

U.S. Department of Education
2015 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

[] Public or [X] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [] Title I [] Charter [] Magnet [] Choice

Name of Principal Mr. Brian Benscoter

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Grace Community High School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 3001 University Blvd.

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Tyler State TX Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 75701-7457

County Smith State School Code Number* 447133

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Twitter GraceTylerGCS Facebook gracetylertx?fref=ts Google+ https://plus.google.com/115960276667676925854/about

YouTube/URL _____ Blog http://graceschoolblog.com/ Other Social Media Link LinkedIn - https://www.linkedin.com/company/grace-community-school

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify that it is accurate.

(Principal's Signature) Date _____

Name of Superintendent*Mr. John Ferguson E-mail: jferguson@gracetyler.org
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name _____ Tel. _____

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify that it is accurate.

(Superintendent's Signature) Date _____

Name of School Board President/Chairperson Mr. Chris Glenney
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify that it is accurate.

(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature) Date _____

**Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

PART I – ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

Include this page in the school’s application as page 2.

The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below concerning the school’s eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The school has made its Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) or Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) each year for the past two years and has not been identified by the state as “persistently dangerous” within the last two years.
3. To meet final eligibility, a public school must meet the state’s AMOs or AYP requirements in the 2014-2015 school year and be certified by the state representative. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2008 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, or 2013.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school’s application and/or rescind a school’s award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution’s equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

All data are the most recent year available.

DISTRICT (Question 1 is not applicable to non-public schools)

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- Elementary schools (includes K-8)
 - Middle/Junior high schools
 - High schools
 - K-12 schools
- TOTAL

SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
 - Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
 - Suburban
 - Small city or town in a rural area
 - Rural
3. 12 Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school.
4. Number of students as of October 1 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	0	0	0
K	0	0	0
1	0	0	0
2	0	0	0
3	0	0	0
4	0	0	0
5	0	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	39	37	76
10	49	32	81
11	30	30	60
12	46	45	91
Total Students	164	144	308

5. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
 - 2 % Asian
 - 3 % Black or African American
 - 4 % Hispanic or Latino
 - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - 90 % White
 - 1 % Two or more races
 - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

6. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2013 - 2014 year: 5%

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2013 until the end of the school year	3
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2013 until the end of the 2013-2014 school year	14
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	17
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1	324
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.052
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

7. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 0 %
0 Total number ELL
 Number of non-English languages represented: 0
 Specify non-English languages:
8. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 0 %
 Total number students who qualify: 0

9. Students receiving special education services: 7 %
22 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional categories.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| <u>1</u> Autism | <u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Deafness | <u>0</u> Other Health Impaired |
| <u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness | <u>22</u> Specific Learning Disability |
| <u>1</u> Emotional Disturbance | <u>0</u> Speech or Language Impairment |
| <u>0</u> Hearing Impairment | <u>0</u> Traumatic Brain Injury |
| <u>0</u> Mental Retardation | <u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness |
| <u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities | <u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed |

10. Use Full-Time Equivalent (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of personnel in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff
Administrators	3
Classroom teachers	21
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	12
Paraprofessionals	4
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 15:1

12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

Required Information	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010
Daily student attendance	97%	98%	98%	97%	97%
High school graduation rate	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

13. **For schools ending in grade 12 (high schools)**

Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2014

Post-Secondary Status	
Graduating class size	78
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	77%
Enrolled in a community college	19%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	1%
Other	3%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

Yes No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

15. Please summarize your school mission in 25 words or less: To assist Christian families to encourage, equip, and educate their student to influence the world for Christ

PART III – SUMMARY

In 1973, a group of Tyler families saw the need for a faith-based community school that would serve the educational and spiritual needs of their children. They began Grace Community School with an enrollment of sixty students in grades two through twelve in a single small building.

The school moved to a building on Old Jacksonville Road which now houses the elementary school. In the mid-1980s, the oil bust and resulting recession in Tyler led to the closure of the high school, but Grace continued on from kindergarten through eighth grade. In the early 90's, Grace Community purchased a separate building for the upper grades and began a 9th grade class in 1995. Grace completed its high school building in 1996, and graduated its first class in the new high school in 1999. In 2009, Grace completed a \$7,000,000 building project, including a football/soccer field and track and a new science wing.

