



GRAND RAPIDS CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

# INTERNATIONAL STUDENT PROGRAM

## **GRCS COVID-19 FAQs for International Students and Parents: Looking toward 2021-2022**

Pursuing the academic, social, emotional, physical, and spiritual development of your children is our collective responsibility. The current global health crisis has presented a serious challenge for us to overcome and we are committed to navigating this together.

**Below is a list of questions that the International Student Program has been asked over the past months. We will continue to keep the international community at Grand Rapids Christian Schools abreast of all of the changes occurring because of COVID-19. Please contact Joelle Williams at [jwilliams@grcs.org](mailto:jwilliams@grcs.org) for more information.**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

***Where can I obtain the most relevant, updated information regarding guidelines for COVID-19 in the U.S.?***

Here are 3 helpful websites you can use for the most up-to-date information:

- [ICE Guidance on COVID-19 \(click on 'NONIMMIGRANT STUDENTS AND SEVP-CERTIFIED SCHOOLS'\)](#)
- [DHS: Department of Homeland Security](#)
- [CDC: Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

***What are Grand Rapids Christian Schools' classroom plans for new and returning students? Is Grand Rapids Christian School going to provide remote learning to students who cannot return to the United States for in-person classes?***

**If your child is a returning student who plans to remain in the United States this summer,** they will begin in-person instruction on August 18, 2021. It is our plan to offer in-person instruction for the duration of the 2021-2022 school year.

**If your child is a returning student who will/did live at home for the summer,** it is our expectation that you coordinate with us before purchasing a flight for his/her return so that *as soon as travel to the US and Grand Rapids is safely possible* (lifted travel bans and flight availability) he/she will join us in person in Grand Rapids. We are planning on all students being here in Grand Rapids for the start of in-person classes in August, 2021. We are paying close attention to travel requirements and are considering the possibility of organizing supervised group arrangements for a 14-day 3rd country quarantine should that still be necessary for some passport holders seeking an August 2021 entry into the United States.

**If your son/daughter is a new student at GRCS and/or is waiting for a visa (renewal),** we are excited to welcome him/her into or back to our school community. While the Department of State is not publishing dates for re-opening consulates and embassies, they have said they will “aggressively staff their visa offices, giving priority to those applying for student visas.” Your student’s program start date is August 18; as this date draws closer, the chance for an expedited visa appointment will increase. We are hopeful he/she will soon be able to join us in person at GRCS! SEVIS guidelines do not dictate (or limit) our ability to fully include your student in our school learning and instruction so it is our plan to keep your student fully engaged in their GRCS classes (5-6 courses), beginning August 18. Students will have access to their classes (recordings and maybe livestream) and multiple hours of face-to-face (via Zoom) academic tutoring, supports, and peer contact each week. We are making plans to teach and connect your child with other students at GRCS. Your child’s future friends, teachers, and host families are excited for his/her arrival!

DSO’s are currently permitted to send I-20 Forms to students via email due to Covid-19. Students who are in active status will stay in active status as a student of Grand Rapids Christian School. We will provide a schedule for remote learning students by early August 2021. We are working to ensure that students can access an appropriate academic platform in a timeframe that would be more sensitive to international time zones.

***When do we need to communicate our plans and flight information to Grand Rapids Christian Schools?***

Students need to communicate their plans and flight information to Grand Rapids Christian School **as soon as possible**. Please send this information to Julie Watson at [jwatson@grcs.org](mailto:jwatson@grcs.org).

***If we need to quarantine, can we still attend school through remote learning?***

Yes, students will be fully supported during their entire quarantine period. Grand Rapids Christian Schools is committed to following SEVP and CDC guidelines and will make sure the guidelines are met during this quarantine period. More information will follow as we approach the start of the fall semester.

