

Grace Christian School

Pontiac, IL

Faculty Handbook

2021-2022

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

Joshua 1:9

Grace Christian School

Mission Statement: The mission and purpose of Grace Christian School is to aid parents in leading children to academic, spiritual, physical, emotional, and relational truth.

Vision: The vision of Grace Christian School is to prepare students for the academic rigors of higher education and to teach them Christian character and faith to live their lives for Jesus Christ.

Core Values: The core values of Grace Christian School are to provide:

- A. A solid spiritual Biblical foundation. (Psalm 102: 25-27)
- B. Academic Excellence.(Matthew 22:37)
- C. Extra-curricular excellence. (I Corinthians 10:31)
- D. A low student to teacher ratio (Mark 4:34; Mark 9:35)
- E. Moral Instruction (Philippians 4:8)
- F. An optimal learning environment (Isaiah 11:9b)

School Day

1. Teachers will be expected to be present each school day in accordance with the school schedule and calendar.
2. The school day begins at 8:00 a.m. and ends at 3:00 p.m.
3. Teachers will begin a time of prayer each morning beginning at 7:30 a.m.
4. Teachers will be expected to attend staff meetings as required and to attend Board of Education meetings as requested.

Employment Information

Requirements for all Teachers

1. A signed contract (each year)
2. Federal & State W-4 Withholding Exemption Certificate
3. Health Examination Record and TB Test
4. Official Transcripts
5. Satisfactory background investigation & Fingerprints
6. Mandated Reporter Form for DCFS
7. Signed Statement of Faith
8. Signed Confidentiality Policy

Payroll: Each employee's salary will be split amongst twelve (12) monthly payments made on the first of each month beginning with September and ending with August.

Delta Dental/Vision: Grace Christian School will provide a dental and vision plan for all teachers choosing to participate. There is no cost to the teacher.

Teacher Absence

If a teacher finds it necessary to be absent from their duties at school, contact Jennifer Morrison (309)825 – 2053 or Tim Fairchild (309) 297-0935 to arrange for a substitute.

Sick Days: Teachers will be permitted 5 sick days per year with pay.

Personal and Professional Days: Full time teachers will be permitted three (3) personal days per school year with advanced approval. One professional day may be taken with advanced approval to attend a conference or to visit another school for professional growth and development. Any full time teacher taking a professional day may be required to submit a paper on what they learned, who they visited, etc.

Bereavement Leave: In the event of a death in a full time, regular, teacher's immediate family, an employee may be granted up to three (3) days of paid bereavement leave to handle matters related to death and grieving. If additional time is needed, the employee may request an unpaid leave of absence or utilize unused personal days. For further information, review the Teacher contract and Board Policy Manual.

General Policies and Procedures

Cell Phones: Cell phones will be a primary method of communication for teachers at GCS. In the event of a crisis, it is critical that teachers have their cell phones available for use. Teachers are expected to model responsible use of their cell phones. Cell phones should not be used in the sanctuary at any time.

Email: All teachers are provided a computer from GCS and an email account through the school. Be sure to check your email each day to see if you have received any messages from other teachers, board members, or parents.

Student Visitors: From time to time, we may have students and/or parents visiting classrooms at GCS. Extend every courtesy to these visitors while maintaining an orderly classroom.

Lesson Plans: Lesson plans are very important for effective teaching and planning to take place. Lesson plans may be turned into administration upon request.

Appearance and Dress Guidelines: (Romans 12:1; I Tim. 2:9) In order that we honor God and provide an example for students and others in the GCS family and the community, we ask that modesty, good grooming, and common sense should guide the faculty and volunteers' choice of dress.

1. Shorts during the school week are prohibited regardless of the heat index.
2. Sleeveless shirts/blouses must have "normal" armholes (not cut in or cut low) or another shirt should be worn underneath.
3. Skirts and dresses must be modest with the appropriate length.
4. Bare midriff (crop) tops must have another shirt underneath.
5. No torn, cut, fringed or frayed jeans (beyond normal wear), shorts, or shirts can be worn.
6. Clothing must fit properly, modestly and neatly.
7. No clothing, jewelry, symbols or accessories that are pagan, anti-Christian, or inappropriate to Grace Christian School are allowed.

8. Guidelines may be adjusted for field trips. Dress appropriately for the job requirements.
9. Shoes must be worn at all times. Flip-flop type shoes and sandals without a back strap are discouraged.
10. Males may not wear earrings. Females are not allowed to wear multiple earrings. No body or tongue piercing is allowed.
11. Men are encouraged to wear sport shirts with collars, and slacks that are neatly pressed and clean. T-shirts are discouraged. Casual shoes are permitted.
12. No jeans may be worn except on Casual Friday. GCS T-shirts may be worn on Casual Fridays.

