

Ascent Classical Academy of Grand Junction



Family and Student Handbook



THE VISION

Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools develop the moral and intellectual skills, habits, and virtues upon which independent, responsible, and joyful lives are built, in the firm belief that such lives are the basis for a free and flourishing republic.

THE MISSION

Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools train the minds and improve the hearts of young people through a classical, content-rich education in the liberal arts and sciences, with instruction in the principles of moral character and civic virtue in an orderly and disciplined environment.

CORE VIRTUES

● Courage ● Moderation ● Justice ● Responsibility ● Prudence ● Friendship ● Wonder

MOTTO

ad maiora ex tenebris

Out of the darkness towards the greater things

LOCATION

Ascent Classical Academy of Grand Junction
545 31 Road, Grand Junction Colorado 81504
Headmaster: Carissa Drake
Contact: office@gj.ascentcolorado.org

This document collects the procedures that ACAGJ uses to implement the policies identified in the Family Handbook. The material in this document is site-specific and will not apply to other Ascent schools outside of Ascent Classical Academy of Grand Junction.

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LETTER TO FAMILIES

Dear Families,

Welcome to Ascent Classical Academy of Grand Junction!

We are honored that you have chosen our academy for your family and eager for you to join us in the pursuit of truth, goodness, and beauty.

Parents/guardians, please take the time to read through our entire handbook. We encourage you to read pertinent portions with your students, such as the mission statement and honor code. Please note that we revise and improve the handbook annually, so re-reading is important for returning families as well. The following pages clarify many of the essential details that a family must understand to participate fully in our community. In effect, knowing the handbook helps your family participate fully and knowledgeably in the community. At enrollment, parents/guardians confirmed that they read and understand these guidelines. Students will review these policies in the classroom.

The center of our school is the classroom and the relationship between the teacher and the student. Every family supports and participates in this relationship by encouraging their children through homework as well as by being involved on campus. I urge every parent/guardian, student, and teacher to become wholeheartedly involved in at least one Ascent activity. For a parent/guardian, this might mean volunteering in the classroom, leading or serving on a PSOG committee, or chaperoning a field trip; for a teacher, coaching a sport or organizing a club; and for a student, playing a sport or being a leader in an extracurricular arena. Through work and friendship, we build up each other's spirits and develop our community.

Before you turn the page, I would like to quote from The Athenian Oath. The young men of ancient Athens took this oath when they reached the age of seventeen.

"We will revere and obey the City's laws, and will do our best to incite a like reverence and respect in those above and below us ... We will strive to quicken the public's sense of civic duty. Thus, in all these ways we will transmit this City, not only, not less, but greater and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us."

What a powerful call to service from one of the great cities of the Western tradition! Each of us, as free citizens of ACAGJ, should equally strive to make our school a better place - a city of truth, goodness, and beauty -for those students, parents/guardians, and teachers who will follow us.

Warmly,

Carissa Drake
Headmaster

Introduction to the Family Handbook

The ACAGJ Family Handbook is a site specific document that details the policies and procedures of our campus. This document complements and is in alignment with the Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools Board Policy Handbook. For Board level policies, which include grievance policies, expulsion, retention and promotion, etc. please see the ACACS Board Policy Handbook. For all Ascent Classical Academy of Grand Junction, site related policies, please review this handbook in detail.

ACA Educational Philosophy

Philosophy

Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools' mission is derived from the history and philosophy of liberal education in Western Civilization and in America. Currently, traditional, classical education is experiencing a renaissance in this country after decades of neglect. Within this broader reform, Ascent Classical Academy Charter Schools follow the principles and curriculum of what might be called an American classical education, whose mission encourages the formation of human beings and citizens who will flourish in life and serve their communities and country in a manifold way. To embrace the mission, the school holds certain essays and texts to be the foundation. Among these are the following:

- *The Schools We Need and Why We Don't Have Them* by E.D. Hirsch
- *The Making of Americans* by E.D. Hirsch
- *The Great Conversation* by Robert Maynard Hutchins
- *A Classical Education for Modern Times* by Terrence O. Moore

Important Historical Sources:

- *Proposals Relating to the Education of youth in Pennsylvania* by Benjamin Franklin
- *Virginia Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge* by Thomas Jefferson
- *A Plan for the Establishment of Public Schools* by Benjamin Rush

Hillsdale College Candidate Member School

Ascent Classical Academy of Grand Junction is proud to be a Hillsdale College Candidate Member School. As a candidate member school, ACAGJ employs the Hillsdale College K-12 curriculum and receives training and support from the Hillsdale K-12 academic team. Hillsdale College was founded to provide the kind of sound learning necessary to preserve the blessings of liberty. For over 175 years, it has offered an outstanding liberal arts education for undergraduate students. Restoring excellence to American K-12 education is a natural extension of the College's mission, and Hillsdale has been helping K-12 schools for over three decades.

Hillsdale teaches K-12 schools to provide an education that is both classical and American in its orientation; one that is rooted in the liberal arts and sciences, offers a firm grounding in civic virtue, and cultivates moral character.

Communication

ACAGJ believes that a trusting relationship between the school and the parents is vital to the moral and intellectual formation of the students. Below is a brief description of the personnel in leadership at ACAGJ. We encourage parents to reach out to communicate questions and concerns.

The **Headmaster** is Carissa Drake. She reports to the Ascent Classical Academy Charter School Board of Directors and is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the school. She directly oversees the implementation of ACAGJ's curriculum and has sole authority to manage all teachers and staff at ACAGJ. Mrs. Drake's contact information is carissa.drake@gj.ascentcolorado.org.

The **Dean of Students** is Jessica Newman. She oversees school-wide discipline and the implementation of Love and Logic Discipline in and out of the classroom. She also oversees the Aftercare program at ACAGJ. Ms. Newman's contact information is jessica.newman@gj.ascentcolorado.org.

The **Dean of Upper School** is JB Phillips. He oversees the pedagogy and philosophy related to grades 7-12. He provides teacher support in areas of culture, curriculum content, and classroom management. Mr. Phillips contact information is jb.phillips@gj.ascentcolorado.org.

The **Dean of Grammar School** is Joy Slate. She oversees the pedagogy and philosophy related to grades K-6th. She provides teacher support in areas of culture, curriculum content, and classroom management. Mrs. Slate's contact information is joy.slate@gj.ascentcolorado.org.

The **Dean of Student Activities** is Scott Spoede. He oversees the extra-curricular activities including sports, house activities, and clubs. Mr. Spoede's contact information is scott.spoede@gj.ascentcolorado.org.