***Will I need to be quarantined separately when I return to the school in August?***

Grand Rapids Christian Schools will work to make effective and safe decisions to ensure the welfare of our international students and community. We anticipate that students will need to quarantine and/or demonstrate a negative COVID-19 test result or having received a Covid vaccine. We are monitoring the Center for Disease Control website and will be following Michigan guidelines for the safe integration of all students arriving from overseas into our community. This will involve airport pick-up, possible COVID testing, possible quarantining after arrival, and daily temperature monitoring. To the extent possible, students will live with a host family any quarantine period. We will be in communication with you and each host family about the plan for your specific student. In the event your child needs medical attention due to exposure to COVID, it is covered under their medical insurance.

***Where will students stay during quarantine when they re-enter the U.S.?***

Grand Rapids Christian Schools will provide various options depending on CDC and State/County-issued Department of Health guidelines at the time of re-entry. We will address each student's arrival on a case by case basis to ensure the safest and most positive re-entry into the United States and the GRCS community. International students and their families will be responsible for any extra costs associated with a required quarantine period.

***Can I take a year off until the COVID situation is resolved?***

We highly discourage any student from taking a year off from school as students will lose their visa status. Therefore, Grand Rapids Christian School highly recommends students return to the U.S. to continue their education as soon as the travel ban is lifted. Please email Joelle Williams at [jwilliams@grcs.org](mailto:jwilliams@grcs.org) or Laura Rhodes at [lrhodes@grcs.org](mailto:lrhodes@grcs.org) for additional questions regarding your visa or I-20.

### ***What is the health risk for returning to the U.S. this Fall?***

As of March, 2021, 25% of Michigan adults have received the Covid vaccine. As of April 5, 2021 everyone 16 years of age and older is eligible to receive the vaccine. More information about Michigan's status can be found here: [Michigan.gov Coronavirus](https://www.michigan.gov/Coronavirus)

### ***What safety protocols does the school have in place for returning students?***

Grand Rapids Christian Schools (GRCS) believes in-person, on-campus instruction is in the best interest of students and seeks to do all it can to safely resume in-person teaching and learning this fall. In preparation for returning to the classroom, a task force of GRCS administration, staff members, and health department officials developed a back-to-school plan that considers factors associated with multiple scenarios. Grand Rapids Christian Schools created a plan that follows national and local mandates, guidelines, and best practices. This plan is flexible so we are prepared to respond as the coronavirus runs its course.

The task force compiled a thorough plan (over 60 pages) outlining our health, safety, and wellness protocols for returning to school (please see more information here: [GRCS Reopening Plans](#)). By early summer GRCS will be able to assess the continued need for social distancing, mandatory masks, and frequent sanitation, as well as the many health and wellness practices our school community is currently observing.

As mentioned above, GRCS is following the governor's guidance on phases for Michigan's safe re-opening; we are currently in Phase . On the website, you can see the changes in protocol that will happen as we progress into Phase 5 and eventually Phase 6. If the State of Michigan (and GRCS) moves to Phase 3 due to a serious flare-up of Covid-19, which would temporarily suspend on-campus learning, we will adapt the learning experience for our international students in a way that does not jeopardize your student's health or immigration status.

We will continue to keep our community updated regarding safety requirements when Grand Rapids Christian School buildings officially reopen. Maintaining the safety and well-being of our students remains our highest priority during this time.

***If my child gets sick, will they have health insurance to cover the illness?***

Yes, all international students have student health insurance plans while studying in the U.S. that will cover them for sickness and accidents. This would include coverage for COVID-19.

***For Applicants***

We welcome inquiries about the International Student Program (grades 7-12) at Grand Rapids Christian Schools and would love to speak to you about our program opportunities and plans for educating students amidst this unique time. Please contact Joelle Williams at [jwilliams@grcs.org](mailto:jwilliams@grcs.org) with any questions!

***Thank you for your support and trust of Grand Rapids Christian Schools during this unprecedented time. We are committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of all of our international students. If you have any specific concerns that weren't addressed in this document, please feel free to contact Joelle Williams at [jwilliams@grcs.org](mailto:jwilliams@grcs.org).***