Drug and Alcohol-Free Workplace: Grace Christian School is drug- and alcohol-free. All employees are prohibited from engaging in any of the following activities while on School premises or while performing work for the School:

1. Unlawful manufacture, dispensing, distribution, possession, use, or being under the influence of a controlled substance.
2. Distribution, consumption, use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol.

Any violations of this policy will result in disciplinary action, including termination. Additionally, local law enforcement officials will be notified of any illegal drug activity.

Firearms: Grace Christian is a firearm-free school. Firearms are not allowed onto the premises under any conditions. Any violations of this policy will be immediately reported to local and State law officials.

Emergency Closings: School may be canceled for reasons of extreme weather or other emergencies. Grace Christian School will most often close or delay in the mornings for inclement weather conditions in concert with Pontiac School District 429 and Pontiac Township High School District 90, but will be specifically announced for our school. Announcements of our closings will be made through a phone chain and may be made on radio stations 98.9 FM, 93.7 FM, 101.5 FM, 104.9 FM, and/or Mediacom Channel 13.

After School Supervision/Pick-up: Grace Christian School dismisses at 3:00 p.m. Unfortunately, we are unable to provide supervision for students whose rides are late, so students need to be picked up by 3:15 p.m. When parents come to pick-up their child/children, they must come into the school building in order for the student(s) to be dismissed. This is to avoid any accidents in a busy parking lot. When accompanied children are in the building after school hours, they must abide by the same rules that apply during school hours.

Release During School Hours: For safety and security reasons, a prior written or oral consent of a student's custodial parent/guardian is required before a student is released during school hours: (1) at any time before the regular dismissal time or at any time before school is otherwise officially closed, and/or (2) to any person other than a custodial parent/guardian.

Transportation: It is the responsibility of parents and guardians to arrange for the transportation of their children to and from school. Many families make car pool arrangements. If anyone other than a parent is scheduled to pick a child up, there must be a note or email sent to the school office notifying the office volunteer. Otherwise, a child may not be permitted to leave with an adult after school if notice is not given.

Lunches: Grace Christian School does not have hot lunch; students are to bring a sack lunch for the noon meal. Students should bring proper utensils. The PTO may provide lunch for students on occasion. Notice will be given to the students and parents prior to these events.

Medicine: Written authorization from both the parents and physician is required for the administration of medications by school staff. Medication authorization forms are provided in the registration documents. Upon arrival at school, the student is to give medicines and the authorization note to the office. No staff member is allowed to administer medication to any student without written authorization. This includes aspirin, Tylenol, cough drops and other over-the-counter drugs. Any medicine to be administered to a student must be provided by the parent and in its original labeled container.

Drills and Emergencies: Grace Christian School has a comprehensive Crisis Management Plan in place. Regular emergency instructions and drills will be given to all students to help them thoughtfully respond to emergencies. Drills will include Fire, Earthquake, Tornado, and Emergency drills.

Lost and Found: Any lost items will be placed in a lost-and-found box near the office, where they may be retrieved. Items not picked up will periodically be given to Goodwill.

Electronic Equipment: Students should not bring electronic equipment to school for any reason. This includes portable radios, CD players, mp3 players, iPods, iPads, and hand-held electronic games (such as PSP, Nintendo DS, Nintendo Game Boy, etc.). This applies to field trips. Cell phones may be brought to school by the upper grade students, but will be turned into their teacher or the office during the school day. The school is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged goods belonging to students.

Recess: Children are to be dressed appropriately for recess each day. Even if the weather is chilly outside, the children will be having recess outdoors as long as the weather permits. The sunshine and brisk breeze will stimulate their minds and bodies as they progress through the day. So be certain that your child is dressed to remain warm during chilly days. Children running and playing games will warm up rapidly even if the weather is a bit chilly.

Abused and Neglected Child Reporting: Any employee who suspects or receives knowledge that a student may be an abused or neglected child or, for a student aged 18 through 21, an abused or neglected individual with a disability, shall immediately: (1) report or cause a report to be made to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services on its Child Abuse Hotline 800/25-ABUSE or 217/524-2606, and (2) follow any additional directions given by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services to complete a report. The employee shall also promptly notify the School Board that a report has been made. All teachers shall sign the Acknowledgement of Mandated Reporter Status form provided by the Illinois Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) and the School Board shall ensure that the signed forms are retained.

