

SEPTEMBER 2024

NEWSLETTER



Welcome to Grace Christian Academy!

School Contact

13000 Zekiah Dr
Waldorf, MD 20601
(301) 645-0406
Office Hours: 7:30-4:00 M-F

Important Dates:

- 9/2 - NO SCHOOL
- 9/4 - Claire's Gourmet Fundraiser Kickoff
- 9/5 - Chik-Fil-A Lunch Begins
- 9/6 - Pizza Lunch Begins
- 9/10 - Panda Express Lunch Begins
- 9/11 - Patriotic Day
- 9/13 - HALF DAY for Students, NO AFTERCARE
- 9/17 - Claire's Gourmet Ends
- 9/17 - Middle School Back to School Night 6pm
- 9/19 - TAG Day
- 9/19 - Oct. Lunch Forms Due
- 9/20 - Mid-Quarter
- 9/24 - Elementary Back to School Night 6pm
- 9/26 - Picture Day

**Lunch Forms Found
HERE!**



Message From the Office

Dear GCA Family,

As we embark on this new school year, we are thrilled to share that the start of school has been nothing short of fantastic. Our teachers and administrators are embracing their roles with great enthusiasm, dedicated to making this the best school year yet.

Our theme this year is Steadfast which means we have a steady and unwavering course in love, allegiance, and conviction to the schools mission statement. Our theme verse for this year is 1 Corinthians 15:58: "Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain." We will remain STEADFAST, which is inspired by the calling and vision that God has given us for GCA. With His guidance, we are confident that we will remain immovable on our mission to academic excellence, as we walk in obedience to the Lord.

We want to reassure you of our unwavering commitment to the stability and excellence of Christian education here at GCA. We are genuinely excited about the opportunities this school year holds and are eager to see the incredible growth and achievements of your children.

Thank you for being an integral part of our family here at GCA. Together, let's make this year extraordinary!

In His Service,
Stacie Buhl,
Director of School

Back to School Nights!

Middle School: 9/17 at 6pm

Elementary: 9/24 at 6pm

Our Back to School Nights are coming up soon! Please mark your calendar and try your best to find childcare as we ask that these nights are **student free**. The staff is able to get through more information and there are less distractions when students are able to stay home. However, we do know this is not always attainable for some families.

This is a night where parents can hear information from the Director of School and the Director of Education as well as attend sessions with the students' teachers. During these sessions teachers will discuss specific classroom and curriculum topics.



NEW TIMES!

Preschool and Elementary

Arrival

8:15 - 8:25am

Dismissal

3:00 - 3:15pm

Middle School

Arrival

7:45 - 7:55am

Dismissal

3:15 - 3:30pm

Claire's Gourmet

amanda.reed@graceknights.org

Claire's Gourmet is back! This is one of our largest, and most delicious, fundraisers. Students will bring home all of the necessary information Wednesday, 9/4. Students can earn prizes based on the amount of items they sell. Claire's Gourmet is the perfect fundraiser for this time of year with holidays just around the corner. In the past, money from Claire's has been used to purchase playground equipment, security systems, classroom technology and more! Stay tuned for more information!

GCA Athletics

john.somerville@graceknights.org

GCA Girls Volleyball and Coed soccer has started! We are excited to cheer on our athletes during this Fall season!

Soccer

9/18: Home vs. KCA @4pm

9/25: Away vs. Riverdale

@4pm

9/27: Away vs Clinton

Grace @4pm

Volleyball

9/23: Home vs. Clinton Grace

@4pm

9/25: Home vs. Riverdale

Schedules are subject to change.



Go Knights!

School Tablets

megan.schaniel@graceknights.org

In an effort to continue offering educational best practices that are research-based, GCA has been able to purchase over 115 new tablets to be used in the classrooms! Middle School students will now be one-to-one, receiving the tablets in homeroom and returning them at the end of the school day. Security measures are being put in place on the devices but please remind your students that there will be consequences for any misuse or mistreatment of devices. Please refer to the Tablet Agreement Form for more information. They should NEVER go home! Preschool and elementary classrooms will each get 3-4 tablets to be used for learning centers. We are excited for all of the enhanced learning opportunities these devices will provide!



AR INCENTIVE PROGRAM

cindy.hornickel@graceknights.org

This year at GCA we are continuing several Accelerated Reader incentives to help motivate and encourage students along their reading journey. Each quarter student and class AR progress will be evaluated, and rewards will be given in each category.

There will be a different reward for each nine weeks grading period. Rewards are usually parties such as a popcorn and movie party, ice cream sundae party, pizza and outside play time, or a sock hop in the gym!

