

God, Community, & Academics Homeschool Group, Inc.

Glorifying God, in Community, while Pursuing Academic Excellence

*Teach me your way, LORD,
that I may rely on your faithfulness;
give me an undivided heart,
that I may fear your name.*

Psalm 86:11

Family Handbook

The purpose of God, Community, & Academics Homeschool Group, Inc. is to offer support to Christian families as they endeavor to home educate their children to the glory of God. We believe in working with excellence in all that we do for the Kingdom of God. For this reason, we place a high value on both academic pursuits and the building up of Christian community.

Objectives:

- To partner with parents who are the primary educators of their children
- To supplement, not replace, the education a child is receiving at home
- To offer classes that often work better in a group setting, such as lab sciences or discussion-based classes
- To have a strong focus on the following fields of study: science, technology, English language arts, fine arts, and Christian studies
- To emphasize academic excellence, while not prioritizing it over loving each other well and meeting the needs of the entire community
- To create a loving and encouraging learning environment for students
- To be a community of Christian brothers and sisters all trying to accomplish the same goals: to see the Truth of God in every subject and to show the Love of God in every relationship

GCA Structure

GCA is led by a volunteer board of directors. The Board of GCA is composed of qualified men and women with a heart for homeschooling. The Board oversees the educational and spiritual direction of GCA. The Board supports the GCA community by providing for the overall organization of the co-op and the implementation of class instruction for each school year such as the following:

- Determining and enforcing the Code of Conduct
- Reviewing family applications and interviewing prospective families
- Oversight of class instructors and curricula
- Providing a nurturing environment for students to grow both academically and spiritually

As a board of directors, we strive to offer quality classes taught by experienced Christian teachers. We have carefully structured a year-to-year class matrix to help students get a complete education in both science and English language arts from middle school through graduation. In addition, each year we offer a variety of other required classes and fun electives.

We interview each teacher and review all curricula used, but the teacher is solely responsible for the planning, teaching, and grading of their class. This means the quality of each class should be consistent, but the requirements of each class may differ.

Joining GCA

If you are interested in joining GCA, please complete the following steps. Our application process and schedule is posted on our website.

- Read the Statement of Faith.
- Read the GCA Family Handbook.
- Complete an application.
- Schedule an interview.
- Once accepted, fill out registration forms and pay registration fees.
- Register for classes on your assigned day and pay class deposits.
- GCA reserves the right to refuse admittance.

Our Schedule

Part of our mission is Community. For this reason, we offer 28 week classes. Our weekly meeting times are Fridays from 8:30 am - 4 pm. We start school the Friday after Labor day and end in May. .

Fee Schedule

- Registration fee - includes liability insurance, building rental, classroom and cleaning supplies, and website hosting fees
 - Registration fees are due before students can enroll in classes. If there is a financial hardship, please contact the Board for payment options.
 - Registration fee depends on the number of students enrolled. We try to keep the registration fee as low as possible. Fees typically range from \$65 - \$100 per student per year.
- Class Deposit - There is a deposit due for each class. Deposits are set by the teacher. Deposits secure your spot in the class and allow the teacher to order needed supplies. Deposits are separate from the class fee.
 - Class deposits due date will be posted on the GCA calendar
 - For those registering after the due date, deposits are due upon enrollment in a class.
 - If deposits are not paid, a teacher can remove a student from class.
 - Deposits are non refundable if you drop a class after the due date.
- Class Fee - The class fee is the amount due for the class after the deposit is paid. Teachers are independent contractors, so the following stipulations apply:
 - All class fees, including deposits, are paid to the teacher. GCA does not receive any portion of those fees.
 - Deposits and class fees are to be paid via the GCA website. GCA will then handle the distribution of payments directly to teachers.
 - Teachers set the fee for the class. The typical range of class fee is as follows:
 - PreK - Elementary \$175-\$225 per class
 - Middle School \$200 - \$300 per class
 - High School \$250 - \$400 per class
 - Families will be billed quarterly for classes. Deposits cover the cost of teacher supplies and the first class. The first payment is due by the end of the second scheduled school day. The schedule will be published at the time the school calendar is released.
 - A late fee of 10% of the amount due will be applied to any overdue payments. If the payment, including the late fee, is not received within one week of the late fee assessment, students may be removed from their classes and blocked from accessing Canvas.