Bullying, Intimidation, and Harassment: No person, including a School employee or agent, or student, shall harass, intimidate, or bully a student on the basis of actual or perceived: race; color; nationality; sex; ancestry; age; religion; physical or mental disability; association with a person or group with one or more of the aforementioned actual or perceived characteristics; or any other distinguishing characteristic. The School will not tolerate harassing, intimidating conduct, or bullying whether verbal, physical, or visual, that affects the

tangible benefits of education, that unreasonably interferes with a student's educational performance, or that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment.

Weapons, Drugs, Battery: A school staff member shall immediately notify the office in the event that he or she: (1) observes any person in possession of a firearm on or around school grounds; however, such action may be delayed if immediate notice would endanger students under his or her supervision, (2) observes or has reason to suspect that any person on school grounds is or was involved in a drug-related incident, or (3) observes a battery committed against any staff member. Upon receiving such a report, the office shall immediately notify the local law enforcement agency, State Police, and any involved student's parent/guardian. "School grounds" includes modes of transportation to school activities and any public way within 1000 feet of the school, as well as school property itself. In the case of a firearm, the office would also initiate a Code Red situation in which teachers would refer to their Crisis Management Plan.

Staff Internet Use Policy:

Grace Christian School is committed to the use of the Internet and electronic communications as learning resources, recognizing the great potential that telecommunications have to enhance the educational process. The Board of Education encourages the staff to make use of telecommunications to explore educational topics, conduct research, and contact others, both in the educational world and those who provide service to educators.

Communications over the network are often public in nature, therefore, general rules and standards for professional behavior and communications will apply. Non-business use of the telecommunications system (including phones and computers) must be done during an employee's non-duty time. This does not include emergency situations; but employees are responsible to make the Board of Education aware of any emergencies.

The following directives are rules which shall be followed by all employees. Failure to abide by these rules may be subject to discipline:

1. School computers and systems are owned by the school and are intended for educational purposes at all times. Staff members shall have no expectations of privacy when using the Internet or electronic communications. The IT Administrator may monitor, inspect, copy, review, and store (at any time and without prior notice) all usage of school computers and systems. All material and information accessed/received through school computers and systems shall remain the property of the school.
2. Employees may use social media or personal email during their lunch break but should not use it at other times throughout the work day. Be a responsible user of these items and model responsible use for GCS students.
3. Each employee is given a school email account. These accounts should be used only for school related items.
4. The following behaviors are not permitted on the school computers or networks:
 - Sharing confidential information on students or employees of GCS.
 - Sending or displaying offensive messages or pictures.
 - Using obscene language.
 - Drawing, coloring, attaching stickers, or any other defamation of the physical machine.
 - Harassing, insulting, or threatening persons or group of persons with regard to race, gender, national or ethnic origin.
 - Engaging in practices that threaten the network (such as loading or downloading files that may contain a virus).

- Violating copyright laws.
- Using other’s passwords to gain access to the system.
- Trespassing in others’ folders, documents, or files.
- Intentionally wasting limited resources.
- Employing the network for commercial purposes, financial gain, or fraud.
- Sending of “chain letters” or “broadcast” messages to lists of individuals which would interfere with the works of others.
- Violating regulations prescribed by the IT Administrator.

Any violation or inappropriate use will result in a report to the School Board. Violations may result in a loss of network access, and/or disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.

5. GCS employees shall at all times conduct themselves in a manner befitting their role as educators and consistent with the high level of expectations of Christian character. Employees posting anything on personal social networks are expected to operate with the highest degree of decorum and conduct themselves with the highest possible respect for the importance of serving in a Christian school.

Guide to Supplemental Use of Audio/Visual Works

- A. Educationally Produced Materials – Educationally produced materials are generally not commercially rated. The use of these materials must be age appropriate and previewed by the teacher. These Audio Visual Works must enhance or otherwise support the objectives of the subject or lesson being taught.
- B. Materials Commercially Produced by the Movie Industry

Ratings for Audio/Visual Works Commercially Produced by the Movie Industry

Movies/Videos	GCS Students (K-8)
NC17	NO
X	NO
R	NO
PG13	MAYBE ¹
PG	MAYBE ¹
G	YES ²
NO RATING	MAYBE ²

¹Age appropriate, teacher previewed, principal/board approved, and parent written approval with meaningful alternative experience offered if parents do not wish to have their child view the audio visual work. Every effort should be made to cut out vulgarity and/or other inappropriate material. Audio/visual work must enhance or otherwise support the objectives of the subject or lesson being taught.

²Age appropriate, teacher previewed. Audio/visual work must enhance or otherwise support the objectives of the subject or lesson being taught.

