



LIVING GRACE

CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

HANDBOOK

Raising Up Champions for God!

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, . . . “plans to give you hope and a future” (Jer. 29:11).

Living Grace Christian School

Raising Up Champions for God!

Dear Parents:

Welcome to Living Grace Christian School! This School Handbook shares our foundational documents, including our vision, mission, statement of faith, core values, and philosophy of education. As a ministry of Northgate Community Church, we seek to partner with parents in a way that enables children to prosper in their growth as disciples of Christ. All people—parents, teachers, and students—work together in positive Biblical teamwork and relationship in order to help the children to understand their identity in Christ and God’s developing plan for their lives. It is our hope that understanding the school’s core values will assist you as we work together to raise up champions for God.

In addition, the handbook includes sections on academics, discipline, attendance, parent participation, godly character training, extracurricular activities, prayer partners, and other items. Please read the handbook. Use it as a tool to assist you in communicating a consistent message to your child. Remember that as we stand together in the spirit of the three-stranded cord (Ecclesiastes 4:12) of the parents, the congregation, and the school teachers working together, we will see God bestow the blessing of life forevermore upon our children (Psalm 133).

If you have any questions regarding the information in this handbook, please feel free to contact me. We consider it a privilege to work with you in this very worthy endeavor of raising up champions for God!

Sincerely,

Daniel L. Switzer, Ed.D.
Principal

Living Grace Christian School
20300 Pleasant Ridge Drive
Montgomery Village, MD 20886
301-840-9830

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Eph. 2:8-10, NIV).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	5
MISSION STATEMENT	7
VISION STATEMENT	7
THE HEART OF LIVING GRACE	7
CORE VALUES	8
STATEMENT OF FAITH.....	9
PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION	10
Purpose of Education	10
Responsibility of Parents for Education.....	11
The States’ Role in Education.....	12
The Nature of the Child as Applicable to Education	13
Relevance of Civil Documents	15
Marks of a Mature Citizen	16
Major Principles to Be Learned	17
Distinctives of Early Childhood, Infancy, and in Utero Educational Practices	17
Common Core of Understandings for Moral Maturity and Citizenship Competency	19
Characteristics of the Ideal Curriculum	19
References.....	22
PARENTS’ PLEDGE OF COVENANT	23
ACADEMICS	24
Grading System.....	24
High School Graduation Requirements	25
Report Cards and Parent-Teacher Conferences	25
Assignment Work	26
Standardized Testing.....	26
Academic Dishonesty	26
DISCIPLINE	26
Security within Clear Boundaries	27
Process of Discipline.....	27
Standard of Talk.....	28
Class Standards	28
Code of Christian Conduct	28
Proactive Focus.....	29
ATTENDANCE	29
Lateness.....	29
Absenteeism.....	29
PARENT PARTICIPATION PLAN	30
Values	30
Policies.....	31
Goals	31
GODLY CHARACTER TRAINING PLAN.....	32
Selected Definitions	32
Involving Parents	33
Students as “Peer Role Examples”	33
PRAYER PARTNERS	33

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES.....	34
Worship Team.....	34
Drama.....	34
Interscholastic Athletics	34
Sports Club	35
Art Club	35
Chess Club	35
Student Government.....	36
SCHOOL UNIFORM.....	37
SCHOOL HOURS AND PROCEDURES	38
EMAIL COMMUNICATIONS	39
SCHOOL CLOSINGS	39
MEDICATION.....	39
TUITION PAYMENTS	39
FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE.....	39
PASTORAL TUITION DISCOUNT.....	40
STUDENT CHAMPIONS FUND	40
LIVING GRACE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL ENDOWMENT FUND	40
SCHOOL NEWSLETTER— <i>RAISING CHAMPIONS</i>	40
RACIAL NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY	40

MISSION STATEMENT

At Living Grace Christian School God has given us a mission to raise up champions for God—servant leaders of godly character who will advance the cause of Christ and make disciples of all nations.

VISION STATEMENT

As a ministry of Northgate Community Church, Living Grace Christian School is a Biblically-integrated school for committed believing families in the body of Christ. Parents, as their children’s primary teacher, partner with the school’s staff and their home congregation in a strong three-stranded cord (Ecclesiastes 4:12) that enables children to prosper in their growth as disciples of Jesus. Therefore, the school is one in which parents are integrated into a quality educational program for their children. All people—parents, teachers, and students—work together in positive Biblical teamwork and relationship in order to help the children to understand their identity in Christ and God’s developing plan for their lives.

THE HEART OF LIVING GRACE

Ephesians 2:8-10 says, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (NIV). God’s grace enables us to focus on Christ and his glorious gift of salvation. God’s grace helps us to focus on our relationship with Christ—our union with Christ. God’s grace enables us to get our focus off ourselves and onto Christ and his empowerment in order to live the victorious life of Christ.

At Living Grace Christian School, we emphasize with the students that they are saved by God’s grace through faith, which is itself a gift of God. We stress that the students can have a grace-filled relationship with Jesus Christ, who is “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). We provide them with constant encouragement that they are God’s workmanship—that God has a great plan, a great promised land, a great destiny for their lives. As Jeremiah 29:11 says, “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, . . . “plans to give you hope and a future” (NIV).

In addition, since we espouse the necessity of teamwork between parents and teachers, we seek to walk in a grace-filled way toward one another. We seek to excel in our communications with one another. We endeavor to speak the truth in love and receive one another in a way that honors Christ. We ask parents to “reserve judgment” when they hear a negative report from their children and, if necessary, to ask the teacher about the matter. As parents and teachers, we seek to walk in the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace so that God commands a blessing—abundant life forevermore—upon our children and students (Psalm 133). We welcome and encourage parents’ participation in the educational process, both at home and in the school setting.

CORE VALUES

At Living Grace Christian School we hold to the following core values as a school community:

1. The Whole Counsel of the Word of God

We espouse and teach God's Word as providing purpose, destiny, and guidance for life. God's Word should be integrated into all of life. Integrating the Bible into the curriculum, we are committed to academic excellence. (Acts 20:20, 27; Matt. 28:16-20)

2. A House of Prayer for All Nations

We believe prophetic worship, prayer, and preaching in the lives of our students edifies them concerning God's heart and plan for their lives. The students develop a sensitivity to the Lord's heart and plan for their lives through regular opportunities to worship the Lord in Spirit and in truth. (Isaiah 56:6-7, Matt. 21:13-16, 1 Pet. 2:1-10)

3. The Gospel of Grace through Faith

We seek to nurture our students in a developing, grace-filled relationship with Christ, who is "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). As caring teachers, we seek to help and encourage all students to maximize their potential by emphasizing their overcoming position in Christ. (Acts 20:24, 32; Eph. 2:8-10, 2 Tim. 1:8-12)

4. The Unity of the Spirit through the Bond of Peace

We maintain open and peace-filled communication through being receptive and accessible to one another as teachers, parents, and students. We speak the truth in love. As teachers, we invite parents to communicate with us. We seek to excel in regular interaction, both oral and written, in order to prosper in our relationships and to help our students succeed. (Eph. 4:1-6, Psalm 133, Phil. 2:1-11)

5. The Imitation of Christ

We call ourselves and our students to imitate Christ in discipleship. As part of a godly character training program each year, the students are taught and encouraged to grow in specific traits of godly character. (Matt. 11:28-30, Matt. 28:16-20, Eph. 5:1-2, 1 Thess. 1:2-10)

6. The Greatness of Servanthood

We seek to have an attitude of service. As teachers and parents we partner together in the training and teaching of our students. As teachers, we aim to encourage parents to see themselves as participants in their children's home learning, in volunteer school service, and in attending school team meetings. We foster an environment clearly supportive of parents. (Matt. 20:20-28, 1 Pet. 4:10-11)

7. The Perfection of Love

We walk in love for one another. All of God's commands are summed up in loving God and loving our neighbors. Christian love and care for others is the defining characteristic of the life of Christ. (1 John 4:15-18, Matt. 7:12, Matt. 22:36-40, John 15:1-17, 1 John 3:1)

STATEMENT OF FAITH

As a ministry of Northgate Community Church, we set forth the following general statement of fundamental beliefs. We are conservative in theology, evangelical in spirit, and charismatic in ministry.

