

Gulf Coast Christian Schools



**Accredited by the
National Christian School Association**

Business and Mission Plan

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Executive Summary

Gulf Coast Christian School is a ministry and a business established in 1979. Its vision is to serve the community of Pinellas County, especially the St. Petersburg area, by providing quality and personalized education to as many students as possible while emphasizing strong Christian values.

Research shows that GCCS is very competitive in value for preschool, elementary, and middle school grades. While the facilities of GCCS do not allow for as many extra curricular activities and programs to be offered, the curriculum is competitive with schools that have larger, more modern facilities.

Customers of GCCS include: parents who want to provide a Christian education for their children, parents who are dissatisfied with public education, parents who are looking for a school that teaches values and ethics, and parents looking for strong academics and advanced curriculum. Members of the Churches of Christ make up about 20-25% of the population.

GCCS has been aggressively marketing its program for the 2007-08 school year. A public relations program is also in place. Public service announcements are used to make the public aware of specialized programs. Coupons, flyers, ads, and other traditional methods of advertising are used. Our Yellow Pages ad refers potential customers to our website for extensive information about the school.

In the January 2003 visit for accreditation renewal, Dr. Ed Higginbotham of Harding University commented that, "Gulf Coast Christian School is a good school with a very strong staff. Clearly, the staff is one of the major strengths of the school. It is unusual for a school of this size to have so many good teachers, each teaching in his or her area of certification. That doesn't happen accidentally. I commend you for your commitment to excellence in your instructional program." Human resources have always been the strength of GCCS, and efforts are continuously made to ensure that this quality continues. Staff stability, retention and skill enhancement are top priorities.

Gulf Coast Christian School is a viable school in the St. Petersburg area, and is preparing for an outstanding 21st century of learning by students. As the environment of education changes, GCCS is prepared to meet the challenges.

Letter from the Elders of Northwest Church of Christ

The elders of the Northwest Church of Christ would like to express our support of Christian education and of Gulf Coast Christian School. We believe GCCS provides an opportunity for children to obtain a good education while being surrounded by Christian peers, teachers, and administrators. The school also provides a vehicle for people to witness Christians caring for others.

While providing an excellent fundamental education to the students, GCCS shares the love of Jesus, brings children up in the way of the Lord, provides a solid foundation in the Bible and teaches them to interact with one another as Christian brothers and sisters. It does this while providing a safe haven from so many of the dangers and pitfalls that exist in the public school environment. We know that, eventually, we must all venture out into the world to do His work. But, GCCS protects our children in their youth and better prepares them to face the world as Christians with a solid faith in the Good News that they must spread.

While GCCS is independently administrated on a daily basis, Northwest offers support in prayer and in the sharing of facilities and finances. We believe that we have good communication and a good working relationship with GCCS and are kept up to date on progress and issues that confront the school.

There are many benefits that arise from the school/church relationship. Many young people are exposed to God's word, and their families are provided an opportunity to become members of our Lord's Church.

GCCS serves the spiritual needs and also meets many of the physical needs of the individual involved. Students, parents, teachers, staff workers, administrators, board members, volunteers, local neighbors, members of Northwest church of Christ, as well as their immediate and extended families are all enriched by this school. Often the children become teachers, and teachers and parents become students as we all learn from the opportunities and experiences that present themselves daily.

Sincerely,

John Lucius

Jim Myers

Jim Shannon

Jim Wheeler

Elders, Northwest Church of Christ

Gulf Coast Christian School Philosophy

Gulf Coast Christian School exists in order to provide students with the opportunity to grow and mature, “as Jesus did, in wisdom, and in stature, in favor with God and man.” This guiding principle incorporates into a curriculum designed to guide students to develop spiritually, academically, physically, and socially.

The foundation of Gulf Coast Christian School is the belief that God and His son Jesus are creators and sustainers of all, as the Godhead – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus, the Word, became flesh, and was sent for the purpose of saving mankind. We believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, given to us through the Holy Spirit guiding the writings of men. We believe the Bible is our guide for living and daily decision making.

Gulf Coast Christian School was founded on the belief that man has a divine origin, that he was created in the image of God, and that man has moral freedom and responsibility. We believe that man is saved by God’s grace through belief in and obedience to God’s word.

