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## Board Report

# 2022

# 2023

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**Tom DeJonge, Superintendent**

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October 2022

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Preparing students to  
be effective servants of  
Christ in contemporary  
society.

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# Mission

Preparing students to be effective servants of Christ in contemporary society.

# Core values



**Christ:** We are rooted in Christ



**Community:** We are better together



**Commitment:** We lead lives with purpose



# Portrait of a Graduate

By using their unique gifts to glorify God, pursue personal faith, and bring about shalom in the world, graduates of Grand Rapids Christian Schools will be:

## **Disciples of Christ**

Prepared to follow Christ with faithfulness, resilience, and humility in a broken but hopeful world.

## **Culturally competent**

Prepared to engage with a diverse range of people and ideologies.

## **Communicators and collaborators**

Prepared to work in a team environment, articulate ideas, and consider multiple viewpoints.

## **Thoughtful neighbors**

Prepared to practice hospitality, compassion, service, and empathy for those around them.

## **Justice seekers**

Prepared to actively pursue greater wholeness in the world by working for justice and practicing stewardship.

## **Creative solution finders**

Prepared to identify issues, engage in critical thinking, and persistently work toward solutions.

## **Lifelong explorers**

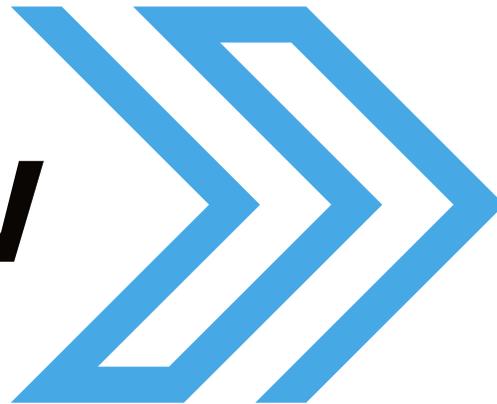
Prepared to live a life of discovery and wonder in God's world.

## Theme verse

*Come, follow me* is Jesus’s call to discipleship and is found at the beginning of each of the four gospels. In each case, Jesus seeks out and calls someone by name and that person responds in faith and obedience. God calls; people follow. **That’s the Christian life in summary: God’s gracious calling leads to a life of obedience.** Grace produces discipleship. While the theme for the year arises from Jesus’s call to discipleship found in the gospels, the call to follow is the story of faith found throughout all of the Bible. God calls; his people follow.

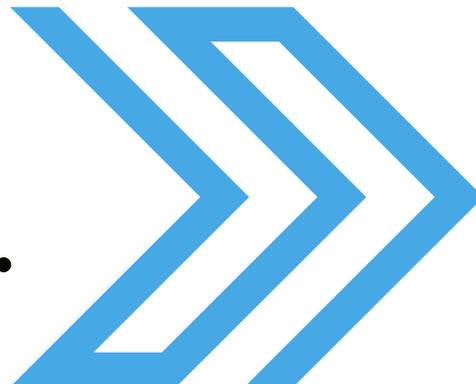
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COME,  
FOLLOW  
ME. MARK 1:17



.....

VENGAN,  
SÍGANME.  
MARCOS 1:17



# Calendar of events

Below is a summary of our school calendar and upcoming events you may be scheduled to (or would like to) attend. For a full list of GRCS events, visit [grcs.org/calendar](https://grcs.org/calendar).

## October 2022

October 17	Board of Trustees Meeting	Board Room	6:00 pm
October 18	Foundation Board Meeting	Board Room	10:00 am
October 20	Development Committee Meeting	GRCHS Conference Room	Noon
October 25	Cultural Competency Committee Mtg	Iroquois Learning Commons	7:00 am

## November 2022

September 02	No School	All Campuses	
September 05	No School	All Campuses	
September 07	Executive Committee Meeting	Board Room	7:00 am
September 12	Education Committee Meeting	Board Room	12:30 pm
September 27	Cultural Competency Committee Mtg	Iroquois Learning Commons	7:00 am

## Decemeber 2022

October 05	Executive Committee Meeting	Board Room	7:00 am
October 06	Finance/Operations Committee Mtg	Board Room	7:00 am
October 07	Homecoming	Eagles Stadium	7:00 pm
October 17	Board of Trustees Meeting	Board Room	6:00 pm
October 18	Foundation Board Meeting	Board Room	10:00 am
October 20	Development Committee Meeting	GRCHS Conference Room	Noon
October 25	Cultural Competency Committee Mtg	Iroquois Learning Commons	7:00 am

# From the superintendent



Dear Board:

I am excited to see you next Monday at this month's board meeting! It has been a wonderful start to school, a return to school that has seen a much more "normal" rhythm than we have experienced over the last past three years. Principals report that staff morale is high, which is a reflection of their recognition of this fact as well.

