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## Board Report

# 2022 2023

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**Tom DeJonge, Superintendent**

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March 2023

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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

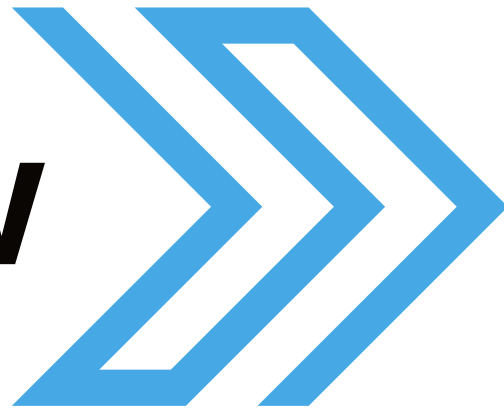
Prepared to live a life of discovery and wonder in God's world.

## 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).

## March 2023

March 20	Education Committee Meeting	HUB	12:30 pm
March 20	Board of Trustees Meeting	HUB	6:00 pm
March 21	Cultural Competence Committee Mtg	Iroquois Learning Commons	7:00 am
March 30	No School - PD for staff	All Campuses	
March 31 - Apr 7	Spring Break	All Campuses	

## April 2023

April 03 -07	Spring Break	All Campuses	
April 12	Executive Committee Meeting	Board Room	7:00 am
April 13	Development Committee Meeting	Board Room	Noon
April 18	Foundation Board Meeting	Board Room	10:00 am
April 20	New 2 You Board Meeting	Board Room	8:00 am
April 24	Board of Trustees Meeting	HUB	6:00 pm
April 25	Cultural Competence Committee Mtg	Iroquois Learning Commons	7:00 am

## May 2023

May 04	Finance Committee Meeting	Board Room	7:30 am
May 15	Education Committee Meeting	HUB	12:30 pm
May 18	Development Committee Meeting	Board Room	Noon
May 22	Eagles Classic	Wuskowhan Players Club	
May 23	Cultural Competency Committee Mtg	Iroquois Learning Commons	7:00 am
May 23	High School Graduation	Eagles Stadium	8:00 pm
May 24	Executive Committee Meeting	Board Room	7:00 am
May 30 - 31	Exams	GRCHS	
May 31	Rockford Christian Graduation	Rockford Christian Worship Center	7:00 pm



# From the superintendent



Dear Board:

With the election of our three new board nominees and approval of the 2023-24 Operating Budget at the February 20, 2023 Annual Meeting, we return our complete focus on the successful completion of the 2022-23 school year and preparation for the successful launch of the 2023-24 school year. Our district administrative team continues to monitor the achievement of this year's strategic priorities and corresponding action items in order to provide the Board with a progress update on the 2022-2026 Strategic Plan at the August 2023 Board Retreat. Admission Directors at each school continue to plan for and host numerous opportunities for prospective students to learn about and explore the many opportunities available to them as GRCS students. Development staff continue their efforts to meet our 2022-23 Eagles Fund targets through a variety of Spring events and fundraising initiatives. And Board committees continue their work to address numerous efforts aligned with their respective charges and responsibilities.

All this to say that it takes many hands to accomplish the many tasks that are critically important to ensure our students thrive and the strength of our educational programs.

At this month's board meeting, there are several action items for the board to approve. In addition to Consent Agenda items, they include the board's approval of important aspects of the superintendent search and the 2023-24 Staff Handbooks. We are scheduled to meet on Monday, March 20, 2023 beginning at 6:00 p.m. in the Hub. Please let me know if you are unable to attend in person so that I can send out a Zoom link.

Please know how much you are appreciated. Your deep commitment to our kids and community is clearly evident. Your engagement in and support of all that we are called to accomplish is second-to-none. Simply stated, we are positioned to do our work excellently because of you and your strategic leadership.