We believe that Christ is our example for our relationship to the world. Our view is toward an eternal life with God.

We believe that each student will be able to develop to his full potential and learn most efficiently when curricula and practices are developmentally appropriate and by consistently experiencing success in their efforts. We believe students learn Christian values by identifying with the Christian attitudes and conduct modeled by faculty and staff.

The role of the parents in the education of their children is critical to the success of the curricula of Gulf Coast Christian School. Parents are respected as primary teachers of their children and valued for their essential role in God’s plan for the family unit. Parental assistance with homework and reinforcement of lessons learned is vital. The school utilizes many methods to maintain close communication between school and home. Parents are encouraged to take an active role in school life through participation in PTFA (Parent/Teacher/Friend/Association), school board, and classroom volunteer activities.

Gulf Coast Christian School has maintained a relation with the host church since its establishment. Faculty and staff are involved in a spiritual ministry as well as the educational process. The school seeks to be of service to the surrounding community.

GCCS: Business & Ministry

Vision Statement

GCCS exists to serve our community by providing quality and personalized education to as many students as possible while emphasizing strong Christian values.

Mission Statement

The mission of GCCS is to provide academic and Christian education using the best educational practices including innovative and traditional methods in order to guide students to grow and mature as Jesus did, “in wisdom and stature, in favor with God and men.” Luke 2:52 NIV

GCCS Core Values

Christian love directs us that all interpersonal relationships be highly regarded. We should interact with one another in truth, dignity, and respectfulness.

Education empowers each of us to excel using good judgment, based on sound principles and knowledge, leading to the development of sound beliefs, attitudes, and skills.

Our faith in God, through His Son, is the foundation of the trust in all of our relationships.

Integrity refers to the soundness of our moral character, to a God-given desire to do what is right, regardless of the consequences. It is a willingness to be humbled in order to preserve ethics and morality.

Responsibility to God, self, and others encourages us to achieve our potential and to appreciate the talents of others.

Spirituality is the development of the aspect of our being that enables our relationship with God.

Purpose

The ultimate goal of Gulf Coast Christian School is to cultivate in young people an appreciation for their own talents and abilities, as well as the contributions of others. Bible lessons are taught daily in all grades and all students attend a weekly chapel in which they participate.

A core GCCS belief is that raising children to be responsible and well educated adults who contribute to their community takes more than just a school. It takes the school, the parents and the community. "A cord of three strands is not quickly broken." Ecclesiastes 4:12

Background

Since 1979, Gulf Coast Christian School has been a ministry of the Northwest Church of Christ in St. Petersburg, Florida. The school was originally founded for the purpose of providing mothers with a quality day-care in a Christian environment ("Mom's Day Out" program), but quickly evolved into Gulf Coast Christian School.

Today, Gulf Coast Christian School offers age appropriate curriculum for children ages 2 through the 8th grade. GCCS is dedicated to meeting or exceeding the State of Florida academic requirements. The teachers at GCCS are committed to excellence. With a 16-1 average student-to-teacher ratio for grades K-5, teachers are able to focus on challenging and nurturing children to become intelligent, self-reliant, and responsible members of society.

GCCS is accredited by the National Christian School Association for the K-8 program. The preschool program is licensed by the Pinellas County License Board.

Not only have our students achieved academic excellence, many along with their parents, family and friends have come to know Christ and put Him on in baptism because of the school. Clearly, this ministry has been a great success in carrying out the commission Christ gives Christians in Matthew 28.

As a business, GCCS uses tuition as its main source of income, supplemented by grants and donations from supporters and grants. Seventy percent of all funds (tuition, grants, and donations) are used to hire and retain quality personnel. The remaining funds are used for curriculum, training, operations, and miscellaneous expenses.

As with any mission work, this ministry has not been easy. Current and past teachers and administrators deserve our thanks for their dedicated and sacrificial service. They are “missionaries” and the benefit of their work indeed spans into eternity.

Enrollment

Over the last five years, enrollment has ranged from 150 students up to 200 students. Currently, approximately 180 students attend GCCS.