Grace Community High School has grown to its current size of approximately 308 students and exists as a 9th through 12th grade, coeducational, college-preparatory day school with selective admissions. The curriculum is rigorous and presented from a Christian perspective; students also receive social, athletic, and fine arts opportunities to provide a well-rounded high school experience. GCS consistently finishes in the top five for the "Henderson Cup" which is based on the combined points earned by TAPPS schools in the areas of academic, speech, fine arts, and athletic competitions.

Grace Community School is a ministry of Grace Community Church of Tyler, Texas and is accredited by the Association of Christian Schools International and AdvancEd. Grace is also a charter member and is certified through the Council on Educational Standards and Accountability (CESA). Grace Community High School also is a member of the Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools, (TAPPS). The school is ecumenical in its focus, with GCS students representing over 100 different churches.

The GCS mission is to assist Christian families in educating, equipping, and encouraging their children to influence the world for Christ, which it accomplishes through three core values: educational sanctification, redemptive community, and, "life as worship". The school's mission is to assist, not replace, parents. Therefore, GCS holds parenting seminars, uses its print and electronic publications as parent education vehicles, and uses every touch point to empower parents to exhort, encourage and hold each other accountable in community.

One distinctive GCS tradition occurs during the graduation ceremony when a twenty minute interlude is provided for parents to join their graduate to deliver a very personal "blessing". This beautiful time serves as the perfect capstone of an educational experience designed to "assist Christian families", an essential part of the mission statement.

The high school faculty has been trained to use the Cultivate curriculum for student mentoring, and there is periodic retraining for new faculty members. The school's in-house professional development program often features topics related to student development and mentoring. Teachers are evaluated based, in part, on how they build into the lives of students.

The Humanities curriculum integrates English, history, and Bible in a self-reinforcing context, and even the STEM subjects are guided by the same "Essential Questions for the Humanities", producing a rich and rigorous high school education. GCS graduates routinely receive college scholarship dollars and enjoy success in their colleges of choice. They exceed state averages on the ACT College Benchmarks in all areas, and are recognized as AP and National Merit scholars. In 2014, there were five National Merit Finalists in all of Smith County where GCS is located; three were from GCS. Because it is a challenging curriculum, academic support is available at several levels for those students who have diagnosed learning difference and need appropriate accommodations, are new to the school, or who are experiencing traumatic events.

GCS has long enjoyed award winning fine arts and athletics. High School students may take band, orchestra, choir, drum line, art, drama, and tech theater; they may compete in men's/women's football/volleyball, cross country, swimming, soccer, basketball, tennis, golf, and baseball/softball, and track, debate, yearbook, and TAPPS academic competitions.

Within the school, students serve as leaders in several substantial student government projects, National Honor Society, and chapel team. Students develop and exercise leadership aptitudes in civic organizations such as Texas Bank and Trust student board of directors, Rotary, UT Tyler Ethics Bowl, and various leadership conferences. While service is a part of the school's regular culture, designated student-orchestrated community service days give students an opportunity to serve a broad cross-section of the Tyler community. Activities include cheer camp in a low-income public elementary school, hosting a play day for special needs adults, and working at the local food bank. GCS is recognized by the City of Tyler as a valuable community partner.

PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

1. Core Curriculum:

The core curriculum of Grace Community High School could be described as “Humanities Plus”. Too often, STEM subjects are taught in isolation from other curriculum, ignoring the need to integrate all subjects together according to how the world actually works. To truly teach a faith-based integrated curriculum, humanities plus STEM is the ideal equation, and one that is very distinctive.

The mission of the study of humanities lies in the tireless pursuit of truth from literature, history, and the arts and the ethical impact this has on decisions in every corner of life from politics to scientific research. Such an integrated humanities approach exposes the reality of human fragmentation, need, and suffering that sparks a pursuit for completion, wholeness, and reunification of the human image. Thus the aim of the humanities at Grace lies in guiding students in examining the meaning of human life, both as it is as well as how it ought to be, through an exploration and engagement with history, literature, theology, philosophy, and the visual arts within the Western tradition. Additionally, the essential humanities questions are applied in science and math courses and in the use of technology to provide students with this fully-orbed world view.