See you soon,



Tom

# Campus faith theme stories

## Sara Seth, GRCMS

Mrs. Juanita Davis, our K-8 Cultural Competence Coordinator orchestrated an amazing evening at GRCMS. Despite the snow day causing the event to move to March 1, many middle school students and families enjoyed a presentation on the significance, impact and importance of Gospel Music in the African-American community. There were special performances from local Gospel artists, the GRCHS Gospel Choir, and some of our very own middle school students. The performances were followed by a Taste of Soul food catered by Southern Smoke.



## Graham Schultze, Evergreen

- The past few school months have been exciting on the Evergreen Campus. Not only did the Early Learning Center open its doors to 18-36 month old children, but we've also welcomed a new group of employees to GRCS. The ELC lead caregivers and aides are excited to work alongside our young learners and share Christ's love, patience, and joy. In early January, Mark VanderWerf, Chaplain at GRCHS, led a dedication service and Blessing of the Building. During the event, ELC Director Tara Udeh shared a fantastic quote by Wess Stafford, casting a beautiful vision for the opportunity held by all of us involved in the ELC: "Watch carefully the children around you. In precious moments you will catch a glimpse of your Savior's face...Walk gently around them; his footprints are all around you." GRCS is excited to open the doors to an environment in which the youngest Eagles are valued and grow as image bearers and servants of Christ.
- "We are rooted in Christ!" This response to our core value is shared every Friday morning during Evergreen's chapel. In our most recent chapel, students learned that they would be selecting an area that aligns with their personal interests through which to serve Christ. Students are eager to team up in multiage age groups and follow Christ into our community by way of service projects. Our options for service learning projects this year include creation care on our campus (partnering with Friends of GR Parks), multigenerational care (partnering with local retirement homes), service through art (partnering with local artists), and food security (partnering with Kids Food Basket).

# Campus faith theme stories

## **John Barkel, Iroquois**

- This month our third grade classes led us in chapel worship. Every single student was involved in some way in this time of praise and worship. Our third grade leaders followed direction and a plan, and then led the rest of the school in what most definitely, a spirit-filled experience. I'm proud of our staff and students who made this experience of "Come, follow me" a success.
- On MLK Jr. Day, our students did a variety of activities focused on service. One grade developed a lending library that will be put out in the Ottawa Hills Neighborhood this spring, we packed lunches for Kids Food Basket, and we packed "blessing bags" which are filled with hand warmers, snacks, and something to drink. The blessing bags are intended to hand out to those who are asking for assistance throughout our city. It's great to see our students engaging in our community and supporting our neighbors even at such young ages.



## Strategic Plan

# Goal A Priority 1

## Mission and Core Values

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

We recently contracted with Think Theory, a local design firm, to create visible displays of the GRCS' Mission, Vision, Core Values, and Portrait of a Graduate attributes that were affirmed with the Board's approval of the 2022-26 Strategic Plan. These displays will be located in designated areas at each of our five schools and serve as a clear reminder to students and parents of our foundational beliefs and who we are and aspire to be. Our hope is to have these installed over the coming months with all displays being installed no later than the start of the 2023-24 school year.



## 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

The Governance Committee met on March 13, 2023 to begin its discussion on the recommendations we received from CSI and CESA in their most recent accreditation reports. Those recommendations advised a review of GRCS Bylaws, in particular as they pertain to Membership and other matters related to the Board's strategic governance. The Committee will likely take several months to complete its work in these areas and anticipates its recommendations being provided to the board in late Spring or at the Annual Retreat in August 2023.



## Strategic Plan

# Goal A Priority 3

## Leadership Transition

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

Led by Caleb Doezeema, the Executive Committee has focused a great deal of its attention on the action steps necessary to move the board forward with its search for a new superintendent. Specifically, those steps have included overseeing the development and distribution of a Request for Proposal (RFP), which was sent to five search firms and consultants, interviews of the four firms that responded to the RFP, and selecting the firm for the board's approval; confirmation of a Search Committee and drafting of a Search Committee Charge; establishment of a communication timeline; and preparation to launch the search throughout the coming weeks. The Executive Committee has worked hard and is excited to share a thorough update with the board at its March meeting.