1. We believe the Bible to be the divinely inspired Word of God, God's revelation of Himself to humankind, and the supreme authority in all matters of faith, conduct, practice, and opinion (Deut. 4:1-2, 2 Tim. 3:15-16, 2 Pet. 1:19-21). We also believe we need God the Father to give believers the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, with the eyes of our understanding being enlightened (Eph. 1:17-18, Luke 24:44-46).
2. We believe in the one and only living and true God, eternally existent, and revealing Himself in three manifestations: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19).
3. We believe in the deity of Jesus Christ as Lord, his virgin birth, his sinless life, his miracles, his vicarious and atoning death through his shed blood, his bodily resurrection, his ascension to the right hand of the Father, and his final revelation in power and glory.
4. We believe that the new birth is absolutely essential for the salvation of lost and sinful man, and that, upon belief in the resurrection of Christ from the dead and confession of Jesus as Lord, one becomes partaker of the divine nature and recipient of eternal life.
5. We believe in the Holy Spirit who regenerates and baptizes believers into the Body of Christ (Tit. 3:5, Eph. 4:30, 1 Cor. 12:13) and by whose indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life (1 Cor. 2:4-5). We believe in the Baptism of the Spirit by which the believer is empowered for witness, ministry, and the receiving of spiritual gifts (Eph. 5:18-21, 1 Cor. 12:5-8) and which initiates an ongoing present ministry of enlightening, comforting and energizing the believer in prayer, worship, and service (Eph. 5:18-21).
6. We believe in the bodily resurrection of the just and the unjust, in a final time of ultimate judgment, in the everlasting blessedness of the saved, and in the punishment of the lost.
7. We believe in and observe the New Testament ordinances of Believer's Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These ordinances are observed in obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ, as acts of love and devotion and are not considered necessary for eternal salvation.
8. We believe the government of the local church resides in the recognized pastors and elders and that Christ gave the five-fold apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to equip the saints for ministry and works of service (Eph. 4:11-12, 1 Cor. 12:28).
9. We believe in the spiritual unity of all believers in our Lord Jesus Christ, the centrality of the Kingdom of God, and the outworking of God's sovereignty in the course of history.
10. We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in His image. Human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or

mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from conception through natural death. We are therefore called to defend, protect, and value all human life (Ps. 139).

This 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 Living Grace Christian School's faith, doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline, our board of elders is the school's final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application.

PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

With the education of children, as with any great purpose, it is imperative to understand why one teaches. Understanding the reasoning for education, including one's purpose in ministering to young people through teaching, is of utmost importance. This Christian philosophy of education is based upon the whole counsel of God's Word.

Purpose of Education

God has given us the Bible to be our guidebook for life. The Bible shares timeless truths that, if applied, will result in blessing. They provide parents and teachers alike with purpose and motivation. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 provides a clear statement regarding our purpose as humans:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. (NIV)

Our calling is to teach our children and students to love God with every aspect of their being. When asked about the most important commandment, Jesus said that we are to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Likewise, teaching children should focus on these areas. A concern for the heart, for instance, would be to develop our child's sensitivity to the Lord in worship. Regarding the soul, we can help our children to be decisive in serving God. With respect to the mind, we can counsel our young people to understand that the spiritual battle is won or lost in the thought realm; they must learn to take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Our children can learn to love God with all of their heart, soul, understanding, and strength as they play on their soccer team, study at school, or spend time with friends. A major part of helping children develop a love for the Lord is teaching them to give their all to him. Colossians 3:23 says, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men" (NIV).

As Deuteronomy 6 indicates, God's Word should be taught all day long to children: at the beginning of the day, during the day, and at the end of the day. We should look for opportunities to write God's principles on our children's hearts. At school, in all subjects (all day long), the students should receive an education that integrates the Bible and which continually points them toward a love for God and his Word.

In addition, Christ's Great Commission, one of the most significant purposes of life, provides us with mission for education. In Matthew 28:19-20, Christ called us to make disciples and to teach them to obey his commands. Surely our children should be our first disciples. They need to be continually challenged to draw near to Christ in a grace-filled relationship.

This relationship with him is cultivated through prayer, Biblical devotions, worship, and faith as they grow in understanding their position in Christ and becoming aware of the Lord's presence in their lives. As we teach our children to obey God's Word, we are training them in godly character. We need to remember that God is with us as we disciple our children.

Webster's 1828 Dictionary defines the word *education* as "the bringing up, as of a child," which implies training. Webster also states regarding children's education: "to give them a religious *education* is indispensable; and an immense responsibility rests on parents and guardians who neglect these duties." Education is fundamentally religious because there is always a belief system behind the material taught as well as behind the one doing the teaching! Moreover, parents have been given the God-ordained role and responsibility to train up their children (Proverbs 22:6). Therefore, the school's purpose is to partner with parents in fulfilling their responsibility before God.

God calls young people to remember their Creator while they are young (Ecclesiastes 12:1). At the end of the book of Ecclesiastes, the teacher, after making an observation regarding the futility of "many books" and "much study," concludes that man's purpose is to "fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man" (NIV, Ecc. 12:12-13). God's two greatest commandments have to do with loving God and loving others—surely education in all of its various components should ultimately find its purpose in such an end.

Responsibility of Parents for Education

As we explore the responsibility and the authority that parents have to educate their children, it is helpful to understand that our Father God provides us with the heart for this task:

For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. (NIV, Rom. 8:15-16)

Understanding Father God's heart toward us as his children motivates us in our parenting task with our own children. The Bible clearly shows us that parents are responsible to train their children in the ways of the Lord. One passage that serves to motivate us as parents is Psalm 78:5-7:

He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children. Then they would put their trust in God and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands. (NIV)

Some might say that parents are to teach their children God's ways, but that non-Biblical subjects—such as math—can be taught by anyone no matter what that person may believe. Our response is that all education is fundamentally religious because there is always a belief system—a religion—behind the subject matter being taught as well as behind the particular teacher doing the instructing.

God has clearly *ordained* parents with the role of teaching their children. Ephesians 6:4 counsels, “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (NIV). The book of Proverbs is full of references to “my son,” the father, and the mother. Clearly, it was understood that parents were the primary teachers of children and were held responsible for this task. Proverbs 19:27 is a good example of one such verse: “Stop listening to instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge” (NIV). Why is education so bankrupt in our society today? Would it not be that a very significant factor has to do with broken homes—missing fathers and mothers who are derelict of their duty to teach their children?

The church is composed of families of parents and children. In a covenantal agreement, a strong three-stranded cord of the parents, the congregation, and the school (as a ministry of a congregation) is necessary to *work together* to achieve the mission to which God has called us. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 emphasizes the importance of this teamwork:

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. (NIV)

The key is that all three strands—the parents, the congregation, and the school—are working together through positive teamwork and communication so that the children may receive a consistent message and prosper in their growth. We will not be “overpowered” in our mission of raising up champions of God if we are a strong three-stranded cord!

The States' Role in Education

This discussion would not be complete without a word regarding the state's role in education. The state exists to ensure that parents are free to educate their children according to their beliefs. When there is a clear, documented dereliction of parental responsibility, the state may become involved in order to ensure a minimal level of education. However, this action should never be done in such a way that usurps the parents' fundamental role and right to provide for their children's education as they responsibly believe to be correct.

The Nature of the Child as Applicable to Education

As human beings, we are connected to the God that created this universe. Genesis 1:26-28 says that man is made in God's image and likeness with a mandate to take dominion over all creatures. Educators need to teach their students that they are linked to God; therefore, they are created with value and have a need to be inhabited by God.

John 14:16-17 tells us that the Father gives believers the Spirit of truth. We need to recognize that God by his Spirit is involved in every aspect of a Christian's education as He counsels us.

Moreover, one's relationship with God impacts his education. 1 Peter 1:16 calls us to be holy because of God's example of holiness. The implication is that teachers should teach and encourage students that they can have a called-out, special relationship with God, resulting in a godly moral life. Teachers should relentlessly encourage students to understand their position of acceptance in Christ. Children need to understand the importance of God's grace in their lives; 1 Corinthians 15:8-10 states that although Paul considered himself to be the least of the apostles, he credited God's grace for who he is.

It is important for students to have a thoroughly Biblical world view so that they may be able to objectively critique non-Biblical thinking. One's understanding of one's place within the scope of this universe affects one's outlook. For instance, when Job was physically afflicted, his wife told him to turn against the Lord (Job 2:7-9). Her lack of a God-centered world view affected her view of Job's circumstances.

Just as there is a connection between one's relationship with God and one's outlook and behavior, there is also a connection between the body and the spirit of man. Proverbs 23:13-14 counsels that godly use of the rod of discipline will help to protect a child from eternal death. 1 Corinthians 6:18-19 stresses that sexual sins are against one's own body, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit. And Proverbs 17:22 warns that the state of one's heart affects one's health. With these understandings, educators should teach students that what they do with their bodies will affect their spiritual lives. Moreover, we can also imply that a student's body language often expresses one's inner spiritual life.

