

ADVENTIST CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

STUDENT AND PARENT HANDBOOK

Academic Year: 2026-2027



Rooted in Jesus. Ready for Life

School Board, Faculty, and Staff

School Board Members

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Judith Carty - Board Member
Moriah Harsi - Board Member
Ron Oxentenko - Board Member
Bobbie Whidden - Board Member
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Scott Bowes - Gulf States Conference Superintendent of Education
Lisa Willis - Principal
Pastor Eddy Nunez - Church Pastor

Faculty and Staff

Administration and Office

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Merilyn Lucion - Secretary/Registrar
Moriah Harsi - Treasurer

Classroom Teachers

Briana Perez - VPK-Kindergarten
Hanan Hanna - Grades 1-2
Kathy Penno - Grades 3-4
Raquel Fajardo - Grades 5-6
Mark Grice - Grades 7-8

Support and Enrichment

Bonnie Peden - Art Teacher
Sasha Leger - Music Teacher
Cristine Surginer - Paraprofessional
Pastor Eddy Nunez - Church Pastor

Table of Contents

Section 1 - Philosophy of Adventist Education

Goals for Curriculum in
Seventh-day Adventist Schools

Section 2 - Academic Program

History and Accreditation
Academics
Grade Reports
Grading System
Academic Probation
Incomplete and Failure

Section 3 - School Policies

Non-Discrimination Policy
Admission
Financial Information
Insurance
Computer and Internet Usage
Digital Media Policy
Cell Phone Policy
School Visitors
Dispensing Medication
Student Diet
Dress Code

Section 4 - Attendance and Tardy Policies

School Hours
Arrival and Dismissal
Absences
Pre-Arranged Absences
Tardy Policy
Perfect Attendance
Student Pickup

4	Early Student Pickup	15
	Accident and Sickness	15
4	Closed Campus	16
	Hazardous Weather Conditions	16
6	Section 5 - School Rules and Discipline Policies	17
6	Student Conduct	17
6	General School Rules, Violent Behavior, Weapons	17
6	Bullying	18
7	Statement on Human Sexuality and Identity	19
8	Discipline	20
9	Section 6 - School Regulations	22
9	Playground	22
10	School and Personal Property	22
10	School-Sponsored Outings and Trips	22
11	Field Trips	22
11	Extracurricular Activities	22
11	Testing	22
12	School Telephone	23
12	Cell Phones and Other Electronic Devices	23
14	Section 7 - School Board	24
14	Employees and Volunteers	24
14	Section 8 - Home and School Association	25
15	Section 9 - Parent Involvement and Communications	26
15	Parent/Guardian Involvement	26
15	Parent-Teacher Conferences	26
15	School Visitation and Communication Procedures	26
15	Telephone	26
15	School Calendar and Communication	26
	Handbook Revision and Compliance	28

Section 1 - Philosophy of Adventist Education

The Seventh-day Adventist Church recognizes God as the ultimate Source of existence and truth. In the beginning, God created humanity in His perfect image, but sin later marred this perfection. Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, God's character and purpose can be understood through nature, the Bible, and Jesus Christ. Adventist education is based on distinctive characteristics derived from the Bible and the inspired writings of Ellen G. White. These characteristics emphasize the redemptive aim of true education: to restore human beings to the image of their Maker.

God presents His infinitely loving and wise character as the ultimate standard for human conduct. Human motives, thinking, and behavior have fallen short of God's ideal. Adventist education, in its broadest sense, is a means of returning human beings to their original relationship with God.

Adventist education aims to cultivate a strong faith in God and a deep respect for the inherent value and dignity of every person. It seeks to develop character traits that reflect the Creator, encouraging students to become independent and critical thinkers rather than mere imitators of others' ideas. Adventist education also promotes selfless service rather than selfish ambition, encourages each individual to reach their full potential, and embraces what is true, good, and beautiful in every aspect of life.

This kind of education imparts far more than academic knowledge. It supports the balanced development of the whole person - physically, intellectually, socially, and spiritually. Homes, schools, and churches work together, in cooperation with divine agencies, to prepare learners for responsible citizenship in this world and in the world to come.

Goals for Curriculum in Seventh-day Adventist Schools

Each student should develop in the following areas:

Acceptance of God: Surrender one's whole life to God, develop a relationship with Jesus Christ, and allow the Holy Spirit to work in one's life.

Commitment to the Church: Desire to know, live, and share the message and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Interpersonal Relationships: Develop a sense of self-worth, understand the responsibilities of family membership, and respond with sensitivity to the needs of others.

Responsible Citizenship: Develop an understanding of cultural and historical heritages, affirm the dignity and worth of others, accept civic and family responsibilities, and respond sensitively to the needs of others.

Healthy, Balanced Living: Accept personal responsibility for achieving and maintaining optimal physical, mental, and spiritual health.