The **Dean of Student Services** is Daniel Woods. He oversees programs for all students with IEPs and is responsible for screening incoming students for special needs and conducting evaluations for special education when necessary. He also is responsible for overseeing the programs of students with Section 504 Plans, including screening for and evaluating student need for 504 accommodation plans. Mr. Woods' contact information is daniel.woods@gj.ascentcolorado.org.

The **Registrar** is Nicole Harrison. She oversees the school registration of each student and maintains individual student files. Additionally, Mrs. Harrison manages the enrollment process and data reporting to the Colorado Department of Education. Mrs. Harrison's contact information is nicole.harrison@gj.ascentcolorado.org.

The Attendance/Admin Assistant is Melissa Pestridge. She oversees attendance and general office related issues. Mrs. Pestridge's contact information is office@gj.ascentcolorado.org.

Questions or concerns about curriculum should be directed to the **Dean of Upper School (7th-12th) or the Dean of Grammar School (K-6th)**.

Questions or concerns about **student conduct or discipline** should be directed to the Dean of Students.

General questions regarding the school may be directed to the **Administrative Assistant**.

Faculty and staff emails may be found on the school website. A brief email is the preferred method for communicating with faculty members. Please allow 24 business hours for teachers to respond to email requests. Parents/guardians may leave phone messages for specific faculty via the school office, if needed.

Educational Priorities and Curriculum

The Governing Board desired that all students receive a classical, liberal arts education. To this end, the Board has determined the following educational priorities.

1. Basic cognitive skills: reading, writing, mathematics
2. Core Subjects:
 - a. English language and literature
 - b. History, geography, and government
 - c. Physical and biological sciences
 - d. Mathematics
3. Other classical subjects: Latin, art, and music
4. Auxiliary subjects: Foreign languages, physical education, and performing arts
5. Extracurricular activities of any type

Basic Principles

ACAGJ's teaching philosophy is within the scope of a content-rich K-12 scope and sequence with the guidance of the Hillsdale College K-12 Program Guide, founded on the following principles:

1. A curriculum that is content-rich, balanced, and strong across the four disciplines of math, science, literature, and history.
2. The Western tradition is central in the study of history, literature, philosophy, and the fine arts
3. Study of the American literary, moral, philosophical, political, and historical traditions
4. Explicit instruction in phonics and grammar
5. The study of Latin as a requirement for all students.
6. An approach to instruction that acknowledges objective standards of truth, goodness, and beauty
7. A well-educated and articulate faculty who use traditional, teacher-led methods of instruction
8. A commitment to use technology effectively without diminishing the faculty leadership that is crucial to academic achievement
9. A plan to serve Grades K through 12 (though the school opens with fewer grades) so as to provide continuity and a recurrent examination of subjects throughout a student's career
10. A school culture of moral virtue, decorum, respect, discipline, and studiousness among both students and faculty

Academic Progress and Success

Grading

We believe grades are not the sole indication of a student's academic ability or aptitude. Nonetheless, grades are a useful tool to evaluate and communicate a student's mastery of the curriculum. Teachers will assign grades in order to reflect accurately the range between true mastery and insufficient knowledge of a subject. To this end, the following letter grades represent levels of mastery, as follows:

- A - Mastery
- B - Proficiency
- C - Sufficiency (Competence)
- D - Insufficiency
- F - Failing

In addition to these general parameters, we will use a 4.0 grading scale. The following grading scale will be used for grades K-12:

A	94-100%	4.0*
A-	90-93%	3.7
B+	87-89%	3.3
B	84-86%	3.0
B-	80-83%	2.7
C+	77-79%	2.3
C	74-76%	2.0
C-	70-73%	1.7
D+	67-69%	1.3
D	64-66%	1.0
D-	60-63%	0.7
F	0-59%	0.0

*GPA calculations only apply to students in 9-12 grade.

The grading scale as defined above is utilized for all students. Incompletes will only be given under special circumstances as determined by the headmaster. It is the responsibility of parents and students to remain informed of the student's progress.

Promotion Requirements

For detailed information regarding promotion requirements for K-6 and 7-12 students, see the Ascent Classical Academies Board Handbook.

Grade Level Retention

The purpose of promotion and retention is to provide maximum consideration for the long-range welfare of the student and to provide an opportunity for each student to progress through school according to his/her own needs and abilities.

It is expected that most students will be promoted annually from one grade level to another upon completion of satisfactory work, however, a student may be retained when his/her standards of achievement or social, emotional, mental or physical development would not allow satisfactory progress in the next higher grade. Retention normally occurs before the student leaves the primary grades.

Parents/guardians who wish to appeal the decision for retention must first contact the headmaster. If parents/guardians do not accept the decision of the headmaster, an appeal may be made in writing to the Board.

Graduation Requirements

For detailed information regarding graduation requirements, see the Ascent Classical Academies Board Handbook.

Academic Support

Conference

Students in grades 7-10 have conference time built into their weekly schedule on a routine basis. Conference time is intended to offer students the opportunity to consult with teachers during the school day. Conference time is especially important for students with extracurriculars and after-school commitments.

During this time, students are expected to work independently and studiously under the guidance of a teacher. Students will remain in their designated conference time classroom unless they need to consult with another teacher regarding homework, tutoring, or make-up work/assessments. Students will be signed out of their conference time classroom to consult with other teachers. Students who do not need to consult with another teacher should treat this time as an opportunity to begin homework, catch up on personal organization, or read quietly. Students will not be allowed to treat this time as free time or to use the time for social purposes.

Intervention

Students in grades K-6 have intervention time built into their daily schedule. This time is intended for specific intervention in mathematics and literacy. Additionally, students who are falling short of the reading and mathematics goals for their grade level will meet with the reading or math interventionist. This may involve the interventionist “pushing into” the classroom or pulling the student to work one-on-one or in a small group of other students on a consistent basis for a period of six to eight weeks. The interventionist will reach out to parents should their child need this intervention and will provide regular communication regarding progress.

Tutoring

Tutoring is offered after school on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays. Tutoring for K-6th grade is by invitation only. Teachers will reach out to parents to schedule tutoring. Upper School teachers will provide tutoring hours to their students in their course syllabus. Teachers may offer tutoring on Fridays at their discretion and may choose to schedule tutoring before school when it fits the needs of the teacher and parents. Tutoring is offered to our families free of charge.

Tutoring is intended to support students who are struggling with current concepts. Tutoring is not a time for extensive remediation, nor can tutoring be considered a substitute for missed class time.

Students attending tutoring may be excused from extracurricular activities or obligations (e.g., sports practice) without penalty, so long as arrangements for tutoring are communicated in advance to the coach or activity leader.

Questions or concerns about tutoring should be directed to your child’s teacher.