Likewise, as we train students, teachers should address the spirit and soul of the child—heart issues—which will ultimately affect outward actions. James 1:14 says that temptation comes from within man through evil desires. Conversely, Hebrews 8:10 tells us that God will write his laws on our hearts and minds. We all have a need for God—to repent and embrace God by faith—so that we may be changed in a grace-filled way and walk in the life of the Holy Spirit.

There is further relevancy related to discipline. All humans come to the point in life of knowing between right and wrong. Deuteronomy 1:39 refers to the little children who do not yet know the difference between right and wrong. Teachers should train students in right conduct and then hold them accountable for their actions in a calm, loving, and consistent manner.

Because man's heart and conscience tell him what is right and wrong (Romans 2:15), teachers should understand that students have a basic inherent understanding of what is right and wrong through their consciences.

In addition to giving man this inherent understanding, God gave man boundaries within which he is free to conduct himself. In Genesis 2:16-17, God commanded Adam to be free to eat fruit of any tree except the tree of knowing good and evil. Because of this inherent need for structure, students desire a disciplined, orderly classroom environment in which to learn. In order for students to prosper in their education, the classroom environment needs to be one of peace.

In addition, teachers should have an orientation of allowing students to develop their God-given desire to exercise self control. 2 Timothy 1:7 says that we have been given a spirit of love, strength, and self control, not one of fear.

Furthermore, when dealing with classroom discipline situations, teachers should understand that disobedient, rebellious students will naturally be motivated to attempt to draw others into their wrongful behavior and attitudes. For instance, when Eve ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, she gave some to her husband as well (Genesis 3:6); and Jezebel pushed Ahab to do evil and pursue idols (1 Kings 21:25-26). Teachers need to teach students to take responsibility for their own actions before God and man.

Regarding self control, the teacher should be a consistent example to his students of godly love and kindness. Proverbs 15:1 says that when confronted with wrath, a kind word pacifies the emotions whereas a harsh word intensifies the feelings.

Another quality of humans which is relevant to education is the fact that humans are social beings. Genesis 2:18 points out that Adam needed an appropriate helpmate. Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 stresses that two persons are able to help and protect each other, and a three-stranded cord cannot be easily cut. In the Kingdom of God, not much is accomplished without teamwork. Therefore, the school setting should include ample opportunities for the students to learn how to be teammates with others, including leading, following, communicating, and building trust with others.

The Bible also has much to say regarding man's motivation, a gift from God. Genesis 1:28 states that man has been blessed by God to be fruitful and to take dominion. Acts 17:26 concurs by saying that mankind, made from Adam, was created to inhabit all of the earth. Therefore, in teaching our students, one should understand that healthy competition is effective. Moreover, as God's work of art, man is made to perform good works, which have been purposed by God (Ephesians 2:10). As a primary purpose of life, students should have a commitment to accomplish all the good works that God has already ordained for them.

In addition, as we teach students, we should understand that they intrinsically desire to know the foundational meaning to the different fields of knowledge. Genesis 41:15 illustrates that Pharaoh desired Joseph to interpret his dream. Psalm 119:45 declares that seeking out God's laws produces freedom in one's life.

How can parents and teachers encourage students' achievement? For one, they should set reasonably high expectations for students and hold them accountable to those expectations by being engaged in their studies. 2 Timothy says that a soldier desires to please his commander. Ephesians 5:8-10 calls us to live as children of light and to discover that which is pleasing to God. Children have an intrinsic desire to please God, their parents, and their teachers. We should use this motivation in a healthy manner.

To encourage academic and character growth, the curriculum should be challenging for the students. James 1:2-4 challenges Christians to be joyful when faced with trials because trials are used to mature our faith. Christians are called to rejoice in suffering because through sufferings we grow in perseverance, character, and hope (Romans 5:3).

Finally, when studying the nature of man as applicable to education, one should consider the issue of authority. Teachers and students must first learn to walk under authority before they can be expected to issue authority. Exodus 20:12 commands people to honor their parents, a commandment which comes with a promise from God. Obeying one's parents will result in a life of blessing (Ephesians 6:1-3). As children walk in their God-given ability to be under authority, they will grow in a grace-filled way toward being a champion of God.

Relevance of Civil Documents

Note: Notes from a Regent University course entitled *Philosophy & Issues of Education* contribute heavily to this section.

The Declaration of Independence, the foundational document of the United States of America, contains much relevance to the field of education. This monumental document declares the following:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness. . .

Implicit in this document is the understanding that men are *created beings*, not evolved beings, and that man has a *Creator*. Moreover, our Creator has bestowed men with certain inalienable *rights*. As we have seen from Scripture, one inalienable right given by Creator God is that of training one's children. It is the civil government's responsibility to protect God-given inalienable rights. Today, when the government usurps the parents' right to teach their children as they believe, the government is absolutely wrong and is violating the spirit of The Declaration of Independence.

In addition to The Declaration of Independence, our nation's Constitution has much relevance to education. Contrary to popular belief, our country does not have a foundation of separation of church and state! The first amendment states the following: "Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion nor prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Congress was not to establish a national religion. The states would not allow the federal

government to do so because the states had their own established religions. Religious belief was under the jurisdiction of the state, not the federal government. The clause regarding Congress making no law prohibiting the free exercise of religion meant that the federal government could not interfere with the respective state's religion. The first amendment does not take religions freedom; rather, it protects religious freedom. In other words, the federal government was put on a leash!

Some people have wrongfully interpreted the Fourteenth Amendment forbidding states from taking away a person's liberty to mean that the First Amendment prohibition against Congress establishing a religion is now a restriction on the state as well. What has occurred is that the Supreme Court has gone way beyond its authority, which is limited to Constitutional items. As opposed to being protected by the government as they should, our inalienable rights are now being stolen from us by the government.

The article "America's Great Wall Separating Church and State—A Shifting Foundation!" focuses on Jefferson's and Madison's explanations of the Constitution. Cox, the author of the article, explains the true intent of the First Amendment:

The wall of separation is a *one-way* wall only. It serves to reinforce the constitutional limitation that the federal government could not intermeddle with religion. The wall keeps Congress from establishing a national religion but it does not keep religion from influencing the federal government. . . . Furthermore, it is not an impregnable one-way wall but a one-way wall only against any law that would deprive religious establishments of the states but not against laws that promote the free exercise of religion. . . . A totally impregnable wall would never allow, for example, the federally funded congressional chaplain system. (19)

Obviously, our nation's government has gone severely awry from the original intent of the First Amendment.

Marks of a Mature Citizen

At Living Grace Christian School, we want to be able to identify certain Biblical "marks" in our students as they mature in their citizenship in God's Kingdom. The following distinguishing marks are those toward which we are aiming:

1. A personal relationship with Christ as one's Savior and Lord (John 1:12-13; Rom. 10:6-13).
2. God's Word living within one's inner being (Col. 3:16; James 1:21-25).
3. Doing all things wholeheartedly unto the Lord for his glory (Col. 3:17; 1 Chron. 28:9-10).
4. Counting oneself dead to sin, alive to Christ, and living by the Spirit with the fruit of the Holy Spirit operating in one's life (Rom. 6:1-14; Gal. 5:22-24; 1 Pet. 4:1).
5. Walking in God-given motivation (Ps. 8:4-6; Gen. 1:28; 1 Tim. 3:1).
6. Understanding and walking out one's God-given purpose, calling, and gifts (Jer. 29:11; Eph. 2:8-10; Eph. 4:1, 11-13; 1 Thess. 4:1; 2 Cor. 5:9).
7. A worshiper of the Lord in Spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24; Ps. 135:1-5).

8. A walk of humility before God (Eph. 4:2; Phil. 2:5-11).
9. The capacity to study and teach the Word of God (Deut. 11:18-21; 2 Tim. 2:15; Heb. 5:11-14).

Major Principles to Be Learned

We also identify the following major spiritual principles which our students should learn to apply to their lives:

1. Following God as his disciple (Matt. 4:19-20; Matt. 28:19-20).
2. Being consciously aware of God's empowering presence (Josh. 1:9; Matt. 28:20).
3. Working wholeheartedly as unto the Lord (Eph. 6:7; Col. 3:17).
4. Being available to God and ready to serve him (Isa. 6:8; Matt. 4:21-22).
5. Walking out covenantal principles for living, including dealing with conflicts Biblically and working together in agreement (Matt. 18; Ecc. 4:7-12).
6. Walking in unity, in teamwork, and in godly relationships as part of the Body of Christ (Ps. 133, John 17:20-23; Eph. 4:3-6).
7. Practicing intercessory prayer (Matt. 18:18-20; Neh. 1:4-11).
8. Having the capacity to Biblically and critically evaluate world views and thought patterns (2 Tim. 3:14-17; Titus 1:9-2:1).

Distinctives of Early Childhood, Infancy, and in Utero Educational Practices

Because Living Grace Christian School believes that parents possess the God-given role and responsibility to train their children, we include here a discussion of educational practices starting from a child's earliest age.

