**Student & Parent Handbook**

***2019-2020***

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**FAITH & PHILOSOPHY**

**Who We Are**

*Grace Academy* is a ministry of Abundant Life Center. The vision of Abundant Life Center is *fruitfulness for the glory of God by sowing God’s word to our hearts and our lives to the world*. One way we seek to fulfill this vision is by providing Christian Education to our local community. Learn more about our church on our website at [www.abundantlifectr.com](http://www.abundantlifectr.com).

**Statement of Faith**

1.  The Bible is the inspired Word of God and by it all doctrine is established.

2.  There is one true God who is revealed in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

3.  Our Heavenly Father is Creator, Almighty, Eternal, and a God of love.

4.  Jesus is the Son of God.  He was the Word made flesh who lived a sinless life. He was born of a virgin. Jesus died as our substitute for sin and was raised from the dead victorious over sin, the devil, and death.  Jesus now reigns as Lord and Head of the Church.

5.  Salvation from sin and death is provided for all mankind through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ.  We receive salvation by grace through faith.  Our salvation provides for forgiveness, healing, authority over the devil, peace, and fellowship with God.

6.  The Holy Spirit works to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and to guide believers in truth.  We believe in the baptism of the Holy Spirit with believers being filled with the Spirit, empowered to live for Christ, and manifesting the gifts of the Spirit.

7. God designed the family unit to be established between one man and one woman, each representing unique aspects of God’s nature, and together providing a complete picture of God’s will for the family. Within this model, children are best positioned to grow and excel in every area of life.

*Our 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 Grace Academy’s faith, doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline, the Senior Pastor of Abundant Life Center is the final interpretive authority on the Bible’s meaning and application as related to our above stated beliefs.*

**Mission Statement**

*Grace Academy exists to assist parents with training their children to excel in life preparation, in further education, and in the development of Christ-like character.*

**Christian Philosophy**

Proverbs 22:6 says, *“Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”* This is a Biblical mandate that God gave to all parents. We desire to partner with parents to assist them in this training process. We consider the *parents’ involvement* a vital component in ensuring their child has a positive and successful educational experience.

In preschool, we introduce several important foundational concepts of learning and character. Beginning in kindergarten, the classroom instruction transitions to focusing more on Christian discipleship where we partner with Christian parents to ensure consistency of life and learning.

We strive to create an environment where children can develop spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, physically, and socially. All classroom instruction is taught through the lens of a Biblical worldview where God’s Word, the Bible, is the basis of all truth and the foundation from which all learning begins.

**Educational Philosophy**

We believe that if children are not taught to look for and see God in every area of life, their perspectives on life will lack faith that God is relevant to every area of life. Therefore, our goal is to teach every subject through a biblical worldview; whereby, children will interpret all matters of life in light of the truth of God’s Word and begin the process of developing a foundation of faith in Jesus Christ.

**Expectations of Grace Academy:**

* Grace Academy will provide qualified teachers and staff.
* Grace Academy will communicate regularly with parents regarding their child’s performance and be available for consultations with parents throughout the year.
* Grace Academy will provide a learning environment conducive to the age-appropriate needs of the students.

**Expectations of parents:**

* Parents will abide by the policies set forth in the parent handbook.
* Parents will maintain open communicate with the school regarding any questions or concerns.
* Parents will participate in school activities such as field trips, fundraisers, and other events.

**Expectations of students:**

* Students will abide by the policies set forth in this manual and those established in the classroom by the teacher.
* Students will behave in a respectful manner towards the staff, other students, and the facility.
* Students will participate in class field trips and programs throughout the school year.

**ADMISSIONS**

**Admissions Policy**

Students seeking admission to Grace Academy will be evaluated on the basis of their enrollment application. All new students enrolling in kindergarten will be required to take an entrance test to determine their readiness for kindergarten. Returning students do not need to take the entrance testing unless otherwise determined by the school director. Additionally, we may request copies of previous school records.

Enrollment for new families will begin after enrollment opens for current families. After enrollment opens for new families, applications will be processed in the order in which they, along with the application fee, are received.

In preschool, we introduce several important foundational concepts of learning and character. Beginning in kindergarten, the classroom instruction transitions to focusing more on Christian discipleship where we partner with Christian parents to ensure consistency of life and learning. Therefore, beginning in kindergarten, we require that at least one parent be a Christian.

A student may be denied admission based upon academic or behavioral concerns, or if any part of the enrollment information is incomplete.

