

GRACE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Home of the Patriots

MARCH 2026

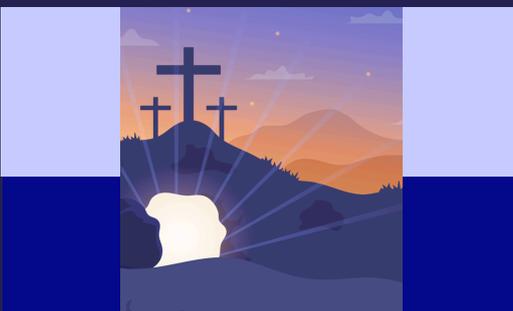
IMPACT



Inspiring students to **IMPACT** the world for Jesus Christ through an excellent educational experience from a Biblical worldview



TAKE ACTION



THIS EDITION:

- “Call to Action!”
- Athletics
- Parents
- Student Highlights
- GCEA
- GCS Alumni
- Upcoming Events
- Prayer & Praise
- Supporting GCS
- Calendar

CALL TO ACTION!

March begins what seems like the sprint to the end of the school year. Every weekend this month is something big and important to our school. From an administrative perspective we are managing for a successful end of the school year as we gather data for adjustments for the coming school year. There is a weird tension between faith and planning. There is a strong correlation between student success and our staff. We are looking for ways to bolster staff-student interaction in the secondary for the coming year. This would be easy to do if we had an unlimited budget.

Over the course of January and February I have established a nonprofit called West Michigan Student Scholarship (WMSS). April's *IMPACT* will have a full page on this new non-profit as the website is developed. This is the Scholarship Granting Organization (SGO) necessary for the Federal tax credit available to participating states in 2027. We are doing all the legwork to establish the organization with the expectation that the newly elected governor of Michigan will opt into the federally funded program. ***I cannot emphasize enough how important it is for you all to be talking about this and contacting your local representatives*** and reaching out to both the Democratic <https://act.michigandems.com/a/contact-us> and Republican <https://mi.gop/contact-us/> parties. Both of them want your money, but the links offer you an opportunity to share what you're concerned about. The question is simple: Will your party's candidate for governor opt in to receive the Education Freedom Tax Credit starting in 2027?

Politicians are simple. They only care if it helps them get votes. We need to be talking about this opportunity for our schools. This opportunity will help more than just our school system. It will help everyone who is paying tuition. It has a real impact on your life and we need to communicate that the politician's choice will have an impact on their life, as well.

Review the Basics:

- Step 1 is to convince both parties that opting in is best for Michigan's students. This may be best done through prayer, but we should be blameless in our effort and reach out.
- Starting in 2027 the \$1,700 Tax credit: Either you donate that to the WMSS or you pay it to the federal government. No matter how you slice it, \$1700 is going somewhere other than to you. The federal government is giving you an option to give to students instead of them.
 - When you donate to WMSS you put it in the Patriot fund.
- WMSS will issue scholarships to students who attend Grace. The amount awarded will be dependent on the number of people we can get to give their tax bill to WMSS. My goal the first year is 1,000 people, which will generate \$1.7 million in scholarship funds. That is more than our current budget for this year.
 - Next year's goal is to double the number of participants. We need to take advantage of this opportunity while it presents itself.

I will be talking about this often as the year marches forward. Even to new people I meet I say, "Have you heard about this new tax credit coming in 2027?", and I share about what it can mean for my school and that they could be part of making our school more affordable to students.

We all need to get this good news out,



Benjamin Williamson
Administrator



ATHLETICS

THE LADY PATRIOTS ARE GOING TO DISTRICTS!

The GCS Patriots/OLL Lakers co-op varsity girls team will play against Decatur at the district semifinal game on Wednesday, March 4th at 5:30pm at Decatur High School. Please come out and cheer on this great group of girls! Purchase tickets* at <https://gofan.co/event/6196757>

*Cash will not be accepted at the gate.



GCS WRESTLING UPDATES

Each of our Patriots performed well at the Jr. High Wrestling Invitational at Coloma High School on Saturday. Out of 15 schools, Zayden took 1st place in his weight class and Daniel took 3rd in his. Congratulations!

GO PATRIOTS!

BE SURE TO CHECK THE [ATHLETIC CALENDAR](#) FOR COMPLETE GAME SCHEDULES!