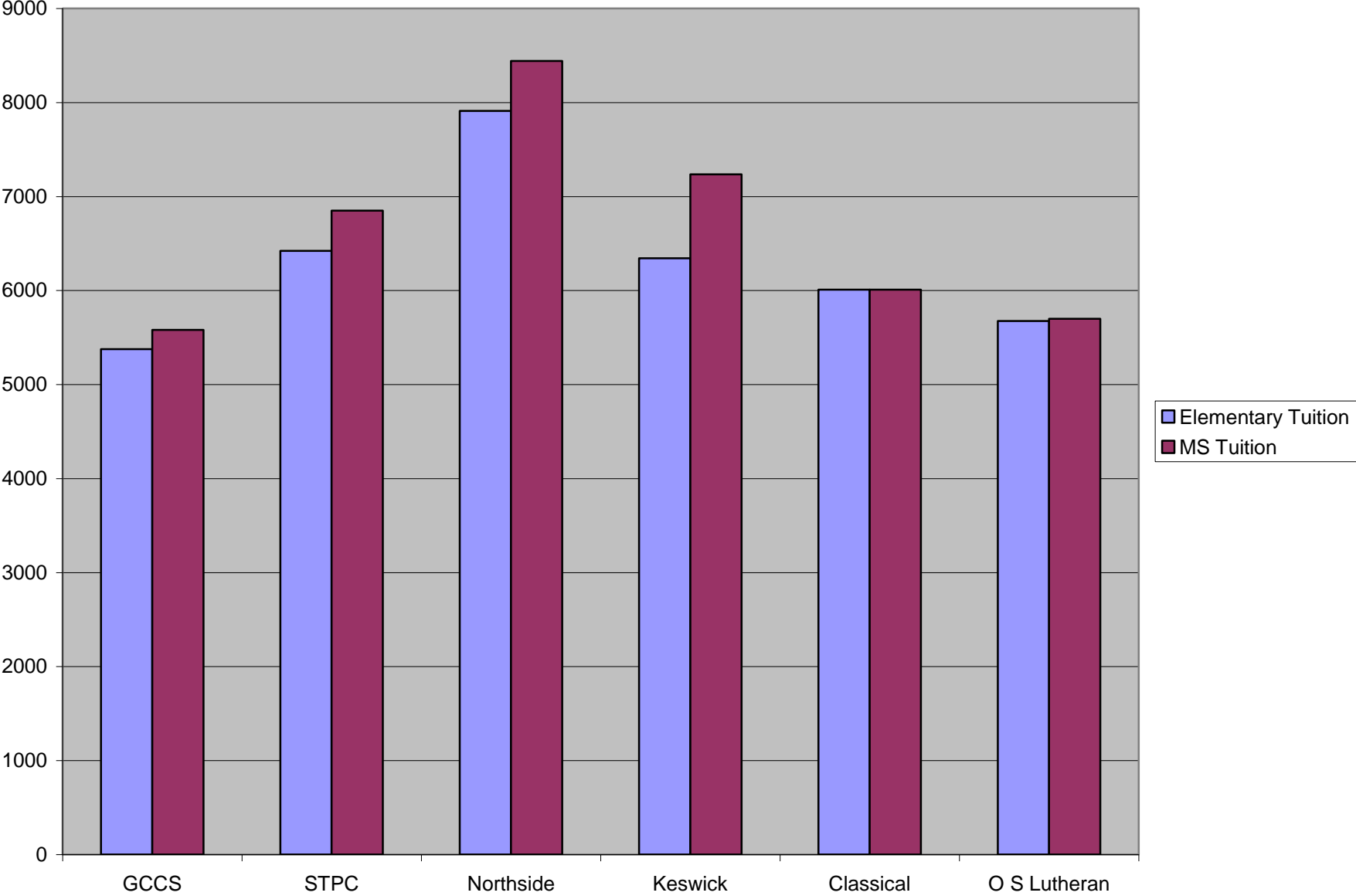
PTFA

The parents at GCCS have a strong and active Parent-Teacher-Friend Association. The PTFA supports GCCS with social events and fundraising activities to meet special needs of the students and the teachers. Annual events include a picnic at the beginning of the school year, Breakfast with Santa, visit with the Easter bunny and several fun events for families, such as bowling, picnics, etc. Fundraising events include the annual pie sale and walkathons.