***Notice of Non-discriminatory Policy as to Students***

**Grace Academy admits students of any race, gender, color, nationality, and ethnic origin to 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, gender, color, nationality, and ethnic origin in administration of its admission policies, educational policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school programs.**

**Admissions Procedure:**

1. Submission of completed *Enrollment Packet* to the school:
   * Signed Enrollment Application
   * $35 (non-refundable) Application fee
   * Birth Certificate (photocopy)

Additional forms for Kindergarten:

* + Signed Pastor’s Recommendation
  + Signed Records Release Request Form

1. New students enrolling in kindergarten will be contacted to schedule their *entrance testing*. Current students are not required to take entrance testing unless otherwise determined by the school director.
2. *Verification Letters* will be sent to families communicating the status of their application.
3. A *Welcome Packet* will be sent to all parents whose children have been accepted. This packet contains additional forms and information. Some of the forms will need to be completed and returned to the school, along with the Materials Fee ($50 for preschool; $75 for Kindergarten), by June 1.

**Withdrawal**

Withdrawal from Grace Academy requires at least two weeks’ notice to the director. Tuition payments are required until the withdrawal is complete. Refunds will be made for overpayments as long as the proper notice was given. If no proper notice was given, the school reserves the right not to give refunds. In the event of an extenuating circumstance, the director reserves the right to work with the parents regarding payments and refunds.

**Transportation**

*Preschool* – Preschool parents are responsible for the transportation of their children to and from school.

*Kindergarten* – Parents may either transport their children or have their children transported by their local school district. If parents desire to have their child(ren) transported to Grace Academy by their local school district, the district is required to provide transportation, free of charge, if the border of their school district is within 10 miles of Grace Academy.

For more information specific to your school district, please contact the director at Grace Academy. You must complete a *Transportation Form* and return it to Grace Academy. Grace Academy will then submit this to the school district on your behalf. The district should then be in touch with the parents directly regarding the transportation schedule.

**FINANCIAL**

**Tuition and Fees**

Tuition payments must be paid on or before the first of each month, beginning on September 1. There will be a total of 9 payments, with the last payment being on May 1. Tuition payments can be made by cash, personal check, or money order. Credit Cards are not accepted.

**Application Fee:** Due upon submission of application. $35/student

**Tuition rates**: (9 monthly payments – September through May)

* + **Preschool**: (9:00am-11:30am)
    - 2-days/week (T/Th) – PK-3 only $115/month ($1035/year)
    - 3-days/week (T/W/Th) – PK-3 & PK-4 $130/month ($1170/year)
    - Lunch Buddies (T/Th) 11:30am-12:30pm $ 25/month ($200/year)

*Children must be 3 or 4 respectively by August 31, 2019.*

* + **Kindergarten**: (9am-3pm)
    - 3-days/week (T/W/Th) $250/month ($2250/year)

*Children must be 5 by August 31, 2019.*

**Materials fee**: (one-time fee) - Due by June 1.

* + Preschool - $50 per student
  + Kindergarten - $75 per student

**Entrance Testing fee**: (Kindergarten only) – $25

* + Waived for current student

**Field Trips:** Field trip expenses are not included in the above listed tuition or fees. Parents will be required to pay these expenses as they arise.

**Lunch Buddies** (Preschool only) – *Starts in October*

Our Lunch Buddies programruns from 11:30am-12:30pm. This timeallows preschoolers to have lunch together followed by additional play and/or instructional time. Children need to bring a packed lunch not requiring the use of a microwave.

For planning and budgeting purposes, it is expected that if a child enrolls in the Lunch Buddies program, they remain in the program for the duration of the year. However, if circumstances arise that warrant the parents removing their child from the program, at least two weeks’ notice must be given, otherwise, parents will be required to pay for an additional month.

**ATTENDANCE**

Regular attendance is essential to ensuring a healthy attitude and an overall positive experience. Parents are not to send their children to school if it would be detrimental to their child’s health or to the health of others.

**Preschool**

Although attendance in preschool is not strictly enforced, it is still very important that children attend school regularly to prevent gaps in their learning and to minimize disruptions to the overall flow of the classroom learning environment.

**Kindergarten**

*Unexcused Absences*

Unexcused absences are defined as missing the bus, vacationing, or family outings without prior school approval. Special consideration may be given in unusual cases. Additionally, after ten “excused” absences, absences will be unexcused unless the student has a doctor’s note.