When does learning begin? Luke 1:44 says that the baby in the womb responded in joy at Mary's greeting. Psalm 139:16 declares that God ordained man's days even when he was in the womb. Indeed, education begins in the womb, a fact which establishes parents as the child's most important teachers. Examples of in utero practices which could be used by parents are the following: praying audibly over the baby, speaking to the baby, edifying the baby with the Word of God, playing worship music for the baby to hear, and ensuring a nurturing and loving home environment. One could say that children are born learners; that is, they are born, having already begun the learning process.

As born learners, infants have many learning distinctives which encourage their amazing learning. One can just look into a baby's eyes and see the learning process thriving as he is searching, grasping, and embracing as much knowledge as he can. One learning distinctive is that the baby is born with a foundational base of knowledge, upon which is built more and more learning. Hebrews 8:10 says that God places his laws on the hearts and minds of people. Parents should use this foundation to wisely make the most of their child's infancy. The bonding which began in the womb makes the parents the child's most effective teachers.

Another learning distinctive is that the infant has been created in God's image. Psalm 6:6-8 says that God made man to rule over all living creatures. Moreover, God has placed in the infant's heart a vacuum which can only be filled by him (Ecc. 3:11). Therefore, education toward salvation starts immediately as the baby is linked to the value of God and is in need of being inhabited by God. Even as God has a need for relationship, so also babies have a need for relationship. Early in his existence, Adam realized his need for a helper (Gen. 2:18). This need to be social with others spurs babies on to learn language in order to be able to communicate with those around them.

As the baby grows to early childhood, parents should continue to use his natural inquisitiveness and desire for knowledge. Joshua 4:6 points out how the sign of the stone memorial would encourage the children to ask about the significance of the stones. Children naturally ask questions about what they see. Likewise, children love to have stories read to them—they will listen to the same stories over and over again without becoming bored—and they ask questions about all kinds of details in the stories. Indeed, Jesus, the master teacher, used stories to teach. The child will naturally search until he finds the answer!

Moreover, since children have a natural desire to learn, parents (and teachers) should focus on building a godly relationship with their children as opposed to an overemphasis on particular teaching techniques. This distinctive has definite applicability to discipline. Proverbs 22:6 provides the general principle that godly training of children leads to their following God as an adult. 2 Timothy 2:4 says that a soldier desires to please his commander. It can be safely said that a child has an inherent healthy desire to please his father and mother. A healthy relationship with one's child will have an outstanding impact on the child's learning, heart attitudes, and behavior.

A final distinctive of early childhood is the child's need for discipline and order. In Genesis 2:16-17, God told Adam that he was free to eat fruit of any tree except the tree of knowing good and evil, an action which would result in death. Discipline, including godly use of the rod, should be done with the child's long-range interests in mind. Proverbs 23:13-14 states, "Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die. Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death" (NIV). Hebrews 12:11 says, "No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it" (NIV). Discipline should be administered with a love that communicates a future hope for God's purposes in the life of the child.

An anecdote from the life of Reverend John Witherspoon is very powerful. When his child was three or four years old and captivated with a particular toy, he would say, "Dad has need of this; let me have it." Early on, the child would throw a temper tantrum, but as time went on, his child freely let his dad have the toy, whereupon John would say, "Thank you." All of this was done in a calm manner by the father. This discipline enabled the child to learn to yield everything to the heavenly Father. May the Lord grant us wisdom and vision as we train our children from their earliest ages.

Common Core of Understandings for Moral Maturity and Citizenship Competency

We at Living Grace Christian School believe that there are core understandings that should be developing within each student in order for the student to be growing to a place of moral maturity and citizenship competency. These core understandings include the following:

1. A healthy reverence for God. Proverbs 1:7 states, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline” (NIV). This quality will enable students to continue learning rightly throughout their lives.
2. A commitment to following the Lord as a true disciple. This discipleship should include the following aspects:
 - a. a consistent devotional life of Bible reading and prayer;
 - b. walking under authority before walking in authority;
 - c. practical servanthood;
 - d. living victoriously through spiritual warfare;
 - e. stewardship of time and money
 - f. counting oneself dead to sin and alive to Christ;
 - g. living by the Holy Spirit, including walking in the fruit and gifts of the Spirit;
 - h. servant leadership in humility
 - i. walking out Biblical principles of covenantal living, relational discipleship, forgiveness, and dealing with trials and persecutions.
3. A Biblical understanding of human nature.
4. A thorough understanding and first commitment to one’s citizenship in God’s holy nation.
5. A commitment to body-life unity, participation, and teamwork within the Church.
6. A commitment to godly relationships, including marriage, family, and the importance of parental responsibility to train children in the ways of the Lord.
7. An understanding of one’s physical self, including the importance of a healthy spiritual life, nutritious eating habits, good hygiene, physical fitness, and fellowship activities.

Characteristics of the Ideal Curriculum

The ideal curriculum should be thoroughly based on God’s Word the Bible. The curriculum and the teachers should consciously integrate the Bible into all subject matter. Every area of the curriculum should support the school’s overall mission to raise up champions of God—servant leaders of godly character who will advance the cause of Christ and make disciples of all nations. We are involved in making disciples for God’s Kingdom purposes. The following discussion elaborates on various characteristics of an ideal curriculum.

The study of the Bible. In addition to teaching the Bible to the students, students should be taught how to study the Bible on their own. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 states, “All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (NIV). Students should also receive training in apologetics to be able to give a defense of the gospel. Finally, there should be

a strong emphasis on Bible memory and meditation so that God's Word would become a living part of the students' very beings.

The reading of great books. The love of reading should be inculcated within the students through encouraging the reading of great literature, including classics, which are consistent with Biblical truth and which contribute to godly character. The curriculum should have the objective of all students becoming readers, which will assist in enabling them to become life-long learners.

Communication—both written and oral. Students should be trained and mentored in the art of communication. They should receive much practice in writing and speaking with clarity and with conviction for God's purposes and glory. The capacity to connect with people on both a personal level and in group settings is critical to leadership development. Cox, in the article "A Beginning Biblically Based Philosophy of Education" emphasizes that God used words to create and that Satan used words to trick Adam and Eve (14-15). Cox concludes, "Thus, any study of the field of communication must be based on understanding that oral and written expression has the power to operationalize spiritual forces" (15). Romans 10:17 emphasizes the importance of communication in advancing the Kingdom of God: "Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ" (NIV).

God's creative order expressed in science and mathematics. Science and mathematics should be Biblically-based and Biblically-integrated. God created the world, and he created the world with order. Thus, students should understand that science and math starts with God. Students should receive a thorough understanding of God's created order through the study of science and mathematics. Students should be challenged toward excellence with an orientation of impacting the various fields of math, science, engineering, and technology with the truth of God's Word.

History as God's story. History should be taught with an emphasis on God's sovereignty in the affairs of mankind as well as the sowing and reaping consequential impacts of man's actions throughout the ages. High priority should be placed on the students' understanding of the history of God's holy nation and their primary identification as citizens of this holy nation. Cox, in his article "Christianity and Nationalism and Educational Philosophy," states that our primary aim should be to build God's holy nation (26). He argues, "Allegiance to earthly nation citizenship is qualitatively different from and subordinate, if not antithetical, to Kingdom of God citizenship" (16-17). He challenges believers to be working toward "developing the citizenship expectations of God's holy nation" (19).

Foreign language study. The ideal curriculum should include language study to help prepare students for ministry to different people groups. Jesus' vision for the church is "a house of prayer for all nations" (Mark 11:17; Isaiah 56:7). Studying different languages not only can prepare students linguistically but also can prepare their hearts to reach out to different people groups. As Christ called us, "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19). For example, the language of Spanish can be taught with a focus toward reaching out to the many Hispanic people in the United States today and with a focus of preparing students for service and mission trips to Hispanic countries.

Biblical discipleship. Active Biblical discipleship which deals with issues in the students' lives from a Biblical perspective is of paramount importance. The focus should be on having a grace-filled relationship with Christ and on the training of godly character. Cox, in his article "Responsibility Centered Character Development," gives excellent techniques to address heart issues in achieving the objective of character development: "Modeling, unconditional positive regard, firm yet loving confrontation in truth, and the use of historical and literary examples" (14).

The fine arts. The arts should be taught with an emphasis on using one's creative being for God's glory. Music, a very powerful tool, should be used for God's purposes and glory. Psalm 150 specifies that the trumpet, harp, lyre, tambourine, dancing, strings, flute, cymbals, and everyone breathing are for the purpose of praising God! Students should be called to use their voices and instruments in heartfelt praise of their Creator. Moreover, students should understand the appropriate use of worship dance as unto the Lord. Art should be taught with the understanding that students are created in the image of God, who is the ultimate Creator of art; and thus they have creative capacities to glorify God with the beauty of their artistic expressions.