Upper School Homework Support

Students learn the virtues of responsibility and prudence through developing academic habits, such as homework completion. To this end, ACAGJ has a mandatory homework support program intended to help students build these habits of virtue.

Program structure:

- The Dean of Upper School will run a missing assignments report on Fridays, starting the 4th week of the quarter, and notify parents if students have multiple missing assignments in any core content area.
- The student will then have the opportunity to complete missing work and submit by Monday of the following week.
- If the student still has missing assignments in core classes, the Dean of Upper School will notify the student and parents that the student will need to stay for homework support on Tuesday and Wednesday until 4:00 pm.

Questions or concerns should be directed to the Dean of Upper School.

Homework

One of the best ways for parents to be involved in their child’s education is to provide support and structure for homework. Homework is an opportunity for students to practice skills taught in class and, for our older students, prepare for the next day’s classes. As a general guideline, the homework assignments set by our teachers should be tasks the average student could complete in ten minutes multiplied by their grade level (e.g. if your child is in third grade, they should have approximately 30 minutes of homework). This number represents the total homework time across ALL subjects that the average student should spend per grade level.

Grade	Approximate Time
K-1	10 min

2	20 min
3	30 min
4	30-40 min
5	40-50 min
6	50-60 min
7-8th	60-75 min
High School	60-90 min

ACAGJ highly encourages students to read on a nightly basis for at least 20 minutes. This can be in the form of a family read aloud, independent reading, or student reading to parents or siblings. Parents can refer to the ACAGJ Recommended Reading list for ideas of great literature.

Note that a student outside of the average could take more or less time to complete all their assignments. Parents should reach out to their child's teacher if he or she is spending far more time than these guidelines to complete their homework.

Honor Code

Consistent with its mission to develop students with good character and virtue, ACAGJ sets forth the following honor code:

I am honorable and responsible in conduct, honest in word and deed, respectful of others, and will promote the same.

Consistent with the honor code, ACAGJ takes instances of plagiarism and cheating very seriously. Our mission is to guide students towards virtue and responsibility. As such the following process will be followed when instances of plagiarism or cheating are discovered.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism will not be tolerated by any teacher in any subject. Students progress academically only by receiving comments and corrections on work they turn in and by taking these comments and corrections to heart in order to improve their performance. The entire system of assessment rests on the assumption that the work a student turns in is his/her own. Plagiarism compromises the system, is unfair to other students in the class who do their own work, and constitutes a form of theft of others' ideas and labor.

Plagiarism is defined as the appropriation of another's ideas or words in order to present them as one's own. An instance of plagiarism can be as long as a term paper or as short as a sentence. Simply paraphrasing an author's words can also constitute plagiarism. The words of authors can only be used when properly quoted and cited. Teachers will provide the guidelines of acceptable citation. When in doubt, the student has the responsibility to ask how an author should be used in an assignment.

Cheating

Cheating occurs when a student uses someone else's work or a prohibited source of information in order to gain an unfair advantage on a test or an assignment and to avoid doing his/her own work. Cheating comes in many forms. One student copying off another, a student using a "cheat sheet" to answer questions on a test, and a student trying to pass off another student's work as his own are examples of cheating.

A disciplinary referral slip will be issued if plagiarism or cheating has occurred. The teacher and Dean of Students will handle instances of plagiarism and cheating.

PowerSchool

At ACAGJ we are under the philosophy that a letter grade within itself is not the end goal for our students, but that the grade and the student ownership of maintaining their grade is a reflection of a learner living out our core virtues.

The PowerSchool Parent portal is a helpful means of communicating student academic progress. Parents with students in grades 3-12 have 24-hour access to their child's online gradebook through the parent portal and are able to see scores as well as teacher comments on assignments. Parents are encouraged to check PowerSchool regularly to make sure they are aware of their child's progress and potential academic needs.

The PowerSchool Parent portal is not available for students in grades K-2. The focus of early grammar school is foundational reading and math skills as well as developing academic habits. The development of these skills over the course of the year is best understood through progress monitoring and communication with the classroom teacher.

Summer Assignments

Summer reading assignments attempt to enhance summer break by showing students how to spend their time wisely. Upper school students are given a specific assignment that they are required to complete before the first day of school. These assignments are particular to each age and course of study they will be completing in the fall. Both returning and new upper school students are required to complete this assignment. Please make sure to affirm the importance of this endeavor and support your child and the school in its completion.

For younger students, we have a suggested summer reading list posted on our website and encourage you and your children to explore its richness, build memories, and habituate their hearts towards reading over the summer break.

Questions about the summer reading assignment should be directed to the Deans of Grammar and Upper School.

Teacher Communication

ACAGJ grammar school teachers send out a Weekly Newsletter as a first line of communication with parents regarding routine information and curricula for the upcoming week. We recommend that parents review the newsletter for upcoming events and content weekly.

Teachers may also share additional information or resources in their newsletters that parents and students may find helpful. Students in grades 3-6 will be expected to use the Ascent provided planner, which will be checked daily. Parents should refer to their child's planner for detailed homework assignments. Large

projects and general information will be provided in the Weekly Newsletter, but homework specifics will come home in student planners. This is meant to train healthy homework habits. Upper school students are expected to maintain a planner but it will not be checked daily by teachers. Students are expected to be responsible for their daily work.

Standardized Tests at ACAGJ

ACAGJ participates in several different standardized tests throughout the school year, including DIBELS8, The Classical Learning Test (CLT), Colorado Measures of Academic Success (CMAS) and Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT). Ascent does not teach to the limited scope of these tests, but we use the data collected from these assessments to evaluate and improve the delivery of our classical education program.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

Carline

Drop off

Carline is the means by which students at Ascent Classical Academy are dropped off and picked up from school. Morning drop-off begins at 7:15 AM; parents may arrive on campus as early as 7:10 AM to begin lining up. Carline ends at 7:38 AM. Parents must walk their students into the building to check in at the Front Office after these times. It is imperative that students are dropped off in time to get to their classroom by 7:40.

Dismissal

Below are the rolling times for dismissal. All families should have received a new carline tag and number. If you did not get your family's carline tag at Back To School night, please contact the front office.