## Strategic Plan

# Goal B

## Priority 1

## Faith Formation

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 sub committee has been working to ensure Scripture is tied to and communicated along with each of the characteristics of the Portrait of a Graduate. Mark VanderWerf has created a draft of a throughlines narrative that connects the characteristics of the portrait to foundational beliefs and Biblical truths that make clear and tangible connections to the classroom. The draft has been shared with the Faith Formation sub committee and will be brought to the District Leadership Team this month. The sub committee also has plans to begin reviewing the current GRCS website and links to decide on what information is important to represent GRCS well. Below are some specific examples of how faith formation is being woven throughout our students' and teachers' experiences:

- Middle School students continue to serve Kakuma through a weekly school store and have raised over \$1000 to date.
- High School students and staff are raising money for the special Olympics. Our Unified basketball program is leading the charge.
- Evergreen students are focusing their 3rd phase of CREW on service learning projects in the community--partnerships include Kids Food Basket, Plaster Creek Stewards, and retirement communities.



- Faith Formation Committee members, John Barkel and Mark VanderWerf attended the Deeper Learning conference to visit model schools and collaborate with other Christian school leaders from across the country.
- The High School Showcase welcomed roughly 500 guests. The program intentionally focused on the mission of GRCS and how that impacts the faith of our students.
- A curriculum video was created for prospective families to showcase the breadth of offerings at GRCHS and how they reinforce our mission.
- GRCMS 6th grade teachers have implemented small group time during corporate Bible time each week.

## Strategic Plan

# Goal B Priority 2

## Belonging

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

- February’s scheduled Professional Development days focused on increasing the capacity of elementary and middle school faculty in the Responsive Classroom framework.
- Academic Program Coordinators at each level, with the support of building administrators, have begun the process of planning professional development for the 23/24 school year now that next year’s calendar has been approved by the board.





## Strategic Plan

# Goal B Priority 3

## Flourishing and Feedback

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**

- Grand Rapids Christian Middle School and Rockford Christian Middle School administrators and teachers spent the past year revising report cards into a standards based format. Students and families received the standards based report cards in January. These report cards reflected the work that students did during the first semester.
- Lynnette Kooienga, Middle School Academic Program Coordinator, continues to work closely with the administrators to revise the new teacher mentoring program to align with the strategic plan and with the needs of our new teachers.
- Four teachers from the three elementary campuses attended a Learning Lab in January which was led by Linda Jonker. The Learning Lab focused on Visual Notetaking in the Bible classroom. Each teacher set a learning goal for their observation. The rich and meaningful conversation after the observation focused on Bible instruction with elementary students.
- Each of the elementary Professional Learning Teams met together for two - three hours during the months of January and February. The focus of the work integrated the elements of the Portrait of a Graduate into the grade level social studies units or into the co-curricular units of study.



- Students in grades one through eight took the NWEA Map winter assessment in January. The teachers and administrators are now working together to analyze the data so that they can continue to meet the needs of all learners.
- Grand Rapids Christian High began SAT test prep interventions for students not meeting college readiness benchmarks.

## Strategic Plan

# Goal B

## Priority 4

## District Campus Initiatives

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

**Ben Buursma, RCS**

- In December 2022, the Kent County Parks Department announced its intentions to purchase the Silver Lake Country Club near the corner of Young Street and Belding Road with plans to convert it into a park. This golf course had gone out of business in 2017 and has been unattended since that time. Because of this announcement by the county, RCS reached out to Daniel DeLooff, head of Kent County Parks, to inquire about partnering with them in whatever way we can. Mr. DeLooff has been gracious enough to invite us to have further conversations about how our students can be a part of this process. In February we will be taking our middle school students on a walkabout of the 125-acre tract located only two miles from school. We hope he will be able to meet us there and explain some of the hopes and dreams as they develop this land into a place of recreation. Already he has asked us if we would be willing to develop a nature trail, complete with signage and explanations. He seems eager to hear from our students about their ideas regarding what this park could look like and optimal uses for such a place.  
Frisbee golf? Natural playscapes? Native plantings? Wetland preservation? All of it is possible as we hope to partner with Kent County in developing a park from start to finish. This is an exciting opportunity for our students. Stay tuned!