We are grateful for you and your service to our schools and your dedication to supporting our students and staff. We are grateful for our parents and their love for their children and investment in providing them a Christian education. We are grateful for our teachers and staff who work tirelessly on behalf of their students. And we are grateful to God for His everlasting faithfulness and presence with us as we seek wisdom and direction in our work.

What a privilege it is to serve His kingdom in this way. It is with excitement that we humbly follow His call on our lives here at GRC.

At this month's meeting, the board will be asked to approve the revised 2022-23 Operating Budget, which was reviewed and supported by the Finance Committee at its October meeting. The board will also have the opportunity to review and discuss the report provided by the ad hoc committee that was charged by the board in March 2022 to conduct a review of our Human Sexuality position statement.

Looking forward to seeing you Monday night. We will begin at 6:00 p.m. in the Hub.

Tom



# Campus faith theme stories

## Brad Mockabee, GRCHS

We have spent a lot of time discussing how the “three C’s” that represent our district core values impact the way we live. Last spring, the administration worked with student leaders to create a list of shared behaviors based on the core values. We are calling this list of behaviors “The Eagle Blueprint.” You can find those behaviors here:

### CHRIST

- GATHER together in community
- GLORIFY God through prayer, praise, and worship
- GROW in our knowledge and faith in Jesus Christ
- GO in peace in the presence of the Holy Spirit

### COMMUNITY

- WELCOME and INCLUDE our neighbors
- LISTEN to, RESPECT, and SEEK JUSTICE for those around us
- ENCOURAGE one another and CELEBRATE our unique stories and gifts
- CARE for our school and PRACTICE stewardship

### COMMITMENT

- EXPLORE God’s world & ENGAGE in new opportunities to DISCOVER my gifts
- LIVE WITH INTEGRITY in words and actions and SEEK RESTORATION after conflict
- WORK to achieve my personal best and PERSEVERE in difficult situations
- BALANCE all aspects of life & CARE for my spiritual, physical, and mental health



All freshmen take the Speech and Composition as their introductory English course at the HS. The first speech for the class asked them to give a speech on someone they know who embodied the attributes in the GRCS Portrait of a Graduate. This assignment both helped students learn the components of a strong speech but also helped them identify and honor those who emulate the goals that we have for our own students.

In chapel and small groups, we’ve been discussing the role of doubts and questions in our faith. We gave students the opportunity to submit some of their most difficult questions, then both students and teachers discussed some of them in chapel. It was an important reminder that God created us with amazing minds with the capacity to ask tough questions and that having doubts doesn’t separate us from God, but rather gives us the opportunity to seek him in a more personal way.

## Sara Seth, GRCMS

All middle school students participated in an event to support Kids Food Basket: each grade decorated bags for children throughout Kent County. By decorating brown bags, our students helped to create ripples of joy in our community. These decorated bags are filled with healthy, life-affirming meals for students. GRCMS decorated 1,000 bags to contribute to this effort! One small way to continue to strive to be Disciples of Christ in our community.



# Campus faith theme stories

## Ben Buursma, RCS

One of the benefits of a district-wide theme is the opportunity to share stories and insights across our campuses. This month, High School Chaplain Mark VanderWerf, along with five high school students, led Family Time (chapel) at Rockford Christian. It was wonderful to have these students share ways we can listen to God and follow Him.

Along with a slate on invited guests, each classroom at Rockford Christian takes a turn leading our community in worship for our weekly Family Time. This month, our third grade students used God’s Creation as inspiration for our school theme. We marveled at a murmuration of starlings and what they have to teach us about working together.

