



Head of School Newsletter

The latest GCCS news and announcements

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In this season of Advent, we look forward with eager anticipation to the coming of our Savior who brings hope, joy, and peace. Christmas can be a busy time filled with many activities and family gatherings, and these are good times of fellowship and fun.

We also want to always keep Christ at the center of our Christmas celebrations both at home and in our Christian schools. As we begin Christmas break this next week, I hope that your family finds time to slow down, to embrace the love of God shown in the gift of Christ and celebrated in our lives, and to enjoy peace and rest.

Recently, while singing the familiar Christmas carol, "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" at church, I was struck by the lines of this verse:

"O come, Desire of the nations, bind
in one the hearts of all mankind;
bid every strife and quarrel cease
and fill the world with heaven's peace."

This seems a very apt prayer for this Christmas season and for our country. May we continue to focus on our individual and collective roles to **serve together** as we build God's Kingdom at GCCS and on the peace that can only come from the greatest gift of all, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Merry Christmas to you and yours!

Eric P. Burgess
Head of School



As We Return From Christmas Break...

In last month's HOS Newsletter, I communicated the following information that we received from the Kent County Health Department (KCHD) in early November, as well as our school's plan following the Christmas break. I reiterate it here in case you missed it last month.

From Adam London at KCHD: "The public health order requiring facial covering use in PreK through 6th grade was written to expire 60 days after the vaccine is made available for 5 to 11 year olds. This means the order will expire during the Christmas - New Year holiday break and before kids return to school in Kent County on January 3rd. At that time, decisions about facial covering policies will belong to the school districts and to the leadership of the private and parochial schools."

Following Christmas break, GCCS will *not* require facial coverings at school for JK - 12th graders (except on school buses, as long as the CDC order for public transportation remains in effect). KCHD continues to recommend mask-wearing. We will leave this decision up to our staff and families.

Also, as we have previously communicated regarding vaccines for COVID, GCCS will not require COVID vaccinations for attendance at school or for participation in school-related events.

As we have sought to do throughout the pandemic, GCCS will create a learning environment at school where students are safe and respecting the choices of each family and where students respect one another. We continue to work together as a community of faith and learning to partner with families in order to equip students to serve and glorify God with their lives.

The following protocols and considerations will continue to apply into the second semester and, we assume, will be required through the remainder of the school year unless we are notified of different guidelines by MDHHS and/or KCHD.

Morning Health Screening

It will continue to be important for families to complete the morning health checklist each morning with your kids. We ask all parents to please err on the side of caution when considering symptoms and don't assume it is a cold or allergies. Know that we have rapid antigen tests available in each school office that we can utilize if you have a question about a possible COVID case for your child. Contact your school office with questions.

Close Contact Quarantine Guidance

Our goal is to keep kids in school and to work with our families and the Kent County Health Department (KCHD) to get kids back to school once they have had COVID. KCHD provides a toolkit and regularly-updated guidance to schools which we use as guidance regarding close contact quarantine and return-to-school options.

Determinations on quarantine need to be made on a case-by-case basis as guidance is more strict for in-home close contacts as opposed to an in-school close contact. Close contacts in a home situation or in an "outbreak" situation (three or more associated cases in school) are determined directly by the Health Department. Our Coronavirus Dashboard is updated regularly with positive cases and if there is new guidance.

If there is a COVID-positive student at school, the school is responsible to look back 48 hours from the start of symptoms to consider close contacts at school. Since a change in options from KCHD in late October, the option exists for in-school close contacts who are unvaccinated to "test-to-stay," which we have been doing at the elementary campus, by taking a rapid antigen test each morning during the 10-day quarantine window. GCCS continues to utilize this option, if it is chosen by parents, in order to keep healthy students attending in-person.



Snow Day Reminders

You will receive notifications of school closings via e-mail and text. In addition, you can also receive notifications from local television stations by going to their respective websites and selecting to receive school closing text alerts for GCCS.

Snow days are an opportunity for our students to rest, play in the snow, read, or craft. We believe that having a couple of snow days a year helps us get a little extra rest in a world that has become too busy. However, if we lose a number of school days due to weather, we know that it can impact learning. For that reason, GCCS implemented the following policy in 2019: **we will consider the first two snow days simply days of rest.** However, once we hit the third snow day, we will be offering online learning opportunities to our students. These will vary by grade-level and will be "asynchronous" (not happening at the same time), as families circumstances on snow days vary and schedules will not always line up.

We encourage our GCCS students to read on these days off, as reading is one of the most powerful ways to further their learning. And, of course, they need to get out and play in the snow and enjoy the beauty of winter in Michigan!

GCCS Summer Camps and Childcare

Though we are in the midst of winter right now, we know it is not too early to begin planning for summer and the opportunities we have in Michigan and at Grandville Calvin Christian to develop children's gifts and talents and to have fun with friends at summer camps!

The camp offerings this summer include drama camps, sports camps, and art camps. You can also check out a special rocket camp for middle schoolers. Take a look over the options at <https://www.gccssportscamps.com>. (We will have a printed brochure available in January 2022.)

GCCS will also again be offering summer childcare on the elementary school campus (GCS). Alicia Kragt, GCCS Childcare Director, will be sending information in February for how to sign up for summer childcare.

Please contact Alicia at AKragt@gccsmi.org with any questions about summer childcare planning. (Your child will need to be registered as space will be limited.)

GCCS Mission Statement:

"Equipping Students to Serve and Glorify God"



November 2021 Board Report

Each month, I share the GCCS Board Report with you. This report will allow you to know what I am communicating to the Board, as well as providing regular updates on the Strategic Plan implementation.

[You can view the November Board report here.](#)