Intellectual Development: Adopt a systematic, logical, and biblically based approach to decision-making and problem-solving while developing a broad body of knowledge.

Communication Skills: Recognize the importance of effective communication and develop the skills needed to communicate clearly and responsibly.

Personal Management: Function responsibly in everyday life by applying Christian principles of stewardship and personal management.

Aesthetic Appreciation: Develop an appreciation for the beauty of God's creation and human expression while nurturing individual ability in the fine arts.

Section 2 - Academic Program

History and Accreditation

Since the 1930s, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has operated a school in Panama City that is now known as Adventist Christian Academy (ACA). The school is part of a network of more than 5,500 schools that form the world's largest Protestant church-related educational network. ACA is committed to high educational standards and is accredited by the Accrediting Association of Seventh-day Adventist Schools, Colleges, and Universities and the National Council for Private School Accreditation (NCPSA). By adhering to these requirements and standards, ACA seeks to provide students with a high-quality educational experience.

Academics

Adventist Christian Academy offers an academic program reviewed by the Office of Education of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists and is Christ-centered. In addition to the core academic subjects, we include Bible lessons and technology. Our VPK and Kindergarten program is a bilingual, developmentally based program.

The science program emphasizes hands-on experiments and active learning. Students use laptops to deepen and reinforce instruction. Physical education includes a variety of sports and games that promote teamwork, sportsmanship, and physical fitness.

Instruction is tailored to student needs through flexibility, individualization, peer tutoring, and opportunities for independent learning. Our music program covers music theory, appreciation, and performance, and serves our local church and community. Field trips, art and science fairs, guest speakers, and school programs further enrich the academic program.

Report Cards

The school year is divided into four nine-week grading periods. At the end of each period, a report card showing the student's progress will be sent home, mailed to the parent/guardian, or provided during a parent-teacher conference. Final grades are recorded in the student's permanent record. Final report cards and transcripts are released after financial clearance.

Grading System

ACA uses a grading system designed to measure student achievement in relation to course objectives and standards. Report cards also include feedback on learning skills, behavior, attitude, participation, and effort, providing a comprehensive view of each student's progress.

VPK and Kindergarten

Assessments and reporting for both VPK and Kindergarten students are based on developmental skills. Students spend the day learning, practicing, and growing in several cognitive and physical domains. Opportunities to practice play-based learning are also provided.

Example of Grading Marks

VPK- Kindergarten

Mark	Description
I	Independently achieves objectives and performs skills
P	Progressing toward achieving objectives and skills
NT	Needs more time to develop

Grades 1-2 and Selected Non-Core Classes

The following marks are used in grades 1-2 and may also be used for selected non-core classes in other grades:

Mark	Description
E	Excellent - consistently demonstrates advanced proficiency in grade-level expectations
S	Satisfactory - meets grade-level expectations
N	Needs Improvement - growth is not yet meeting grade-level expectations

Grades 3-8

Grades	Description
A / A-	Excels in understanding content and applying concepts
B+ / B / B-	Masters most content and skills
C+ / C / C-	Demonstrates a basic understanding of concepts and skills
D+ / D / D-	Demonstrates limited or incomplete understanding of concepts and skills

Grades	Description
F	Shows an unacceptable level of understanding and/or effort
P	Pass
F	Fail

Academic Probation

A student who receives two or more D grades or one or more F grades will be placed on academic probation for at least four and one-half weeks.

Incomplete and Failure

When a student cannot complete course requirements because of illness or another approved emergency, a grade of Incomplete may be assigned. Once the required work is completed satisfactorily, full credit will be given.

An Incomplete should be resolved within two weeks after the end of the grading period. If it is not resolved within that time, an F may be recorded for the grading period.

An F grade may also be assigned because of excessive absences. See the Absence Policy in Section 4.

Section 3 - School Policies

Adventist Christian Academy provides a biblically based Christian education for families in our community. Admission is based on available space and the requirements outlined in this handbook.

Non-Discrimination Policy

Adventist Christian Academy admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin, sex, gender, or disability to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, ethnicity, sex, gender, disability, or any other status protected by applicable law in the administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

As a Seventh-day Adventist Christian school, Adventist Christian Academy may give preference to admissions who share Christian faith-based values, as permitted by law.

The school is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities or special needs.

Admission

Children entering the following grades must be the listed age on or before September 1 of the current school year:

- VPK: 4 years old
- Kindergarten: five years old
- First grade: six years old

Before a child may be admitted, the parent/guardian must:

- Have a family interview with the principal
- Complete an application for each child.
- Submit verification of the child's birth date, such as a copy of the birth certificate.
- Provide a certificate from a licensed physician or the Public Health Department documenting a physical examination completed within one year for first-time students. The physical examination for a first-time student entering sixth grade must include the results of a scoliosis screening, as required by state law.
- Provide a Certificate of Immunization (DH Form 680) from a licensed physician or the County Health Department documenting that current immunization requirements have been met. If DH Form 680 is not provided, DH Form 681 must be submitted.
- Submit previous school records. Parents/guardians of new students will be asked to sign a consent form authorizing the school to obtain records from the child's previous school.
- Sign a Computer Network and Internet Acceptable Use Policy Consent Form.
- Sign a Medical Consent to Treat Statement.
- Sign a Code of Conduct Statement.
- Complete a Financial Agreement Form approved by the School Board, if applicable.

