and send a child home based on the child's symptoms. Please see our complete list of communicable diseases

GCA requires that students with the following conditions be kept at home:

#### **Chicken Pox**

Keep students home until all lesions are crusted over (about 4-6 days after rash appears).

#### **Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)**

Keep students home; may return 24 hours after medication has begun.

#### **COVID**

Symptoms of COVID include but are not limited to the following: cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, fever or chills, muscle or body aches, stomach pain, vomiting or diarrhea, and loss of taste and smell. If your child exhibits any of these symptoms they should stay home until cleared by a health professional or symptom free for three days. Please see the separate COVID policy for current information.

#### **Fever**

Students who have experienced fever within the last 24 hours must be kept at home. A fever is considered a body temperature of 100.4 degrees or more. Please see COVID policy for fevers related to the COVID virus.

**Fifth Disease**

Students may return as physician directs or when fever has subsided.

**Head Lice**

Keep students home until treated and head inspection by staff or documentation provided by pediatrician and/or pharmacist confirm that live nits (eggs) are no longer present. Parents are to notify the school if their student has lice. At that time, a notice will be sent home to all families explaining possible exposure to head lice. Having head lice is not an issue of poor hygiene, as they prefer clean hair. Nonetheless, every effort will be made to maintain the confidentiality of the infected student. Should a classroom outbreak occur, additional steps will be made to limit the spread of infection. This includes but is not limited to head checks, quarantining book bags, removing carpets, etc.

**Hepatitis A & B**

Keep students home until a physician's note is turned in which designates a return date.

**Influenza**

Students should remain home until symptoms are gone.

**Impetigo**

Students may return 24 hours after treatment is begun and no drainage present.

**Measles/Mumps**

Students are to remain home until the date noted on the physician's note.

**Mononucleosis**

Student should be kept at home as the physician directs.

**Pin Worms**

Students should be kept at home; may return 24 hours after medication has begun.

**Ringworm**

Students should be kept at home until treatment has begun and a note from physician or parent clears the student to return to school.

**Scabies**

Students should remain at home until student and household contacts have been treated, and note from physician should be provided, indicating a return date.

**Strep Throat**

Students may return to school 24 hours after medication is begun if no fever is present.

## **Vomiting/Diarrhea**

Please see COVID policy. Students must be kept home until they have been diarrhea/vomit free for 24 hours.

## **Medication**

We strongly encourage that, whenever possible, the timing of taking medications be scheduled so that they can be taken at home. Only when no other arrangements can be made will it be acceptable for them to be taken at school. If it is necessary for your student to be given a medication at school, the following requirements must be met:

1. Written request by physician and parents for prescription medications; or/and a written request by parent/guardian for all non-prescription medications.
2. All medications that belong to the student must be in an adult's possession while the student is at school.
3. Any prescribed medication that needs to be administered during the day must be in the original container from the pharmacy.
4. The student's Student Medical Form must be completed on RenWeb authorizing GCA staff to administer medications. No medications will be given without completion of one of the above form.

## **Self-Medication (Middle School Only)**

Learning to care for one's health and wellbeing is an important developmental milestone for all students. Parents should be informed that students who are approved to self-carry medications while at school and during school sponsored activities are independent in the management of their medication with no oversight from school staff. For a student to self-carry a medication, the following requirements must be met annually:

1. The student's parent/guardian must submit a Self-Medication of Over-the-Counter Medications form each year to the school office for any middle school student wishing to self-administer any over-the-counter medication.
2. The form must state student's need for over-the-counter medication will be required to sign a Self-Medication Student Agreement form acknowledging their role in self-carrying as well as a commitment to communicate to school staff when he/she is having trouble or adverse reactions. The student will agree to keep their medication secure.

## **Anaphylaxis & Inhalers**

Anaphylaxis is a severe, life-threatening allergic reaction. The school recognizes the importance of staff responsible for child/children at risk of anaphylaxis undertaking training that includes preventative measure to minimize the risk of an anaphylactic reaction, recognition of the signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis and emergency treatment, including administration of an EpiPen.