Community

In the community, the Northwest Church of Christ consistently supports GCCS both financially and by providing facilities. Neighborhood businesses are also supportive with gifts, discounts and item donations. Monthly dinners are provided by local businesses with the proceeds going directly into the school’s general expenditure fund. An auction is held annually with merchandise and services provided by local merchants as well as private donations.

Market Analysis



Customers

Students from many different backgrounds attend GCCS. Approximately one fourth of the students come from the membership of the Churches of Christ. The remaining students also come from the surrounding community, and represent many different backgrounds. The population is multi-cultural, with a wide range of Christian beliefs represented.

Customers of GCCS include: parents who want to provide a Christian education for their children, parents who are dissatisfied with public education, parents who are looking for a school that teaches values and ethics, and parents looking for strong academics and advanced curriculum. Parents may come from the greater St. Petersburg area, including St. Pete Beach, Treasure Island, Madeira Beach, Seminole, Largo, Gulfport, and Clearwater.

The target market includes parents of preschool children who are likely to stay in the same school through preschool, elementary school, and middle school. A secondary market includes parents of elementary students, and a third target market is parents of middle school students.

The geographic area around GCCS is also an important target market. This includes the 33709 and 33710 zip codes.

Parents learn of GCCS through many avenues. Word-of-mouth has always been one of the best tools for this, and continues to be. Other methods are described in the section below, Marketing Plan.

Marketing Plan

Beginning in January 2008, GCCS is renewing an aggressive marketing plan. The goal of the plan is to increase enrollment at all three levels: preschool, elementary, and middle school.

All levels

- Expanded Website
- Ads in the Families-on-the-Go magazine for three months – in the 33709 and 33710 zip code areas
- Teachers send letters to grade level that is to be promoted to them inviting them to participate the next year
- Coupons in ValPac and other local media
- Tuition credit to parents who recommend another family who enrolls their child at GCCS
- Tuition credit to teachers and staff who recommend another family who enrolls their child at GCCS
- Flyers to local churches and preschools
- Recruitment of Board of Trustee members from all local Churches of Christ
- Yellow Pages
- Personal contacts
- Open House for next grade up
- 10% discount to ministers of all denominations
- Public service announcements on Christian radio stations

Preschool

- Word of mouth
- Flyers to local preschools that are closing
- Flyers to local churches of all denominations that do not have preschools
- Flyers to local pediatrician offices

Elementary/Middle

- Flyers to local preschools that do not have elementary programs to promote elementary school
- Friend Day
- Middle School flyers and coupons to churches of all denominations in 33709 and 33710 zip codes

Operations Plan

Material Resources

GCCS uses the facilities provided by the Northwest Church of Christ. In addition, the school owns two lots that adjoin the church property. Playground equipment, sports equipment, audio-visuals, textbooks and curriculum resources, classroom furniture, and many other resources are owned by the school. A portable building with three classrooms is currently being leased.

Human Resources

In the 2002 visit for accreditation renewal, Dr. Ed Higginbotham of Harding University commented that, "Gulf Coast Christian School is a good school with a very strong staff. Clearly, the staff is one of the major strengths of the school. It is unusual for a school of this size to have so many good teachers, each teaching in his or her area of certification. That doesn't happen accidentally. I commend you for your commitment to excellence in your instructional program."

- All teachers in the elementary and middle school programs are certified. Preschool teachers have met all credentials required by the state of Florida and by the Pinellas County License Board for Children's Centers. Most exceed the requirements. Staff, certified in first aid and CPR, is available in the extended care program as well as during the preschool and elementary/middle school day.
- The bookkeeper has 20 years of experience in accounting and banking. Other office staff members attend workshops periodically to stay up to date in computer technology and office management skills. The administrator has a master's degree and has completed the coursework for a doctorate in education curriculum and instruction. The administrator has committed to remain on staff as an advisory consultant upon the hiring a new school administrator.
- Staff members are encouraged to continually update and pursue professional growth opportunities. Reimbursement of half of the tuition for work toward the next level degree is provided. Tuition for required classes is reimbursed in full.
- The GCCS Board of Trustees is a diverse group of volunteers including parents, business leaders, retired military nurse with experience in Risk Management, educators, and physicians. They give of their time and resources in many ways.