Achievement or placement testing may be used to assist with admission and grade placement. A student must demonstrate the ability to complete the work required for the grade in which admission is requested.

Adventist Christian Academy is committed to partnering with families to support the unique learning needs of every student. As a small school, however, our staffing and resources may limit the specialized services we are able to provide.

Before enrollment, parents/guardians are asked to provide the principal with any relevant educational, psychological, medical, or evaluation reports so the school can determine whether it can appropriately meet the student's educational needs. If a student is enrolled and receives outside support services, parents/guardians are encouraged to share updated recommendations and progress reports as appropriate. This partnership helps us provide the best possible support for each student's growth and success.

All students must be toilet-trained and able to use the restroom independently. School staff cannot assist with toileting. If an accident occurs, the parent/guardian will be contacted and asked to bring clean clothing and assist the student.

The registration and admission process must be completed before a student may attend class. All applications are reviewed individually and approved for admission by the School Board.

Students accepted for enrollment are expected to support the standards of Adventist Christian education, willingly follow school regulations, uphold the principles upon which the school operates, maintain reverence during religious activities, and observe school rules.

Financial Information

Tuition and Expenses

Grades	Annual Tuition	10-Month Payment
VPK	\$1,000	\$100
K-3	\$7,600	\$760
4-8	\$7,000	\$700

Monthly tuition payments are due from August 2026 through May 2027.

Additional Expenses (Non-Refundable)

Description	Grades	Amount
Registration Fee	K-8	\$300.00
Technology Fee	K-8	\$300.00
School Shirt	K-8	\$20.00

Description	Grades	Amount
Transportation Fee	K-8	\$45.00

Financial Programs and Scholarships

The Florida Corporate Tax Credit Scholarship is available to children of qualifying families. For information or to determine eligibility, visit the Step Up for Students website at stepupforstudents.org. Information about other scholarships is also available on that website.

To ask about other financial assistance that may be available, please reach out to the school treasurer at sdapanamacity2700@gmail.com or call the principal at 850-252-2788.

Insurance

In the event of an accident, parents/guardians will be notified as soon as possible. The school will provide information and forms for the secondary accident insurance carried on all students. Completed forms must be returned to the Gulf States Conference of Seventh-day Adventists with the physician's statement and documentation of associated costs. This insurance helps provide coverage for accidents or injuries that occur during school hours or school-sponsored activities.

Computer and Internet Usage

Adventist Christian Academy provides student access to the internet. A parent/guardian and the student must sign the Computer Network and Internet Acceptable Use Policy Consent Form before the student may access the school network. Access is a privilege, not a right.

Teachers may review student files and communications to maintain system integrity and ensure responsible use. Users accept personal, legal, financial, and other responsibilities for their actions while using the school computer network or accessing internet content through the school network.

Students are expected to follow Christian principles and will:

- Communicate responsibly and courteously.
- Use computer hardware and software responsibly.
- Keep passwords private.
- Respect the confidentiality of other users' folders, work, and files.
- Learn about and follow copyright laws.
- Follow the Internet Acceptable Use Policy.
- Not attempt to access or alter unauthorized areas of any computer system.

Failure to follow these rules may result in loss of access and other disciplinary or legal consequences.

Digital Media Policy

Social media and entertainment sites such as YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, TikTok, and similar platforms may not be accessed on school computers. Use of these sites is also prohibited on school grounds unless specifically authorized for educational purposes.

Cell Phone Policy

Students may bring cell phones and smartwatches to school; however, all personal electronic devices will be collected in the morning and returned at the end of the school day. During school hours, a student may use a phone only with permission to contact a parent/guardian in an emergency.

School Visitors

For student safety, anyone other than an employee or student must obtain permission from the principal before coming onto the school campus. Visitors must call the school and the child's teacher before arriving to visit.

Dispensing Medication

Prescription Medication

A student who must take medication prescribed by a physician during the school day may be assisted when the medication is provided in its original container with the appropriate form completed by the physician and signed by the parent/guardian. Parents/guardians must contact the teacher and fill out the prescription medication form before prescription medication can be brought to school.

Over-the-Counter Medication

Over-the-counter medication must be given directly to the teacher with a written note from the parent/guardian that provides specific dispensing instructions.

Important

All prescription and over-the-counter medications brought to school must be given to the teacher immediately upon arrival.