**Graham Schultze, Evergreen**

- Evergreen hosted its 5th Winter Enrichment Week in partnership with Van Andel Education Institute in February. Our partnership with VAEI led students to rich, inquiry-based learning that is often place-based, creating a deeper understanding of our city or state. This year, for the first time, *all* Evergreen students participated in our 5-day experience, complete with a Friday evening presentation event! VAEI continues to be a valuable partner as we lean into our IB journey.
- In late October, Evergreen staff members were trained by an International Baccalaureate consultant over the course of two days. Making the Primary Years Programme (PYP) happen proved to be a great course for teaching staff in regard to deepening our understanding of unit planning through the IB PYP framework. Since October, Evergreen's IB Coordinator, Emily Kouri, has been hard at work connecting with worldwide contacts at IB PYP schools. On March 21, Emily, Team 1 Teacher Jori Falak, and I will travel to Notre Dame Prep for a daylong visit. Notre Dame Prep is the only other private IB PYP school in the state and we're excited to learn more about their day to day operations.

# 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, Communications

Over the past few months, my focus has been on updating the website and admission content to become more student-focused. I have launched a new marketing campaign, “The Eagle Experience.” The Eagle Experience truly showcases what makes GRCS uniquely different from the other schools in the area. We have highlighted each campus with photos of current students in action with high-level explanations of what you or your child will experience at that particular school.

This campaign is currently active in admissions for the following events, where our audience is prospective parents and students.

- High school Showcase
- Future Eagle Days
- Meet us in the Middle
- Middle School Showcase
- Preschool/Kindergarten Open House

Moving into the summer, I plan to create a district wide brand and style guide with hopes of launching it at New Staff Orientation in August.





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

## Advancement Model Aligned with the Strategic Plan

### Megan Gritter, Admissions

Admission events have been in full swing at every campus!

Vickie has been hosting 8th graders from Rockford, GRCMS, and Ada Christian as well as hosting the first two Future Eagle Day and a very successful Showcase. Linda has been busy with preschool and kindergarten open houses, as well as multiple middle school events.

Jessie has finished her events and has been assisting Linda and Vickie with their remaining events.

As of March 15, we have received the following:

- 82 inquiries through the website (this includes the ELC)
- 61 registered kindergarten students for 2023 - 2024 at Evergreen
- 62 registered preschool students at Evergreen
- 118 registered kindergarten students at Iroquois
- 169 registered preschool students at Iroquois
- 38 registered kindergarten students at RCS
- 113 registered preschool students at RCS
- 114 potential students who registered for GRCHS Future Eagle Days (this event is ongoing)
- Over 500 students from all over West Michigan attended our High School Showcase event
- 60 potential GRCMS students who registered for “Meet Us in the Middle” (this event is ongoing)



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

## Advancement Model Aligned with the Strategic Plan

### Amanda Matthews, Development

My focus and time continues to be donor outreach, cultivation, and community relations.

Significant donor meetings regarding Go Forth pledges and gifts were scheduled and completed. These pledges have been booked, advancing the Go Forth Funding Initiative from \$10,121,366.00 December 31, 2022 to current level at \$11,902,113.00.

Donor engagement and retention will continue as I continue to foster historic donors as well as cultivate new prospects and also engage newly enrolled families at all five campuses.