PARENTS

REENROLLMENT 2026-27

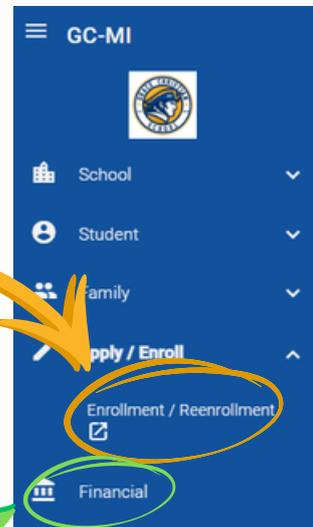
Returning Families: Re-enrollment Packets are ready in FACTS Family Portal. Follow these easy steps to let us know of your child's enrollment status at GCS for the upcoming school year!

1. Go to Factsmgmt.com
2. Login to your **FACTS Family Portal**
3. Click on *Apply/Enroll*, then **Enrollment/Reenrollment**
4. Review to ensure accurate information and complete any empty fields.
5. Submit by **MARCH 21!**

Financial Aid* is available for the upcoming school year. Applicants must apply through our newly developed **FACTS Financial Aid** platform. To qualify for scholarships:

FACTS Family Portal ⇒ **Financial** ⇒ *Apply for Aid* ⇒ *Create Account*

*Please note that there is an application fee of \$45 for FACTS Financial Aid



A FRIENDLY REMINDER ABOUT TOYS AT SCHOOL

We kindly ask that elementary students leave toys at home. The school day does not provide time to play with toys, and simply knowing they are in backpacks sometimes creates distraction or worry.

Toys are also not permitted at recess as they can easily be lost or damaged, often lead to disagreements, and distract from active play, which is the true purpose of recess.

If a teacher plans a special event such as a Tech Day, Stuffy Day, or another designated activity, students are welcome to bring approved items on those specific days.

Thank you for your support in helping us maintain a focused and positive school environment!





SPRING BREAK

Monday, March 30th - Monday, April 6th

School will resume on Tuesday, April 7th.

We pray that your family will enjoy a very blessed Easter weekend celebrating the resurrection of our King and Savior, Jesus Christ.



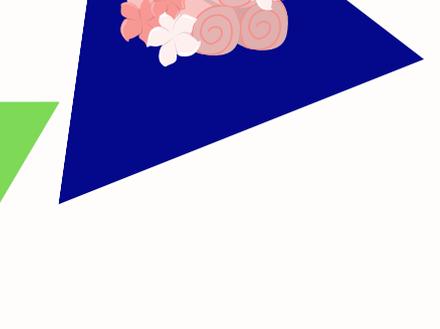
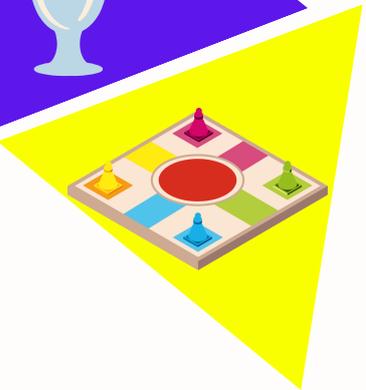
Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

AUCTION DONATION

The Annual Benefit Auction is scheduled for March 21. As with every year, we are asking families to help by bringing in donation items for class auction baskets. Below, basket themes are listed by grade level. Thank you for your prayerful consideration to give toward our biggest fundraiser of the year!

AUCTION BASKETS

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| Preschool 3 & 4 | SPA DAY |
| TK | ART |
| Kindergarten | GARDENING |
| 1 st Grade | GAME NIGHT |
| 2 nd Grade | FAMILY SUNDAE KIT |
| 3 rd Grade | BEACH |
| 4 th - 6 th Grade | CAMPING & GRILLING |
| 7 th & 8 th Grade | GIFT CARDS |
| High School 1 | MOVIE NIGHT |
| High School 2 | SPORTS |



OTHER WAYS TO HELP WITH AUCTION

We could use some people to call businesses, pick up valuable donations and more. Contact Rebecca Dill today at

rdill@gcspatriots.com!

STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS



NATIONAL TECHNICAL HONOR SOCIETY

Congratulations to Mason Green and Matthew Williamson for their induction into the National Technical Honor Society for their high academics and hard work at Van Buren Tech.



100 DAYS!

TK, Kindergarten and 1st Grade celebrated the 100th Day of school by dressing up as if they were 100 years old! The rest of the school was filled with smiles as they paraded delicately down the halls. The first graders also enjoyed a 100-word scavenger hunt throughout the building!