Lunch

A student's diet can significantly influence learning. Parents/guardians are encouraged to provide a balanced breakfast and nutritious lunch with plenty of fruits and vegetables. ACA does not have a hot lunch program, and students may not cook meals at school. Students may warm already prepared food in the classroom microwave.

Dress Code

Purpose of the Standard of Dress

The Standard of Dress is intended to promote modesty, neatness, safety, and a positive school image. It encourages concentration on learning, supports health and safety, helps minimize clothing costs, creates school unity, promotes equality, and reduces social pressure.

Appearance

Students must present a modest, clean, and neat appearance. Clothing should fit appropriately, be worn correctly, and be suitable for the weather and occasion. Pants, shorts, and skirts should be worn at the waist. Shirts should be buttoned and tucked in as required. Closed-toe shoes must be fastened

securely and worn at all times. Clothing should be clean and in good repair, without excessive fading, rips, holes, or noticeable stains.

ACA School Uniform

ACA students are expected to wear the school uniform daily unless otherwise instructed because of fun days, spirit week, or school programs.

Shirts:

- Two free uniform polo shirts with the school logo will be given to each student at registration.
- Additional polo shirts may be purchased. Please see the principal or school treasurer for the current price.

Bottoms:

- Uniform-style pants, skirts, skorts, jumpers, or shorts in khaki or navy.
- Blue jeans, jean skirts, jean skorts, or modest-length jean shorts are permitted.
- Skinny jeans, leggings, or jeans that are frayed, torn, or overly ornamented are not permitted.

Belt:

- A belt must be worn when pants or shorts have belt loops.

Shoes:

- Closed-toe shoes are required. Tennis shoes with socks are preferred.
- Shoelaces must remain tied.
- Sandals and flip-flops are not permitted.

Modesty Requirements

- Avoid tight-fitting or low-waist clothing.
- Skirts, skorts, and shorts must approach the knee.
- Clothing must not reveal the midriff or expose undergarments.
- Tank tops and sleeveless tops are not appropriate for boys or girls.
- Shorts must be worn under skirts and jumpers.

Prohibited Items

- Hats, caps, and sunglasses may not be worn in the classroom.
- Jewelry is discouraged. Students will be asked to remove any items that pose a safety concern.
- Unnatural hair or nail colors are not permitted.

Consequences for Dress Code Violations

Any staff member may document a dress code violation.

The following consequences apply:

1. First offense: The student will receive a citation, and the parent/guardian will be notified.
2. Second offense: The parent/guardian will be required to bring appropriate school attire.
3. Third offense: The parent/guardian will be required to remove the student from school, resulting in an unexcused absence.

Repeated violations may result in administrative discipline.

Section 4 - Attendance and Tardy Policies

School Hours

Days	School Hours
Monday-Thursday	8:00 AM.-3:00 PM
Friday	8:00 AM.-2:15 PM

Arrival and Dismissal

Students may arrive at 7:30 AM and must be picked up within 15 minutes after dismissal or be subject to after-school care fees. Teachers cannot provide before and after-school care during preparation time. Parents/guardians who need aftercare should ask the school about available programs.

Absences

The attendance record is a legal document. Teachers must request an explanation for each absence. Students are expected to attend school punctually and regularly. After an absence or tardy, a student must bring a written explanation from the parent/guardian upon returning to school. If the school does not receive a written explanation within one week, the absence will be recorded as unexcused.

Valid reasons for an excused absence may include:

- Verified student illness.
- Medical, dental, or optometric services.
- Quarantine.
- Bereavement.

Parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to avoid taking students out of school for vacations or other preventable reasons. Medical appointments should be scheduled after school or during school breaks whenever possible. Absences can negatively affect academic progress and grades. If a child will be absent, the parent/guardian should contact the teacher before 8:00 a.m.

A student who is absent for seven or more days during a nine-week grading period may forfeit grades for that period unless the teacher determines that the missed work has been completed satisfactorily.

Excessive absences and tardiness, whether excused or unexcused, may prevent a student from meeting attendance and academic requirements for promotion to the next grade.

Excused and Unexcused Absences

An excused absence allows a student to make up missed assignments, quizzes, and tests and provides additional time to submit homework or other work. Work missed because of an unexcused absence normally may not be made up. In hardship cases, a parent/guardian may submit a written request asking that the student be allowed to complete missed work.

Work missed because of an excused absence may be completed without a grade penalty. Students will receive one school day to make up work for each day absent, beginning on the day they return. To receive an excused absence, the student must submit a note from home explaining the absence. A

physician's note is required for an illness lasting three or more days or for a medical appointment. All notes must be submitted to the teacher no later than 48 hours after the student returns to school.

Pre-Arranged Absences

To request an excused absence for an essential family trip, the parent/guardian must submit a written request to the administration at least five school days before the absence. Planned absences should be kept to a minimum. Without advance notice, the absence may be recorded as unexcused.