Staff and parents/guardians need to be made aware that it is not possible to achieve a completely allergen-free environment at GCA. Grace Covenant Church is open to the community and we cannot control allergens that are used on property. Staff and parents should not have a false sense of security that an allergy has been or can be

eliminated from the environment. Instead GCA recognizes the need to adopt procedures and risk minimization strategies to reduce the risk of a child having an anaphylactic reaction.

Grace Covenant Academy believes that the safety and well-being of children who are at risk of anaphylaxis is a whole community responsibility. The school is committed to:

1. Providing a practical, safe and healthy environment.
2. Raising awareness about allergies and anaphylaxis among the school faculty and staff.
3. Ensuring each staff member has adequate knowledge of allergies, anaphylaxis and emergency procedures.
4. Facilitating communication between all staff and affected students to ensure the well-being of children at risk for anaphylaxis.

### **Treatment**

Treatment is centered on treating the rapidly progressing effects of histamine release in the body with epinephrine. The allergen should also be removed immediately. GCA has EpiPens on site so that they can be administered in the event of unsuspected anaphylaxis. Students with a known allergy are required to have an EpiPen available for use.

In the event that an EpiPen is used, 911 will be called and the child will be transported to the nearest emergency room.

### **Carrying an EpiPen & Prescription Inhaler**

In order for any GCA students to carry an EpiPen or Inhaler throughout the day, the following requirements must be met:

1. The school receives an annual written authorization from the student's parent for the student to self-carry and self-administer (inhaler only) (EpiPen / Inhaler Administration Form).
2. The parent has not requested that school personnel administer the student's inhaler.
3. The inhaler / EpiPen is properly labeled for that student.
4. The school administration has assessed the student's knowledge and skills to safely possess and use (inhaler only) their EpiPen / Inhaler in a school setting and has entered a plan to implement safe possession and use of the EpiPen / inhaler into the student's permanent file.

### **Personal Hygiene and Toileting**

All students enrolled at GCA must be potty-trained and completely independent in their toileting practice before attending school. We do not have the facilities or supplies required to change children in these classrooms, and it is our obligation as a school to provide privacy for all students. This means that GCA staff members may assist when necessary but will not directly engage with students in order to protect all concerned (GCA staff and students).

Students who are enrolled at GCA must:

No longer wear diapers (disposable or cloth) or disposable underwear (pull-ups)

Be able to tell the teacher when they need to go to the restroom  
Be able to attend to their own hygiene

While we realize that accidents may happen, they are defined as unusual incidents and not ongoing occurrences in the classroom. Recognizing that some students may have medical issues requiring personal toileting assistance, GCA is not equipped to engage in a hands-on manner with individual students. Any students requiring special assistance in this area must communicate with the school office prior to enrollment, which could impact enrollment decisions and/or placement.

### **Potty Training**

If your student is not completely potty-trained as described above by the first day of school, families may choose one of the following options:

1. Withdraw your student from school and place their name at the top of our wait list. Registration fees will not be refunded. However, if your student is placed in a class at a later date, families will not need to pay additional fees. Families will cease paying tuition but not be reimbursed for completed days of school.
2. Continue to pay tuition to hold your student's spot until potty-training has been completed.

### **Toileting Accidents**

If a toileting accident occurs, the parent will be called. The parent must respond by coming to school if there is no change of clothing available or if the student is unable to clean up, redress themselves independently and return to class.

If regular toileting accidents happen and there are not any other medical concerns, parents will have the opportunity to work with GCA staff to develop a plan that will help the student in their independence. This could include but not be limited to keeping the child at home for 1 week to retrain toileting expectations. Regular is defined as 3 or more accidents in a week, primarily after the first 2-3 weeks of school. This process may be repeated up to 2 times before discussion begins regarding enrollment of class placement. In this circumstance, the school reserves the right to proceed with one of the following options:

1. Disenroll the student from the classroom for the remainder of the school year. Families will cease paying tuition but not be reimbursed for completed days of school.
2. Put student on a customized plan, which could end in re-engagement in the classroom or disenrollment. Parents will continue to pay tuition to hold their child's spot, whether or not the student remains in class.

