



2023-2024

GHC Middle School Handbook

Grand Haven Christian Middle School
1102 Grant Street
Grand Haven, Michigan 49417
616-842-5420
<http://www.grandhavenchristian.org>

Mr. Tim Annema, Principal

Grand Haven Christian Middle School is dedicated to the glory of God and the education of His children. We, the administration and staff of GHCS, dedicate ourselves to partnering with families in order to achieve the best possible educational outcomes for our students. Effective education is based upon a cooperative community, grounded in God's Word and dedicated to living in Christlikeness. Our mission is to educate minds and shape hearts for service to God in His world.

Middle School: Transition Years

We are a Christ-centered middle school. While many people use "middle school" and "junior high school" interchangeably, they are quite different. Since 1994, we are by design and philosophy a "middle school." Our middle school provides the framework for teaching and reaching God's covenant children during their adolescent years. Our middle school program includes not only rigorous academic requirements but it also takes into account the spiritual, physiological, emotional, physical and social growth that our students will experience during these all-important developmental years.

Teaching Staff

Mark Brondyke, 8th Homeroom, Science
mbrondyke@grandhavenchristian.org

Tully Groenendyk, 7th Homeroom, Bible
tgroenendyk@grandhavenchristian.org

Hailey Smith, 7th Homeroom, English
hsmith@grandhavenchristian.org

Onica Nop, 6th Homeroom, Math
onop@grandhavenchristian.org

Ryan Walter, 6th Homeroom, Social Studies, Dean of Students
rwalter@grandhavenchristian.org

Heather Grisales, Spanish Immersion
hgrisales@grandhavenchristian.org

Sarah Miller, Education Support
smiller@grandhavenchristian.org

Kathryn Becksvoort, Choir Instructor
kbecksvoort@grandhavenchristian.org

Bridget Ehlich, Spanish Teacher
@grandhavenchristian.org

Ann Claire Achey, Art Teacher
@grandhavenchristian.org

Tyler Ray, Physical Education Teacher
tray@grandhavenchristian.org

Spiritual Development

Students are led to see all aspects of learning through the lens of this world as God's Creation. Life is about worshiping our Creator and gaining a deeper understanding of Him. We want each of our students to have a personal relationship with their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Through a camp experience, devotions, chapel, prayer, in-class instruction and discussion, service opportunities, fair and appropriate discipline, and modeling a daily Christian walk, GHCMS students will gain a comprehensive understanding of a Christian worldview from a Reformed perspective.

Core Academic Courses

each of these courses meets 5 times per week

Bible classes lead students on a faith journey from Genesis through Revelation in a comprehensive and immersive survey of the Bible, stretched over the course of grades 6-8. Bible scripture memorization is also an integral element of all Bible classes.

Science classes are hypothesis and experiment-driven, featuring numerous hands-on experiences. Students study an assortment of topics which form the early building blocks of Earth science, chemistry, biology, and physics.

Social Studies/History classes offer students an ever-broadening perspective of the world. This begins with a first look at the history of Western Civilization (Grade 6), a look at the world as it is through the lens of World Geography (Grade 7), and the first half of a two-part class on American History (Grade 8). Emphasis is given to heritage, identity, citizenship, and the formation of Western values and perspectives.

Math/Algebra classes offer a range of coursework in order to best fit the needs of students at various levels of comprehension (including remedial, on-level, and accelerated classes), with the most advanced students having the opportunity to take Geometry. Ideally, all GHCMS students who have not already taken Algebra I at GHC will be prepared for Algebra I as freshmen in high school.

English Language Arts classes in Grades 6-8 feature a comprehensive and balanced literacy program which emphasizes language usage, individualized spelling, reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. In addition to differentiated and independent reading/writing projects, students will also complete at least two major novel studies at each grade level. Writing projects vary in nature and scale, but will intentionally include mastery of the MLA format.

Extracurricular Courses

Physical Education

Spanish

Band

Art

Choir

Grand Haven Christian School Code of Conduct

This middle school handbook is to be read in tandem with the school-wide Code of Conduct. Students will be held to the standards and expectations in both this handbook and the school-wide Code of Conduct, and teachers will also adhere to the policies in the code. Each parent, in enrolling a child at GHC, is committing and agreeing to uphold the standards set forth in this document.

Academic Policies and Procedures

Grand Haven Christian Middle School teachers use the FACTS grading software, which allows students and their families to easily access their grades, attendance, and other information.