The teacher will outline missed work when the student returns. The student will receive the same number of school days to complete the work as the number of days absent. The parent/guardian and student are responsible for learning missed content and returning completed work.

Attendance and Tardiness

Regular attendance and arriving on time help students succeed academically, build positive habits, and fully participate in the life of the school. Each day begins with worship promptly at 8:00 a.m., setting the spiritual tone for learning together. We appreciate parents partnering with us by ensuring students arrive on time and are ready to begin the day.

A written explanation from a parent or guardian is required for all absences and tardies. Students who arrive after 10:00 a.m. will be recorded absent for the morning session. Students arriving after 1:30 p.m. will be recorded absent for the afternoon session. Likewise, students who leave before 1:30 p.m. will be recorded absent for the afternoon session.

If a pattern of excessive tardiness develops, the principal will partner with the family to identify ways to improve attendance and support the student's success.

We also encourage every student to make consistent attendance a priority. Students who complete the school year with no absences, tardies, or early dismissals—whether excused or unexcused—will be recognized for achieving Perfect Attendance.

Student Pickup

For student safety, parents/guardians must inform the principal of every person authorized to pick up their child. If a different person will pick up the student, the principal must receive advance notice by note or phone. If a student has written permission to leave school unescorted, the school is not responsible for the student after the student leaves campus. Families must follow the drop-off and pickup procedures provided at registration.

Early Student Pickup

When a student must leave early, the parent/guardian should send a written note stating the reason and give it to the teacher before school begins. Advance notice helps the teacher plan the day. The attendance record will be marked according to the time the student leaves. Early pickup may affect the student's attendance record.

Accident and Sickness

The school makes every reasonable effort to prevent accidents. If an accident occurs or a student becomes ill, the school will notify the parent/guardian and provide first aid whenever possible. In the event of a serious accident or illness, the school will call 911 and attempt to reach the parent/guardian.

Closed Campus

Students may not leave school property without permission from a parent or legal guardian.

Hazardous Weather Conditions

When Bay County Public Schools close because of hazardous weather, Adventist Christian Academy will also close unless parents/guardians are notified otherwise.

Section 5 - School Rules and Discipline Policies

Student Conduct

At Adventist Christian Academy, we believe that students learn best in a safe, caring, and relationship-centered environment. Our goal is to help every student grow academically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually while building positive friendships and learning to treat others with kindness and respect. We view student conduct as an opportunity to teach, encourage, and guide students toward making wise choices that benefit both themselves and those around them.

Our student conduct expectations are designed to:

1. Foster a positive, safe, and healthy learning environment where every student can thrive.
2. Build a school culture that encourages kindness, respect, responsibility, and meaningful friendships.
3. Help students develop self-discipline, good judgment, and personal responsibility.
4. Teach students to resolve conflicts respectfully and contribute positively to the school community.
5. Encourage attitudes and behaviors that reflect the character of Christ.
6. Uphold the mission, values, and principles of Adventist Christian Academy.
7. Promote the physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of all students and staff.
8. Follow the Student Code of Conduct and school policies during all school-sponsored activities, on and off campus.
9. Respect the beliefs of students from other faith traditions.

Violations of School Policy

To help maintain a safe, respectful, and Christ-centered learning environment, students are expected to follow all school rules and policies. Violations of the following expectations may result in disciplinary action:

- The use, possession, or distribution of alcohol, tobacco, vaping products, or illegal drugs is prohibited.
- Explicit, obscene, or sexually inappropriate language, images, materials, or discussions, whether verbal, written, digital, or implied, are prohibited.
- Language or behavior that demeans, intimidates, or discriminates against another person based on race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, disability, sex, or other protected characteristics is prohibited. This includes racial slurs, derogatory remarks, hate speech, discriminatory jokes, or gestures.
- The use of profane, vulgar, or disrespectful language and inappropriate behavior is prohibited.
- Possessing, displaying, or distributing immoral, violent, or inappropriate materials is prohibited.
- Gambling is prohibited.
- Cheating, plagiarism, theft, or any form of dishonesty is prohibited.

- Bringing distracting items to school, including toys, radios, televisions, recording devices, magazines, or other non-school-related items, is prohibited unless approved by a teacher for educational purposes.
- Possessing firearms, weapons, explosives, firecrackers, or other dangerous items at school or school-sponsored activities is prohibited.
- Tampering with fire safety equipment or the school alarm system is prohibited.
- Vandalism, defacing, or the willful destruction of school or personal property is prohibited. Parents/guardians are responsible for the cost of repairing or replacing property damaged by their child.
- Fighting, physical aggression, bullying, intimidation, or threatening behavior toward another student or staff member is prohibited.
- Students are expected to follow all school technology, digital media, and internet policies. Cell phones and other personal electronic devices must be turned in to the teacher at the beginning of the school day unless otherwise directed by school staff.