*Excused Absences*

Excused absences are defined as illness of the student, death in the immediate family, and medical (including dental and optical) appointments. Every attempt should be made to schedule appointments before or after school hours. If a kindergarten student arrives after 10:30am or leaves before 1:30pm, they will be marked as absent for a ½ day.

Vacations and family outings will be excused only if a written request is received and approved in advance by the director. Parents should make every attempt to schedule vacations during school vacation times. The teacher will communicate to the parents regarding work that will be missed.

If a student will be absent, it is the parent’s responsibility to communicate this to the school office by leaving a voicemail and/or emailing the school. Parents may additionally notify the teacher directly. However, they still need to notify the office. It is not the office’s responsibility to contact the parent if a child is absent. The child’s absence will be marked “unexcused” without prior notification, unless otherwise determined by the director. It is our policy that any student missing more than ten days in a school year will be required to obtain a doctor’s note for every subsequent absence. If a doctor’s note is not provided, every subsequent absence will be marked as “unexcused.” Exceptions may be granted by the director for extenuating circumstances.

**Tardiness**

Punctuality is important to help children develop good habits, not only for school, but for life. If a student is tardy because of a doctor or dentist appointment, it will be counted as an excused tardy if the parent drops off a note from the doctor’s or dentist’s office upon arrival at the school, and if the student arrives before 10:30am. Tardiness occurs when a student arrives late for school and is unable to be in their classroom by 9am when school starts. Each tardy will be classified as excused or unexcused. The student’s regular method of getting to school will be used when determining which classification the student receives when the tardy is due to transportation.

**Delays, Cancellations, & Closures**

In the event of a school delay or cancellation due to weather, power outage, or other such event, parents will be notified via the text message alert system by 8am that morning. If it is weather-related, the school will also post the announcement on the WGAL channel 8 website, on the FOX 43 website, and on the WJTL radio station by 8am that morning. If you have any questions, please contact the school.

*1-Hour Delay Schedule*

Preschool – 10am-12pm. Lunch Buddies will run from 12-12:30pm (T/Th only)

Kindergarten – 10am-3pm.

*Closure*

In the event of an unexpected school closure after students have arrived at school (power outage, evacuation, etc.), parents will be notified immediately. If parents cannot be reached, the school will contact someone listed on the Emergency Information Form. In the event the school is unable to reach anyone, the school will take whatever precautions it deems necessary to ensure the safety of the students.

**GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Hours of Operation**

The school day starts at 9am for preschool and kindergarten. Doors open at 8:45am. If children arrive via school district transportation earlier than 8:45am, we will accommodate those situations. Children should be in their rooms and ready to start the day by 9am. Students enrolled in the Lunch Buddies program stay until 12:30pm. Kindergarten operates from 9am-3pm.

Parents are welcome to visit during hours of operation as long as there is prior notification given to the school. All visitors are to first report to the office upon arrival to check in and also to check out when leaving.

**Drop-Off Procedures**

Doors open at 8:45am. A staff member will greet at the front door. If you desire to accompany your child to their classroom, please park in the lower lot. If you are dropping off your child at the front door, you may drive up around the circle. If you know you will arrive late to school, please call the school at 717-755-6438 to let us know when you will arrive. Ring the doorbell upon arrival, and staff will let you in. The front door will be locked by 9:05am.

**Pickup Procedures**

In order to ensure a safe and efficient pick up of your child after school, we request that all parents or other authorized adults display the Dismissal Signs provided by the school. A staff member will bring your child directly to you outside. You may wait in the car line to drive up to the front door or park in the lower lot and walk up.

*Student Pick Up Policy*

Children must be picked up promptly when the class is dismissed. A late fee of $10 will be charged for every 15 minutes beyond the dismissal time if there is a consistent occurrence of the child being picked up late. In the case of extenuating circumstances, we will work with you.

Students will only be released to an authorized adult. Authorized adults will be identified as those displaying the Dismissal Sign provided by the school or as listed on student’s Emergency Information form provided by the parent. If someone new will be picking up your child, please try to give them one of the Dismissal Signs we provided. Otherwise, simply let us know ahead of time via phone or email.

**Lunch**

All preschoolers have the option to enroll in the Lunch Buddies program, which runs from 11:30am-12:30pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays beginning in October.

All kindergarten students will have a 45-minute lunch and recess break from 11:45am-12:30pm every day. Kindergarten students will be required to bring a packed lunch. Please do not plan on the use of a microwave.