- If there is a financial hardship and a family is unable to pay the fee that is due, they should communicate with teachers and the Board before class fees are due to avoid penalty.
- Any family with outstanding fees will not be allowed to return the following year.
- The fee schedule will not be adjusted if GCA must cancel classes because of circumstances beyond our control, such as extreme or hazardous weather.
- A teacher is allowed to cancel 1 class per semester without adjustment to the fee schedule. If there are further cancellations, you can request a refund for the missed day. It is up to you to request the refund from the teacher. If the teacher needs to be absent from school but provides quality content to the student, such as a prerecorded video, or at home research, a refund may not be requested.

Registering for Classes

Registration is on a staggered schedule as follows:

- Board Members and Team Leaders
- Teachers
- Returning Families
- New Families

To enroll in classes, each family must update their profiles annually, pay the student registration fees, and register for a parent service hour.

Once your class enrollment day opens, you are free to sign your student up for classes. Please do not sign your child up for more than one class per hour. If this happens, the Board may remove your child from both classes. Please review the class description, parental requirements, needed supplies and any other information the teacher has provided about the class when registering. Unless otherwise noted in the description all books and supplies are needed by the first day of class.

Canvas

Once accepted into a class, your teacher will send you information about the class via email. Please make sure we have a valid email that you check often. All students in middle school and high school will need their own email as well. We use Canvas, a web-based learning management program, for all our middle and high school classes. Teachers will post class information, assignments, and grades, as well as communicate with students on Canvas. Information about Canvas will be sent to all families a few weeks before school starts in the fall.

Service Hours

All families need to sign up for service hours. You must register for your service hour before you can enroll your students in classes. Specifics about service hours are outlined under **Parental Expectations**.

Dropping a class

Schedules may change, or a class may not be a good fit. Families have a one-week period at the start of a class to drop it. Classes not officially dropped through the website and properly communicated with the teacher will be billed in full for the year.

Grading Policy

Teachers of all middle school and high school classes will issue grades in a timely manner. Parents should reach out to the teacher directly if they have questions about their student's grade.

Because we are a community of believers striving for academic excellence, we do require a minimum GPA to register for classes at GCA. Students must maintain an average GPA of at least a 2.0 (73%) in their GCA classes to enroll in the next level class. We recognize some classes may be a challenge for some students. Teachers are available and desire to work with students that are having difficulties. Many teachers offer private tutoring on site. If a student attends classes and puts forth a true effort to participate and turn in assignments, they should be successful in all their classes at GCA.

Parental Expectations

GCA's motto is Glorifying God, **in Community**, while Pursuing Academic Excellence, and we mean that. We view GCA as a place where families can come together to support one another in the faith and through their homeschooling journeys. The parents are a large part of making this community of believers all that it can be.

- Parental Presence - It is the parent's responsibility to supervise their children and to make sure the entire family is following the Code of Conduct. According to the agreement with our host church RCC, a parent must be on the premises the entire time they have children at GCA. If children are not in class, they must be in the family area or approved outdoor locations *with* their parents.
 - If a parent is teaching a class, children must be enrolled in a class, placed in the nursery, or left under the direct supervision of another adult in the building. If you are leaving your child with another adult, a form must be completed and approved by the board.

- Service Requirements - Each family is essential to help support the co-op. The Board depends on the help of all families in order to ensure that the co-op runs efficiently and safely.
 - Services jobs and requirement hours will be posted during the registration period.
 - Teaching a full-year class counts as 1 service hour.
 - Serving in the role of a Team Leader counts as one service hour
 - If you are unable to complete your assignment for the day, it is your responsibility to find a replacement. If no replacement is found, a fee of \$10 will be charged to the individual.
 - There will be a limited amount of "opt out" slots for parents unable to serve the required hours. The "opt out" fee is \$280 for the year. These opportunities are available on a first-come, first-served basis and can be found in the Service Hour Matrix.

- Emergency Care Cards - if a parent has an unexpected emergency, they can assign care of the children to another adult for the day. The adult in charge is assuming responsibility for the children as well as your service hour.