Violent Behavior, Weapons, and Bullying

Zero Tolerance for Violence

ACA and the Board of Education do not tolerate violence in any form at school.

Violence includes any act of physical aggression toward another person that threatens or may affect that person's safety, health, or welfare. This policy applies in school buildings, on school grounds, during school hours, and at school events.

For this policy, a violent act includes:

1. An intentional act involving force or the threatened use of force against another person or group with the intent to injure, intimidate, harass, threaten, or otherwise cause harm.
2. A deliberate act that supports or assists the use or threatened use of force.
3. An act intended to prevent, inhibit, or interfere with the operation of an educational or school-sponsored program, activity, or event.

When a violent act occurs, the principal may assign consequences that include detention, in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, parent/guardian notification, and/or a parent conference. If serious injury occurs, significant force is used, or a student refuses redirection from a teacher or the principal, the student may be suspended for five days and referred to the School Board for a disciplinary hearing.

Dangerous Weapons Policy

Weapons are prohibited in school buildings, on school grounds, and at school-sponsored activities. Prohibited items include firearms; water guns, imitations, and look-alikes; BB guns; pellet guns; pistols; revolvers; shotguns; rifles; disguised guns; dart guns; daggers; knives; swords; metal knuckles; razors; slingshots; box cutters; stun guns; laser pointers; pepper spray or other noxious sprays; and any other object that may cause physical injury or death. If a student brings a prohibited item to school, the parent/guardian will be notified immediately, and disciplinary action, including possible expulsion, will be taken.

Bullying Policy

Bullying in any form is strictly prohibited on school property, in a school vehicle, and at any school-sponsored activity or event. Bullying includes an intentional gesture or an intentional written, verbal, electronic, or physical act or threat that is severe, persistent, or pervasive enough to create an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment. Bullying is described in reference to the following:

- Physically or mentally harming a student, parent/guardian, or staff member.
- Damaging a student's, parent's/guardian's, or staff member's property.
- Placing a student, parent/guardian, or staff member in reasonable fear of harm.
- Placing a student, parent/guardian, or staff member in reasonable fear that property will be damaged.

Bullying also includes cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is bullying carried out through an electronic communication device or platform, including email, instant messaging, text messages, blogs, cell phones, online games, and websites.

Statement on Human Sexuality and Identity

Adventist Christian Academy is a K-8 educational institution owned and operated by the Gulf States Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, which is part of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church. We adhere to the teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its interpretation and understanding of Scripture. We seek to conduct our educational ministry with a commitment to God as Creator and Savior while fulfilling the gospel commission to share Jesus Christ and His love with the world.

As a Seventh-day Adventist educational institution, ACA neither condones nor promotes behavior outside of Adventist biblical beliefs. The school's policy on human sexuality and identity is based on the North American Division Statement on Human Sexuality and the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of Scripture.

Teaching about human sexuality and identity throughout the curriculum is aligned with Seventh-day Adventist biblical beliefs. The following guidelines support students, parents/guardians, staff, and other stakeholders:

- Physical contact between students that would normally be viewed as overly affectionate is not permitted. This includes displays of affection, hand-holding, tickling, wrestling, and massaging.
- School staff retains the right to counsel or discipline individuals who demonstrate inappropriate conduct or irresponsible behavior in social interactions.
- ACA follows Adventist biblically based principles in all areas, including sexual behavior. While enrolled, students are expected not to promote or advocate lifestyles that contradict Seventh-day Adventist biblical beliefs. The school does not condone sexual practices or behavior contrary to its biblical belief system and expects students to demonstrate a similar commitment.
- During application and enrollment, students must disclose their birth gender. This information is used to determine matters including restroom use, sports participation, uniform and clothing choices, pronouns, and other gender-related issues addressed in the handbook. Accurate information is required so that appropriate school accommodations can be considered.

Adventist Christian Academy is called to love all people. In a sin-filled world, our goal is to create an environment in which everyone is treated with love and respect.

Biblical Foundation

"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity." - Colossians 3:12-14

Approved by the GSC Board of Education on September 24, 2024; edited March 4, 2025.

Discipline

The purpose of discipline is to prepare a child for self-government through obedience, self-reliance, and self-control. Our school is founded on the principle that parents and teachers are representatives of God and are themselves accountable to Him.

Education, p. 287

"Help the child to see that parents and teachers are representatives of God, and that, as they act in harmony with Him, their laws in the home and the school are also His. As the child is to render obedience to parents and teachers, so they, in turn, are to render obedience to God."

The school seeks to encourage confidence and strengthen each student's sense of honor. When a student does not follow school discipline policies, appropriate action will be taken. No student may interfere with another student's right to receive a Christian education. Disciplinary action may include one or more of the following measures.

Assertive and Preventive Discipline

- Establish clear classroom rules.
- Enforce classroom rules consistently and fairly.
- Establish appropriate consequences for not following rules.