• **Average Points Earned**- *When a student takes an AR test, they are given a point value at the end of their quiz.*

Students will also be rewarded at the end of the year for point clubs (25, 50, 75, 100, and more points throughout the year), meeting every goal throughout the year, and more!

• **Student Growth Percentage**- *After each STAR test a student is given a growth percentage. There are 4 STAR tests in total in a year. The student that shows the most growth from one quarter to the next in each class will receive a library treasure box pass. Some goodies that they may find in the Treasure Box are: squishy stress balls, gummy bear erasers (scented), pens, pencils, backpack clips, book character erasers, and more!*

As a school, we want to create a culture of students and teachers who love to read! Throughout the year we have many fun and exciting things planned beyond our incentive program. We hope that our students' success will translate into their everyday attitudes and speech as they excel in reading this school year.

If you have questions about the AR Incentives Program, contact our Librarian, Mrs. Cindy Hornickel.

Fall MAPS Testing

michelle.goodson@graceknights.org

We will begin our Fall MAPS Growth Testing in a few weeks! Students in Kindergarten - 8th grade will take a Math test and a Reading test. Students in 3rd - 8th will also take a Science test this year! We do these tests three times a year to track how students are growing from Fall to Winter to Spring in these subjects. Results will be sent home after all testing is completed.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY



Birthday Parties

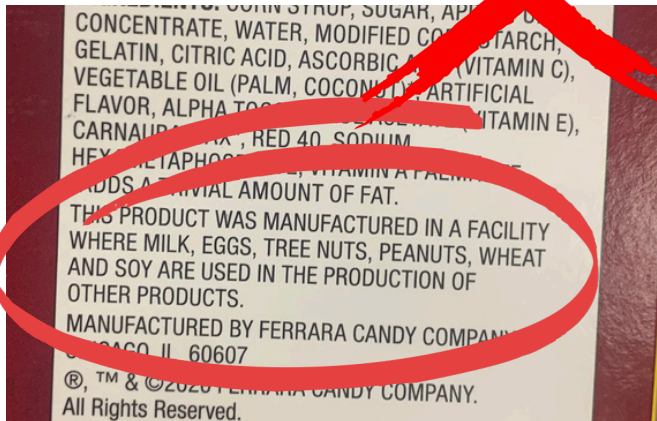
Are you wanting to celebrate your student's birthday at school?

Students are allowed to bring in a treat such as cupcakes and cookies to school. All food must be brought to the office, not given to the teacher directly or sent in with the student.

Any item sent must abide by the following:

**MUST be SEALED from a STORE
AND**

MUST have a NUT FREE Label.



- Your food will not be passed out if the label says made in a facility the produces nuts.
- **No balloons or treat bags. If brought in, these will be left in the office. The school cannot be held responsible for any times that may contain an allergen in a treat bag, nor can we search each bag that is brought in.**

WHO DO I CONTACT?

TEACHER

Questions about:

- Assignments
- Gradebook
- Classroom Management
- AR
- Your student's behavior and habits in class
- Agenda/Notebook (Grades 3 -8)
- Anything classroom specific

S.T.E.P. CENTER/TESTING MICHELLE GOODSON

Questions about:

- Learning Lab
- MAPS Testing
- Entrance Testing
- IEPs, 504s, Educational Services

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION MEGAN SCHANIEL

Questions about:

- Curriculum
- School Events
- Educational policies and procedures

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

GREGORY HARRIS

Questions about:

- School security measures
- School-wide discipline policies
- Emotional and Spiritual Support

DIRECTOR OF SCHOOL STACIE BUHL

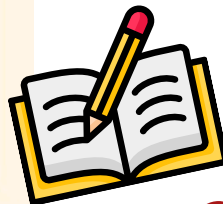
Questions about:

- School mission and vision
- School culture and values

OTHER QUESTIONS?

- Enrollment, Records, FACTS login - **Lisa Johnson**
- Tuition, Payments, Financial - **Nancy Kemmerer**
- Forms, Attendance, Pickup - **Julie Turner**
- Employment - **Nina Johnson**
- Medications, Student Illness - **Kristin Barber**
- Extended Care, Summer Camp - **Michelle Goodson**
- Athletics - **John Somerville**
- Fundraisers - **Amanda Reed**
- Parent Involvement, Homeschool - **Amanda Reed**

2024-2025 ACADEMIC SCHOOL GOAL:



*Get students
writing MORE!*

In a world of technology and seemingly everything in fast motion, pencil to paper writing, allowing students time to free-write and be creative can often fall to the wayside. As educators face the exciting benefits and potential downfalls of AI, GCA feels it is important to keep our students writing traditionally! Research shows many benefits to putting pencil to paper, including better retention of information for many learners. As a school we will continue to teach proper writing techniques and encourage proper English and superior word choices. Each student will have a writing portfolio this year where writing samples will be placed so that students, parents and teachers can see growth in students' writing skills from the beginning to the end of the year. We will continue sharing information about this endeavor throughout the year!