**Dress Code**

Children’s appearance should be neat and clean. Clothing should not display any inappropriate images. Children should also wear weather-appropriate clothing. Jackets, sweaters, hats, and gloves should be worn in cooler weather. If children are not dressed warmly enough, they may have to stay indoors during recess on the playground. This decision is at the teacher’s discretion.

Footwear – Children should wear sturdy shoes appropriate for gym class and the playground. Children should not wear flip flops, clogs, or any footwear without a heel strap.

**Health Services**

1. In case of accident or serious illness, the school will seek to contact the parents first, followed by a contact listed on the Emergency Information Form. If the school is unable to reach anyone, the school will call the physician indicated on the emergency form and will follow his or her instructions. If it is impossible to contact this physician, the school may take whatever actions seem reasonable and necessary to care for the child.
2. First Aid services are given in cases of accidents or the onset of a sudden illness.
3. Parents need to notify the school in writing if there are updates to their child’s health, such as vaccinations or the contraction of an acute chronic disease.
4. Children enrolling in kindergarten must submit a copy of the vaccine records.
5. If your child is taking medication, medicine must be brought to the office. It must be labeled with the child’s name, along with proper instructions on how and when to administer the medicine.
6. If a child has a fever, pink eye, lice, been put on antibiotics for an infection, or any other possible communicable health issue, there must be at least a **24-hour waiting period before the child returns to school.**  Please contact your pediatrician for medical advice and notify the school. Children may return to school as soon as their health permits or the doctor gives permission.
7. A child with an extended illness should have work sent home if he/she is able to complete it. Please inform the school of this kind of situation. The school will do its best to work together in the best interest of the child.

**Curriculum**

Our curriculum fulfills all PA learning standards and utilizes resources based upon three core criteria:

1. *Competency* - Is it an effective method that will equip students to be competent in that subject area?
2. *Christian* - Is it in agreement with a Biblical Worldview?
3. *Continuity* - Is it able to be part of a comprehensive plan so that it provides continuity across multiple grades?

Preschool:

* *Creativity* *and* *Readiness skills* through hands on sensory experiences
* *Language development* through a variety of interactive activities including singing, finger plays, and creative movement, as well as an introduction and reinforcement of phonics using the Zoophonics program
* Introduction to *basic alphabet and number concepts* through theme-based individual and small group instruction
* *Creative play* *and* *socialization* with an emphasis on sharing, caring, and interaction
* *Fine and gross motor skill development* with varied age-appropriate activities
* *Spiritual formation* through Bible stories, music, and interactive activities

Additional elements introduced in the PK-4 class include:

* *Phonemic awareness, rhyming words, and opposites* reinforced through the phonics program
* *Mathematics* introduced through calendar activities, as well as a variety of hands-on activities, and problem solving, with a strong emphasis on using manipulatives
* *Handwriting* through the Learning Without Tears curriculum
* *Creative movement* through music and introductory sign language

Kindergarten:

* *Spiritual formation* focused on discipleship training through interactive Bible stories, life application, character development, music, and additional activities
* *Language skills* - oral development, phonics, journaling (kid writing) and introductory reading skillsintroduced and reinforced through the use of a variety of effective instructional tools
* *Mathematic skills* introduced and reinforced through the use of manipulatives and hands-on learning activities to strengthen reasoning skills and provide opportunities for knowledge application
* *Fine and gross motor skill development* with varied age-appropriate activities
* *Music concepts* as children are introduced to sounds, rhythms, instruments, etc.
* *Science and Social Studies* knowledge and learning primarily through theme-based activities including hands-on interactive experimentation and life application

**Enrichment Classes**

All students will have the opportunity to have physical education and/or music enrichment classes. Preschoolers will alternate weeks for each enrichment. Kindergarten will have both enrichments every week. Art will be incorporated within the classroom activities.

**Special Events**

We will have special events throughout the school year designed to enhance the learning experience and encourage family involvement in the child’s education. Some of these events include a Fall Festival, Thanksgiving Celebration, Christmas Program, Easter Egg Hunt, Daddy Date Night, Mother’s Day Brunch, and Grandparents’ Day. We will go on a variety of field trips to fun and educational locations throughout the year, as well as invite special guests into our school to teach us about things such as fire safety and oral hygiene. More specific details will be provided in the classroom newsletters.

**Field Trips**

Field trips are an important part of the school experience. We select field trips that allow children to have hands-on opportunities such as apple picking in the fall, making ice cream, or playing creatively with gears and gizmos. Possible destinations include Brown’s Orchard, Flinchbaugh’s Orchard, Hands-on-House, Turkey Hill Experience, Lake Tobias, Baltimore Zoo, and more!