- 2:40 pm Kindergartners without siblings (pink card)
- 3:00 pm Walkers/bikers/drivers (4th - 10th and K-3rd students with a sibling)
- 3:05 pm Family names that start with A-H (blue card)
- 3:15 pm Family names that start with I-R (green card)
- 3:25 pm Family names that start with S-Z (orange card)

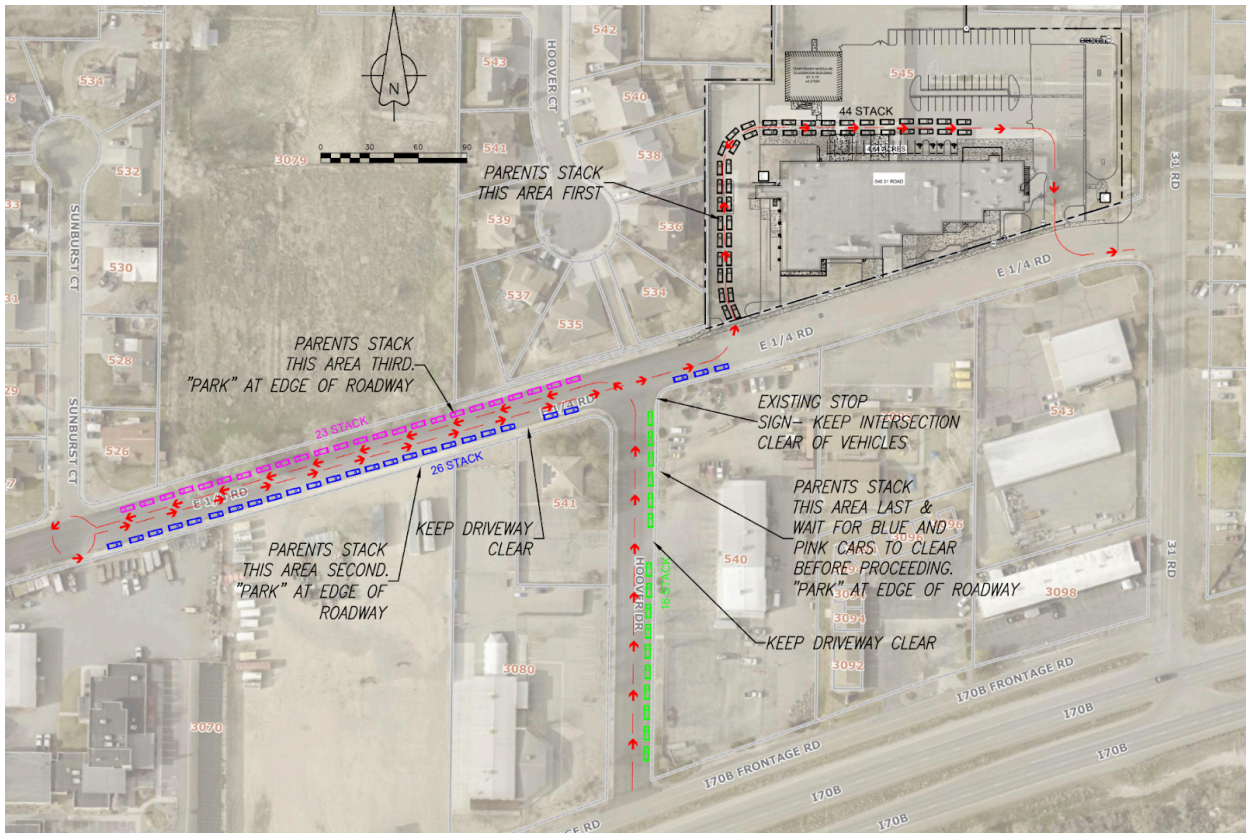
Anyone that misses their designated time may come after 3:20. Carline closes at 3:30 and students will be brought into the front office to call parents.

You should have received an email requesting you to register your family in the Pickup Patrol App through a provided link. If you did not receive this email, please contact the front office. Don't forget to download the app on your phone (app.pickuppatrol.net/parents)

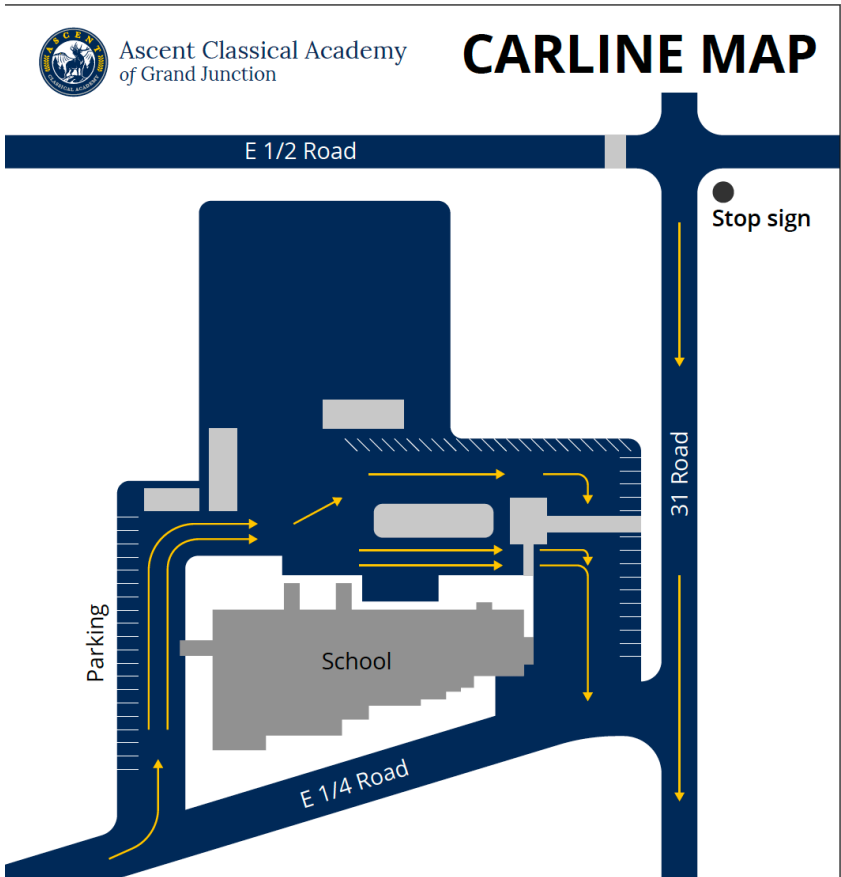
If you have any further question please watch this video [

Please see the driveline and carline maps below for reference.

Driveline Map



Carline Map



Student Walkers/Bikers

Students in 4th-10th grade or younger students with an older sibling may be given permission to walk or bike off of campus by their parent/guardian. This designation must be noted in the Pickup Patrol app. Students must have a walk-off badge on their person as they exit campus.

Aftercare Program

ACAGJ offers an aftercare program from 3:30-5:30 pm on site. This is a fee based program that is offered to families as a benefit and service to the community. The cost of the program will cover a student snack, supplies, hourly rate for aftercare employees, and other expenses to run the program. We do our best to keep fees low while also providing an important service to our community. Tutoring is not part of this program. Contact individual teachers for tutoring schedules.