- Development team will be attending the CSM conference March 27-29
- I will be attending American Fundraising Professionals Major Gifts Conference, April 17-19
- Christian School Management Conference: Annual Fund
  - Conference Dates: June 22-23; June 26-29.
  - To further strengthen a cohesive building base model of engaging donors while promoting and strengthening a culture of generosity.
  - CSM will host an onsite professional development workshop for designated staff and volunteer parents in June 2023.
- **Eagles Fund Total:** \$1,514,451.00
- **Go Forth Total:** \$11,902,113.00 (88.2%) of \$13.5 million goal
- **2023 Go Forth Gala:**
  - 206 attended
  - \$226,300.00 raised as of March 16th 2023. This includes sponsorship, ticket sales, and gifts given at the event. Post event: online events received total \$9,300.00. I expect more gifts to roll in this week and throughout next week.
  - Personal phone calls to attendees and sponsors will be completed by Development Staff, Development Committee and Superintendent, Tom DeJonge.
- **Eagles Classic:** May 22nd, 2023 Wuskowhan Players Club
  - Current Sponsorship total: \$101,000.00
  - 22 teams registered
- Spring Appeal focus and strategy has been discussed. We are executing a 14,000 piece mailing to our families and our giving community. This will give detailed narrative and context regarding Go Forth while furthermore requesting funding encompassing the Spring Appeal.
- Post mailing, a three week communication and reminder has been crafted and will go out via email encouraging gifts and pledges before the end of the fiscal year June 30, 2023.
- I continue to meet with and engage Fles Society Members. I continue making weekly phone calls to follow up on weekly donations. I will continue discussion, planning, and setting benchmarks for the next fiscal year.



# News and celebrations

**Sara Seth, GRCMS**

## Vex Robotics

- Our VEX Robotics teams have made huge strides at the middle school. We increased our team size from 12 students to 32 this year! These 32 students were placed onto 8 robot teams to compete throughout the fall. In December, some students had the opportunity to continue to the postseason and try to compete at a state level. Five teams (20 students) went to the State competition in Monroe, MI on March 4. While all teams competed well, two of our teams managed to win awards (The Judges Award and the Amaze Award)!



- The student advisory board successfully launched the opening of a school store that is open twice per week for students to come and purchase snacks to help raise funds for the Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya. The students plan to donate the money earned to help advance the resources in the library in the camp to give more educational opportunities to students in Kenya.
- We celebrate the many God-given talents of our students along with the adults who step in to help them grow these talents! Our 7th and 8th grade band students received high ratings at the Band Festival in late February. We are very proud of their hard work and perseverance.



# News and celebrations

## Brad Mockabee, GRCHS

Throughout the early weeks of January, things at the high school were all about Winterim! Most students engaged in on-campus learning, having unique experiences in the classroom and throughout West Michigan. Roughly 225 students traveled to far and away places all over the world, learning and serving for Christ. We also had nearly 80 students exploring potential future careers through professional internships at businesses and locations throughout the greater Grand Rapids area.





# News and celebrations

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## Graham Schultze, Evergreen

What's In Our Water is the focus of 2023's Winter Enrichment week at Evergreen. Partnering yet again with Van Andel Education Institute, staff has guided students through an inquiry-based investigation to learn deeply about watersheds: what they are, what issues we're facing, and what solutions might improve the quality of the Lower Grand River watersheds.



Despite snow days repeatedly trifling with our plans, the entire experience culminated on Friday, March 17 during a multiage presentation event in our gym, during which students will show off models created in VAEI's labs and share their findings from research, observations, and conversations.

## John Barkel, Iroquois

Expedition Kindergarten at Iroquois was a huge hit! This was the first time in three years we held this event in person. Our parent turnout was awesome, and most of the families who attended signed up for kindergarten for the 23-24 school year. Currently, our kindergarten enrollment numbers are excellent. A big thank you to Jessie Renz, Director of Admissions, for her hard work in preparing for this important event. Praise God for our healthy enrollment!



It is always great when students from the high school visit us here at the Iroquois campus. This month we welcomed GRC high schoolers who are in the Spanish Immersion program. These students spent time with our kindergarten students reading, playing games and sharing the Spanish language together.