Even though teachers continue to teach a single discipline, the regular collaboration required to integrate the subjects brings additional depth, perspective, and richness to the instruction. The collegiality and professional learning engendered by the humanities approach makes learning engaging, exciting, and meaningful to student and teacher alike.

English courses use “Aristotle’s Topics of Invention” as the foundation for writing designed to argue and support a thesis. Students are trained to effectively use argumentation, grammar, and documentation in both written and oral communication. Literature is chosen to support the chronological unfolding of world history taught in history classes. All students engage in close reading and interpretation of texts from a variety of sources and genres and utilize critical thinking skills to analyze history and literature from multiple sources and through multiple types of media. Socratic discussions develop a foundation in thinking using evidence. Math courses reflect a traditional high school trajectory, with differentiated courses available beginning in 8th grade, culminating in AP Calculus. Science, too, follows the traditional order with freshman biology students receiving initial exposure to the rigors of processing complex information in a college preparatory style. Blended learning is being evaluated for developmental appropriateness to further prepare students for college. Students engage in discussion of responsible uses of science, mathematics, and technology in the current culture and analyze current events and culture in light of the overall humanities focus.

While the learning standards are somewhat unique to the school, they are continuously informed by the ACT College and Career Readiness Standards, the Texas state standards, Common Core State Standards, NCTM standards, NCTE standards, the ISTE standards, and the Next Generation Science standards. The default course level is Honors, but alternatives include on-level, pre-AP, nine dual credit courses, and six AP courses.

The GCS Humanities approach supports the school’s three core values:

- Core Value - Life as Worship
- At GCS, we use an expanded understanding of “humanities” or “liberal arts” to explain all the learning pursuits which address what it means to be fully human.
- Core Value - Educational Sanctification
- GCS integrated learning includes reading classic works of literature; appreciating and participating in the arts; being familiar with world history, geography, and governments; understanding a philosophy of science and mathematics as well as applying scientific and mathematical skills and content; gaining familiarity with other languages and cultures; developing fluency in listening to, speaking about, and writing about great ideas; growing in character; and stewarding our bodies.

- Core Value - Redemptive Community

This integrated approach recognizes the dignity and complexity of the learners in all their aspects, honors the calling of the teacher, and is a learning-centered hybrid of educational approaches. Reading, discussing, and learning together – students, faculty, and families - contributes to community.

The use of this approach is not only self-reinforcing, but also supplies a context for learning, integrating traditionally compartmentalized disciplines. This approach prepares GCS students for college not only because of its rigor, but also because the contextualization makes sense of and makes memorable the content. The regular practice of the higher level thinking and close reading, equips GCS students for what they encounter in college. Whether or not a student attends college, the humanities focus equips them as literate citizens who know how to pursue the “good life” and how to help to secure it for others through the work that they do.

2. Other Curriculum Areas:

Research demonstrates that involvement in fine arts supports student academic success. Because of the traditional excellence of the programs, most students take three or more fine arts in their high school career even though only one is required for graduation. Classes meet four times per week, with additional practices and performances. In the visual arts programs, students assemble an extensive portfolio in four years of study, and several graduates have been accepted into the art and design schools of their choice. The performing arts departments of drama, choir, and orchestra, as well as the extra-curricular drum-line, produce perennial state championships and prepare students for admission to very competitive college programs. In addition to being a tool to educate the whole person, fine arts programs at GCS are designed to teach students that a person's worth and performance should not be linked, that judges should receive honor and respect, and how to graciously accept victory or defeat. Every discipline within the fine arts shares the five spiraling strands of artistic discipline: craftsmanship and artistry, performance and evaluation, cultural and historical heritage, and career, vocational, and service opportunities. Students are taught to regard the arts as a form of worship and an opportunity to be good stewards of opportunities and giftedness.