General Program Schedule

- 3:30-3:45 Snack and community time
- 3:45-4:30 Homework and Tutoring
- 4:30-5:00 Outside play (weather permitting)
- 5:00-5:30 (board games, activities, finish homework)

Aftercare Fees

Aftercare is signed up for on a monthly basis with a five day a week or three day a week option. Parents who wish to sign up for aftercare need to register and pay prior to the last school day of the preceding month (e.g. If parents wish to have aftercare in September, registration and payment need to be made by the last business day of August). Parents who need emergency care should contact the front office as soon as possible if a need arises. *Fees below are based on the 2025-26 academic year and may change.

- 5 days a week: \$225 monthly
- 3 days a week (flexible): \$160.00 monthly

Parents/guardians should contact the front office for questions regarding payment or financial hardship.

Attendance

Absences

To excuse an absence a parent or guardian must call or email the office or submit the absence through Pick Up Patrol by 3:00 pm of the missed day. All absences must be resolved within two school days.

Excessive Absences

Per ACA board policy, students who miss more than 10 days of school for any reason in a single school year will be declared habitually truant and may have credit withheld. **Students in the Grammar School (K-6) with 10 days of absence or more may be retained. Students in the Upper School (7-9) with 10 days of absence or more may lose credit for their courses and be ineligible for graduation.** For the purposes of attendance, excessive tardiness may count toward unexcused absences.

To support parents in attendance matters, the school office will send graduated notifications as absences accrue towards the 10 absence threshold. Parents of students who are chronically absent may be required to meet with school administration to develop an attendance plan. Chronically absent students may also lose their privileges to participate in extracurricular activities, including fine arts, clubs, house activities, and athletics until habitual attendance is re-established. Further, if students fail to show up for school on the day of an evening activity, they will not be permitted to attend the activity without prior permission from the Headmaster or a Dean.

Questions regarding attendance records and updating absence reasons should be directed to the Attendance Receptionist. Questions regarding attendance policy and excessive absence procedure should be directed to the Dean of Students.

Advance/Makeup Work

While we appreciate the forethought and desire to take care of responsibilities prior to absences, ACAGJ also understands that such requests present an additional burden to teachers. Parents and students may request advance work prior to a pre-arranged absence but must understand that the teacher is not obliged to pre-teach, plan, or create additional materials to support an absence. Additionally, many assignments may not be able to be accommodated in advance (e.g., tests, group work, labs). If advanced work is provided, it is expected that the work is delivered completed upon the student's return.

Parents and students should consult the teacher and weekly newsletter to review what was/will be assigned during an absence. Students should make sure they understand their teacher's expectations and procedures for submitting makeup work.

Over the course of the school year it is inevitable that a student will miss classes due to illness, appointments, or other family obligations. ACAGJ's policy allows 2 days for every day of absence. If a student is absent in the days leading up to or on the day of a pre-scheduled test, essay or project, the student will be expected to take the test or turn in the essay or project upon returning to school. Questions

about makeup work should be directed to your child's teacher. Questions about our makeup work policies should be directed to the Dean of Grammar School or Dean of Upper School.

Early Pickup

Parents wishing to pick up students early from school for appointments must pick up their child before 2:30 PM. Our office staff may not be able to assist with early pickups after 2:30 PM as they are preparing for carline and general dismissal. Pick ups after 2:30 will need to join the carline.

To pick up your child early, please update the Pickup Patrol app as soon as possible to notify the front office so we can prepare your child for timely dismissal. If you have appointments pre-scheduled or that occur on a regular basis, the Pickup Patrol app can be updated for any day throughout the entire school year or up until 1:30 on the day of.

To pick up your child, please park and walk into the front office with your photo ID. A staff member will verify your identity and call your child down to the office. Please note that in order to maximize learning time we do not pull students early from class to wait for pickup. Anticipate up to a five-minute wait for your child to walk to the front office from class.

Late Arrivals

Our carline closes at 7:38 AM. All vehicles arriving on the property at or after this time will need to park and walk their students into the front office to be checked in. Students may not be dropped off to enter the office alone.

Students must be present in the classroom and ready to learn to be considered on time. Upper School and Grammar School begin at 7:40 AM. Students arriving at or after 7:40 AM will be marked as tardy.

Late Pickup

To respect the time of our teachers and staff who must remain on site to supervise students, parents must pick up their students promptly at the end of the school day and/or after school activities. Late pickup is defined as arriving on site to pick up a student after 3:30 PM, when the office closes, OR 10 minutes after the end time of the after-school activity should it extend past the time the office closes (e.g., if sports practice ends at 5 PM, parents must pick up by 5:10 PM). School staff will make every effort to contact parents and emergency contacts by phone once this window has passed.

Should no phone contact with any guardian or emergency contact for a student be established within 20 minutes after the school office has closed or an after-school activity has ended, school staff will deliver students to onsite aftercare, where parents may pick up students and pay the drop-in fees associated. Aftercare closes at 5:30 PM.

Fees and Finances

Financial Support

ACAGJ does not wish student fees to present a financial hardship or obstacle to attendance for families in need. To that end, we waive student fees and offer additional financial assistance towards uniforms and lunches for qualifying families. Families interested in receiving financial assistance may complete the family assistance survey, which can be accessed by contacting the registrar. Families may qualify for either Tier 1 or Tier 2 assistance. This is based on the same rubric as Free and Reduced Lunch standards.

Questions about exemptions to student fees should be directed to our Registrar. Questions about paying student fees, including payment plans, should be directed to the front office.

Student Textbooks

Students are responsible for the textbooks and materials checked out to them. Teachers will communicate expectations to students for proper and respectful handling of books and other school materials.

Workbooks (i.e. *Dimensions Math*) and literature books are considered textbooks that students use during the year for their education. If a student loses their workbook or literature book and needs a replacement, a parent/guardian will need to pay for a replacement book.

Lost and Damaged Textbooks

Students check out various textbooks and resources during the school year. Should an item not be returned, school staff will contact the parent via email to note the missing item and offer a window for the book to be found and returned. A form will also be sent home with the student for the parent to sign and return, acknowledging the book is lost. If a student loses a consumable item, such as a literature book, the school will replace the book after the replacement fee has been paid by a parent/guardian.

Should an item be returned in a damaged condition, school staff will note the damage and provide evidence of the damage to the parent, as well as evidence that the book was assigned to their student. School staff will determine if damage reaches a level beyond regular wear and tear that requires replacement.