All field trip information will be communicated directly from the office through the Family Folders. You will receive a *Family Field Trip Form* that provides important information such as date, time, and cost. These forms, along with any payments (if applicable), need to be returned via the Family Folders directly to the office. The teachers will also include field trip information in their weekly newsletters. Parents will be responsible for all field trip expenses.

Parents are to transport their children directly to the field trip location. If a parent is unable to attend, they are responsible for arranging other transportation. It is important that every effort is made for children to attend field trips. Therefore, please communicate with the teacher if you have any questions or concerns. Most field trips will occur during the allotted time for normal school hours. However, there may be cases where it could be longer.

**Discipline - “Super Star” System**

The goal of the system is conscience formation according to God’s Word. We want to motivate children to control their own actions – building in them the knowledge of right and wrong, as well as the understanding of God’s pattern for blessings and the opportunity for redemption. We do this by instilling an understanding of

* **Right and Wrong**: Helping them connect good choices with good consequences, and bad choices with bad consequences.
* **Redemption**: Helping them see that, even after they made a bad choice, they can still be rewarded if they repent, change their behavior, and make better choices.

At the beginning of each school year and periodically throughout the year, the teacher will review class rules and expectations with the students. Each day, all children begin on Green (good behavior). If a child’s behavior warrants moving to Yellow (needs to improve behavior, but some good choices), or Red (poor behavior), the teacher will explain to the child the reason for this and encourage making better choices in order to move back to Green. Depending upon the severity of the behavior, there may be an immediate consequence as well – missing recess, etc. This decision is at the teacher’s discretion.

If a child’s behavior ended the day on red, the teacher will complete a *Discipline Form* and put it into your child’s Class Folder letting you know the details regarding your child’s behavior that day. Feel free to contact the teacher if you have any questions. If the frequency and/or severity of a child’s behavior requires further actions, the following steps may be taken to address this issue:

* Verbal communication between teacher/parent
* Meeting with the Director
* Student suspension (period of time will vary – usually one week)
* Expulsion from preschool

If a student demonstrated “exceptional” behavior that day – helped clean up without being asked, consistently quick to follow instructions, etc. - they will be awarded a Super Star Sticker. We make a big deal about these!

**Staff**

All of our staff are carefully selected and well qualified for their role. They each have obtained their security clearances and are First Aid and CPR certified.

**Volunteers**

All volunteers working with children must obtain their security clearances. If you would like to volunteer to help out at the school when needed, please submit a copy of your clearances to the school along with your Volunteer Form, found in the Welcome Packet.

**Communication**

In each class, the teacher will send home a monthly school calendar and weekly newsletters to keep the parents up-to-date on the latest school news and events. All calendars are posted and available to print out on the “calendar” tab on our website as well.

Each child will have a CLASS FOLDER which will be used for direct communication between the teacher and the parent. This folder will be collected each day by the teacher to add any communications, student work, or other information to send home.

Each family will have a FAMILY FOLDER which will be used for communication between the office and the parents. This colorful, plastic folder will be used for picture forms, fundraisers, field trips, and other important information. These folders will be collected directly by the office staff, usually at arrival or dismissal time.

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES will be in the fall and in the spring. These meetings allow the parents to view additional class work by the child, review their child’s Progress Report, and discuss any questions or concerns with the teacher. Teachers and the director are available for any additional consultations upon request.

Children’s behavior and classroom performance can be greatly affected by life events, such as the death of a loved one, separation from parents, moving, etc. Please be sure to communicate to the teacher regarding any such events so that we can properly help your child if changes in their behavior arise.

**Parent – Teacher Relationship**

We believe that the school is to be an extension of the home, not a substitute. Therefore, we seek to work closely with all parents to further enhance the child’s overall growth and development. If at any time you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the teacher or the director.

**Conflict Resolution**

In the event that conflict arises involving parents and school staff, it is expected that all parties involved seek to resolve the matter directly with the other party(ies). If no resolution can be reached, bring the matter to the attention of the director to serve as a mediator in an effort to resolve the matter.

**Facilities**

The school is located within the Abundant Life Center facility. There are several classrooms that will be used for the preschool and kindergarten classes. There is a multi-purpose room available for additional activities or events. An outdoor playground area is located behind the facility.

**Child Protection Policy**

The safety of our children is vitally important. Therefore, Grace Academy has put in place a child protection policy to ensure the safety of your children. If you would like further information about this policy, please contact the director or view it on our website.