- C. TV Series Material

¹Age appropriate, teacher previewed, principal/board approved, and parent written approval with meaningful alternative experience offered if parents do not wish to have their child view the audio visual work. Every effort should be made to cut out vulgarity and/or other inappropriate material. Audio/visual work must enhance or otherwise support the objectives of the subject or lesson being taught.

²Age appropriate, teacher previewed. Audio/visual work must enhance or otherwise support the objectives of the subject or lesson being taught.

D. There are websites that you can go to for movie/video reviews from a Christian perspective.

pluggedin.com

crosswalk.com

Extra-Curricular Activities

Grace Christian School participates in extra-curricular sports through a cooperative agreement with St. Mary's School and Pontiac Junior High School in Pontiac, Illinois. All rules and policies of athletic eligibility of St. Mary's and Pontiac Junior High apply to student-athletes of Grace Christian School.

Academic Eligibility: A primary purpose of Grace Christian School is to provide an excellent education for all students. All participants and parents should understand that the curricular program takes priority while participating in extra-curricular sport seasons. Eligibility to participate in extra-curricular activities is determined on Thursday of each school week. Any student whose cumulative average grade falls below 73% (D+) in any subject will be considered "ineligible" for the following week of extra-curricular activities. The period of eligibility is Monday through Saturday for each week. Students who struggle with repeated instances of ineligibility may be advised to withdraw from participation in certain extra-curricular activities in order to allow more time for academic preparation. If an athlete is "ineligible", he/she may be allowed to practice and attend home games. Grades will be checked on a weekly basis, beginning with the 3rd week of a new semester.

Attendance Eligibility: All athletes are expected to be at all scheduled practices and contests. Continued unjustified unexcused absenteeism may result in dismissal from the team. If a student misses school due to illness, he/she will not be eligible to participate in the day's sports activities. If the student becomes well enough to arrive at school by 11:00 a.m. and attends the remainder of the day, he/she will be able to participate in the evening's extra-curricular activities. Exceptions to this rule include funerals, doctor's appointments, early dismissal, and prearranged absences.

Standards of Student Athletes: Grace Christian School participates in sports programs in the belief that competitive team experiences contribute significantly to the development of character, mutual support, and school spirit. Further, participation in activities outside of Grace Christian School gives our students an opportunity to impact their culture for Christ. We expect our students to represent GCS in a manner that is respectful of others on and off the field of play and brings honor to the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, sportsmanship is an important part of this training.

Concussions: A concussion is a brain injury and all brain injuries are serious. They are caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head, or by a blow to another part of the body with the force transmitted to the head. They can range from mild to severe and can disrupt the way the brain normally works. Even though most concussions are mild, all concussions are potentially serious and may result in complications including prolonged brain damage and death if not recognized and managed properly. In other words, even a "ding" or a bump on the head can be serious. You can't see a concussion and most sports concussions occur without loss of consciousness. Signs and symptoms of concussion may show up right after the injury or can take hours or days to fully appear.

If a child reports any symptoms of concussion, or if you notice the symptoms or signs of concussion yourself, seek medical attention right away. Symptoms may include one or more of the following:

- Headaches
- "Pressure in head"
- Nausea or vomiting
- Neck pain
- Loss of coordination
- Balance problems or dizziness
- Blurred, double, or fuzzy vision
- Sensitivity to light or noise
- Feeling sluggish or slowed down
- Feeling foggy or groggy

- Drowsiness
- Change in sleep patterns
- Amnesia
- “Don’t feel right”
- Fatigue or low energy
- Sadness

- Nervousness or anxiety
- Irritability
- More emotional
- Confusion
- Concentration or memory problems
- Repeating the same question/comment

Academics

Report Cards

Report cards will be given to students after each quarterly period. Progress reports may be mailed to parents of students who are on academic watch.

Grading Scale

A+	99-100	A	94-98	A-	92-93
B+	90-91	B	85-89	B-	83-84
C+	81-82	C	76-80	C-	74-75
D+	72-73	D	67-71	D-	65-66
F	64-below				

Homework

Homework is part of the GCS instructional program and has the overarching goal of increasing student achievement. Homework is assigned to further a student’s educational development and is an application or adaptation of a classroom experience. The School Board shall provide guidance to ensure that homework:

1. Is used to reinforce and apply previously covered concepts, principles, and skills;
2. Is not assigned for disciplinary purposes;
3. Serves as a communication link between the school and parents/guardians;
4. Encourages independent thought, self-direction, and self-discipline; and
5. Is of appropriate frequency and length, and does not become excessive, according to the teachers’ best professional judgment.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Teachers at Grace Christian School are always willing to answer questions and to work in a positive manner for the welfare of their students. Teachers will be available for conferences, by appointment, for all students at the end of the 1st quarter and 3rd quarter, after report cards have been distributed. These conferences are a great opportunity for the teacher, student and parent to discuss the physical, emotional, and academic development of the student. If a conference is desired at any other time, please contact the individual teacher to set up a conference time. An example of an effective Parent/Teacher conference would involve a time of prayer with the parents and covering examples of student work.