An invoice for lost or damaged items will be sent to parents over email from our Inventory and Finance Specialist. We offer a variety of payment options. If payments represent an undue financial burden for your family, please speak with our Inventory and Finance Specialist regarding alternate arrangements.

Questions regarding lost or damaged textbooks should be directed to our Inventory and Finance Specialist.

School Supplies

ACAGJ purchases school supplies for its students using a portion of student fees. Students are expected to treat school supplies with respect to ensure that supplies last for the expected life of that particular item. Students will be provided with required materials at the start of the school year. Replacement or additional supplies are made available by request through the teacher. Intentional destruction or misuse of supplies will result in disciplinary action.

Parent Engagement Guidelines

Weekly Newsletter

To maintain communication with our families about upcoming events and important announcements, ACAGJ publishes our e-newsletter once a week. Out of courtesy to our busy office staff, please make sure to consult the newsletter and/or any of our handbooks and guiding documents, such as these guidelines, before reaching out with questions.

Parent/Teacher Email Etiquette

As a campus, ACAGJ has adopted a professional and respectful approach to communications between staff and families. Any communication sent in haste and/or heightened emotional state that is intended to cause harm rather than bring about a solution to a problem is counterproductive to finding a collaborative solution. What we have found is that such communications are not only unproductive but damaging to the parent-teacher partnership, and indicative of a buildup of frustration or breach of trust and respect in the relationship. When an aggressive email is sent or received, ACAGJ will support parents and staff in pausing all communication until a face-to-face meeting can be had and these interpersonal issues resolved. Only when parents and teachers are working together for the betterment of students can real progress be made on solving problems.

Parent-Teacher Communication

Out of respect for our employees, we ask parents to use official ACAGJ communication channels to discuss school/student business. As a close community, many ACAGJ teachers and staff may have personal connections to our families from outside of the school. ACAGJ employees are not permitted to discuss school or student business through personal channels, such as social media accounts and text messaging.

Campus Meetings

Drop in or same-day requests for meetings of any kind cannot be accommodated at our campus. Parents wishing to schedule a meeting with a teacher should contact that teacher directly and understand that such meetings are likely to be scheduled after school rather than during the school day. Parents wishing to schedule a meeting with an administrator should contact the front office to request an appointment. Please be sure to provide a short summary of what needs to be discussed so that the meeting can proceed productively.

We often find that phone calls can be accommodated in a shorter turnaround time than in-person meetings. If there is a concern that a meeting will take too long to arrange, a phone call may be requested instead. We want to be sure to address any concerns as soon as we can.

Classroom Observations

Parents are always welcome to visit our campus and observe classes in session. Visiting a classroom can be a great way for parents to gain perspective, see our faculty in their elements, as well as have a framework for which they can speak to their children about what they are learning. We ask that parents schedule a classroom visit through the teacher and the front office. ACAGJ cannot accommodate same day requests for classroom observations.

Before visitors arrive, they must understand the expectations in order to have a valuable observation experience but also allow for continued decorum in our classrooms. The purpose of a classroom visit should never be to critique the teacher or interfere with the learning process in any way.

Parent Partnership

Just as we hold ourselves accountable to set an example of virtue and wisdom for our students, we ask our parents as partners with us to hold themselves accountable. We ask that parents/guardians:

- Not speak poorly of teachers or other staff in order that students may have the best opportunity to learn from all teachers. This includes social media platforms.
- Hold high expectations of student performance - regardless of final grades, students should be putting forth their best effort in all their educational endeavors
- Encourage students in their learning by asking questions and discussing what they have learned on a regular basis
- Help your children develop effective study skills and work habits
- Oversee your child's progress
- Support the school by getting children to school on time

Visitor and Volunteer Expectations

Please follow the below guidelines when visiting campus:

- Follow school procedures as outlined in the Board Handbook and this ACAGJ Family Handbook document
- Understand the mission and philosophy of Ascent Classical Academy
- Class observations must be scheduled ahead of time through the receptionist.
- Visitor dress is reverent and non-distracting, keeping within the spirit of our student uniform and non-uniform dress code.
- Observations should be for a set time and not the whole day.
- Visitors may not wander the building to observe other classes unannounced. Visitors found doing this will be asked to leave by a member of our administration and visiting will not be permitted again.
- Visitors should not interject into the class discussion or offer to assist students in their learning during class time.
- Visitors are not permitted to grade assignments at any time.
- Visitors should not, at any time, take photographs or videos during their observation. This is a direct break of student privacy and visitors will be removed immediately. Exceptions will be made only for parents attending an Opening Ceremony where their student is being recognized for an award. We ask that parents respect the privacy of students and staff by not posting photos or videos that include anyone other than their own students.

Questions about visiting campus can be directed to our front office.

Volunteering

Volunteers are critical to the success of Ascent Classical Academy, and we are deeply appreciative of the time and effort our parents and community members invest in us. We know that children enjoy greater success in school when the adults they admire most take an interest in their education. No matter what kind of volunteer work a parent does, or who they do it for, there are some common qualities that will help them be a successful volunteer at Ascent Classical Academy.

Volunteers must complete a background check through our Raptor system before they may volunteer on campus. Volunteers must also read and sign the *Volunteer Agreement* and the *Student Privacy and Confidentiality Agreement* before volunteering. These documents provide important expectations, policies, and information about volunteering on our site.

Questions about volunteer opportunities can be directed to the front office.

Student Discipline

Philosophy of Discipline

How a school approaches discipline might be one of the most important factors in the development of its school culture. As with anything we do, we align our philosophy with our school's mission and vision. We intend to maintain an orderly and disciplined environment. If we are truly working to develop 'the moral and intellectual skills, habits, and virtues upon which independent, responsible, and joyful lives are built', then we cannot approach discipline in any other way than working to form good human beings.

This must be done with a transformative mindset and not a punitive one. Punitive measures may curb unwanted behavior temporarily but will never transform behavior in any permanent way. Schools that focus their efforts on only curbing behavior will bring about an attitude of bitterness and suspicion of hypocrisy. Therefore, a school should envision the future they desire for their students and develop their discipline policies and procedures to that end - to help students understand why their actions, or inactions, were harmful to the community. The school experience should help them desire a better life for themselves and inspire the child to strive towards excellence.

ACAGJ uses a blend of approaches, with strategies from *Love and Logic for Teachers* and the promotion of a positive mindset. We encourage parents to read *Love and Logic for Parents* and *Mindset: The new psychology of success*.

