

Welcome to a new school year at Grace Academy. We look forward to seeing our new and returning students. We are pleased you have chosen Grace Academy to educate your children. It is our desire to not only encourage a strong academic environment but also offer a campus with a strong spiritual emphasis.

There have been various changes as we enter this new year. We are moving Chapel to the first school day of the week. After review, we felt it would be better to start off the week with a spiritual emphasis rather than wait until the end of the week. We will continue to offer Chapel and small group activities to our middle and high school students. Elementary Chapel will also be held at the beginning of the week. Blessing Buddies and Clubs will continue to be offered.

New staff have been hired at Grace Academy. My role has not changed but my title has changed. I now have accepted the role as Head of School and will continue to be the Middle/High School Principal. Mrs. Christina Hammer-Atkins is now the Chief Academic Officer and Elementary Principal. She will oversee professional development, teacher evaluations, curriculum and other academic assignments at the same time serving our K4 – Grade 5 students.

Shaunette Terrelonge has been selected as the schools new Business Manager. She has an accounting degree for the University of Maryland and will be working with FACTS, Sycamore, foodservice, and other accounts involving financial matters. She is here to serve you and can help you with financial questions. This school year we encourage all families to use FACTS to pay tuition bills. The **FACTS subscription fee** has been paid by GA for all families. We will continue to accept checks and cash but would encourage you to pay all tuition online when possible. This helps us with various financial reports and assist us with updated accounting practices. In the future we hope to move all financial transactions to FACTS including paying for school fees, field trips, retreats, food service, etc.

New teaching staff include Rebekah Smith (Grade 5), Sara Swacina (Art), Stephen Hunt (Physical Education/Assistant Athletic Director), Erin Holt (Middle School Science), Tim Drown (High School Science), Mr. Greer (American Sign Language). We are please God has sent these teachers our way. At this writing we are still searching for a part-time technology and orchestra teacher.

Frank Shortt has accepted the role as our Lead Custodian. Frank was our 3<sup>rd</sup> shift custodian so he is not new to Grace Academy. He and his crew have done a marvelous job of getting the school ready for opening. The school looks fabulous. Not only have they cleaned but several coats of paint have been applied. As you will see the main office area has a fresh coat of paint in brighter colors. To assist Mr. Shortt, we have selected Brandon Snyder as our 2<sup>nd</sup> shift custodian. Brandon is looking forward to working at Grace and he will serve as our afternoon custodian.

After several discussions with our academic team we have deep concerns about the interference cellphones have had on student learning. Technology can be good when used correctly but there is a correlation between student under achievement and interruptions by cellphone usage. We found too many students, middle/high, were circumventing the cellphone policy by asking to use the restroom only to find that this was an avenue to text and use their cellphone. This school year middle/high school students **are required** to place their cellphone in their locker or if taken to class will be required to be place in a compartment hanging on the classroom door. Students will not be permitted to take a cellphone with them to the restroom. If a student violates the school cellphone policy the phone will be confiscated and returned only to a parent. The fine will remain at \$25 and raised to \$50 after the

second offense. **Students may not use cellphones between the hours of 8:20 – 3:15.** If you have an emergency please call the school. Students may be permitted to call parents or review texts on a case by case basis only.

Parents we ask for your assistance with our dress code policy. It is not our desire to be the dress code police but as a Christian school we must insist that students remain modest in their dress. I am aware of the latest trends in clothing and understand that teenagers want to look “cool” but clothing that is tight fitting is not acceptable. Please do not be offended if an administrator contacts you with a concern. One new change this year will be Dress Down Day every Friday. Students are required to wear school colors or spirit wear. If a student desires to wear their uniform they are welcome to do so. Some DDD will be themed and a fundraiser fee charged.

Thank you again parents for your dedication to our school and trusting us enough to spend your hard-earned money sending your students to Grace. We encourage you to be active parents. We welcome you to join Parent Involvement, Athletic Boosters and other organizations within our school. My door is open if you have question and concerns. We are here to serve God and welcome you as part of the Grace family.