Incomplete assignments are treated and marked in FACTS as zeroes by standard school policy, though exceptions apply at the good judgment and discretion of GHCMS faculty. The process for managing incomplete assignments is as follows:

- Assignments are collected or checked in class. Any student who does not have a complete assignment ready by the start of class will be notified that his/her assignment is incomplete.
- When a student reaches three incomplete assignments in a given class, the teacher will contact that student's parent. If that student then reaches four missing assignments, this will result in a mandatory after-school study detention.
- Attendance at detention sessions will take precedence over any athletic or other school activities that are scheduled during the after-school hours.
- The teacher will make contact with the parent(s) to review the student's performance in class and to inform them of the detention.
- For each detention, the student will receive a discipline "point." Accumulated points will be dealt with according to the Middle School Discipline Policy.
- Students submitting late work can earn up to a maximum of 80% when the assignment is no more than one day late. After that, the value of the assignment will be reduced to a maximum of 50% credit, subject to the discretion of the teacher. In order to receive 50% late credit, work must be completed and submitted within the same unit of study. After that point, the student will still need to complete the work but receive 0% credit, as this now represents a significant degree of negligence on the part of the student.
- Each trimester (there are three in a school year), students will receive report card grades (via email), and then they will start again with a "clean slate" in the ensuing trimester.

Honor Roll is broken down into "Gold Honor Roll" and "Silver Honor Roll." Students who receive an A or A- in all classes (including specials) will be identified as Gold Honor Roll students, and students who receive a B- average in all classes (including specials)

will be identified as Silver Honor Roll students. This will be communicated via the Middle School Newsletter.

Trimester Exams apply to 8th grade students only. Eighth graders have exams in their core subjects for the first two trimesters. These exams are averaged and count as 15% of their trimester grade. For the third trimester, they produce a “Capstone Project.” which counts as their exam grade in each of their core classes.

The Middle School Grading Scale

| | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 101+ A+ | 91-93 B+ | 81-83 C+ | 71-73 D+ |
| 97-100 A | 87-90 B | 77-80 C | 67-70 D |
| 94-96 A- | 84-86 B- | 74-76 C- | 64-66 D- |
| | | | 0-63 E |

Organizational Skills

Learning to manage and complete tasks in a timely fashion are important skills to develop in middle school. We offer our students both tools and assistance in learning these essential lifelong skills.

Through a combination of daily and weekly disciplines, teachers maintain open lines of communication with students with regard to due dates and how to best manage the workload. The GHCMS faculty also coordinates internally in order to balance the homework and assessment load given each day. This is most clearly represented in the weekly test/homework calendar, which is generally distributed at the end of an academic week in order to give advance notice of upcoming responsibilities. In doing so, we encourage students to think ahead, plan ahead, prepare ahead and manage their time efficiently and effectively.

Vacations/Extended Absences. The expectation is that a student will inform his or her teachers about a vacation or an absence, which will be considered a pre-excused conference. Individual teachers will direct the student on what the best plan will be for the given time and circumstances. Teachers will provide an optional pre-excused absence plan that details when students will make up assessments and turn in work.

Communication

Open communication between faculty and parents is an integral component in student success. It is the goal of GHCMS to maintain a healthy rapport with families by practicing an intentional, consolidated approach to communication. Our hope is that our communication contributes to families feeling valued and well-informed without feeling overly-saturated in correspondence. This correspondence may take any of the following forms:

- FACTS (grades, assignments, report cards, etc.)
- Newsletter (emailed to students and families every Friday)
- Individual direct communication: emails, phone calls, written notes, conferences
- Report cards (distributed at the conclusion of each trimester)
- Informal conversations around campus before or after school
- Digital platforms: school website, social media
- Team meetings (at the request of parents or faculty, managed by administration)
- Disciplinary notices (missing assignment reports, discipline report)

Dress Code

GHCMS aims to create and maintain a culture that is at the same time professional and personal. In the context of a dress code, this means personal freedom and expression is promoted until it comes into conflict with our values, mission, academics, and relationships. To put it more simply, when considering attire, consider the following general guidelines: clean, neat, and modest.

Not Permitted (General):

- Attire that consists of profane, obscene, sexually-implied or explicit language or graphics, as well as clothing that advertises or promotes tobacco, alcohol, or substance abuse
- Pajamas, slippers, and blankets
- Any clothing that shows skin at the mid-torso region, regardless of movement
- Any clothing that may expose undergarments, which includes sports bras for girls as well as sagging and low-cut pants for all students
- No hoods, hats, or other head-coverings in the building during school hours
- Chains of any gauge used on the person or property of students

Guidelines for Shirts/Tops:

- All shirts must be modest, extending beneath the waistline and completely covering a student's mid-torso region, regardless of movement
- No low-cut tops or tank tops
- Straps of shirts must be the width of two fingers.