Discipline Procedures

The best form of discipline is a proactive structure to redirect misbehavior before it occurs. Nonetheless, accidents and mistakes will happen. Each teacher at Ascent may have a slightly different approach to discipline, but all teachers will follow the same general procedures when addressing routine student misbehavior:

- Redirect student back to expected behavior
- Have a conversation with the student to correct misbehavior and address the issue.
- Apply consequences for repeated misbehavior in an escalating sequence
- Refer students to the office for chronic or egregious misbehavior

Communication with parents is essential to the discipline process and it is expected of teachers and staff throughout these procedures.

Behavioral Consequences

Each teacher has a range of tools at their disposal to help students develop the academic and moral virtues necessary to succeed in school. ACAGJ does not have a prescribed sequence of consequences that all teachers must follow; teachers have the discretion to apply consequences as appropriate for the particular student and circumstances. Below you will find short descriptions of common consequences used at ACAGJ. These are options that you may see employed depending on the severity of behavior.

Questions about particular discipline situations should first be directed to your child's teacher or the relevant staff member. Questions about discipline policy should be directed to the Dean of Students.

Electronic Device Policy

Electronic devices must be powered off and may not be used during the academic school day, including drop-off and pick-up, without express staff permission. Students may not keep electronic devices on their person during the academic school day. Such devices include but are not limited to laptops, portable audio devices, head/earphones, hand-held video games, cell phones, and any other device or accessory with wireless or cellular capabilities, including but not limited to watches and eyewear. Exceptions will be made for necessary medical devices and at the headmaster's discretion.

Any student who is using a phone or other electronic device during the day will have that device confiscated until the end of the day. If there is reason to believe that the device has been used in the transmission or reception of communications prohibited by law, policy, or regulation, the device may be powered on and searched by a law enforcement official.

Students who break this rule will be subject to disciplinary action. Once a device has been confiscated, the following procedure will be used to return the device:

- 1st confiscation: The device will be held until the end of the school day and can be picked up by the student or parent when school is dismissed.
- 2nd Confiscation: The device will be held until the end of the school day and can be picked up only by a parent when school is dismissed.
- 3rd Confiscation: The student will be required to leave his or her device in the front office each day and pick it up at the end of the day for the remainder of the year. If the student fails to follow this procedure he/she will no longer be allowed to bring a cell phone to school.

A parent will be notified of all instances of confiscation by the staff member who confiscated the device. If a student continues to flout the rules regarding cell phone use, additional disciplinary action, up to and including suspension from school may occur. ACAGJ is not responsible for the damage, loss, or theft of these items.

Student Health

Health Office

Our Health Office strives to create a comfortable environment for our students. Per Board Handbook policy SE-26.0, students who are sick with contagious illnesses or communicable diseases may not attend school. Common signs of contagious illness or communicable disease include:

Coughing/Sneezing

If a student has mucus that is yellow or green, it is advised that they stay at home. If a student has a persistent cough, they must remain home until it eases. If a student comes to school coughing and/or sneezing and it is a disruption to the class, they will be sent home.

Diarrhea, Fever, Vomiting.

Students should remain at home for 24 hours after the last occurrence of diarrhea or vomiting. If a student vomits at school, they will need to be picked up immediately and must stay home for at least 24 hours without another incident. If students come to school while they are still experiencing symptoms, they are more likely to spread the virus to other children, especially if proper hand washing is not performed. If a student has a fever above 100 degrees, keep them at home. If they come to school and have a fever of 100 degrees or above, they will need to be picked up immediately. All students need to be fever free without the use of fever-reducing medications for a full 24 hours before returning to school.

Sleep

Students unable to remain awake in class will be sent to the office. Parents may be asked to pick up their student and return the student when the student is able to stay awake and participate fully in learning.

Excessive Health Office Visits

If students visit the health office frequently while at school, parents will be contacted. The health office does provide students with peppermints and/or saltine crackers to help soothe mildly upset stomachs. Tampons and pads are also available for our female students. We are not authorized to give out cough drops or cough medicine to students.

Medications On Campus

Per Ascent Board Policy, in order to have student medication (including over the counter medications) the Health Office must have a medical, allergy, and/or asthma form completed by the student's doctor. Authorized providers that can complete this form are MD, DO, PA, NP, NPP, and DDS. No other types of providers are accepted on this form.

Any student that has a health condition that needs medication may warrant a meeting with the Nurse and Health Tech. If parents have a health plan from their student's doctor, this must be brought to the Health Office for recordkeeping and adherence to the health plan.

Parents will need to bring the form and the medication into the Health Office and sign a medication form. Expired medications will not be accepted. Medication must be in its original bottle and have the student's name on it. All forms of medication, including acetaminophen and ibuprofen, must have a doctor's note.

Students may not self-medicate or transport medication to or from the school. Students cannot bring in

their own medication and keep it with them without prior authorization from the Health Office.

If a student needs to carry an inhaler or epi-pen, parents still must have their student's doctor fill out the appropriate form and bring it to the Health Tech. The student then must have a brief meeting with the Health Tech and Nurse to sign a Self-Carry Form and demonstrate that they know how to use their inhaler or epi-pen and when to bring it with them during the day.

Menstrual Supplies

ACAGJ wishes to ease the anxiety or discomfort many young ladies feel when first managing the menstrual cycle. Our nurse's office stocks pads and tampons in the case they are forgotten or in case of emergencies, but students should plan to bring their own supplies on a regular basis. Parents are encouraged to prepare menstrual packs for their daughters. A simple, opaque, small zippered pouch or pencil case can easily be transported to the ladies' room.

Our nurse's station can provide heating packs for easing cramps, but we cannot dispense medication (including aspirin, naproxen sodium, or ibuprofen) without following the medication procedures outlined above. Students are not allowed to self-medicate while on campus without meeting the above requirements.

Questions about student health should be directed to the Health Technician.

Student Life

Awards and Ceremonies

Philosophy of Awards

Ascent Classical Academy wishes to recognize students for their effort and success in accomplishing difficult things. Nonetheless, we also wish to honor the balance between rewarding achievement and rewarding participation. Winning an award at Ascent should represent leadership and exemplary conduct amongst the student body, whether academically or behaviorally. For this reason, Ascent carefully considers each award created and given.

Opening Ceremony

Opening Ceremony is a special time of assembly each week where our students and faculty contemplate our purpose and delight in being in school each day. Opening Ceremony is an opportunity to discuss historical events, celebrate student accomplishments, and reflect on virtue. Students may perform for their peers during the Opening Ceremony, such as a music piece or poem recitation. We also recite the Pledge of Allegiance and our student creed during Opening Ceremony, as a means of coming together as a student community around our purpose of American Classical Education. Parents are invited to attend any of our all-school Opening Ceremony held on Wednesday mornings and will need to check in through the Front Office as visitors. Please check updated information in our newsletters about Opening Ceremony, as our growing enrollment may at times require us to host separate events for each upper and lower school.