- Mom Sub - if an individual has an ongoing schedule conflict and will need to miss coop every week, they can arrange a Mom Sub. The following stipulations apply:
 - Students must be in class while the parent is off campus.
 - The parent is still responsible for their service hour.
 - If the assigned Mom Sub adult will not be in attendance, the parent must come to school that day.
 - The Board will approve Mom Sub applications on a case by case basis and reserves the right to make exceptions to any stipulation.

Code of Conduct

The GCA Code of Conduct has been established as a means of communicating and understanding the lifestyle standards set forth by the Board of Directors. Each standard addresses choices students can make and act upon as individuals. The expectations apply to students and parents both on or off campus. An unwillingness to make one's best effort to meet these standards also implies a choice not to continue with GCA. The Code of Conduct is presented as an agreement between the students, the parents, and the school.

Students and families understand that by enrolling in GCA, they are accepting all school policies - those outlined in the student handbook and those established by

the Board of Directors. It is to be understood that GCA expects its students and families to agree to the following standards:

- Adhere to all policies to promote excellence in character development, to show preference to Christian brothers and sisters, and to honor God.
- Put forth their best effort in homework, in preparation for quizzes and tests, during classroom assignments, and in any special academic projects since one of the primary reasons for enrollment as a student is academic training.
- Understand that communication and interactions between parents, students, teachers, and administration is encouraged. All communication should be carried out in a respectful, constructive, and Biblical manner.
- Refrain from the following destructive behaviors regarding use of words:
 - Gossiping (repeating information about others that is not my concern or is not edifying, whether true or untrue)
 - Slander (repeating information about other people that is untrue)
 - Mockery (disdainful or disrespectful talk about those in authority, the church, or scriptural principles)
 - Profanity, obscenity, vulgarity, and/or offensive slang
- Seek to be honest above reproach.
- Understand that standards of sexual conduct and social behavior are based on Biblical guidelines rather than those of the culture, popular media, or peer groups. Students should exhibit self-control and refrain from displays of affection (e.g., holding hands, sitting on laps, arm around shoulders, etc.).
- Refrain from using electronic media devices while on the premises. This includes, but is not limited to computers, tablets, cell phones, cameras, or another device that can access the internet.
 - Teachers may make an exception and allow laptops or tablets in their class if devices are needed for assignments. If required for class , parents will be notified by the teacher in these cases.
 - Student cell phones should be left in cars while at GCA
 - It is our goal that GCA be an environment that fosters growth in personal relationships for both the parents and the student body. Cell phones and other electronic devices are proven to interfere with relationships and learning, so they are not allowed in the building by students.
- Abstain from the use of drugs, tobacco, e-cigarettes, alcohol, or pornographic material since these are destroyers of self-discipline, self-control, and are in violation of God’s plan for his people.
- Refrain from bringing to co-op any item that could be considered a weapon, including but not limited to, firearms, knives, etc.
- Maintain Christian standards of courtesy and kindness in the way they treat others and show respect for fellow students, parents, teachers, and administrators in my speech, attitudes, and action.

- Understand that attendance is an essential element of learning and put forth their best effort in regular and timely attendance. Teachers have authority to enact a tardiness policy in their individual classes. Habitually tardy students may receive a behavior referral.
- Refuse to discriminate, bully, or harass any other student or co-op member. Prohibited conduct includes, but is not limited to, derogatory remarks and/or acts, including slurs, epithets and other verbal, written, graphic or physical conduct of a hostile, intimidating, abusive, bullying, degrading, threatening or violent nature.
 - A student or a student's parent should report a complaint of discrimination, bullying, or harassment to the Board. If a Board member is unavailable, a report can be made to any coordinator or teacher, who is to immediately notify the Board.
 - The Board shall investigate the complaint and make decisions regarding any disciplinary actions. Both parties shall be notified of the results. Board decisions are final.
- Show respect for the building and all its furnishings and contents. RCC has graciously agreed to allow us to use the building with the following guidelines in place:
 - Parents may be financially responsible for any damage caused by their student.
 - Purposeful destruction of property is grounds for immediate expulsion.
 - Please do not bring food items into any rooms except the designated lunch room.
 - Drinks other than water, in a sealed bottle, are not allowed in any rooms other than the designated lunch room.
 - Chewing gum while in the building is not permitted.
 - Please enter and exit the building only through approved entryways.
 - To promote the safety of our co-op, we ask that students not open doors and allow anyone into the building without the permission of an adult supervisor. .
 - Students should remain with parents when not in class.
 - Running is not allowed in the building.
 - Please refrain from yelling or shouting in the building, remembering that there are classes going on.
 - Students must stay in the designated outdoors areas.
 - Students use the designated restroom for their age and gender.