BUDDIES IN CHRIST

February 25th was a special day at GCS, where older students "buddied up" with younger students for a combined chapel. Together, the students enjoyed a time of worship and devotions, followed by a brief pep assembly and games in the gymnasium. Staff led the students in "Four Corners" and "Ameoba".



2025-26 GCEA BOARD MEMBERS

Whitney Tinker - President
wtinker@gcspatriots.com

Nathan Hutchins - Vice President
nhutchins@gcspatriots.com

Holly Crouch - Treasurer
hcrouch@gcspatriots.com

Ruth Malaka - Secretary
rmalaka@gcspatriots.com

Shirl Bontrager
sbontrager@gcspatriots.com



Marshall Downs
mddowns@gcspatriots.com

Laraine Fox
lfox@gcspatriots.com

Joel Layman
jlayman@gcspatriots.com

Trever Meachum
tmeachum@gcspatriots.com

Brian Montgomery
bmontgomery@gcspatriots.com

THE NEXT GCEA BOARD MEETING WILL TAKE PLACE ON
MONDAY, MARCH 23 @ 6:30 PM.

JOIN THE GCEA!



You're invited to be part of the GCEA (Grace Christian Educational Association), the governing body of our school. The fiscal year for the GCEA runs July 1 to June 30. Membership requires agreement with our organization's doctrinal statement and \$10 membership fee. The membership fee is waived for parents of students at GCS. Each year we have an annual meeting where the School Board is elected and an annual report is presented to the membership. Membership allows you the right to vote at our annual GCEA meeting and at special/extra meetings throughout the year. Join TODAY by completing the [GCEA Membership Application Form](#) on our website and emailing it to info@gcspatriots.com.

Our School Board is accessible to you through email as well as open board meetings.

DEADLINE

If you wish to vote at the annual GCEA meeting on April 14, you must submit your GCEA Membership Application no later than Tuesday, March 31.



ALUMNI NEWS

RICK HERTER

Rick Herter, GCS graduate of 1979, will be awarded the Presidents Medal for Exceptionally Meritorious Service by the Air Force Historical Foundation in May for his incredible art work spanning a 38-year career. To learn more about Rick's accomplishments and see his beautiful artwork, visit his [website](#) and [Facebook page](#)! Congratulations, Rick!



ATTENTION, GCS ALUMNI!

We love to learn what God is doing in the lives of our Patriots! If you would like us to share His work in your life with the greater GCS community, we encourage you to send us your accomplishments and news, such as awards, births, graduations, marriage, moves, promotions and other announcements with us at info@gcspatriots.com. Photos are appreciated, but not required.



UPCOMING EVENTS

SPRING TIME AT GCS

Spring is always a very busy time as we wrap up one year and begin to prepare for the next! There are many events coming up including the Auction, ACSI Music Festival for our band students, a mission trip to Guatemala for our juniors and seniors, Kindergarten Program, Open House, Science Fair, Graduation, awards nights, enrollment and more! Please consider sharing the images below with friends and family!



Grace Christian School
KINDERGARTEN ROUNDUP & PROGRAM
 Friday, March 6, 2026

Interested in Kindergarten programs available at GCS? Join us for our Kindergarten Program and Kindergarten Roundup.

SCHEDULE:
 OPEN HOUSE 5:00 - 6:00

- Kindergarten classrooms open
- Meet our teachers
- Enrollment information available

PROGRAM 6:15 - 7:15

- Join us in the commons as our students present a short program highlighting what they've been learning this year.

NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS

Website: www.gcpspatriots.org | Email: info@gcpspatriots.com | Phone: 269-463-5545



PS - 12TH GRADE
GRACE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
OPEN HOUSE

For over 50 years, GCS has partnered with families to shape hearts and minds through Christ-centered education. Experience our family-style community, small class sizes, and strong academics guided by a faithful, dedicated staff. We invite you to come experience the Grace difference!

Saturday, March 7, 2026
10:00 AM - 1:00 PM

325 N. M-140
 Watervliet, MI 49098

- Meet our staff
- Visit classrooms
- Ask questions
- View our Science Fair displays

For more info: **269-463-5545**
 Visit us: www.GCSPatriots.org

SPREAD THE NEWS



GCS Class of 2026 presents
THE 4TH ANNUAL CHILI/SOUP COOK-OFF!