SCHOOL UNIFORMS

We know that many parents are waiting for uniforms to arrive in the mail or be returned to the school with the school logo. Grace will be extended the first few weeks of school. However, when you are purchasing uniform bottoms please be aware of GCA uniform guidelines. A school uniform pant has a 'welt' pocket, not a *pocket on the outside*. Girls are **not** to wear *jegging style or stretchy pants* that are khaki or navy in color. We will be enforcing our dress code soon and will send parents an email if their child is out of dress code. *This goes for all students*. Many girls are wearing stretchy material pants. *Cargo shorts* are not a school uniform bottom.

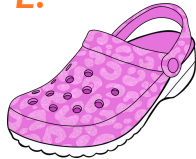
Below are pictures of approved pants/shorts. Our SCHOOL WEBSITE has more detailed information about GCA's school uniform.



Dress Code

UPDATE

*Students are now allowed to wear Crocs to school, but they **MUST** wear the backstraps at all times! They also must wear tennis shoes to PE.*



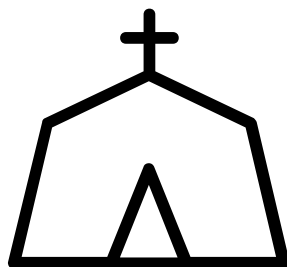
Middle School Events

dwayne.johnson@graceknights.org

*Middle School Retreat: **October 2nd-4th, 2024**, at Skycroft Conference Center in Middletown, MD*

*"Good Works" project on **October 16th, 2024** at Farming for Hunger in Hughesville, MD*

SAVE THE DATE



Program Fees

nancy.kemmerer@graceknights.org

This is a reminder for those who have not paid their program fees for the year. Please log into your FACTS account to check your balance. These fees should be paid at the start of the school year and we have quite a few families who still have balances. If you still have a balance, it is due no later than 9/13. Thank you for your attention to this matter!

Custodial Documents

lisa.johnson@graceknights.org

It is the intent of GCA to remain neutral toward families split by divorce or separation. We do not take sides with one parent against the other where there may be possible conflict over children attending our school. If you have a court decree, which established you as legal guardian, you will want to provide GCA a copy of such document for attachment to your child's permanent record. We will use this as a legal base for working with the custodial parent. In the absence of such a document, you must be aware that GCA cannot deny either parent access to his/her child. We cannot withhold information or refuse to see or work with the other parent. We cannot keep the other parent from picking up his/her child from school. GCA wants to protect all our students from emotionally upsetting situations. In order to maintain a safe and secure environment within the school, all custody disputes must be addressed outside of the school. Updated official Court/Custodial documents must be provided to the school.

If your family has custody agreements that are court documented, please provide copies to the main office to the attention to Lisa Johnson.

Click the link below for custodial documents.

Custodial Documents

Vaccines Requirements:

- 7th Grade (must be 11 yrs old to receive): Meningococcal, Tdap
- Kindergarten: Second dose of MMR & Varicella
- Pre-K3 & Pre-K4: DTaP/DTP/DT (4 Doses) Polio (3 Doses) Hib (at least 1 dose given after 10 mos of age) MMR (at least 1 dose) Varicella (at least 1 dose) Hepatitis B (3 doses) PCV (1 dose). If your child turns 5 within the school year, the second MMR dose is required within 20 days of their birthdate.
- Students who are non-compliant with vaccine requirements after the first 20 days of school are at risk for exclusion.

Medications:

New medication authorization forms are required for this school year. The front desk WILL NOT accept medications without the proper forms. There is a general form and one specifically for students with allergies/anaphylaxis and/or asthma. All forms are found in Parents Web, under the Admissions tab on our website, or at the school office.

Students will be sent home on a case by case basis for illnesses such as diarrhea, vomiting, fever, respiratory illness, etc. Students may return may return to school when, for at least 24 hours, both are true:

- **Symptoms are better overall, and Fever free (without use of fever-reducing medication).**

ILLNESSES/APPOINTMENTS, ETC.

Now that we are back to school, viruses and such will begin to make its way through the school sooner than later. Please express importance of handwashing, cough/sneeze etiquette, consuming enough water, eating a healthy diet, and getting a good nights rest to your student.