Similarly, physical activity has been linked to cognitive skills in much recent brain research, so the opportunity to participate in competitive athletics or other physical education is important to support academic success. In 2014, 73 percent of GCS high school students participated in athletics with its attendant conditioning class. Those not involved in competitive athletics may also take the conditioning class as an elective. Coaches seek to provide "real-life" opportunities to be "on mission". A people-first-performance-second approach means that in competition and in PE, coaches and programs will be evaluated first and foremost, not by the athletic performance or win-loss records of their teams, but by the spiritual formation of their student-athletes. While the programs will develop individual giftedness, they will emphasize how that gifts are primarily given to serve the team. The slogan of both the fine arts and athletics departments is “For an Audience of One”.

GCS is in compliance with the program’s foreign language requirements. Students take Spanish for two to four years, four times per week. The five students who took the fourth year of AP Spanish in 2014 scored either a 4 or a 5 on the AP test. By investing in the process of acquiring clear communication, literacy and understanding skills in a second language, students are equipped to make an impact not only locally, but internationally. Study of a second language also increases an appreciation for the unique beauty that is reflected in all people groups. So in addition to meeting the instructional objectives of becoming proficient readers, writers, speakers and listeners, GCS students are encouraged to use the ability to learn language in order to cultivate genuine love for, learn to live at peace with, be appreciative of, and be hospitable towards members of other cultures.

The study and use of technology at GCS is designed to equip students to be the best stewards of the gifts of technology, using them as positive, powerful tools in an increasingly digital world. GCS students use technology daily in a one-to-one iPad environment, supported by the Director of Digital Learning. The director has assembled invaluable videos, instructions, tips, and suggestions at “iPad Central” and conducts

workshops with teachers and parents, while also providing daily support to students. Students may further study technology as interns as well as in a dual credit, project-based elective computer class which meets 4 times per week all year. GCS has adapted the “International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)” standards to fit our unique mission. Practicing digital citizenship and patiently guiding students through the possibilities as well as the pitfalls of ever-available access to information has become a priority in a world where students will be called upon to use technology without being distracted or consumed by it.

3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Academic support is available on two levels.

General support is provided for all students through classroom differentiated instruction and teacher tutorials. Monday-Thursday mornings from 8:00-9:00 is a dedicated tutorial period where teachers are available in their classrooms to meet with students. On-level classes for math and science are available and sometimes differentiation is supplied in a class-within-a-class format. Freshman students who may find the workload difficult are encouraged to delay the foreign language component until after the freshman year. Guided study halls are required for certain students, and all students are counseled about the ramifications of replacing a study hall with an additional course. Appropriate accommodations are routinely made in classrooms for students who need them.

When a student has been identified by a teacher or a parent as needing additional academic support, the Academic Support Center provides intervention through a variety of individually tailored strategies, including one-on-one and group tutorials before, during and after school; assistance with identified learning differences; scheduling of subject-specific tutoring on campus; and short term support of students transitioning from another campus or school system. The Academic Support Center maintains a referral list of diagnosticians for those seeking further intervention. A dyslexia specialist is available to intervene with students on campus, and "Cogmed Working Memory Training" is available to those who may have a working memory deficit.

Textbooks are loaded on devices in the one-to-one iPad program and teachers add their own PDFs for annotating in “Notability”. Another app which is useful for formative assessment is “Socrative”. The “Fuze” math curriculum designed for iPads includes embedded videos, practice, feedback, and challenge which students are encouraged to use and which aid in differentiation. Students enjoy project based learning in The University of Texas dual credit computer course. Organizational support is implemented through the “e-backpack” application, helping students to keep up with materials and deliver them to teachers with a time-stamp, thus reducing stress about losing assignments or not turning them in on time.

Students who find the technology itself too distracting may use traditional paper and pencil methods.

The normal course level is a challenging “Honors”, but additional challenge is available to students through course scheduling, six AP courses, nine dual credit courses, TAPPS academic competitions, and SAT prep courses.

PART V – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

1. Assessment Results Narrative Summary:

In the last five years, 100 percent of Grace students have graduated from high school. In 2014, of those, 77.2 percent enrolled in a four-year university, 19 percent in junior or community college, 1.3 percent joined the military and 2.5 percent made other plans.