Computer technology integration. Computer technology should be integrated within the curriculum to assist in preparing students for the rapid technological growth in our society. At the same time, students should be disciplined regarding the potential pitfalls of being obsessed with technological tools to the detriment of their relationships with God and with others. Still, students should excel in being able to use the many communication tools that technology affords them today.

Educational field trips and church and community service. Interesting field trips relevant to the school's educational goals should be a regular aspect of the educational process. All students should grow up serving in the church; by doing so they learn from a young age that they have a part to play in the advancement of God's Kingdom as part of the Body of Christ. Community service projects should be a normal part of student growth in servanthood, particularly as students enter the secondary grades.

Enjoyment of learning. The educational process should be an enjoyable experience for students. This joy can be cultivated through such aspects as a healthy class atmosphere, a lively class pace that takes into account students' developmental attention spans, educational games, and healthy competition. Students have a natural desire to work toward achieving worthwhile accomplishments. This desire should be encouraged through incorporating good study habits and pursuing mastery of learning, which, in turn, helps students to grow in confidence.

Conclusion

This philosophy expresses Living Grace Christian School's fundamental beliefs regarding education. Any philosophy has its basis in a belief system. Truly, all education is a religious endeavor because there is always a belief system behind the curriculum and behind the teacher. Our philosophy of education is fundamentally based upon God's Word, the Bible.

References

- Cox, W.F. (1994). *A Beginning Biblically Based Philosophy of Education*. Virginia Beach, VA: Regent University.
- Cox, W.F. (1994). *America's Great Wall Separating Church and State—A Shifting Foundation!* Virginia Beach, VA: Regent University.
- Cox, W.F. *Christianity and Nationalism and Educational Philosophy*. Virginia Beach, VA: Regent University.
- Cox, W.F. (1995). *Responsibility Centered Character Development*. Virginia Beach, VA: Regent University.
- (Jefferson, T.) (1776). *The Declaration of Independence*. The Representatives of the United States of America.
- (Madison, J.) *The Constitution*.
- The NIV Study Bible*. (1985). Grand Rapids, MI: The Zondervan Corporation.
- Webster, N. (1828). *Noah Webster's First Edition of an American Dictionary of the English Language*. San Francisco: Foundation for American Christian Education.

PARENTS' PLEDGE OF COVENANT

As part of the registration process, each parent agrees to the following pledge of covenant. This pledge provides us with Biblically-based agreements that help us to work together in a covenantal way that promotes our children's education.

1. At Living Grace Christian School we believe in partnering together in a strong three-stranded cord (Ecc. 4:12) as parents, the school staff, and the home congregation in Biblically cooperative relationship that enables children to prosper in their growth as disciples of Jesus. Accordingly, we seek to walk out our relationships in humility, mutual acceptance, and loving communication (Matt. 18).

2. We believe that we, as parents, have the responsibility to train up our children in the way they should go (Prov. 22:6, Deut. 6). We take this responsibility seriously and entrust to Living Grace Christian School delegated responsibility and authority to support that training during the school day. We agree to keep track of our students' daily progress, including holding our children accountable to complete their assignments and signing the assignment book daily.

3. We agree to walk out a Biblical lifestyle in our family, including in our marriage, in raising our children, and by participating in a local, Bible-believing church (Heb. 10:25). We believe God has created male and female in His image, and we support Biblical marriage and sexuality as that between one man and one woman in covenantal relationship (Gen. 1:27-28, Mal. 2:14-16, Matt. 19:4-6, Lev. 20:13a, Rom. 1:27).

4. We agree to lovingly encourage and discipline our children according to the Bible. We view Biblical discipline as for the long-term good of our children (Heb. 12:1-13). We entrust the school to provide our children with the proper boundaries within which our children can thrive. We agree to uphold the discipline of the school, and to address concerns regarding discipline to the teacher/administration in a Biblical manner.

5. We agree to reserve judgment concerning any negative report our children might bring home from school until we talk with the teacher. We recognize that Scripture exhorts us not to involve the secular legal system in resolving controversies between Christians (1 Cor. 6:1-11). We (in behalf of ourselves and our children), therefore, waive any option of involving the secular legal system in any disagreements, disputes, or complaints which may arise between ourselves and Living Grace Christian School. We agree that Northgate Community Church's Board of Elders will be the final arbiter of any such disputes.

6. We agree to pay the tuition and fees according to the arrangement made with the school administration.

7. We are committed to pray for the school, the staff, the parents, and the students; and to develop positive Biblical teamwork, unity, and relationship with one another.

ACADEMICS

Living Grace Christian School is committed to academic excellence. Our students learn in a traditional classroom setting with small class sizes and individual attention. We endeavor to help each student reach their maximum potential through emphasizing their overcoming position in Christ and instilling effective study habits. A full academic curriculum, which integrates the Bible into the subject matter, includes reading, grammar, writing, spelling, penmanship, math, science, history, Bible, music, art, and physical education. In addition, our students take Spanish classes. Secondary school students learn computer keyboarding and document processing as technology is integrated into the curriculum. For further understanding regarding our academic philosophy, see our school's philosophy of education.

Grading System

Kindergarten students are assessed in both academic and behavioral areas according to the following system:

- O – Outstanding
- S – Satisfactory
- N – Needs Improvement

For grades one through twelve, we use the following grading system:

Letter Grade	Percent Range
A+	97-100
A	93-96
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D	65-69
F	Below 65

High School Graduation Requirements

The purpose of the graduation process and the commencement ceremony is to send forth our students prepared to be champions for God. As champions for God, they should be ready to be servant leaders of godly character. In addition, they should possess a developing understanding of the gifts God has given them and a commitment to use them for the cause of Christ.

Course Credit Requirements. In order to graduate and receive a Living Grace Christian School diploma, ninth through twelfth grade students must pass all required courses and fulfill all requirements for graduation. The credit requirements for graduation are as follows:

<u>Subject Area</u>	<u>Number of Credits</u>
Bible	4 (one credit per year in attendance)
English	4
Mathematics	4
Science	4
History	4
Foreign Language	3
Technology Education	3
Physical Education	2 (1/2 credit per year)

Student Service Requirements. Living Grace Christian School believes it is important for students to be growing in Biblical servanthood. Therefore, students are required to pursue various service opportunities which help them to grow in serving the Lord and others. Students are expected to serve for a minimum of eighty hours. If they desire to do so, students may begin working toward this requirement in grades seven and eight. Various options may fulfill the service requirements. Opportunities for students to consider are the following: congregational service (teaching/helping in Kids Church, worship team, outreach ministry), community programs, summer day camps, and other volunteer venues outside of the school setting. Service hours are verified through a school form which is completed by the student and his service supervisor.

Report Cards and Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parents receive a report card for their child at the end of each quarter marking period. In order to ensure that strong two-way communication has occurred, a parent-teacher conference (one of the school's four team meetings) occurs at the end of the first and third quarters. (After the second quarter we have our annual parent-teacher assembly.) Teachers and parents work together to address areas needing improvement as well as to provide students with specific encouragement.

Assignment Work

Assignment work, otherwise known as homework, is given to each student (first grade and above) daily. Students write their assignments into their assignment books each morning upon arrival to school. Students are given time during the day to work on their assignments, both with the class and individually. As they finish assignments, students ask a teacher (when the teacher is not doing direct instruction), a teacher assistant, or their parent to check and sign off the assignment in their planners, an action which indicates that the assignment is done satisfactorily. In addition, a parent signs the bottom of the student planner each evening, after confirming that all assignments for that day have been completed satisfactorily.

Standardized Testing

In April of each year, first through tenth grade students take standardized achievement tests. These assessments provide standardized assessments of how students are performing in each academic discipline. A testing report is provided to the parents at the end of the school year.

Juniors take the Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test in the fall and the Scholastic Aptitude Test in the spring. In addition, seniors are encouraged to take the Scholastic Aptitude Test a second time in the fall. These assessments are necessary for college applications.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty on the part of a student will receive an appropriate penalty. Cheating on a test or a quiz will result in a 0 % grade for that test or quiz. In addition, students will be sent to the principal's office for proper discipline.

DISCIPLINE

At Living Grace Christian School we view discipline positively. Discipline is done in a covenantal way with loving concern for the child and his or her long-term growth in the Lord. The word *discipline* is related to the word *discipleship*, and we see discipline as an opportunity to speak into the heart and life of the child, thereby disciplining him or her. Hebrews 12:5-11 provides this positive perspective toward discipline:

You have forgotten *that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons:*

“My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because *the Lord disciplines those he loves*, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son.”