- Volunteers are a major resource to GCCS. They assist with work in the classrooms, with the facility, with grant writing and fundraising. They include parents and grandparents, church members, community members, alumni, and students from local schools. Families of students are required to volunteer 12 hours per year.

Staffing plan

- Ratio of preschool classes meet standards set by the Pinellas County License Board for Children's Centers; these vary depending on class size.
- Ratio for elementary school is 1 adult to 16 children average
- Ratio for middle school is 1 adult to 20 students average
- One part time administrator and one full time office worker, plus bartered aides work in the school. One aide substitutes, provides coverage of classes as needed, and coordinates the lunch program. The other aide works in the library, and assists with preschool classes as needed.
- Extended care staff meet the standards established by the Pinellas County License Board for Children's Centers
- Summer Fun program is staffed by standards set by the Pinellas County License Board for Children's Centers

Curriculum

Overview

The Bible and its guiding principles are at the core of all curricula at GCCS. Christ is the example given for the relationship to the world, with a view toward eternal life with God. Academics are stressed, and students are provided with opportunities to be well rounded through music, art, physical education, computers and Spanish. Chapel is held weekly, and students participate through memory verses, dramas, singing, and other creative ways of learning about God and His word. Parents and grandparents are invited to participate in these important times of learning.

Preschool

Gulf Coast Christian Schools provide a quality Christian education for preschoolers, ages 1 to 5. The curriculum consists of weekly thematic units. These units are then combined with the alphabet, numbers and colors. The students are also taught a weekly Bible story and Bible verse. The Bible verse is quoted in chapel each week by the class reciting in unison. Each classroom is set up to enhance learning. There are learning centers including manipulatives, science, books, blocks, toys, housekeeping, and art. Some rooms have computers, and others may cycle centers from time to time such as dress-up, drama, and writing. In these centers, the students may work independently or with others. The students participate in art activity daily. Circle time, also held daily, pertains to the weekly theme. Reading is an essential part of circle time and is also focused on throughout the day.

Elementary

The certified teachers at Gulf Coast Christian School use curriculum and procedures that align with the Sunshine State Standards for Education. A variety of learning styles and methods encompass a sound educational approach to learning. Each child has his/her own textbook for each class and many other class resources are available in each room. Manipulative and hands-on activities are used whenever appropriate to enhance the learning experience. Many rich sources of literature are used including a reading anthology and trade books appropriate at each level. Opportunities are offered for individual and group learning with an emphasis placed on accountability and working as a team member. Standardized testing is one form of evaluation used each year with emphasis placed on planning curriculum for the following years. Children daily receive instruction in Math, Language, Reading, Spelling, Writing, Social Studies, Science, Physical Education, and Bible. Weekly Chapel programs let the children worship together with each class taking part in presenting two chapel programs each school year. Spanish classes are provided weekly.

Middle School

The sound foundation of the GCCS Elementary Program is continued in the Middle School Advanced Curriculum. The curriculum focuses on preparation for advanced High School Programs such as the International Baccalaureate Program and the various Magnet Programs available in Pinellas County. The students receive daily instruction in all subject areas including Physical Education and Health. The Sixth Grade Curriculum includes instruction in Pre-Algebra Course I, Earth Science, Language Arts, World History, and enrichment courses such as Study Skills and Music. The Seventh Grade Curriculum includes instruction in Pre-Algebra Course II, Life Science, Language Arts, Geography, and enrichment courses. Eighth graders study Algebra I, Physical Science, Civics, Spanish, and Language Arts. All of these courses are offered at the advanced level with corresponding workloads, so that GCCS students are well prepared for High School. The Middle School culminates each school year with an educational field trip to an out of county location such as Epcot or Kennedy Space Center.

Extended Learning

Care for children is provided both before and after school hours, with the school opening at 7:00 am and closing at 6:00 pm. Snacks are provided for children in the preschool program, and they are given outdoor time to develop their large motor skills as well as inside time where they have choices that allow them to be creative and work on both large and small motor skills.

Elementary and middle school students have many options to choose from, including time to do homework and time to play, both in and out of doors. Other activities from which they can choose include Reading Club, Art Class, Drama Club, band, piano, Engineering with Legos, and periodic special programs. Intramurals are available for students in 5th-8th grades.