Discipline Notice and Parent Conference

A teacher may issue a discipline notice and request a parent/guardian conference when the offense is not a willful and flagrant violation. If appropriate conduct is not achieved after counseling with the student and parent/guardian, the administration may assign additional consequences, including in-school detention, after-school detention, suspension, or a recommendation for expulsion.

Suspension and Expulsion

Suspension may be used for repeated offenses when other interventions have not been effective. The principal or the School Board chair may suspend a student for no more than three days. Any additional suspension time requires action by the School Board.

All suspensions will be referred to the School Board for prompt review and determination of the final length of the suspension. The parent/guardian and student may be asked to appear before the School Board to discuss the concern and the student's future conduct.

Only the School Board may expel a student. Expulsion is considered when other corrective measures have not produced appropriate conduct. Teachers are not authorized to expel students.

A student may be dismissed because of persistent unacceptable attitudes, conduct, or language. Students who demonstrate through their behavior that they are unwilling to respect the school's Christian philosophy and community expectations may not remain enrolled.

Students are expected to maintain a positive attitude marked by respect for rules, reverence, participation, and goodwill toward others. ACA seeks to apply the Master Teacher's rule: "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." - Luke 6:31

Our students are viewed as younger members of the Lord's family and heirs to the city of God. Our goal for each student is "to honor Christ, to become like Him, to work for Him" because this "is life's highest ambition and its greatest joy." - Education, p. 297

Section 6 - School Regulations

Playground

A staff member or designated adult will supervise students on the playground. Students must follow the directions of supervising adults. Rough play that may lead to injury is not permitted. Hard balls are prohibited because of insurance requirements.

School and Personal Property

Students must promptly report damage to school property so that additional damage, injury, or liability can be prevented. School property includes desks, books, laptops, buildings, restrooms, and all other items owned by the school. A student who defaces, damages, or destroys school property may be suspended or expelled, depending on the seriousness of the offense. Parents/guardians are responsible for replacement or repair costs. The school is not responsible for personal property in the school building or elsewhere on campus.

School-Sponsored Outings and Trips

Students participating in school-sponsored activities or outings represent ACA and the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Students are expected to follow school and church standards and policies. Dress and conduct should be exemplary. The School Board must approve all school outings.

Field Trips

Written permission signed by the student's parent/guardian is required for all off-campus activities. Telephone permission will be accepted only in an extreme situation. All drivers and passengers must follow Florida seat belt laws, and drivers must maintain appropriate insurance coverage.

Extracurricular Activities

Outdoor School

Each spring, students in grades 6 and 7 are invited to attend Outdoor School at Camp Alamisco. Grade-level participation is subject to change; families should consult the school calendar. This four-day program gives students opportunities to experience many forms of hands-on learning. Camp Alamisco is the Gulf States Conference camp located on Lake Martin in Dadeville, Alabama.

Testing

Each year, students in grades 2-8 take the MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) assessment three times to measure growth in skills and knowledge. Results help teachers respond to each student's individual learning needs. Parent reports will be made available to families.

Testing dates will be announced in advance and are listed on the school calendar. Parents/guardians should ensure that students are well rested and have eaten an adequate breakfast so they can perform at their best.

School Telephone

The school telephone is primarily for emergencies and school business. To limit interruptions to learning, teachers and students should not be disturbed during instructional hours. Parents/guardians who need to contact a teacher should send a text or written note at the beginning or end of the school day. Arrangements for social visits after school should be made from home rather than through the school telephone.

Cell Phones and Other Electronic Devices

Personal cell phones and electronic devices may be brought to school for use before and after regular school hours. See the Digital Media Policy and Cell Phone Policy in Section 3. If a device is misused, a teacher may take it and keep it in the school office until the end of the school day, when it will be returned to the parent/guardian.

Please Note

Adventist Christian Academy is not financially responsible for electronic or wireless devices that are lost, borrowed, or damaged on campus.

Section 7 - School Board

School Board meetings are held monthly and are open to parents/guardians and the church constituency. Called meetings may be held as needed with appropriate notice and a stated agenda. A called meeting may or may not be open to everyone. Executive sessions may be held to discuss confidential or sensitive matters and require limited attendance.

The shared goals of Christian teachers and parents/guardians are more readily achieved when a friendly and open relationship exists between home and school. When a concern arises, the following reconciliation process, based on Matthew 18 and 1 Corinthians 6, should be followed:

1. The parent/guardian should first speak privately and confidentially with the teacher and attempt to resolve the concern.
2. If the concern remains unresolved, the parent/guardian should ask the school administration to become involved.
3. If the concern is still unresolved, the parent/guardian may ask the School Board chair to work with the administration toward a resolution.
4. If the concern remains unresolved, the parent/guardian may request a hearing before the School Board.
5. If the concern is still not resolved, the parent/guardian may request assistance from the Gulf States Conference Superintendent of Education.