Grade Advancement

From time to time, there may be students who are capable of advancing a grade ahead of schedule at Grace Christian School. This type of move is the exception and not the norm, therefore a process will be followed before promoting any students an additional grade. Many factors must be considered before a student is promoted including age, gender, intellect, maturity, time of year, etc. The decision to promote a student is extremely important because the ramifications of an incorrect decision will not manifest until much later in the student's academic career. A committee will be formed to investigate the possibility of advancement on a case by case basis. The committee will consist of a board member, principal, parents of child, teacher of child, and the child. The process of acquiring grade advancement may be initiated by the teacher or the parents of the child. If the teacher initiates the process, they will notify the principal of their intent before notifying the parents. The process will be as follows:

- Inform committee of possibility of student advancing.
- Administer end-of-year grade level test to the student. The student must score 85% or higher in order to continue with the possibility of advancement.
- Committee will discuss results of testing as well as the possibility of enhancement of curriculum at current grade level.
- Committee must have unanimous approval in order to advance a student to a higher grade level.

Field Trips

Field trips are permissible when the experiences are a part of the school curriculum and/or contribute to the School's educational objectives. All field trips must have the approval of the Board. The Board shall analyze the following factors to determine whether to approve a field trip: educational value, student safety, parent concerns, heightened security alerts, and liability concerns. Also, please refer to the policy regarding chaperones for field trips.

When planning a field trip, please remember these key points:

1. Field trips are planned for educational purposes to meet specific course objectives.
2. Thoroughly explain your expectations for behavior of the students while on the trip. Remember they are a reflection of Grace Christian School.
3. Make sure any chaperones are aware of the guidelines for chaperoning.

Teacher Expectations

1. Classroom Management

- a. Communicate, enforce, and model proper classroom behavior.
- b. Bible verse memorization – work daily on Bible verse memorization that is appropriate for the grade and subject. Relate class material to Biblical worldview.
- c. Always supervise students. Students should always be monitored and never left alone. The only place in the school students should be by themselves, without adult supervision, is the bathroom.
- d. Use grading of daily work as a tool to help students learn from both their successes and failures.
- e. Have clear and consistent expectations for correcting work and how that will be assessed.
- f. Deal with classroom disruptions in a clear and consistent manner including parent communication when necessary.

2. **Teaching Students**

- a. Have Lessons plans prepared for topics to be taught each day for each of your subjects.
- b. Have all copies prepared and material that needs to be handed out completed at the beginning of school day.
- c. Use a variety of teaching methods to teach curriculum. Integrate an appropriate amount of technology that will reinforce/aid in student comprehension of material.
- d. Be prepared to spend time re-teaching topics that students struggle with.
- e. Know or learn each students' strengths and weaknesses academically. Challenge their strengths and aid them in their weaknesses.
- f. Keep an accurate record of students' grades to give an accurate reflection on their effort and accuracy in each subject.
- g. Memorize Bible verses. Recite every day and always relate class material to Bible verses.
- h. Return graded assessments (tests, quizzes, homework) by next school day or at most 2 days after students complete. Graded work is an important tool in the learning process.

3. **Parent Communication**

- a. Communicate with parents on a regular basis regarding the progress/behavior of their child.
- b. Use time at the end of day when parents are picking up children to communicate. Be sure to keep conversations confidential, so pull parents aside if necessary.
- c. Communicate clearly any upcoming events.

4. **General Duties**

- a. Students should not have cellphones during school day. Teachers should not be on cell phones in front of students unless communicating purpose. No cell phones in chapel.
- b. Students should treat the sanctuary of church with respect. (No running or playing)
- c. Do not take students anywhere off school grounds without prior knowledge of their parents.
- d. Make sure the classroom and building are left clean and lights and thermostats are checked.
- e. Teachers should not leave school during the day except for scheduled events. Teachers should not run errands during school time unless it is an emergency. Any time you have to leave school grounds outside contractual hours should be by administrator approval only.

5. **Personal Conduct**

- a. Be on Time
- b. Dress appropriately
- c. Attend and belong to a Church whose statement of faith is consistent with GCS.
- d. Use social media in accordance with a Christian life.
- e. Be involved in relationships that will allow you to grow your relationship with Jesus Christ.
- f. Refrain from relationships that can cause others to have a questionable image of you.