### **Safety Drills & Emergencies**

GCA students and staff practice tornado, fire and lockdown drills to prepare in the event of an emergency. Instructions for evacuation of the building are posted in each classroom. In the event of an actual emergency, families will be notified immediately.

### **Tornado Drills**

Tornado drills are held throughout the year. A weather alert system is in place and students will be relocated to an interior location if bad weather is predicted.

### **Fire Drills**

Grace Covenant Church has a complete alarm system. Fire drills are held monthly on different days and at various times of day. Students are given instructions on how and where to exit the buildings. An evacuation diagram is located in each classroom.

### **Lockdown Drills**

Lockdown drills are conducted throughout the year in an effort to keep our students safe in the case of an intruder. During a lockdown drill, students and staff will remain in their safe position until an administrator physically comes to each classroom indicating students may return to their normal schedule.

### **Duke Emergency Evacuation**

Because of the location of GCA to the Duke Power Plant, we are required to be prepared for an Duke Power Emergency Evacuation. In case of an emergency at Duke Power Plant which requires a school evacuation, students will be taken by GCA faculty or staff members to Northwest Cabarrus High School located at 5140 NW Cabarrus Dr, Concord, NC 28027. For specific evacuation plans, see the Duke Emergency Evacuation plan.

### **Asbestos Compliance**

The Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA) requires that all public and non-public schools be inspected by a certified inspector verifying that the building is asbestos-free. AHERA excludes schools from the inspection requirement if A) the school was constructed after October 12, 1988, and B) the school has a signed statement from the architect or project engineer responsible for constructing the Grace Covenant Church building that states that no asbestos-containing materials were specified for use in its construction. Our school has been provided such a statement, and is, therefore, exempt from the requirement to conduct an asbestos inspection. In addition, the management plan is available for review and copies may be requested through the Academy office.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **Policies & Regulations**

The following policies and regulations have been designed to assist the administration, faculty and staff, students, and parents in working together in the educational processes of GCA. Undoubtedly, there will be extenuating circumstances to almost every policy in this handbook.

### **School Brand & Logos**

Approval must be obtained through the school office prior to use of any logo. Anyone interested in creating a design using the GCA brand must contact the school office for approval. Approval must be obtained prior to the use of the name and logos in any form.

### **Release of Records**

Grace Covenant Academy will only release student records to adults listed in the student file. Any pertinent restraining orders or custody papers must be presented to the school office in order for the school to release any student information to a non-custodial adult.

### **Lockers & Desks**

Student lockers and desks are the property of GCA and are, at all times, under the ownership of the school. School personnel may perform general inspections of lockers and desks at any time without notice, without student consent, and without a search warrant. Personal backpacks, lunchboxes, purses, etc. may be searched with reasonable cause and with student participation. Reasonable cause is defined but not limited to suspicion of drugs or other illegal substances, theft, or other items not allowed on property.

Students in grades 4 – 8 will be issued lockers by the school. Students must keep them neat, clean and may not use aerosol cans, store candy or food, or use tape or stickers in the locker. Food containers in lunchboxes may only be stored for that day. Lockers may not be decorated on the outside at any time, and anything inside must be morally and ethically acceptable to the administration. Only non-glue stickers or magnetic items may be used on the inside. Only combination locks (no keys) are allowed. Classroom teachers will keep the locker numbers and combination on record. Students are encouraged to use locks on their lockers particularly after school hours and on weekends. No student should ever enter another student's locker.

### **Parking & Pick-Up**

Parents are expected to bring students or pick them up in the school office. They are not to be allowed in through any exterior doors at any time. They may not be dropped off at the playground or at any other location on the school campus. These procedures are in place for the safety and security of our students. If you are coming into the school building, please park your vehicle in the parking lot and not in the car line or under the portico.

## **Car Line**

GCA offers a morning and afternoon car line for all students. Our goals during drop-off and pick-up are expediency and safety. After the first week of school, in order to foster independence, we ask that all students utilize car line in for both morning and afternoon pickup.