ACT score trends over the past five years have held fairly steady. The 2014 composite score average was 25.4 with a 27.2 in Reading and a 24.4 in Mathematics, based on the best score achieved by each student. All of these scores exceed the state and national averages. Additionally, on the college readiness benchmarks for 2014, GCS students far exceeded the state average in each of the four categories and half of Grace students reached or exceeded college readiness benchmarks in ALL four categories. In the last five years, ACT scores ranged from 23.5 to 25.8 in math; from 24.9 to 27.2 in reading; and from 23.1 to 25.1 in science. While most scores have held steady reflecting the strength of the teachers and the curriculum, the consistent upward trend in reading and in science may be attributed to an increased emphasis on close reading skills. ACT did not grant any accommodations on the testing, so there is no sub-group to report.

Total AP students have increased from thirty-two in 2010 to fifty-seven in 2014, with 75.4 percent of those students scoring 3 or higher in eight different courses.

From 2010-2014, GCS has enjoyed the success of five National Merit Scholars and fifteen Commended Scholars. There are four Commended Scholars for 2015.

2. Assessment for Instruction and Learning and Sharing Assessment Results:

Recent professional development has focused on the process of backward design of instruction from assessments, varying assessments, including more frequent formative assessments, and documenting these in course outlines in order to incorporate classroom differentiation based on formative assessments. Since there are tracked options in the high school, the college guidance office counsels students and parents about the course of study which will result in optimal learning and success for each student. When a track does not exist, a “class-within-a-class” provides a tiered approach to instruction. Because of the academic rigor of most courses, often students are given weekly formative quizzes to help them retrieve information and to distribute practice. This strategy allows the teacher to identify areas of misunderstanding, and gives students the opportunity to correct misconceptions before a major assessment. GCS uses the curriculum review cycle to deeply examine assessment data (PSAT, SAT, ACT) to identify areas of deficit in the subject area under review that year. This data is also unpacked by departments and grade levels at a regularly scheduled Friday meeting at the end of the year, where responses are proposed for the following year. Also for the PSAT and AP scores, the principal, director of curriculum, and guidance counselor look at data to identify curriculum areas which may need attention. Students within twenty-five points of the most recent year’s qualifying scores for National Merit recognition are encouraged to enroll in a weekly coaching class which focuses on individual needs; all other students may be enrolled in a more general test prep class during the 8:00 AM tutorial period. Students are introduced to the College Board website for additional test preparation.

Part VI School Support

1. School Climate/Culture

Roland Barth in his article "The Culture Builder" said, "The nature of relationships among the adults within a school has a greater influence on the character and quality of that school and on student accomplishment than anything else. If the relationships between administrators and teachers are trusting, generous, helpful, and cooperative, then the relationships between teachers and students, between students and students, and between teachers and parents are likely to be trusting, generous, helpful and cooperative. If, on the other hand, relationships between administrators and teachers are fearful, competitive, suspicious, and corrosive, then these qualities will disseminate throughout the school community". This quote captures the source of the positive environment for students and teachers at GCS.

Through the use of scheduling, students are placed in classes where they are most likely to enjoy optimal learning, and support is available to all students. Many events punctuate the school year which are purely designed to be fun – homecoming dress up days, school dances, and impromptu activities that maintain a light heart. Intentional strategies are resulting in an increasingly diverse student population coming up through the GCS system.

GCS's approach to discipline is relational in nature, not rules-based. It is an attempt to take a shepherding, rather than a punitive approach to disciplining the heart of the student. It always seeks to restore, because that is what redemptive disciplining should do.

GCS demonstrates value for its teachers. Faculty salaries have traditionally been bench-marked to 90 percent of those of the local school district (which is the highest paying in the area). Given the fact that GCS provides health insurance coverage for its employees (which the state does not), the total compensation package has historically exceeded the 90 percent benchmark. GCS remains the highest-paying private school in the East Texas area. More importantly though, teachers are affirmed and supported in their call to the grand purpose of the school's mission.

GCS is inclined to give students and faculty a second chance. This inevitably results in the perception that some students or staff members stay with the school for too long or are not a fit, but GCS has a predisposition to find ways for members of our community to stay members. This may result in complicated admissions and complex relationships with students and families, but it creates security and trust which makes GCS a great place to work and learn.