## Graham Schultze, Evergreen

The Evergreen chapel committee has been working with students to provide weekly chapels that incorporate our theme in a variety of ways. One such way includes a new litany which reflects on both the theme and the Three Cs (see picture below)

<p><b>LITANY</b></p> <p>Leader: "Come, follow me," Jesus said, All: "and I will send you out to fish for people." Leader: We follow Jesus and we value COMMITMENT, All: We lead lives of purpose!</p> <p>GRAND RAPIDS CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS EVERGREEN CAMPUS</p>
<p><b>LITANY</b></p> <p>We follow Jesus and we value COMMUNITY, We're better together! We follow Jesus and we value CHRIST We are rooted in Christ!</p> <p>GRAND RAPIDS CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS EVERGREEN CAMPUS</p>

Students at Evergreen also celebrated the school theme, our Portrait of a Graduate, and our commitment to multiage programming during our Enrichment Week. For the first time, this week was simply built into our calendar as a standard set of school days (whereas in the past, this was an optional enrollment week as part of our “Balanced Calendar”). Partnering with Camp Roger and Rockford Christian allowed our students to celebrate through experiences in gorgeous outdoor settings. Much of our time at Camp Roger involved working together as CREWS (Communities of Reflection, Engagement, Wonder, and Service: multi-age small groups of 12 students from kindergarten to fifth grade).

## John Barkel, Iroquois

Preschool teachers and teachers in the upper grades collaborate together and make buddy pairs between their classes. This is a great tradition of community building that has been restarted since covid restrictions have lessened. This month, we have the Eagle Dash which is a fun active fundraiser put on by the Iroquois and Evergreen PTO. The Iroquois preschoolers participated the day before K-4 students. While the preschoolers were running, their buddies came out to cheer them. It was such a cool sight to see. Our students in the upper grades made signs, and cheered on their buddies.



## Strategic Plan

## Mission and Core Values

# Goal A Priority 1

Ensure Grand Rapids Christian’s mission and values are at the center of all school functions, inspiring a deeper clarity of why we exist and aligning each member of our community to our fundamental purpose.

### Tom DeJonge, Superintendent

Building principals have focused a great amount of time and energy focusing on our three core values: Christ, Commitment, and Community. They report a variety of examples of how they have applied these values and interpreted them together with their staff members since school kicked off in August. In each case, they report their deep appreciation for the work that was accomplished last year as we developed and defined how they may impact the lives of students and will be applied throughout all aspects of the school community. Hats off to the administrative leadership team and Micahel Calhoun for the tremendous energy that was given to this important task, We pray that they will be clearly evident this year and for years to come.



## Strategic Plan

# Goal A Priority 2

## Strategic Board Governance

Ensure the board and its individual members understand the role and responsibilities of the board and respective board member and the board's strategic rather than operational governance.

### Tom DeJonge, Superintendent

All board committees identified in the strategic plan have been formed and have met one to two times since the start of the school year with the exception of the Governance Committee. As a reminder, board committees and Joint Committees include:

#### Board Committees

- Executive Committee
- Finance and Operations Committee
- Governance Committee (membership in process of being confirmed)
- Development Committee

#### Board Joint Committees

- Cultural Competence Committee
- Education Committee
- Compensation Committee (will begin in November)
- Professional Status Committee (meets as needed)

In addition to their scheduled meeting agenda items, committees have been asked to review their respective committee charges and annual agenda to affirm and/or adjust the charge and add items to the planned agenda.

### Jim Primus, CFO

The GRCS Revised Operating Budget for the 2022-23 school year is complete and was unanimously supported by the Finance Committee at its October 6 meeting. Highlights of the Budget include a 4.0% wage increase for staff + steps, an Eagles Fund goal of \$1.70 million, Tech/Capital Allocation to \$700,000, a tuition increase of \$310/student (3%), and an Operating Reserve of \$500,000. A summary of the Revised Budget will be reviewed at the BOT meeting on October 17, 2022.

With the completion of the 2022-23 GRCS Revised Budget, we will begin work on the 2023-24 Budget and expect to schedule a meeting in early November with the GRCS Compensation Committee.

The 2021-22 Audit is nearly complete. Beene Garter Managing Partner Tom Rosenbach will meet with the GRCS Finance Committee on November 3.



## Strategic Plan

## Leadership Transition

# Goal A Priority 3

Plan for and execute the process to ensure the smooth transition of central administrative leadership in light of the superintendent’s anticipated date of retirement.