In order to keep all students and staff safe, please follow these simple rules:

1. Car lines are CELL PHONE FREE ZONES.
2. Do not pull out and/or drive around car lines — no passing will be allowed in car line.
3. Excessive speed is never excusable on a school campus, but especially during school hours.

Note: If you have a change in your after school pick up plan, please notify the school office in advance, and in writing, the morning of the change. Phone call requests for changes cannot be guaranteed in the last hour of the school day. Also, please be sure to call or send written notice if someone other than a parent is coming to pick up your child. Texting and other forms of social media are not acceptable methods for this important communication.

All students must be picked up no later than 15 minutes after class concludes. Parents must call the school office if a student will be picked up late. At 12:45 any remaining Early Education students will be brought to the GCA office where families will be billed at the rate of \$1 per minute until the child is picked up. At 3:20 p.m. all K-5 students who remain will be checked into the Extended Care Program with applicable fees.

If a student will be picked up early, the student must be signed out. In order to minimize class disruptions, students may not be signed out between 2:45-3:00 without prior notification. Parents must communicate with the school office when the student will be picked up before the conclusion of the school day. This will greatly aid in preparing the student to leave early. In order to maintain order and safety during afternoon car lines the office will be unable to interrupt car line from 3:00-3:15 PM to retrieve any K-5 student, 12:30-12:40 PM to retrieve a Pre-K student. The Transportation Form on RenWeb allows persons other than parents or guardians to pick-up the students from school. If someone listed on the Pick-Up Form is picking-up the student, it is requested that the school office be contacted prior to 2:45 p.m. so car line coordinators can be made aware of this change. Anyone not listed on the Pick-Up Form will be required to show identification before the student will be released to their care. If parents are divorced or separated and one parent has restricted access to a student, a certified copy of the court order of final judgment must be provided. All pickup forms and requirements can be updated online anytime via RenWeb.

## **Extended Care**

Extended Care offers a safe, fun place for our students before and after school. Morning extended care is available to all students enrolled at GCA. Afternoon extended care is available to students in Kindergarten through Grade 8. Morning care is 7:15-8:10 AM, at the rate of \$5/day per student and by reservation only. Afternoon extended care is offered from 3:15-5:45. Students that leave by 4:30 are charged \$8 per day, while those that remain until 5:45 are charged \$15 a day. Weekly and monthly rates are also available. More information regarding Extended Care can be found in the GCA office or by speaking with the Extended Care Director.

## **Lunch & Snack Program**

Lunches and snacks are parent-provided including days that pre-paid hot lunches are offered. Because good food is brain-fuel, healthy and nutritious variety of meals/snacks for the student are encouraged.

Student lunches are not refrigerated and cannot be heated. In the event a child does not have a lunch, the GCA office will attempt to contact the family. If the family cannot be reached, a GCA lunch will be provided and invoiced for the cost.

Students in Kindergarten – Grade 8 have the option to participate in the hot lunch program offered by the school. If a hot lunch is ordered and a student is absent during the lunch hour, the meal will be held in the office for pick up until 3:15 if parents request.

Lunch is an opportunity for social interaction, where community and relationships are strengthened. In order to take advantage of this social opportunity, technology should not be used for lunch at Grace Covenant Academy. In elementary classrooms, teachers may ask students to have no more than 10 minutes of “quiet time” at the beginning of the lunch period so that students can eat and then have social time.

## **Pets**

Pets are not allowed on Grace Covenant campus, except for prior permission granted by school administration for school events.

## **Weather-Related School Closings**

GCA does not follow the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School System schedules for inclement weather closings and re-openings. Please check the following listings for this information: WSOC Channel 9, website, Facebook page, and/or by email.

## **Parties & Special Deliveries**

Permission for class parties or activities, other than those scheduled on the school calendar, should be requested through the teacher. All requests for parties shall be submitted in writing at least one week prior to the event. In order to minimize distractions and to limit peer pressure concerning special occasions, parents are asked to not send gifts, floral arrangements, balloons, etc. to their children at school. If any of these types of items are brought or delivered to school, they will be kept in the school office to be picked up at the end of the day.