- Sheer, see-through blouses or shirts must be paired with clothing nearest the body that is not made of "see-through" materials.

Guidelines for Bottoms:

- Shorts may be worn until the CEA Convention date (mid-October) and after Spring Break, subject to modifications by the GHCMS faculty/administration
- No words or inappropriate graphics on the seat of pants
- All pants and shorts, including jeans, must be fitted at the waist and in good repair. This means all pants must be free of rips, tears, and holes that show skin above the knee.
- All shorts, skirts and dresses must not be shorter than fingertip length.
- Jeggings, leggings and yoga pants must be accompanied by a shirt, dress or skirt that reaches to the end of your fingertips.

Consequences: final decisions concerning alleged dress code violations rest with the building administrators. The following consequences may be carried out if a student is found in violation of the dress code policy:

- First Offense: a verbal warning with correction (the school gives the student something to wear to cover up the offensive clothing or will call parents to bring in appropriate clothing)
- Second Offense: a verbal warning, correction, and notification of the parents by letter or email.
- Third Offense: correction, detention, and notification of the parents.

Campus Policy

The campus is open for students from 7:30 until 4:00 each school day. Upon arrival at school, students may visit their lockers for necessary materials and then proceed to their first hour classes. Students are expected to leave the school building and school property once school has been dismissed. Students may not remain in or around campus in unsupervised spaces on account of security concerns. School entrances, bus loading areas, and adjacent streets are high-risk spaces, which demands that students are cautious, self-controlled, and quickly responsive to adult authorities who are monitoring the area. Students waiting for the bus must stay inside the fence until their assigned bus arrives. Students who are involved in an after-school related activity are expected to remain only in the appropriate areas of the school pertaining to that activity. Students are also expected to make arrangements to be picked up on time following practices, games, events, etc.

Extracurricular Activities

Extra-curricular activities are opportunities for students to try new things or develop pre-existing skills/interests. In order to make these opportunities accessible, GHCMS will allow any student to participate in an extracurricular activity who can meet the minimum conditions of participation (based upon a student’s willingness to satisfy minimum behavioral expectations and satisfy a minimum level of investment in the activity). In other words, all willing and invested students are welcome to participate. Students must also satisfy minimum grade eligibility requirements as a prerequisite for participation, which is detailed below in the “Eligibility Policy.” Due to the limitations of our sports league, interscholastic basketball, baseball, and soccer are only open to 7th and 8th graders, but 6th graders (with experience and interest) may participate if open roster spots remain.

| <u>Interscholastic Sports</u> | <u>Competitions offered</u> | <u>Performance Opportunities</u> |
|--|-----------------------------|---|
| Basketball (Boys & Girls) Baseball (Boys) Golf (Boys) Soccer (Boys & Girls) Track & Field (Boys & Girls) Volleyball (Girls) | Spelling Bee Bible Bowl | Play/Drama Choir Concerts/Festival Band Concerts/Festival |

Intramurals

Three days per week (generally Monday, Wednesday, and Friday), students have the opportunity to participate in student-led activity periods during their lunch hour break. Athletic opportunities include flag football, speedball, volleyball, basketball, and wiffle ball. Classroom activities, such as card games, board games, darts, and foosball are also available. Students may choose whether to participate in these activities.

Eligibility and Mandatory Study Hall Policy

Eligibility. Participation in extracurricular activities at Grand Haven Christian is a privilege. As such, athletes are held to a high standard of behavior and are expected to maintain a strong academic standing in their classes.

A student may become “ineligible” for athletic participation for one or more of the following reasons:

- **Poor grades:** a student who, by the start of school on a Monday morning, has two or more grades below a C- will be ineligible to participate that week
- **Incomplete assignments:** a student who, by the start of school on a Monday morning, has four or more incomplete assignments among core classes will be ineligible to participate that week.

- **School discipline:** student behavior may warrant temporary suspension or permanent removal from a team. These decisions will often be made by teacher recommendation, under the direction of administration.

Ineligibility notices will be distributed to students once the report has been compiled at the start of the week. This means a student should receive notice of his or her eligibility by noon on Monday. In athletics, ineligibility means students may not play in the games for that week, but they may still attend practice. Additionally, students must attend lunch study hall and one Wednesday after-school study hall. These requirements and restrictions can be waived within a school week if an ineligible student regains eligibility, which must involve a conversation between the student and the Dean of Students.