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are

illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. *No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.* (NIV, italics added)

Applied rightly, discipline communicates encouragement, love, and acceptance toward our children. For those trained by discipline, it yields a harvest; according to the Word of God, that harvest is righteousness and peace in the life of the child.

In the school setting, as the students learn to be at peace within secure boundaries, they are best able to learn. Children thrive within proper boundaries and respect those who consistently help them to achieve their best—both in their studies and in their character.

Security within Clear Boundaries

At Living Grace Christian School each teacher clearly communicates the class boundaries—the expectations and standards for the students. We believe clear and consistent boundaries help each student to walk securely within those boundaries. We desire the children to be growing in the fruit of the Holy Spirit: “Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control” (NIV, Gal. 5:22-23).

The fruit of self control is particularly important for students to be in a posture of receiving instruction. Students are trained to obey and follow directions, including the need to listen to instruction and to raise their hand and be called upon rather than calling out to the teacher. In addition, students need to be able to stay in their seat and avoid disrupting the class. By obedience’s very nature, a child who has been trained to obey and respect authority will be in the best posture to learn to his maximal potential. Simply by obeying the teacher, the child will be able to listen to and receive instruction.

Process of Discipline

If the student breaks the standard, then the teacher will admonish the student appropriately. This rebuke will be done in a calm manner, not in a shaming manner, but done in such a way that the student understands that he or she has broken the standard. The student will acknowledge the wrong and seek forgiveness. The teacher will clearly communicate forgiveness to the student.

If after being admonished, the student continues to break the standard, then the student will receive an appropriate matching penalty. Giving a matching penalty is the taking of positive action as opposed to harmful nagging and yelling. A matching penalty is one which matches the nature of the infraction. Matching penalties can take various forms. The penalty should somehow address the nature of the infraction in order to instill in the student the sowing and reaping

principle of life. Appropriate matching penalties include the following: a scribe assignment addressing the nature of the infraction, loss of privilege such as recess (or partial recess), a written apology showing contrition, appropriate cleaning tasks, detentions with assignments addressing the nature of the infraction, and parental correction.

Parents receive a “discipline communication” memo as necessary to let them know what has occurred and the action taken. Parents are asked to reinforce the standard with their child, to sign the memo, and to have their child return it to the homeroom teacher the next school day.

Standard of Talk

Requiring a high standard of speech is particularly important in the school setting. The standard of talk for all teachers and students at Living Grace Christian School is expressed in Ephesians 4:29: “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen” (NIV). Talk such as put-downs, gossip, lying, grumbling, complaining, cursing, vulgar language, and worldly talk about boyfriends-girlfriends, movies, music, pop stars, and computer games is strictly forbidden.

Class Standards

We are committed to having class standards that are based on Scripture. In this way we are able to teach Biblically based principles as we discipline (and disciple) our students. The typical class standards will be the following or a variation thereof:

1. Treat others the way you want to be treated (Luke 6:31).
2. Obey and respect your parents, teachers, and other authorities (Eph. 6:1-3).
3. Be self-controlled (Gal. 5:23, 1 Pet. 5:8-11). Raise your hand and wait to be called upon before talking. Don’t get out of your seat without permission.
4. Talk in a wholesome way—only speak words that build others up (Eph. 4:29).
5. Work wholeheartedly as unto the Lord (Col. 3:23).

Code of Christian Conduct

All teachers, staff, and students are called to conduct themselves according to Biblical standards of godliness both inside the school and outside the school. This Christian code of conduct includes loving God and loving one’s neighbors, including fellow students and teachers, as oneself (Mark 12:28-31); obeying and respecting authority, including parents (for children) and teachers (Titus 3:1-2, Eph. 6:1-9); practicing Biblically wholesome and edifying listening habits, viewing habits, communications, and use of social media (Rom. 12:1-2, Eph. 4:29-5:2); walking in the truth, including abstaining from lying, stealing, and cheating (Eph. 4:20-28); and walking in sexual purity (1 Cor. 6:9-7:14).

In light of the school's Biblical statement on marriage, gender, and sexuality, this Christian code of conduct includes the following: dressing in conformance with one's biological sex, using the restrooms and changing facilities conforming with one's biological sex, and abstaining from all intimate sexual conduct outside the marital union of one man and one woman.

Note: The school has the right to discipline or ask a student to withdraw for any reason. At the same time, failure to comply with expected standards of conduct will subject the student or employee to potential disciplinary action, up to and including expulsion or dismissal.

Proactive Focus

In addition, given our covenantal focus and loving concern for each student's individual growth in godly character, at the parent-teacher conference, the teacher might communicate three areas tailored for the particular student to work on during the next quarter. These areas would be reinforced by both the teacher and the parents with the respective student. As the student succeeds in those particular areas, the student would receive a "star" or some other appropriate commendation for achievement in that area. Each quarter the three areas may be adjusted as necessary. A great way to teach proper behavior is to strongly encourage students when they grow in needful character areas.

ATTENDANCE

Students who have outstanding attendance in school have the best opportunity to learn. Because of this belief, families are called to a high standard of attendance. The following are the school's policies for lateness and for absenteeism.

Lateness

1. Parents are responsible to see that their children arrive on time and are picked up on time after school.
2. Parents are encouraged to have their children arrive to school by 8:15 a.m. so that they may get ready for school in a calm manner. Students are tardy if they are not in their seats by 8:25 a.m.
3. If the student is tardy, then the parent is to escort their child directly to the child's respective class.

Absenteeism

1. When returning to school after being absent, students are to bring a signed excuse from a parent or legal guardian stating the reason for the absence. The homeroom teacher will mark the

note EXCUSED or UNEXCUSED. The homeroom teacher will notify any applicable teachers of unexcused absences.

2. The absence is designated as unexcused if no note is turned in by the third day of the student's return to school regardless of any notes submitted after that date.

3. Excused absences include the following: illness, professional services in connection with student health and welfare, death in the family, family emergency, and necessary absences approved in advance by an administrator.

4. Any student absent five days in a row because of illness must bring a physician's note upon returning to class. The note must state the nature of the illness.

5. Tests missed as a result of an excused absence may be made up, whereas tests missed as a result of an unexcused absence may not be made up and are recorded as an "F" (60) in the grade book. Daily assignments missed as a result of any absence must always be made up. Generally, if a student is absent for a prolonged period of time, the student should be allowed to have the same number of days absent in order to make up the work. However, the work should be paced on a daily basis so that all work is finished within that time frame.

6. Homeroom teachers take attendance for the day. If a student comes in after 11:30 a.m. or leaves before 12:30 p.m., the student will be considered absent for a half-day.

PARENT PARTICIPATION PLAN

Because the mission of Living Grace Christian School is to partner with parents to raise up champions of God and because we believe that parents have been ordained by God as their children's primary teacher, we work hard to involve parents in their children's education. Specifically, we hold to the following values:

Values

1. **In working with parents, we seek to have an attitude of service.** As we partner with parents in the training and teaching of their children, we do so with a sincere and sensitive focus to reasonably do what we can to help the parents in the educational process. (Phil. 2:5-7; Gal. 5:13-15; 1 Pet. 4:7-11; Matt. 20:20-28; Eph. 4:11-13)

2. **We aim to communicate with receptivity, accessibility, and openness.** Our posture is to be one which invites parents to communicate with us. We are committed to the principle of speaking the truth in love. Regular interaction, both written and oral, with parents is a priority in helping our students to succeed. (Matt. 18:15-20; John 1:14; 1 Cor. 13; Prov. 22:11; 1 Tim. 3:1-3; 1 Tim. 4:12; Titus 1:7-8; Titus 2:6-8; Prov. 16:13, 21, 23, 24, 28, 32; Col. 3:12-17; Col. 4:5-6; Eph. 4:14-16)

3. **We view parents as participants in the educational process.** Likewise, we aim to encourage parents to see themselves as participants in their children's home learning, in volunteer school service, and in attending team meetings and school functions. (Deut. 6:4-9; Eph. 6:4; Prov. 22:6; Ps. 78:1-8).

4. We seek to foster an environment clearly supportive of parents. Both for teachers and for administrative staff, we view parents as a priority even amid our busy schedules and workload. Parents are major partners in the Lord's ministry at Living Grace Christian School. When parents visit the school, they should be greeted warmly by us, feel welcomed by us, and leave us having been served and blessed by us.

5. We seek to encourage parent participation in the school setting through a proactive action plan. We aggressively seek parents' assistance as volunteers and actively promote parental participation and attendance at both special events and team meetings.