## **Class Celebrations**

### **Birthdays**

Parents are encouraged to participate in celebrating student birthdays in any of the following ways:

1. Join their student during lunch on their birthday.
2. Sharing of store-bought refreshments in the classroom.
3. Paint the birthday rock (after 3 pm the day before).

All birthday invitations should be mailed or e-mailed and cannot be distributed in the classroom or at school.

### **Holidays and Class Parties**

The celebration of holidays will be as distinctively Christian as possible. Class parties are planned by the room parent(s) in cooperation with the classroom teacher and should adhere to the following guidelines:

#### ***Halloween***

As a Christian school, we do not celebrate Halloween. It is our policy that no ghosts, witches, bats, goblins, black cats, etc., be made or displayed by faculty or students.

#### ***Thanksgiving***

Thanksgiving at GCA is a celebration of thankfulness. We teach gratitude on a daily basis but our goal through Thanksgiving celebrations is to celebrate the goodness of God, family, friends, and the blessings in our lives. Our students reflect on the first Thanksgiving as a historical event between Native Americans and European settlers who came together to celebrate the harvest. We strive for age-appropriate historical accuracy while maintaining a focus on the biblical themes of gathering together, working together in unity, and celebrating thankfulness. Preschool classes will have a family Thanksgiving Feast. Each elementary class will celebrate separately.

#### ***Christmas***

We will have Christmas celebrations the last day before the Christmas break. While we respect the decision of each family to celebrate Christmas as they feel best, we will avoid references to Santa Claus, Elf on the Shelf, reindeer and other cultural issues that may distract from Christ. Students will be discouraged from discussing such issues as families have differing opinions about such items.

#### ***Valentine's Day***

Cards will be exchanged as a whole class and parties will be held on February 14 or the day closest to the actual date.

#### ***Easter***

We will focus on the celebration of the Resurrection of Christ. Easter chicks, eggs, bunnies, etc., are to be left out of the holiday focusing instead on the reality of our risen Savior. We will have Easter celebrations the day prior to Spring Break.

#### ***Earth Day***

At GCA, we focus throughout the year on honoring God and being responsible with what He's given us. Protecting the environment is part of that responsibility. We do not worship a day or an event but encourage our students to learn to be good stewards by protecting God's creation, a blessing from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

## Office Hours

The school office is open during the following times:

School Year Hours      8:00 AM - 4:00 PM, Monday - Friday  
Summer Hours          8:30 AM – 3:00 PM, Tuesday - Thursday

## School Contact Information

Phone: (704) 892-5601

Fax: (704) 892-7206

E-mail: [gcaoffice@gracecovenant.org](mailto:gcaoffice@gracecovenant.org)

## Toys or Other Personal Belongings

Students may not bring any item to school that the administration considers contrary to biblical standards or harmful to the Christian testimony of the school or its students. No toys (unless teacher initiated and communicated to parent) drones, or video games may be brought to school.

## Visitors and Volunteers

GCA loves volunteers! We welcome the opportunity for volunteers to assist at GCA - in the classroom as requested by teachers, in the office, and in other ways. Our priority is always to protect the learning environment first and foremost. Volunteers can contact the office or their child's teacher to learn about volunteer opportunities. All volunteers, whether parents or otherwise, must have an approved background check on file and sign the Volunteer Handbook at GCA prior to working in the classroom or alone with any student.

Visitors and guests are welcome at GCA during appropriately scheduled times. They are expected to sign in at the school office and receive a name tag. Visitors and guests should contact the teacher/school office prior to arrival. In order to minimize disruptions, we ask parents to show consideration to teachers, students, and their instructional time by not coming for unscheduled drop-ins. Teachers have the authority to assess the classroom environment when a visitor arrives and decide if it's a good time for a visitor to come into the classroom.

## Concerns or Grievances

When a member of the Grace Covenant Academy community has a concern or issue, we abide by the following process:

### STEP 1: Pray

We know that much can be handled simply by praying. The Lord longs to hear, respond to our prayers, and give us wisdom to face our challenges.