Lastly, students who remain ineligible for three consecutive weeks will be subject to removal from the team. Prior to any official removal from a team, a conversation will take place between a student's parent and the Athletic Director.

Mandatory Study Hall. For the same reasons listed above (poor grades, incomplete assignments) a non-athlete student may receive a mandatory study hall notice midday Monday. If a student receives a notice, then that student must attend lunch study hall and after school study hall on Wednesday for one hour (2:30 pm - 3:30 pm).

Technology

- Use of technology at GHC is a privilege extended to students, faculty, and staff for educational purposes. Both faculty and students will receive training regarding how to appropriately use and maximize the educational value of technology prior to use.
- Other expectations related to technology use include the appropriate stewardship of devices (as determined by each grade level/division) and restrictions on student use of non-GHC hardware or software (use of personal devices will only be permitted after school hours, not before).
 - Note: Each core MS classroom is equipped with a technology cart which will have a sufficient number of devices for student use, as directed by that classroom teacher. Teacher permission is required prior to student use of any of these devices.
 - Private technology being used by students during school hours will be confiscated and held by the Dean of Students until the end of the school day. A \$10 fee will be assessed at that time.
- In order to uphold the aforementioned expectations, GHC uses digital tools in monitoring/reviewing student technology use. Included in these tools is an email monitoring service which reviews internal communications and a service which allows staff live supervision over current activity on school-issued devices.

Middle School Discipline Policy

Overview:

Consequences for misbehavior are designed to both identify/correct wrongdoing and to restore social harmony within the school. Per the example laid out in Scripture, a combination of grace and truth must exist in the same space; GHC aims to exhort, encourage, and train while also fulfilling its commitment to protect and promote what is pure and virtuous. Accordingly, the escalation of consequences orbits around the heart, words, and actions exhibited by a student who has been found in violation of the behavioral expectations of the school. This means that the school aims to be fair and consistent in its discipline, and at the same time it acknowledges and respects the differences of each individual student/situation. Much like a parent aims to discipline two siblings fairly but not always in the same manner, fairness is distinct from sameness, and this same principle applies to how the GHC administration approaches the use of consequences for misbehavior.

- The general progression of how consequences are administered are as follows:
 - **Level 1: Redirect**
 - Potential causes: excessive disruption in class; roughness on the playground
 - Communication: teacher/student discussion, potentially teacher/parent discussion
 - Sample consequences: change in seating arrangement; being removed from a given activity
 - **Level 2: Admin Redirect** (*based upon the gravity of a single incident or after multiple teacher redirects*)
 - Potential cause: teacher solicits the help of administration after multiple redirects (especially if recurring physical roughness is involved)
 - Communication: admin/student discussion, potential administrative notification to parents
 - Consequence: admin may elect to issue a redirect (with or without a Level 1 consequence) or elevate to Level 3 and issue a detention
 - Note: a staff member may choose to bypass this “level” and issue a detention directly
 - **Level 3: Detention** (*based upon the gravity of a single incident or after multiple redirects*)
 - Potential causes: student is intentionally defiant with a teacher; multiple instances of a student copying other students’ work; student shows excessive physical roughness
 - Communication: teacher/student discussion, principal or dean/student discussion, teacher or administrator notification of parents

- Consequence: a detention is given by the principal or dean, with the terms and details provided both to the student and parent
 - **Level 4: Suspension** (*based upon the gravity of a single incident or after multiple detentions*)
 - Potential causes: student aggressively initiates a fight with another; student continues clearly defiant behavior after multiple detentions
 - Communication: principal/student and principal/parent
 - Consequence: a one-day suspension from school, where the student is disallowed from attending and receives zero credit for any assessments or other work collected that day
 - **Level 5: Expulsion** (*Either due to the gravity of a single incident or after multiple suspensions, it is determined by the school board that partnership is no longer possible with a given student*)
 - Potential causes: student intentionally brings a violent weapon to school; student is involved in using/selling drugs
 - Communication: includes student, parents, faculty, administration, and school board
 - Consequence: removal from the school
 - Note: At “Level 2,” student behavioral issues are formally documented by the school office
- Under no circumstances will Grand Haven Christian School utilize corporal punishment as a consequence for misconduct. However, physical force may be used to protect students from harm, prevent property damage, and to enforce reasonable directives to avoid such damage and/or harm.