2. Engaging Families and Community

GCS is a community where families truly love each other. Parents are encouraged through seminars, publications and weekly blogs. Events, such as end-of-the-year all-school picnics, school auctions, homecoming activities, and other special activities are designed to engage the entire school family. Whether it be through high school fine arts performances at elementary chapel, pep rallies held at the elementary school, or special elementary nights at athletic events, GCS works to promote cross-campus community providing opportunities for older students to pour into the lives of younger ones, edifying both age groups. Students participate in voluntary BASE groups which are focused on building community among students and teachers.

The Grace Single Parents Network comes alongside single moms to help where needed and the school family rallies powerfully around families in crisis. The school uses task forces composed of various stakeholders to develop plans for school programs and responds to a biennial survey to make adjustments that will positively impact the experience of the students.

The school newsletter documents how GCS and its students are impacting the world, and Facebook, Twitter, and other forms of social media are employed to communicate with parents and the broader community. RenWeb, the school management system, is useful for broadcast email as well as to facilitate regular communication. GCS holds regular information nights where parents can have question and

answer sessions with school administrators. School families who transfer from other educational institutions comment frequently on the high level of school-family communication.

While service is a part of the school's regular culture, designated community service days give the school an opportunity to send its students out to a broad cross-section of the Tyler community. GCS has been a regional collection center for Operation Christmas Child for over ten years, with GCS students working to collect gift boxes and organize them for shipping to national centers. Each year, the GCS football team hosts at-risk boys from Azleway Ranch to play a football game as GCS cheerleaders and families cheer them on for a "Friday Night Lights" experience. Also each year, the men's basketball team hosts the local Special Olympics team for a basketball game, including fans, food, and special activities provided by GCS families. The GCS Drama department maintains an on-going "Fearfully and Wonderfully Made" company, comprised of local special needs students. GCS has partnered for the past six years with Parental Care Ministries, an organization that operates churches, Christian schools, and orphanages in southwestern Uganda.

3. Professional Development

An essential component of "Educational Sanctification" is professional development. It is carefully planned to be intentional and mission-driven, providing both large group and individually differentiated opportunities and accountability. Every Friday, classes are dismissed early in order for regular professional development to happen within school hours. The Friday meetings include vertical alignment, professional learning communities, curriculum review, all-school meetings, and campus staff meetings. Professional development also occurs for two days during Thanksgiving, before every new school year, and in an extensive new teacher induction process.

The main driver for learning professionally is not just meeting certification requirements, but rather learning to be better teachers. The school has professional development whether it is needed for certification purposes or not, but it is also helpful for the school to continue to provide ways to meet the ACSI CEU requirements. Providing diverse opportunities that are more specific to individual needs and interests will cultivate a genuine desire to grow and learn. The school helps to pay for professional development and dedicates a significant portion of the budget to support teacher growth.

Marks of effective professional development are that it is strategic, sustained, scaffolded, bite-size, hands-on, and supplies accountability. These indicators guide the implementation of professional development.

Professional Learning Communities (grade level teams, departments, vertical alignment, campus level meetings, book discussions, and all school meetings) are important forms of professional development even though teachers may not always earn CEUs. They may or may not involve new professional learning, but they are indispensable for building relationships and school culture. Since the school needs a consistent structure for evaluating the effectiveness of all professional development and whether the new learning is actually implemented, one Friday meeting each spring is devoted to this evaluative exercise.

Differentiated professional development is normally determined as part of "goal setting" on each teacher's yearly summative evaluation, but since individualized learning opportunities do not always present themselves at the end of the year, the same process to gain approval is available throughout the year.

Subjects or initiatives identified for all school professional development are filtered through philosophy, mission, and student outcomes. These initiatives need to be focused and repeated for enough years to be sustained and become part of the school culture. Differentiated professional development also uses the same focus, whatever model (live instruction, school-based meetings, webinars, online learning, conventions, seminars) is chosen.

4. School Leadership

The head of school has authority from the school board to carry out the operations of the school. As his direct report, the high school principal has an extensive job description including roles in supervision, personnel, admissions, curriculum, instruction, discipline, student programs, and budget. In every meeting, the school's mission (to equip students) guides the decisions. The leadership philosophy manifests itself in the following ways.