SATURDAY, MARCH 7TH 4:30PM-8:00PM
 IN THE CAFETERIA
FREE ENTRIES! FREE TASTES!
OPEN GYM AVAILABLE!

ENTER A CHILI/SOUP/DESSERT TO SHOW OFF YOUR CULINARY SKILLS! VOTE FOR YOUR FAVORITES BY DONATION. WINNING CHILI/SOUP AND DESSERT WILL BE AWARDED PRIZES.

To enter by March 5th, send an email to mrutgers@gcpspatriots.com



AUCTION ACTION with 80's SATISFACTION
MARCH 21, 2026

2:30 PM DOORS OPEN
4:00 PM SILENT AUCTION
5:30 PM LIVE AUCTION

To receive a link to sign in on your mobile device, text **61347** to **888.990.9876**

Purchase a Walking Taco Meal with a cookie & a drink for **Only \$8.50**

GRACE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
 325 N M-140 WATERVLIET, MI 49098

PRAYER REQUESTS

- A GCS teacher is on dialysis and is in great need of a kidney transplant from a living donor. Please join us in praying for God's provision in His perfect time. If you'd like to find out if you could be a donor, please send an email to info@gcspatriots.com.
- Please also join us in prayer for GCS Parent, Jade Dockham, who is recovering from open heart surgery and expecting a child to be born early.



PARTNER WITH OUR MISSION TEAM!

In just a little over two weeks, our mission team will finally board the plane to Guatemala. Our team will travel to San Raymundo, Guatemala to partner with Casas por Cristo in local ministry. They'll be working side-by-side with a local family, their pastor, and Casas staff to build a safe, permanent home, meeting physical needs while sharing the hope of the Gospel in a powerful, tangible way.

Financial Support:

We still have a few team members who need support dollars. Whether you feel led to support a specific team member, or the team as a whole, your generosity directly enables students to serve, build, and share Christ's love.

Prayer Support:

Prayer Requests for the Team

- A hedge of protection around the entire trip.
- Preparation of each heart to display Christ's love throughout the trip.
- Thankfulness for God's provision for expenses and building materials.
- EVERY aspect of the trip bringing glory to God.
- A growing relationship with each other and God.
- A spirit of team unity, cooperation and flexibility.
- A connection to happen with the family and community the team is building for.
- A personal and powerful encounter with God for each team member and those they interact with.
- Divine appointments to display God's love.
- Faith that God will continue to grow seeds that are planted.
- Good health and safety during travel and in Guatemala.
- Abundance of energy and strength.
- A willingness to step out of comfort zones.
- Good sleep in unfamiliar surroundings.
- God's blessings overflowing during the home dedication services and the Holy Spirit moving in a powerful way.
- An eagerness, passion, and joy to share what God did during the trip upon return.



Prayer Requests for Casas & the Recipient Family

- Thank God for our field rep, Ashley Van Ravenswaay, who has been called to serve with Casas por Cristo.
- Pray for the Adan Coc Chajon family, who will be the recipients of the house we build.
- Pray for Clemente de Jesus Cumes Ovando, the pastor of Iglesia Evangelica Orad Sin Cesar church. He chose the family that will be receiving the home and will continue to minister to them long after we've gone.
- Thank God for the volunteer teams that travel to Mexico, Guatemala, Dominican Republic, and Honduras to build homes for a families, meeting the physical need of better housing as a way of also meeting the spiritual need for Jesus Christ.
- Pray that the families receiving homes built by Casas por Cristo are reminded that God loves them and that they grow in a relationship with Jesus.
- Pray that God grants the recipients of these homes a sense of security and dignity in their new dwelling.
- Pray that our recipient family experiences joy and hope in receiving a new home, and that they would be able to build strong, stable lives within it.
- Pray for relationships developed between volunteers, the families, and local pastors.
- Pray that the local churches, pastors, and ministries thrive.