Student of Character Awards

Quarterly, Ascent teachers nominate students for virtue awards. Virtue awards are not given for single acts: a student must demonstrate virtue consistently and in multiple aspects of their academic career in order to be nominated. Students who have particularly represented one of our school's virtues in their conduct and work receive these awards. Students may be recognized multiple times for virtue awards.

Extracurricular Activities

Athletics

ACAGJ offers competitive athletic programs for middle school and high school students. Questions regarding the athletic program and athletic offerings should be directed to the Dean of Student Activities.

Students who participate in athletics must meet behavior and academic expectations in order to be eligible. For a full description of expectations and guidelines, parents should review the ACAGJ Athletic Handbook.

Clubs

Clubs for students in grades 1-4 must be formed and led by a faculty or staff member. Students wishing to form a club must complete a club application form, available in the front office. Club applications are approved by the Dean of Student Activities.

Students must meet extracurricular eligibility requirements to participate in club activities. Students may not attend club meetings unless they are officially a club member. Club membership should be consistent; students who frequently join and/or drop from clubs may be prohibited from club membership for the remainder of the school year.

Questions about student clubs should be directed to the Dean of Student Activities.

Extracurricular Eligibility

Per Board Handbook policy SE-17.0, students must meet certain requirements to be eligible to participate in ACAGJ extracurricular activities, which may include clubs, athletics, school social events, and fine arts activities or groups.

Academic Requirements

- ACAGJ students must remain in academic good standing to remain eligible for participation in extracurriculars. Progress reports are run weekly.
- Academics comes first. Mandatory tutoring takes precedence over extracurriculars, including performances, competitions, and games.

Attendance Requirements

- Students must be in regular attendance at school to participate in extracurricular activities. Excessive tardies and absences harm a student's ability to participate fully in class and benefit from Ascent's classical curriculum.
- Students must be in attendance at least 50% of the school day on the day of an extracurricular activity or event, otherwise they may not participate.
- Students who are *chronically absent* will be placed on probation to focus on regaining academic ground lost to excessive tardies and absences.
- Students who are considered *truant* according to the Board Policy Handbook will be ruled ineligible for extracurricular activities.

Behavioral Requirements

- Virtuous conduct is expected. Any student who has multiple behavioral infractions for a school rules violation may be denied the privilege of participation in all afterschool activities for a period determined by the Headmaster and Deans.
 - Students who receive one suspension may be ruled ineligible for the remainder of the athletic season and/or academic quarter.
 - Students who receive more than one suspension may be ruled ineligible for extracurricular activities through ACAGJ for the remainder of the year.

Probation

A probationary period begins when the student's grades, behavior, or attendance falls below the requirements outlined above at the time of a progress check. Students who fail to attain eligibility requirements during a probationary period are deemed ineligible to participate in extracurricular activities.

- Ineligibility restrictions and duration for academics are determined by the activities eligibility policy. Durations will be based on weekly progress reports. (e.g. Athletics, Fine Arts)
- In addition, students must meet school policy with attendance and behavior requirements.

Questions or concerns regarding extracurricular eligibility should be directed to the Dean of Student Activities or the Headmaster.

Lost and Found

The lost and found is located near the Front Office. Students may check the lost and found for items during arrival, lunch, recess, and just before dismissal begins. Our staff routinely go through the lost and

found to identify items that are labeled with a student's name. The lost and found is donated once a quarter. Any unlabeled items that are not claimed by the end of the semester will be included in this donation. Unlabeled and unclaimed uniform items are added to our uniform closet.

The items that most frequently make it to the lost and found are jackets, water bottles, lunchboxes, and books. Please make sure everything that comes to school has your child's name on or in it.

Breakfast/Lunch and Recess

Breakfast Times

Breakfast service will be provided starting at 7:10 each morning. Kindergarten and First grade students will eat breakfast in their classroom, while students in 2nd-10th grade will eat breakfast in the lunchroom. Breakfast service is quick. Students who would like to eat breakfast need to be on campus with enough time to eat and get to class by 7:40. If a student is late to class because he/she was eating breakfast, they will be marked as an unexcused tardy.

Lunch

ACAGJ will send out a rotating lunch menu each semester. Hot water and microwaves will be available for student use in the lunchroom. The website will have the most current lunch menu.

What to leave at home?

ACAGJ is not responsible for items lost or damaged at school. We strongly urge parents to be aware of what their child brings to school to avoid valuable or sentimental items being lost, damaged, or stolen. Additionally, items brought to school often pose distractions or temptations for students during class.

Common items that are best to leave at home are:

- Toys
- Money
- Trading cards (Pokemon, sports, etc)
- Electronic devices (phones and smart watches are not permitted in the classroom; they must be off and in a student's backpack)
- Digital watches that make noise
- Board games
- Anything expensive or fragile
- Anything your child values deeply or finds special

Special Events

Class Celebrations

Per Board Policy Handbook policy AP-16.0, special events or celebrations must be directly tied to the curriculum and added to the instructional environment. Typically we do not change our routines to commemorate historical holidays out of the context of their historical period (Columbus Day, Presidents' Day, MLK Day, etc.). We study various historical figures and events as part of our history curriculum, and may recognize some of these holidays with special presentations and performances at Opening Ceremony morning assemblies. Teachers may craft a morning work that highlights a specific historical holiday for students with appropriate research and reflection in accordance with school culture. Any special event or party is approved in advance by the Headmaster or her designee.

Questions or concerns regarding class celebrations should be directed to your child's teacher.

Student Birthdays

Due to health concerns, students may NOT bring in birthday treats to share with other students. Parents may bring a special treat to the school for their child to enjoy or stop by the lunchroom to spend the time with their child, but may not distribute candy, toys, or any other items to other students. Balloons, flowers, or other gifts delivered to the Front Office for a student's birthday may be kept at the office until the end of the school day.

Recognizing that birthdays are a special and significant event, especially for younger students, teachers are able to recognize student birthdays in the classroom in small, non-distracting ways. Such recognitions are at the teacher's discretion. This includes birthday recognition during lunchtime.

Invitations for parties or events that are brought to school for distribution must include an invitation for each student in the class. Invitations for exclusive events or parties may not be handed out on campus.

Questions or concerns regarding celebration of student birthdays should be directed to the Dean of Students.

Wonder Days

Each semester we celebrate a Wonder Day themed around what our students are studying. Wonder Days are a time for celebrating our students' love of learning and their accomplishments. These days can include activities like arts and crafts, costumes, themed escape rooms and field day events. Wonder Day events often need a lot of parent volunteer involvement and support. We would love to see you there!