Policies

In order to help us to operate within the above-stated values, the following policies for parent participation are specified:

1. The administration is to lead the parents through oral and written encouragements, including those with a Biblical rationale, for being involved in their children's learning and school.
2. Homeroom teachers are to provide the parents with a weekly encouragement to interact with their child on a specific learning assignment via email. In addition, homeroom teachers should communicate any other important items and reminders in the email.
3. Informal gatherings are scheduled and promoted in the first quarter of the school year for the teachers and the parents to come together for the purpose of breaking down barriers of communication and encouraging a strong working relationship.

Goals

We seek to encourage parents through our values and actions toward a maximal level of parent participation. Specifically, our goals for parent participation are the following:

1. For parents to participate, at least once per week, with their children on the following four home learning activities:
 - a. Reading with their children at home
 - b. Supervising their children's assignment work/review/drill of facts
 - c. Establishing and then monitoring time management for their children
 - d. Interacting with their children on enriching relationship-building activities.
2. Providing volunteer help to the school on at least a quarterly basis. (This volunteer help can be assistance done in the school setting or at home.)
3. Attending each of the school's four team meetings: back-to-school night, the mid-year parent-teacher assembly, and the two parent-teacher conferences (after the first and third quarters).

GODLY CHARACTER TRAINING PLAN

One of the major purposes of Living Grace Christian School is that of godly character development in the lives of the students. We define champions for God as “servant leaders of godly character who will advance the cause of Christ and make disciples of all nations.” What does it mean to be a servant leader of godly character? We take seriously Christ’s enduring mission for us to “make disciples of all nations . . . *teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you*” (NIV, Matt. 28:19-20, italics added). God has given many commands in his Word, including how he commands us to act and relate toward one another.

In order to be purposeful in this great endeavor, we need a strategic plan to systematically and relationally accomplish this mission. Each year the school has a godly character training plan to help accomplish these ends in the lives of our students. The plan set forward here is twofold: role modeling godly character traits by all faculty and staff, and training our students in godly character development. These two foci work in concord to help us to accomplish the purpose for which God has called us.

Each year a biblically-based godly character training plan is implemented which focuses on a particular character trait each month. The plan involves role exemplifying by all staff, parents, and students as well as the teaching of the godly character trait by teachers. Focus is placed on the students’ understanding of the trait, Scripture references associated with the trait, and application of the trait in daily experience. Teachers and parents strongly encourage students to apply the godly character trait to their daily lives. The hope is that the trait would be instilled in their inner being; in other words, that godly character would be written on the students’ hearts and minds by the Holy Spirit.

Examples of various biblically-based character traits are the following: the character of Christ, the fruit of the Holy Spirit, the “one another” commands, and aspects of being a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to the Lord.

Selected Definitions

Selected brief definitions are provided here for key words:

Character: The peculiar qualities, impressed by nature or habit on a person, which distinguish him from others (*Webster’s 1828 Dictionary* as are other definitions in this section).

Role Model: A person whose behavior in a particular role is imitated by others.

Teacher: An instructor; a preceptor; a tutor; one whose business or occupation is to instruct others.

Education: The bringing up of a child; instruction; formation of manners.

Involving Parents

The principal encourages the parents to be involved in the role exemplifying/teaching toward character development through monthly communication to the parents via the school newsletter *Raising Champions*. Parents will be informed of the upcoming monthly character trait at that time. Parents are encouraged to use teachable moments to reinforce the various godly character qualities at home.

Students as “Peer Role Examples”

Effort will be made by the homeroom teachers to involve key student leaders as “peer role examples.” These students will be invited and encouraged to be role examples of the particular trait. In the process, they positively influence their peers as well as grow in a very important leadership principle: leading by example.

References

- “God’s One Another Plan.” Linwood United Church, Kansas City, Missouri. Located in *Educational leadership resource notebook* (Komarnicki, 1992).
- Komarnicki, James W. (1995). *Character development: Course syllabus and related materials*. Virginia Beach: Regent University.
- Komarnicki, James W. (1992). *Educational leadership resource notebook*. Virginia Beach: Regent University.
- The NIV Study Bible*. (1985). Grand Rapids, Michigan: The Zondervan Corporation.
- Webster, Noah. (1980). *Noah Webster’s first edition of an American dictionary of the English language*. San Francisco: Foundation for American Christian Education.

PRAYER PARTNERS

We are committed to having consistent prayer support for the mission that God has for us at Living Grace Christian School. Each year we seek twelve prayer partners who agree to intercede daily for the school—for the staff, the students, and the parents. If a parent, relative, or friend desires to be a designated prayer partner, please talk to Dr. Switzer. Each prayer partner receives the monthly newsletter *Raising Champions*, which includes the prayer needs for the school.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Worship Team

The student worship team is one way our students have the opportunity to be equipped to be champions for God. The students on the worship team grow in becoming servant leaders in leading the student body in celebrating our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. At Living Grace Christian School, we call the students to praise the Lord with all of their hearts in spirit and in truth. This training occurs during our weekly chapel service. Students on the worship team use their leadership and musical gifts, including those of singing and the use of instruments.

Drama

Our students also have the opportunity to develop their gifts through periodic drama programs. A critical component of being equipped as a leader is developing one's communication skills, and drama provides an excellent venue for such growth. More specifically, drama helps to develop important leadership skills of preparation, poise, and expression. The simple act of learning to project one's voice in an appropriate manner is critical to one's development as a leader. Students grow through the process of learning and acting of parts, speaking of lines, singing of songs, and leading their peers and younger students. Of course, drama at Living Grace Christian School involves the production of programs that glorify the Lord and communicate His redemptive message.

Interscholastic Athletics

The Living Grace Christian School Athletics Program supports the mission of the school in every way; namely, that the students are being raised up to be champions for God—servant leaders of godly character who advance the cause of Christ and make disciples of all nations. **Our vision is to become champions for Christ, playing for an audience of One—champions in His eyes.** The verse that embodies what we are seeking to accomplish is found in Colossians 3:23-24: “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.” Our purpose is to receive the Lord's reward. All Biblical values are true for all of life, including the athletic field.

Before the beginning of each season, the coach gives the parents and students the following: basic team information, the application form, game schedule, and the “Roadway to Victory.” **The Roadway to Victory is a document that illustrates the following character-building qualities necessary to accomplish our mission of “each one of us individually and as a team achieving maximum growth in character, in teamwork, and in leadership”: Jesus Christ, faith, purpose, integrity, discipline, teamwork, leadership, courage, exertion, boldness, focus, steadiness, realness, wisdom, self-sacrifice, and maximum growth.** These values of the

athletics program are placed in the form of a torch, which is symbolic of that which an athlete carries on the “Roadway to Victory.”

We ask that parents and students support the teams by coming to the games and cheering on the players. If parents want to go to away games, they can travel in vehicles with the team or meet the team at the game location. Participation on the team is considered a privilege to be earned by the students, by both their personal character and their academic performance.

To register for a team, the application form must be completed, signed, and returned to the coach along with the necessary player fee. Please pray that the athletics teams will be a tool used by the Lord in the lives of our young people to help them to become champions for the Lord who are growing in godly character. Also, please pray for God’s blessing and protection in all activities.

Sports Club

All students have the opportunity to participate in the Sports Club. Supportive of our school’s mission to raise up champions for God, the sports club provides students with the opportunity to participate in recreational sports while walking out principles of servant leadership and godly sportsmanship. While learning the fundamentals of various sports, the students compete on teams in an intramural format. In addition, older students are provided leadership training as they work with younger students. During days of inclement weather, students are taught principles of godly health, including instruction from the Word of God. Our philosophy is to view sports as a ministry tool in reaching out to people with the love of Christ. Students enjoy playing sports while also growing in godly character and in leadership capacity.

Art Club

Students have the opportunity to develop their artistic abilities in the Art Club. The Art Club is a program geared toward the enjoyment of art through different projects and crafts. Our goal is to provide a relaxed environment in which the students learn about various mediums used in art, and be able to discover how they can use their God-given creativity to advance His Kingdom. Each session is geared toward specific grade ranges.

Chess Club

All students also have the opportunity to participate in the Chess Club. The mission of the chess club is to help our students to develop the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) as well as their minds while playing the very strategic game of chess. Chess is a game that challenges children to use their minds to their maximum effort, to think logically, to make wise decisions, and to increase their ability to focus. It is a game that requires patience, gentleness, humility, and self-control. As a game of logical thinking, chess provides the opportunity for children to work through and develop victorious strategies. This practice translates into developing like skills that help our students in many other areas of their Christian walk.

Chess is a game that has often been compared to life, sports, and even politics. The Living Grace Chess Club takes it a step further and relates it to the Word of God. The club reinforces the school's monthly godly character trait by relating it to the game of chess.