### Tom DeJonge, Superintendent

The Executive Committee met on October 5 and discussed possible firms to lead the search for the pending transition in executive leadership. Firms under consideration currently include Vanderbloemen (the firm that completed the search for the recent Chief Advancement Officer position), Affinity, Carter Baldwin, and CACE (Council for Advancement of Christian Education). The board will have an opportunity to discuss anticipated next steps and review the timeline associated with the transition as detailed in the strategic plan at its meeting this month.



## Strategic Plan

## Faith Formation

# Goal B Priority 1

To ensure that the Christian faith is woven throughout all areas of our school for the purpose of achieving the Schools' mission to prepare effective servants of Christ in contemporary society.

### Sara Seth, GRCMS

The Faith Formation subcommittee chair, met with Tom DeJonge to begin the process of gathering all foundational documents related to faith formation in bylaws, handbooks and the website. The subcommittee then met to discuss and begin the process of reviewing these documents with the goal of bringing clarity to our constituents about who we are and what we believe. The subcommittee will eventually recommend the systems by which we communicate and live out the statements in our foundational documents.

GRCHS students are placed into small groups that meet twice monthly. Each small group contains an adult leader that will mentor the students in her/his group.

A team led by chaplain, Mark VanderWerf, met to consider the best structure for small groups based on feedback from adult leaders. Mark VanderWerf also leads a group of chapel interns in ongoing review of our chapels.

7th and 8th grade students at GRCMS are placed into small groups as well. The topic of discussion is led by 8th graders who are mentored by Mr. Jim Vos. It is an opportunity throughout the school year for students to grow together in their faith and relationship with Jesus.



## Strategic Plan

## Belonging

# Goal B Priority 2

To foster a culture of belonging in which the rich differences of God’s creation are reflected in our curriculum and instruction, supported through institutional practices and systems, and reinforced through professional development

### Ben Buursma, RCS

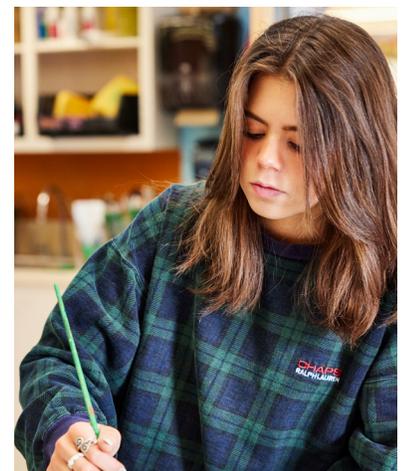
District School Social Workers across our elementary campuses have spearheaded the implementation of Zones of Regulation, a curriculum designed to give students language around their emotions. This program will support the continued social-emotional learning of our PreK-4 students.

Middle School Teachers spent two days of their August Professional Development learning more about Responsive Classroom, the framework currently in place in our elementary school classrooms. Teachers will complete another day of training in the middle of October and again in February.

Juanitia Davis has joined GRCS as its first-ever K-8 Cultural Competence Coordinator. This position promotes the growth of cultural competence in students and staff allowing them to follow Christ’s example of knowing, loving, including and serving one another. In the High School, this work is supported by Rona Das, who has taken on a new role of School Culture Coordinator.

A group of elementary leaders attended a Cultivating Genius training at Kent ISD to learn more about using an Equity Framework when planning instruction. These leaders meet with their Professional Learning Teams to share their learning and begin reviewing the elementary social studies curriculum.

Inclusion coordinators on each campus have met with grade-level teams to ensure that all students continue to receive the supports they need to be successful. At GRCMS, this work has included coordinating with co-curricular teachers, as well as facilitating recess activities that meet specific student interests.



## Strategic Plan

## Flourishing and Feedback

# Goal B Priority 3

To ensure a culture of feedback and growth in which all members of our community are provided a pathway to grow and flourish, and to maintain exemplary and aligned PS-12th grade Christian education across all schools so that all students learn at a high level.

### Ann Bakker, Elementary Curriculum Coordinator

Wednesday, August 10 was an exciting day at GRCS! Our new teachers attended orientation sessions to learn about the work that GRCS is doing in Christian education as it relates to cultural competence, teacher growth, professional learning teams, and inclusion services through the lens of the Portrait of a Professional Educator. That day was followed by building-specific orientation sessions.