Student Dress Code Guidelines

As a Christian homeschool co-op, we aim to promote a learning environment that honors the Lord so that our appearance reflects our identity as followers of Christ. Our dress code applies to all students elementary and up and is in place to support a respectful and focused atmosphere. Parents, we ask that you please help ensure that your child is dressed appropriately each week for co-op.

The suggested guidelines for both boys and girls are as follows:

Shirts and Tops

- **Coverage:** All shirts and tops must cover the midriff, even when arms are raised or students are leaning forward. Tops should have modest necklines.
- **Sleeveless:** Sleeveless tops are allowed only if the shoulder section is at least two inches wide.
- **Graphics and Language:** Be mindful to choose clothing with language, images, or graphics that honor the Lord in their messages.

Shorts, Skirts, and Dresses

- **Length:** Shorts, skirts, and dresses should reach at least fingertip length when arms are extended straight down at the sides.

Pants and Jeans

- **Rips and Tears:** Jeans and pants may have rips or tears, but these must be located from the mid-thigh down.
- **Athletic Wear:** Loose fitting athletic wear is acceptable, including sweatpants, joggers, and shorts that meet the length requirement. Spandex shorts worn alone are not permitted.
- **Leggings.** The top worn with the leggings should be loose fitting and long enough all the way around (back, sides and front) to reach the top of the thigh.

If a student is found to be out of dress code, an email will be sent home to the parent/guardian explaining the specific violation(s). Thank you for helping us maintain a dress code that supports our values and promotes a respectful and positive learning environment.

Disciplinary Actions

It is the goal of GCA to show mercy and grace to students where appropriate. If an offense is habitual in nature or deemed severe, disciplinary actions may be necessary.

- **Habitual Misconduct** - Families whose children are habitually noncompliant with policies outlined in this handbook or with a teacher's class rules may be asked to leave the GCA community. A first offense will result in a documented

warning. The warning will be handed to the parents or placed in the family folder. A second offense will result in a documented warning and a meeting will be scheduled with the family and members of the Board. If there are subsequent infractions, the student may be dismissed from GCA.

- Gross Misconduct - Some infractions are so severe, whether occurring at GCA or elsewhere, they could result in immediate dismissal of the student and/or family. Such misconduct includes but is not limited to: use of illegal substances such as tobacco, drugs, or alcohol; possession of pornographic material, physical violence, bullying, and sexual harassment.

Conflicts

The board is here to support both the families and the teachers. We believe that if a conflict arises between a family and teacher, or a family and another family, it should be handled using the principles found in Matthew 18:15-16. The two parties should first seek to reconcile the disagreement between each other with the intent to listen to one another and to put our own preferences aside, when possible, for the betterment of one another. If a resolution cannot be made, the parties should seek the Board as a second or third "witness." The board will review any written policies regarding the subject. The Board decision on a matter is final.

Contacting GCA

If you need to contact the Board, please do so via email. The host church, Riverside Community Church, should not be contacted regarding questions about GCA, either in person or by phone.

Building Capacity

Because of the size of the building, we kindly ask that you do not remain at school if you do not have any students in classes. We realize there may be a class period that your family is not in class, but they are waiting for an upcoming class. We mean do not come early or stay late if your family has not started or is done for the day.

We truly want GCA to be a warm, encouraging environment where families are excited to be, but the primary goal for our weekly meetings is academics. We encourage you to enroll your students in classes with their friends or participate in the optional community building activities so your family can connect with others outside the classroom.

I, and my whole family, have read the entirety of the GCA Handbook and are in agreement with all its policies.