THANKSGIVING

- Thank you to the elementary families that recognized the value of supporting our upcoming mission trip and providing all of the items needed to send with our team!
- A new set of classroom headphones for the Jr. High Classroom
- Year End Giving donations
- The generous giving of parents and students to our staff during the Christmas season
- Thank you to the donor that provided Thanksgiving turkeys to our staff.
- Those who organized pie making, sold pies, bought pies and showed up to assemble pies for the fundraiser.
- PTF Christmas decorating
- PTF Meal provision for Parent/Teacher Conferences
- Volunteers that made Shemmy's Fish Fry possible
- Parents, staff and students that participated in Patriots-In-Action Day
- Consistent volunteer for gate at home games
- Mrs. Leach repaired and recovered our basketball panels. They look great!
- Workers from the Chapel, EFC volunteered on Saturday, October 4.
 - 23 light units were updated and bleachers secured
- Stairs to the ball field finished
- Water to the ball field/well house plumbing updated
- \$30,000 pledged donation to sponsor a teacher
- \$31,950 came in to meet our student sponsorship needs
- New volleyball cart donated
- Waxing our floors and carpet cleaning donated in August by Mr. Clean's Cleaning & Restoration
- We received over \$20,000 in electrical supplies from a vendor with All-Phase electrical in Benton Harbor. We will be able to completely update our building to LED from fluorescent.
- We were able to secure a shared time partnership with Southgate Community Schools
- Softball field's Summer/Fall refreshing work (looking great)
- New and consistent volunteer keeping the grounds beautiful
- Gym and Locker Room refurbishment
- 1949 Cadillac (open to ideas of what to do with it)
- A lot of furniture & professional displays donated in July/August



SUPPORTING GCS



AUCTION HELP NEEDED

At this time, we are in need of volunteers to make calls to get donations and pick up donations.

Please contact Rebecca Dill rdill@gcspatriots.com.

HISTORIAN NEEDED

We are looking for a Grace Christian Historian! We have shoe boxes of photos and such that need the attention of someone who enjoys compiling history.



GCS STAFF WISHLISTS

[Mrs. Colford, Principal](#) [Mrs. Corwin, High School](#) [Mrs. Compton, PE/Music](#)
[Mrs. Vogel, P4](#) [Miss Hemingway, TK](#) [Miss Newell, Kindergarten](#)
[Mrs. Litten, 1st](#) [Mrs. Tavernier, 2nd](#) [Mrs. Wilkerson, 3rd](#) [Mrs. Grey, 4th](#)
[Mr. Dill, 5th](#) [Miss Erickson, Jr. High](#) [Mr. Bradshaw, Strength](#)



2025-26 SUPPORTING CHURCHES

Below is a list of churches that are attended by GCS families. We are very grateful to the churches that support GCS through both prayer and financial gifts (*indicated in bold*).

- Apostolic Lighthouse Church
- Berrien Center Bible
- Blue Roof Church
- **Bright Star Tabernacle**
- Calvary Bible Church
- Calvary Missionary Baptist Church
- Coloma United Methodist Church
- **Decatur Bible Church**
- Deeper Life Bible Church
- First Baptist Church
- First Church of God
- Freshwater Church
- Full Gospel Assembly
- **Hartford Bible Church**
- Hartford Church of God
- Lakeshore Christian Church
- Latter Day Worship
- LifeBridge Church
- **Midway Baptist Church**
- New Covenant Church
- New Day Church
- New Freedom Church
- New Hope Community Church
- New Jerusalem COGIC
- **New Life Baptist Church**
- **New Life Christian Center**
- **North Wayne Mennonite Church**
- Overflow Church
- Pioneer Memorial Church
- **Sister Lakes Community Church**
- **South Haven Church of Christ**
- St. Mary Catholic Church
- St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Catholic Church - Niles
- **The Chapel, EFC**
- The River
- The Well Ministries
- Victory Life Church
- Volinia Baptist Church
- Watervliet Free Methodist Church
- Woodside
- Yore Community Church



BUSINESS BOOSTERS

When you buy from or use the services of one of these businesses, they support GCS:



Town & Country (10/5%)

(10% for residential services, 5% for commercial services)
2179 Plaza Dr.
(269)934-8155
cheyenne@frazeeeam.com



Cheyenne Chernugel, Realtor (10%)

10% of any commission proceeds will go to Grace Christian School when this ad is mentioned.
(269)252-6595
cheyenne@frazeeeam.com



T & C Water Treatments (10 or 15%)

(110% for salt and parts, 5% for softener systems)
Softeners & water conditioning. Salt sales and delivery.
2179 Plaza Dr., Benton Harbor
(269)983-8156



Tyler Automotive in Niles and Stevensville

New Honda, Chevrolet, Kia, Chrysler, Dodge, Jeep, Ram, as well as pre-owned vehicles at each store. When customers contact Brandon Dockham directly and mention Grace Christian, \$100 plus 25% of my commission will be donated back to the school. Use QR code to see current inventory, calculate payments and contact information for Brandon Dockham.