A survey was developed and sent to new staff members so that they have the opportunity to give feedback about the orientation sessions that were held in August. The survey gathered information on how new staff members are transitioning into their roles at GRCS and what needs they might have as they work with students and colleagues.

Students in first through eighth grade completed the first of three NWEA Map assessments in Reading and Math. Teachers complete assessment reflections after each round of testing and discuss the results with the building administrators and the student support coordinators working together to best meet the needs of all learners at GRCS.

Communication about standards-based grading was shared with the families of GRCMS and RCMS families and caregivers.

Two Learning Labs have been implemented for elementary teachers. Five elementary teachers deepened their understanding of Responsive Classroom Morning Meeting during a Learning Lab which was hosted by Zach Nordling in a first-grade classroom on September 14 at the Rockford Christian Campus.



Six Kindergarten - second grade teachers learned more about teaching phonics by attending a Reading Horizons Learning Lab in Kate Traylor's first-grade classroom at the Iroquois Campus on Wednesday, October 5. Learning Labs provide powerful professional development as teachers observe their colleagues teaching and discuss the teaching and learning techniques that they observed.

## Strategic Plan

## District Campus Initiatives

# Goal B Priority 4

To ensure continued investment in distinct campus initiatives that further each school’s vision and theme, and the Schools’ mission.

### Ben Buursma, RCS

Before school began in August, elementary teachers at Rockford Christian worked with the Outdoor Discover Network to plan new curricular connections that leveraged outdoor learning.

A new outdoor learning pavilion was completed this summer thanks, in part, to funds from the Rockford Education Foundation. This covered gathering area complements the outdoor classrooms already found on campus and will support new opportunities for learning.

### Graham Schultze, Evergreen

Throughout the summer, Evergreen’s Media Inquiry Specialist/International Baccalaureate Coordinator, Emily Kouri, worked to develop introductory training for all teaching staff. Come August, classroom and cocurricular teachers alike spent an entire professional development day engaged with content that introduced them to the IB Primary Years Programme learner profile, connections to the GRCS mission and vision, and the IB PYP transdisciplinary themes:

- Sharing the planet
- Where we are in place and time
- How we express ourselves
- How the world works
- Who we are
- How we organize ourselves

On October 20 and 21, all staff will spend two days with a consultant from the IB during a workshop entitled “Making the PYP Happen”.



# Strategic Plan

# Goal C

# Priority 1

## Advancement Model Aligned with the Strategic Plan

Establish a comprehensive Advancement model focused on family relationship management and powered by end-to-end connected experience design that maximizes enrollment, deepens community and cultivates generosity (time, talent and treasure).

### Megan Gritter, Director of Communications

This past month we have seen great growth in our communications efforts. In the month of September, the corporate office sent 30 emails with an average open rate of 78.33% and an average click rate of 21.9%. To put this into perspective the national average open rate in the education industry is 23.42% and the average click rate is 2.90%. In terms of social media accounts, we are growing our reach and engagement and creating strategies to support our advancement model and strategic plan.

I have been partnering with our admissions directors on a regular basis and have created a communication strategy for their 22-23 admissions events. Vickie has begun eighth-grade visit nights for both GRCMS and Ada Christian. Our Expedition Kindergarten events kick off in November.



#### Facebook:

- Page reach: 14,809, up 12.5% from August
- Page visits: 732, down 7.6%
- New likes: 28, down 12.5%
- Total likes: 4,566 as of October 4
- Post Reach is up 50.2% to 18.3K
- Post Engagement is up 51.4% to 2.6K

#### Instagram:

- Page reach: 2,025
- Accounts engaged: 436, up 1.3%
- Total Followers: 1899
- Content interactions: 1224, up 11.4%



## Strategic Plan **Goal C-1**

## Advancement Model Aligned with the Strategic Plan

### Tom DeJonge, Superintendent

#### Admissions:

We will begin the process of projecting enrollment at each of our campuses in the coming weeks. Admissions staff, principals, and I will review historical enrollment trends, current families, and project forward using that data and information we maintain on each student in order to estimate the 2023-24 enrollment and subsequent staffing assignments. This is an important annual task we complete in the fall in order to inform the budget planning for the coming school year, which Jim has already begun to draft.