God has given us all great minds in order to accomplish His purpose in the earth. He has also given us the gifts of salvation, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and the promises of His Word. We have a responsibility to use these gifts to their fullest potential for His glory. We believe parents, the church, and the school (the three-stranded cord) have a responsibility to help our children develop these tools by creating an environment in which they can grow and excel. Chess Club provides one such environment. Those students who qualify as a result of their strength, style, and uncompromising chess sportsmanship receive the opportunity to compete in chess tournaments.

Student Government

The mission of the student government is to provide the secondary students with experience in becoming servant leaders. By applying godly wisdom in practical matters, they will grow in taking responsibility for leading people toward Biblically noble goals.

Scriptural Foundation

“Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them” (NIV, Acts 6:3).

Goals

1. To provide students with experience in servant-leading others.
2. To inculcate within students key principles of servant leadership from the Word of God.
3. For student government leaders to lead the secondary school students in a service project.
4. For class leaders to lead their class in preparing for and directing a senior class service project.

Procedure for Appointment

1. The whole process of appointing student leaders is one of prayer. Appointment of student leaders is committed into God's hands for His guidance (Prov. 3:5-6).
2. Secondary students nominate candidates from grades 9-12 based on Biblical qualifications.
3. The nominations are considered by the teachers and submitted to the principal.
4. The principal and others designated prayerfully make the final choices.

Qualifications for Appointment

1. Being full of the Spirit and wisdom as well as being a responsibility taker (Acts 6:3)
2. Walking in a grace-filled relationship with Christ, marked by spiritual fruit (Gal. 5:22-23)
3. Walking according to the school's five Biblical standards
4. Maintaining at least a *B* average academically

Offices of Appointment

St. Gov. President—Leads students by example, begins meetings with prayer, and leads meetings

St. Gov. Vice President—Assists president and assumes pres. responsibilities in his absence

St. Gov. Secretary—Records decisions during meetings; performs all necessary correspondence; and counts, records, and delivers to the appropriate parties any monies from fundraising

Chaplain—Maintains a Christlike atmosphere at all meetings and provides Biblical counsel

Representatives—Each grade 7-12 is represented in government by a class representative.

Class Offices of Appointment (Sophomore, Junior, and Senior Classes)

Class President—Leads students by example, begins meetings with prayer, and leads meetings

Class Vice President—Assists president and assumes presidential responsibilities in his absence

Class Secretary—Records decisions during meetings; performs all necessary correspondence; and counts, records, and delivers to the appropriate parties any monies from fundraising

SCHOOL UNIFORM

Our goal is that the students focus on Christ, on growth in godly character, and on their studies. A uniform can help students take their focus off how they and others look and keep their focus on what is important. Students should dress modestly with clothes that fit properly. Students are to be dressed in the proper school uniform upon arrival to school.

The school uniform (not the physical education uniform) is obtained from Flynn & O'Hara Uniforms, Inc. Our school code with the uniform company is M0349. The company is located at Loehmann's Plaza, 5210 Randolph Road, Rockville, Maryland 20852. Their phone number is 1-800-441-4122. Their website is www.flynnohara.com. Any items purchased from other stores are to be of the same color and style of the uniform. The uniform is as follows:

Girls Kindergarten to Fourth Grades (Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays)

Gray Drop-waist Jumper

Blue Short-sleeve Polo Shirt

Blue Long-sleeve Polo Shirt

White or Gray Socks or Tights

Black Dress Shoes (not sneakers or sandals)

Girls Fifth to Twelfth Grades (Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays)

Gray Wrap-around Kilt

Blue Short-sleeve Polo Shirt

Blue Long-sleeve Polo Shirt

White or Gray Socks or Tights

Black Dress Shoes (not sneakers or sandals)

Boys (Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays)

Gray Dress Pants with belt

Blue Short-sleeve Polo Shirt

Blue Long-sleeve Polo Shirt

Black or Gray Socks

Black Dress Shoes (not sneakers or sandals)

Note: While we do not have an “official” uniform sweater, you may purchase a gray, navy blue, or white dress sweater for your child, if necessary.

Physical Education Uniform (for Tuesdays and Thursdays)

On physical education days, students dress in the school p.e. t-shirt, gray gym shorts, white socks, and sneakers. During cold weather, students wear gray sweatpants and a gray sweatshirt. The p.e. t-shirt is purchased from the school office. Other items for the p.e. uniform are purchased at any store.

Hair

Boys’ hair is to be neatly trimmed in a conservative style. Hair is to be blended to eliminate lines and differences in length. No extreme styles are permitted, including tails or lines. Hair is not to be long enough to fall over the eyebrows, over the ears, or past the back collar.

Girls’ hair should be neatly groomed in a conservative style. The hair should not cause girls to deal with it on a continuing basis.

Note: The school administration reserves the right to determine what is appropriate in dress standards.

SCHOOL HOURS AND PROCEDURES

Arrival and dismissal procedures are as follows:

8:00—The school doors are opened. Parents should walk their students along the back sidewalk to the school entrance, which leads directly to the classroom level of the building. Arrival is encouraged by 8:15 to help students prepare for the school day.

8:25—Class starts. Students are to be in their seats by 8:25.

12:00—Morning-only kindergarten students are dismissed. Parents of morning-only kindergarten students should come directly to the kindergarten class to pick up their children.

3:00—End of school day. Parents or the designated driver comes to the back sidewalk to gather their children.

3:00 to 4:30—Various clubs are offered. In addition to other clubs, the Homework Club is for students to work on their homework. Students can receive help with their homework and enjoy some supervised recreation. If this club is needed on an occasional basis (i.e. late pick-up), the cost is \$10 per day.

EMAIL COMMUNICATIONS

The school administration and teachers communicate with parents via email. As a general rule, parents should expect an email communication from the homeroom teacher each Monday. We will highlight upcoming events and show how parents can interact with their children on a specified learning assignment that week. Parents should respond to the email, even if by a simple “thank you,” so that the teacher or administrator knows that the parents have received the communication. Of course, parents may also communicate with the teachers via email.

SCHOOL CLOSINGS

Our school follows the Montgomery County Public School system in determining school closings and delays because of inclement weather. If there is a two-hour delay, morning-only kindergarteners are excused from school. When it is necessary to close school or delay opening, the information will be announced on WJLA Channel Seven.

MEDICATION

We encourage parents to explore every possible alternative to the child needing to take medication during the school day. If a student must take medication during the school day, students may self-administer medication in an administrator’s presence under the condition that the parents have given the administration the school medication order form from the student’s doctor. Medication must be given from the parent directly to the administration for safe keeping.

TUITION PAYMENTS

Tuition payments are paid directly to the Smart Tuition Management Company. This company provides parents with different options for payment. In addition, it frees up the administration to not have to focus on collecting tuition. If you have a question regarding how Smart Tuition works, there are brochures available in the office.

Tuition payments are due to the Smart Tuition Company by the fifth of each month, August through May. If tuition is not paid by the twentieth of the month, then the student is placed on “financial separation” from the school (the student does not come to school) until the tuition arrearage is paid.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

We have adopted the philosophy of “ministry over money.” Because we believe that this kind of an education is a need for children and that God provides our needs, we believe that each family can trust God to provide this need. For families experiencing financial hardship, we encourage them to apply for financial assistance based on need. The family makes an application to an outside company, which makes an objective assessment of the family’s ability to pay and gives a recommended amount of financial assistance.

In addition, we encourage parents to pursue their home congregation for need-based financial assistance in order to be able to send their children to the school. We believe that pastoral leaders will be interested in providing help to families who desire to provide their children with a consistency of education from all three major influences in their lives: home, congregation, and school.

PASTORAL TUITION DISCOUNT

Pastors receive an automatic ten percent discount on their children's tuition. In addition, they may apply for need-based tuition assistance.

STUDENT CHAMPIONS FUND

The "Student Champions Fund" is designed to help parents who cannot pay the full tuition to be able to send their children to the school. We encourage families and individuals to give to the "Student Champions Fund." We desire that no family be excluded from the school due to financial hardship. Checks should be made out to Living Grace Christian School with "Student Champions Fund" written in the memo.

LIVING GRACE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL ENDOWMENT FUND

The Living Grace Christian School Endowment Fund is designed to support the long-term advancement of the school. Checks should be made out to Living Grace Christian School with "Endowment Fund" written in the memo. At present, gifts toward this fund contribute toward the capital campaign for building expansion.

SCHOOL NEWSLETTER—*RAISING CHAMPIONS*

Parents are expected to read the monthly school newsletter *Raising Champions*. Essential information is communicated, and the monthly calendar is provided. Also, we will share the monthly godly character trait, which parents are encouraged to reinforce at home. In addition, Dr. Switzer will often give a written encouragement for parents in the training of their children.

RACIAL NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

Living Grace Christian School admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admission policies, and other school-administered programs.