COMMUNITY EVENTS



Women's Conference

MARCH 14TH @11AM

WORD, WORSHIP,
LUNCH AND PRIZES

NEW LIFE CHRISTIAN CENTER-
6674 PAW PAW AVE- COLOMA



**BERRIEN COUNTY
HEALTH DEPARTMENT**
better health. stronger communities.

HEARING & VISION CLINICS

Spring Break Clinics - By Appointment

School-required hearing and vision screenings

For: Kindergartners through ninth-graders

When: 8:30 a.m.-noon and 1:30-4:30 p.m.

Where: Berrien County Health Department

Monday, March 30

2149 E. Napier Ave., Benton Harbor

Tuesday, March 31

1205 Front St., Niles

Summer Clinics - By Appointment

School-required hearing, vision and dental screenings

For: Students entering kindergarten

When: 8:30 a.m.-noon and 1:30-4:30 p.m.

Where:

Benton Charter Township

- **June 23** – Benton Charter Township Hall

Coloma

- **June 30** – Coloma Junior High

Eau Claire

- **July 28** – Lybrook Elementary

Niles

- **June 8** – Brandywine (B.I.A.)
- **Aug. 10** – Northside Child Development Center

Stevensville

- **June 9** – Hollywood Elementary
- **June 15** – Roosevelt Elementary
- **Aug. 13** – Stewart Elementary

Schedule your appointment by scanning the QR code
or by visiting bit.ly/BCHDHearingVision.
Questions? Call Melisa Jordan at 269.926.7121, ext. 5293.



GRACE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

2025-2026 School Year*



AUGUST

- 21 Back to School Night, 5-7:00 PM
- 25 **First Day of School**
Quarter 1 Begins
- 29 **NO SCHOOL - Labor Day Wknd.**

SEPTEMBER

- 1 **NO SCHOOL - Labor Day Wknd.**
- 3-5 SEW Retreat (Grades 9-12)
- 26 Picture Day

OCTOBER

- 2-3 **NO SCHOOL - Inservice**
- 17 **Grandparents Day, Half Day,**
No Aftercare
End of Quarter 1
- 20 **NO SCHOOL - Inservice**
- 21 Quarter 2 Begins

NOVEMBER

- 3 Picture Retakes
- 4 **NO SCHOOL—Parent/Teacher**
Conferences, 11:00 - 6:00pm
- 24-25 **NO SCHOOL - Fall Break**
- 26-28 **NO SCHOOL - Thanksgiving Break**

DECEMBER

- 5 Christmas Worship Concert, 7pm
- 17 Pastor Appreciation
- 18 **HALF DAY**
End of Quarter 2
- 19-1/5 **NO SCHOOL - Christmas Break**

JANUARY

- 5 **Inservice**
- 6 Quarter 3 Begins
- 19 **NO SCHOOL- MLK Jr. Day**

FEBRUARY

- 13-17 **NO SCHOOL - Mid-Winter Break**
- 17 **Inservice**

MARCH

- 2-6 Science Fair
- 6 Kindergarten Program/Round Up
- 7 Open House, 10:00 am - 1:00 pm
- 13 End of Quarter 3
- 16 **NO SCHOOL - Inservice**
- 17 Quarter 4 Begins
- 21 Annual Benefit Auction
- 22-28 Mission Trip - Guatemala
- 30-4/6 **NO SCHOOL - Spring Break**

APRIL

- 6 **NO SCHOOL - Spring Break**
- 14 **GCEA Meeting**

MAY

- 8 Elementary Musical
- 21 Graduation
- 22-25 **NO SCHOOL, Memorial Day**
- 29 Moving Up Ceremony
(TK-5th), **HALF DAY,**
NO AFTERCARE
End of Quarter 4
Cruise-In, 5:00-8:00 pm
- 30 Golf Outing, tee-off 8:30 am

**This calendar is subject to change.*

Please visit GCSPatriots.org for current calendar.

SCHOOL HOURS

EARLY CARE	7:00 - 7:30 am
PLEDGES/PRAYER	7:50 am
SCHOOL DAY	8:00 - 3:00 pm
AFTER CARE	3:15 - 5:30 pm
HALF DAYS	Dismissal: 11:30 am
OFFICE HOURS	7:30-3:30 pm