#### Development:

I am excited to announce that Amanda Matthews has been hired to fill the position of Director of Development! This is a position that has been vacant for several years as we posted and searched for the right person to fill this important role. Amanda comes to GRCS from a similar position at Widowed Persons Service, where she served as Executive Director leading and overseeing all programming, fund development, volunteer retention, mission advocacy, and community relations in the community. Amanda has two children attending Grand Rapids Christian Schools and is honored to have been offered the position. She will formally begin her work on November 1, 2022.



# News and celebrations

Tom DeJonge, GRCS

## Inspiring Stories

There are many inspiring stories that we witness and hear from students, parents, and grandparents each week. One that stands out to me is an email I received from a grandmother whose first grandchild enrolled in Preschool this fall at the Iroquois Campus. Following the child's first week of school, the grandma wrote to me saying,

“Hi Tom. This was my granddaughter's first week of school at Grand Rapids Christian. It was so clear that **God is in that place**. I have the privilege of bringing her to school each day and walking with her to her classroom. Can't tell you what a special moment it is for me and how incredible it is to be greeted by such wonderful Christian teachers. It brings such joy (and also a few tears!) as I now have the opportunity to watch a fourth generation of family members begin their school journey with you. I wanted to share that and express my thanks to you and everyone at Iroquois for making that dream a reality for our precious granddaughter.”

If THAT'S not inspiring, I don't know what is...

## Eagle Dash

Students at our Iroquois and Evergreen Campuses gathered together on Friday, October 7 for the 2022 Eagle Dash, an annual event sponsored by the GRCS PTO. For the first time, the students gathered for this fun event at Eagles Stadium (rather than hosting it at their respective schools). It was a beautiful day and an awesome sight to see! Parents, grandparents, and friends came to join in on the fun.



# News and celebrations

**Brad Mockabee, GRCHS**

## Homecoming and GAAP

We just finished an amazing Homecoming week at GRCHS! Each day we celebrated our school with grade competitions, fun dress-up events, hallway decorating, a pep rally, the football game, and then a dance. It was a great time to celebrate our school and welcome back our alumni. God has blessed us with a wonderful community, and we have so much to be thankful for here at GRCHS!

We have welcomed 14 German students to our school this fall. Each year, we participate in the GAPP (German American Partnership Program) program, where students come from Hamburg, Germany, to attend classes and live with host families. Many of our students will go to stay in Germany next summer. We are thankful this opportunity to learn more about them and their culture. We are also blessed to have Donna Kamerman-Houskamp, our German Teacher leading this program.

**Sara Seth, GRCMS**

## Faces and Our Cultures

GRCMS and GRCHS have partnered with FACES and Our Cultures for over six years. FACES is a company based in Guatemala focused on empowering youth. FACES provides an opportunity to live a unique and enriching cultural experience that allows them to realize their full potential, build long-lasting friendships, and write a chapter in their lives that they will remember forever. FACES promotes the development of multicultural and global competencies that will prepare this generation of young people for an increasingly interconnected world. By engaging in this opportunity, our students learn how to be more culturally competent while building new relationships and learning about Guatemalan culture. A GRCS Spanish Immersion family is excited to have a Guatemalan exchange student as part of their family for six weeks starting October 17.

**Ben Buursma, RCS**

## RCS New Entrance

Rockford Christian's annual fall PTO fundraiser, the Harvest Hustle, brought our community together as students raised over \$40,000 and blessed others with over 1400 acts of kindness. We celebrated together with a hayride, baby animals, and a "victory lap" around one of the trails on campus.



**FACES & OUR CULTURES**  
EMPOWERING THEIR FUTURE

# News and celebrations

## Graham Schultze, Evergreen

### Olivia Haverkamp Early Learning Center

The Evergreen Campus is continually growing in excitement over the opening of the Olivia Haverkamp Early Learning Center. Construction projects press on as January’s daycare start date approaches. We are grateful for our connection to more families through our Great Start Readiness Program classroom, which opened on October 3.



### Homecoming

An added benefit to our Enrichment Weeks now being a part of our regular calendar is that experiences at Camp Roger and RCS are now available to all Evergreen students. Historically, it was very challenging to arrange appropriate coverage for students who receive inclusion services on the Evergreen Campus during our Enrichment Weeks. It was incredible to have all students and all staff participate for the first time this year!



### Enrichment Week

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For more information, visit [grcs.org](http://grcs.org)  
or contact [name@grcs.org](mailto:name@grcs.org).