Summary

Strengths of the GCCS curriculum include:

- Academics
- Bible and chapel
- Preparation for the International Baccalaureate program
- Computers
- Spanish
- Physical education and intramurals
- Music
- Art incorporated into the academics

Extracurricular activities available to students include:

- Piano
- Band
- Sports
- Drama
- Reading
- Art
- Special programs

Facilities

- GCCS operates in facilities provided by the Northwest Church of Christ. Classrooms for preschool classes meet the standards established by the Pinellas County License Board for Children's Centers. Elementary classrooms exceed the minimum space required. Some classrooms are small, but because class size is kept to 16 or lower at the elementary level, space is not a concern. Middle school classroom space is outstanding.
- A library offers many choices of books. In addition, each classroom has an age and stage appropriate library.

Teacher credentials

- Preschool staff members meet the credential requirements of the Pinellas County License Board and the Florida Department of Children and Families. Most have a Child Development Associate or a Florida equivalent. Three preschool teachers have four-year degrees. Others are working on two-year degrees.
- Preschool staff members are required by Pinellas County License Board to attend at least eight hours of updating per year; GCCS requires a total of 12 which can include the updating provided at the school.
- All preschool staff members have certification in CPR.
- Elementary and middle school staff members have college degrees in education and/or related subjects and are approved for teaching by the National Christian School Association.
- Elementary and middle school staff members attend workshops each year to update themselves in both curriculum and instructional strategies. GCCS requires 12 hours of training per year, and provides some of the training on campus. Teachers are encouraged to attend local and state activities for the remaining hours.

Administrator credentials

- Masters degree in education; completed doctorate work in curriculum and instruction
- Certification in administration and supervision
- Worked in education field for 32 years, 11 years as a teacher, 21 years in administration
- Served as education consultant for 2 years
- Writer of curriculum, textbooks, professional journal articles
- Speaker at local, state, and national conferences

Financial Plan

Tuition Increases for Elementary and Middle Schools

2008-09: 7%

Elementary: \$4990 plus \$555 fees

Middle School: \$5100 plus \$655 fees

2009-10: 8%

2010-2011: 9%

2011-12: 10%

2012-13: 10%

Suggested Salary Increases for Faculty and Staff

2008-09 3% plus step*

2009-10: 4% plus step*

2010-2011: 5% plus step*

2011-12: 6% plus step*

2012-13: 6.5% plus step*

* \$100 for non-degreed, \$200 for degreed

Tuition Increases for Preschool 2008-09

| 07-08 School Day | 07-08 Extended | 07-08 Registration | 08-09 Tuition | 08-09 Fees | 08-09 Registration | Increase 4% Month / Annual |
|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|------------------|---------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| \$437 | \$545 | \$10 | \$455 | \$570 | \$50 | \$18 / 216 |
| \$415 | \$529 | \$10 | \$435 | \$550 | \$50 | \$20 / 240 |
| \$208 | \$350 | \$10 | \$208 | \$350 | \$50 | \$0 |

Growth Plan

Because the student teacher ration of 16 to 1 is a defining factor in making GCCS unique in the community, it is a goal of the school to maintain this ratio. This goal is more than just a number to us at GCCS. It is the philosophy of the school that this low ratio provides better care for children, a better academic foundation, and greater opportunity to teach Christian principles. Every effort will be made to maintain it.

In order to do this, it is anticipated that tuition will have to be raised. This is especially true in light of the need to increase teacher pay. The goal is to raise teacher pay by 25% over the next five years.

In order to sustain the program, the buildings need to be continually updated. This will allow for new technology to be used, and will provide a better educational environment for the students and staff.

A goal is to enhance the donor base as well, to allow for growth and progression - both in curriculum offerings, and in the number of students. The Benevon model has been selected for this goal, and all Board members are asked to attend a Benevon training and to assist in finding people to attend the Campus Life Tours.

Another goal is to continually update curriculum and to provide relevant teacher training to ensure that the new curriculum is being used to its best capacity.

An increase in student enrollment is also a goal. An aggressive plan to recruit students at all levels will be a part of each year's goals.