### STEP 2: Fact Check

Many times, it is easy to jump to conclusions before we have all the facts. Take the time to make sure that your facts are accurate and double back with your child's classroom teacher or any other teacher that may be directly involved.

**STEP 3: Request Meeting**

If issues continue to be unresolved in either Step 1 or 2, request a meeting with your child's teacher and their immediate director (Early Education, Middle School, or Head of School).

**STEP 4: Request 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting**

If issues continue to be unresolved in Steps 1, 2 or 3, request a meeting with classroom teacher, EE/MS director or Head of School, and the Grace Covenant Church Administrator.

**STEP 5: Request 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting**

If issues continue to be unresolved in Steps 1 - 4, request a meeting with classroom teacher, EE/MS director or Head of School, and the Grace Covenant Church Administrator, and the Advisory Council or GCC Lead Pastor, through the Head of School.

**STEP 6: Request Church Council**

If issues continue to be unresolved in Steps 1 - 5, request a meeting for this issue to come before the Church Council. Any decision made by the Church Council is final.

We celebrate when we can come to consensus and agreement. However, there are times when an agreement cannot be reached. In this case, families are allowed to disenroll their students, and tuition refunds will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

## **MIDDLE SCHOOL**

### **Public Displays of Affection**

GCA recognizes that genuine feelings of affection may exist between two students. As our Christian character denotes, students shall refrain from all Public Displays of Affection (PDA) while at GCA or while attending and/or participating in a school-related activity.

PDA includes any physical contact that may make others in proximity uncomfortable or serve as a distraction. Examples of inappropriate PDA include but are not limited to holding hands, kissing, failure to maintain personal space between self and another student, fondling or cuddling, inappropriate touching, rubbing, or massaging, caressing, stroking, or petting, as well as excessive hugging. Inappropriate PDA will not be tolerated. Students involved in such incidents will be subject to a Level 4 disciplinary action.

### **GCA Middle School Honor Code**

To accomplish our vision and mission statements, Grace Covenant Academy teachers vow to nurture the spiritual, academic, physical, and social growth of all GCA students.

To that end, GCA Middle School Students vow to abide by the GCA Spiritual, Academic, and Social Objectives as set forth in this handbook.

At GCA, we believe a safe and nurturing environment is best achieved within an atmosphere of clear expectations and clear consequences for unacceptable behavior, tempered with grace and mercy. Our students understand personal choices produce consequences. Positive consequences evolve from honorable behavior while negative consequences evolve from dishonorable behavior. All students will be held accountable for their actions, both at GCA, as well as within their families and communities.

Attendance at Grace Covenant Academy is a privilege. Positive choices build up both individual students, as well as the entire GCA school community. Students who make poor choices or who have habitual discipline problems may be asked to leave the GCA school community.

Grace Covenant Academy has created the GCA Honor Code to implement a positive philosophy of self-discipline and cooperation within the GCA school community.

### **Behavior Incentives**

Adults in the building will distribute “warrior shields” to students when they notice positive behavior choices especially when the student goes above and beyond without being asked. These shields will be turned in for rewards of varying levels. Some of the items on the incentive cart could include candy, coupon for extra social time, or other contributions. At the end of every quarter, students with multiple demerits will not be able to participate in the Middle School Incentive Program.

### **Middle School Discipline Plan**

The following is a plan for how teachers and staff will handle discipline as the need arises:

**Level 1:** Student does not meet the GCA Behavior Expectation

**Consequence:** Verbal warning and redirection

**Level 2:** Student continues to not meet the GCA Behavior Expectation

**Consequence:** One-on-one conference with teacher, **demerit**

**Level 3:** Repeated Level 2 offense OR disrespectful, aggressive, or intentional misbehavior

**Consequence:** Loss of privilege/incentive, **demerit**

**Level 4:** Repeated Level 3 offense OR cheating, stealing, fighting, or other severe forms of aggression, such as bullying

**Consequence: Demerit**, loss of privilege/incentive, individualized lunch, fix-it plan, parent conference with director and/or Head of School, detention, ISS/OSS, expulsion. Parents will always be informed if a student is sent to the Head of School's office.