Most concerns have more than one perspective. We encourage parents and guardians to address questions or concerns directly and respectfully with the teacher or appropriate staff member so that misunderstandings can be resolved, relationships can be strengthened, and everyone can work together in the best interest of the student. Open, respectful communication helps build trust and supports a positive partnership between home and school.

Employees and Volunteers

Adventist Christian Academy requires all instructional personnel, educational support employees, volunteers, administrators, and contracted personnel to submit fingerprints to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement for state and national background screening in accordance with Section 1002.421(2)(i), Florida Statutes. Before working with students, all staff and volunteers must also complete Child Protection and Pathogen training through the Sterling Volunteers website every three years.

A Letter to Our Teachers

"Dear Teacher, as you consider your need of strength and guidance - a need that no human source can supply - I bid you consider the promises of Him who is the wonderful Counselor. Behold," He says, "I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." - Revelation 3:8
"Call unto Me, and I will answer thee." - Jeremiah 33:3
"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with Mine eye." - Psalm 32:8
"Even unto the end of the world, I am with you." - Matthew 28:20
As the highest preparation for your work, I point you to the words, the life, and the methods of the Prince of teachers. I bid you to consider Him. Here is your true ideal. Behold it, dwell upon it, until the Spirit of the divine Teacher shall take possession of your heart and life.
"Reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord," you will be "transformed into the same image." - 2 Corinthians 3:18
This is the secret of power over your pupils. Reflect Him." - Education, p. 282

Section 8 - Home and School Association

All parents/guardians are members of the Home and School Association. The association seeks to:

- Promote Christian education.
- Provide parent education.
- Unite the home, school, and church in providing Christian education for children.
- Raise funds for the school.
- Serve as a liaison between home and school.
- Assist with school programs as needed.

The Home and School Association will hold meetings throughout the school year. Parents/guardians, students, and church members are encouraged to attend these meetings, which support the development of Christ-centered lifestyles. Families will receive advance notice of meeting times and locations. Students may participate in many programs. Parent and guardian support and attendance are highly valued.

Section 9 - Parent Involvement and Communications

Parent/Guardian Involvement

Parent/guardian involvement is welcomed and encouraged because families play a vital role in the educational process at Adventist Christian Academy. Adults visiting campus or attending school events are asked to model appropriate conduct, speech, and dress and to refrain from smoking.

Students are often invited to participate in programs for the church congregation. Participation in these events helps promote the school and build student confidence.

Research indicates that family involvement in education can contribute to greater interest in school, improved attendance, stronger teacher-student relationships, and increased student self-esteem.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences are held at the end of the first and third quarters to review and distribute report cards and other important information. Parents/guardians are required to attend. Additional conferences may be scheduled by appointment when requested by a parent/guardian or teacher. Families are encouraged to make an appointment whenever they have questions about a student's progress.

School Visitation and Communication Procedures

To help maintain a safe, secure, and focused learning environment, all visitors are asked to check in with the principal and notify the student's teacher upon arriving on campus. Parents and guardians are always welcome and are encouraged to schedule an appointment if they would like to visit a classroom or meet with a teacher.

Because teachers are responsible for supervising and instructing students before, during, and immediately after school, they may not be available for unscheduled conversations. Messages, lunches, and other items for students will be gladly delivered in a way that minimizes interruptions to teaching and learning. Thank you for partnering with us to create a safe and positive school environment for every student.

Telephone

Adventist Christian Academy seeks to minimize interruptions to learning. When a parent/guardian needs to send a message to a student, the office will deliver it. Please call or text the office at (850) 252-2788. A student who needs to contact a parent/guardian must first obtain permission from the classroom teacher.

School Calendar and Communication

We believe that strong communication between home and school helps students thrive. Throughout the year, we will use several methods to keep families informed about important events, reminders, and school updates.

Each family receives a school calendar during registration. The calendar includes school holidays, closures, testing dates, special events, and other important dates. Because schedules occasionally change, the most current information will always be available through our school website, **acapc.org**, and through **TalkingPoints**.

Adventist Christian Academy uses **TalkingPoints**, a family communication app that allows us to quickly share weekly updates, reminders, announcements, and last-minute schedule changes. We encourage every family to register for TalkingPoints so you can receive timely school communications.

School newsletters will also be sent regularly to highlight upcoming events, celebrate school activities, and share important information with families.

We encourage parents and guardians to regularly check TalkingPoints, read school newsletters, and visit **acapc.org** to stay informed and connected throughout the school year.

Handbook Revisions and Compliance

This handbook is a non-static document. The Adventist Christian Academy School Board and School Administration reserve the right to revise, update, modify, or amend the policies, procedures, and information contained herein at any time during the school year as deemed necessary.

It is the responsibility of all faculty, staff, students, and parents/guardians to read, understand, and adhere to the policies and procedures outlined in this handbook.