Doctor's notes can be sent to healthnotes@graceknights.org

Please be sure to inform Healthnotes as well as your student's teacher if your child is receiving a surgical or medical procedure, or have any changes to their health during the school year. This is to ensure they are properly cared for in the event complications arise.



**GRACE CHRISTIAN
ACADEMY**

**WE'RE
HIRING!**

**2ND GRADE TEACHER AIDE
AFTER CARE WORKERS
SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS**



**For more information, email Nina Johnson.
nina.johnson2@graceknights.org
Visit our website to find the application.
www.graceknights.org**



BACK TO SCHOOL IMMUNIZATION CLINIC



JUNE 4, 2024

JUNE 18, 2024

JULY 9, 2024

JULY 23, 2024

AUGUST 6, 2024

AUGUST 15, 2024

AUGUST 20, 2024

AUGUST 29, 2024

SEPTEMBER 3, 2024

SEPTEMBER 12, 2024

SEPTEMBER 17, 2024

SEPTEMBER 26, 2024

OCTOBER 1, 2024

OCTOBER 10, 2024

OCTOBER 15, 2024



**PLEASE CALL 301-609-6835 TO SCHEDULE
YOUR APPOINTMENT**



**CHARLES COUNTY DEPT. OF HEALTH
4545 CRAIN HWY.**

WHITE PLAINS, MD

MUST BE A CHARLES CO. RESIDENT



2024-2025 Academy Calendar



Date	Day	Event
08/15/2024	Th	Binder Orientation and Study Skills, 6pm (All 3 rd and new 6 th – 8 th Students)
08/19/2024	M	Meet & Greet, 4pm – 6pm
08/21/2024	W	First Day of School – Quarter 1 Begins
08/30/2024	F	NO AFTER CARE
09/02/2024	M	School Closed – Labor Day
09/13/2024	F	Half Day for Students (Teacher Professional Development) NO AFTER CARE
10/11/2024	F	NO AFTER CARE
10/14/2024	M	School Closed – Columbus Day
10/23/2024	W	End of Q1 (44 Days)
10/24/2024	Th	No School for Students (Teacher Workday)
10/25/2024	F	No School for Students (Teacher Professional Development)
10/28/2024	M	Begin Q2
11/04/2024	M	No School for Students – Parent Conference Day (Teacher Workday)
11/08/2024	F	NO AFTER CARE
11/11/2024	M	School Closed – Veteran's Day
11/26/2024	Tu	Half Day for All – NO AFTER CARE
11/27/2024	W	No School – Begin Thanksgiving Break
11/29/2024	F	No School – End Thanksgiving Break
12/02/2024	M	School Reopens
12/03/2024	T	GIVING TUESDAY – Please consider Donating to GCA. Thank You.
12/20/2024	F	Half Day for All NO AFTER CARE
12/23/2024	M	No School – Christmas Break Begins
01/03/2025	F	No School – Christmas Break Ends
01/06/2025	M	School Reopens – HAPPY NEW YEAR!
01/16/2025	Th	End of Q2 (44 Days)
01/17/2025	F	No School for Students (Teacher Workday)
01/20/2025	M	School Closed – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
01/21/2025	Tu	Begin Q3
02/14/2025	F	Half Day for Students (Teacher Professional Development) NO AFTER CARE
02/17/2025	M	No School – <u>President's Day</u>
03/05/2025	W	Half Day for Students (Teacher Professional Development) NO AFTER CARE
03/20/2025	Th	End of Q3 (42 Days)
03/21/2025	F	No School for Students (Teacher Workday)
03/28/2025	F	No School for All – Begin Quarter Break
03/31/2025	M	No School for All – End Quarter Break
04/17/2025	Th	Grandparents Day Program – Half Day for All – NO AFTER CARE
04/18/2025	F	No School – Good Friday
04/21/2025	M	No School – Easter Break Begins
04/25/2025	F	No School – Easter Break Ends
04/28/2025	M	School Reopens
05/23/2025	F	NO AFTER CARE
05/26/2025	M	No School – Memorial Day
05/27/2025	Tu	Half Day for Students (Teacher Workday) NO AFTER CARE
05/28/2025	W	Half Day for Students (Teacher Workday) NO AFTER CARE
05/29/2025	Th	Half Day for Students (Teacher Workday) NO AFTER CARE
05/30/2025	F	Half Day for Students – LAST DAY (Teacher Workday) NO AFTER CARE End of Q4

Three inclement weather/snow days have been built into the school calendar.

(170 SCHOOL DAYS + 3 SNOW DAY = 173 DAYS)

After three inclement weather days are used, the following will modify the school year:

- June 2, 2025 (Snow day number four)
- June 3, 2025 (Snow day number five)