Leadership is relational rather than policy-driven. While policies and processes are important to providing structure and guidance, decisions are not policy-driven where doing so would work an injustice.

A high level of trust enhances leadership. The first inclination is to trust people to do the right thing and to support ideas and requests from faculty and staff in many areas including curriculum or professional development.

Empowerment and support are provided. Respecting the unique leadership roles within the school means realizing that those closest to the decision are usually those best able and equipped to make it.

A community approach to leadership means that while considering the perspectives of others may look like indecisiveness, the risk is necessary in order to engage as many stakeholders as possible.

Grass roots idea formation involves a bias towards letting stakeholders develop and implement new ideas. The Academic Support Center, the high school schedule, the Praying Parents of Grace, Cougar Backers, the Drum Line, Spirit Squad, one-act play festival, and single parents' network are notable examples.

Willingness to give, rather than take credit unleashes productivity. When great innovations are generated at the grassroots level, credit is due to the originator of those ideas; but when things go wrong the leader shoulders the responsibility.

Risk taking is essential for a school that is truly committed to excellence - becoming better than it once was. A school that strives to make an impact in the 21st century must be willing to take risks, be unafraid of failure, and to grapple with unintended consequences.

A learning community of teachers and administrators must model lifetime learning not only for the sake of students, but also for personal growth, constantly reading, studying, and exploring new ideas and technologies.

Striving toward excellence requires changing. Not all change is good, but a commitment to the process of change is essential for growth.

A community of grace means that leaders have a bias towards thinking the best of those they lead, acknowledging that every member of the community has value, and that no faculty member or administrator is more important to the success of the community than any other. Leaders should be characterized by kindness, respect, and love.

PART VII - NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL INFORMATION

The purpose of this addendum is to obtain additional information from non-public schools as noted below.

1. Non-public school association(s): Christian

Identify the religious or independent associations, if any, to which the school belongs. Select the primary association first.

2. Does the school have nonprofit, tax-exempt (501(c)(3)) status? Yes No
3. What are the 2014-2015 tuition rates, by grade? (Do not include room, board, or fees.)

2014-2015 Tuition

Grade	Amount
K	\$0
1	\$0
2	\$0
3	\$0
4	\$0
5	\$0
6	\$0
7	\$0
8	\$0
9	\$8811
10	\$8811
11	\$8811
12	\$8811

4. What is the educational cost per student? \$9749
(School budget divided by enrollment)
5. What is the average financial aid per student? \$3546
6. What percentage of the annual budget is devoted to scholarship assistance and/or tuition reduction? 10%
7. What percentage of the student body receives scholarship assistance, including tuition reduction? 35%

PART VIII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

REFERENCED BY NATIONAL NORMS

Subject: <u>Math</u>	Test: <u>ACT</u>
Grade: <u>12</u>	Edition/Publication Year: <u>2014</u>
Publisher: <u>ACT</u>	Scores are reported here as: <u>Scaled scores</u>

School Year	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010
Testing month	Feb	Feb	Feb	Feb	Feb
SCHOOL SCORES					
Average Score	24.4	24.5	25.8	24.5	23.5
Number of students tested	73	70	61	62	41
Percent of total students tested	92.4	93.3	79.2	91.2	78.8
Number of students alternatively assessed					
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Other 1					
Average Score					
Number of students tested	0	0	0	0	0
2. Other 2					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
3. Other 3					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					

NOTES:

REFERENCED BY NATIONAL NORMS

Subject: <u>Reading/ELA</u>	Test: <u>ACT</u>
Grade: <u>12</u>	Edition/Publication Year: <u>2014</u>
Publisher: <u>ACT</u>	Scores are reported here as: <u>Scaled scores</u>

School Year	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011	2009-2010
Testing month	Feb	Feb	Feb	Feb	Feb
SCHOOL SCORES					
Average Score	27.2	26.8	26.9	26.7	24.9
Number of students tested	73	70	61	62	41
Percent of total students tested	92.4	93.3	79.2	91.2	78.8
Number of students alternatively assessed					
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
SUBGROUP SCORES					
1. Other 1					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
2. Other 2					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					
3. Other 3					
Average Score					
Number of students tested					

NOTES: