



American Christian ACADEMY

Elementary School Student/Parent Handbook 2025-2026 School Year

School Information

Website

www.acacademy.com

Address

2300 Veterans Memorial Parkway
Tuscaloosa, AL 35404

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205-553-5942

Accreditation

American Christian Academy is accredited by Cognia (formerly AdvancED) and the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI). ACSI engages schools in a rigorous and holistic process of organizational appraisal and improvement.

American Christian Academy is a coeducational, nonprofit, non-denominational, and independent Christian organization. The school is governed by a self-perpetuating Board of Directors and admits students without regard to race, color, religion, or national origin.

Dear ACA Elementary Families,

Welcome to the 2025-2026 school year at American Christian Academy! It is with great joy and gratitude that I extend a warm greeting to both our returning families and those joining us for the first time. We are excited to embark on another year of learning and growth, trusting in God's guidance and provision for our students.

At ACA, we are committed to providing a Christ-centered education that nurtures both the mind and the heart. Our dedicated team of educators strives for academic excellence while instilling biblical values that shape character and faith. This year, we will continue to create enriching experiences that challenge and inspire students, all while grounding them in the truth of God's Word.

We firmly believe that a strong partnership between home and school, centered on faith, is essential to student success. I encourage you to stay engaged in your child's learning, pray for and with them, and participate in school events and activities. Your involvement and encouragement make a lasting impact on their growth, both academically and spiritually.

Please be on the lookout for updates and important information throughout the year. If you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to reach out. We are here to walk alongside you and your child in this journey, trusting in God's faithfulness every step of the way.

Thank you for being a valued part of our ACA family. I look forward to an amazing year of learning, faith, and achievement together!

Blessings,

Tracey Keaton

Director of Academics

K3-5th Grades

American Christian Academy

Dear ACA Elementary Families,

Welcome to a new and exciting school year at American Christian Academy! I am thrilled to be working with you and your children as we embark on another year of learning, growth, and spiritual development.

At ACA, we are committed to nurturing your child's academic, social, and spiritual growth in a safe, supportive, and Christ-centered environment. Our dedicated teachers and staff are passionate about helping each child discover their unique talents and potential while building a strong foundation rooted in God's Word.

We know that every school year brings new opportunities, challenges, and experiences, and we are here to partner with you in making this year the best one yet! Whether it's engaging in classroom activities, participating in chapel services, or creating lifelong friendships, we are excited to see how each student will thrive this year.

Please know that my door is always open, and I encourage you to reach out with any questions, suggestions, or concerns. Together, we can make this year a memorable and successful one for your child.

Thank you for entrusting us with your child's education. We are honored to walk alongside you as we continue to develop students who are not only academically prepared but also spiritually grounded.

Christine Chism

Elementary Principal
American Christian Academy

2025-2026 School Calendar

August 6 First Day, ½ Day
September 1 Labor Day, no school
October 24 Homecoming, 1/2 Day
November 11 Veterans Day, no school
November 21 Grandparents Day, ½ Day (HS out)
November 24-28 Thanksgiving Break, no school
December 12 ½ Day
Dec 15 - Jan 2 Christmas Break, no school

January 6 First Day of 2nd Semester
January 19 Martin Luther King Jr. Day, no school
February 16 In Service, no school
March 13 Teacher Prep Day, no school
March 16-20 Spring Break, no school
April 3 Good Friday, no school
April 6 Easter Monday, no school
May 22 Last Day of School, ½ Day

Grading Periods

1st Nine Weeks- August 6-October 3
2nd Nine Weeks- October 6-December 12
3rd Nine Weeks- January 6-March 12
4th Nine Weeks- March 23-May 22

Report cards will be available on FACTS following the end of each grading period.

Daycare (K4-5th Grade) Days closed

July 28- August 5
September 1 – Labor Day
November 11- Veterans Day
November 21 -Grandparent's Day, 1/2 day
November 26-28 -Thanksgiving Break
December 24- 26 – Christmas Break

December 31 & January 1, 2026
January 19- MLK Jr. holiday
April 3 – Good Friday
May 22 - Last day of school
May 25 – 27 (Set up for Day camp)
July 3 – Celebrate 4th

Vision Statement

It is with deep conviction that American Christian Academy desires to provide a safe learning environment, biblical integration into challenging academic work, athletic events and other curricular and extracurricular activities. We invite you to join us on this journey by being involved in classroom activities, athletic events, facility improvements and travel opportunities.

Mission Statement

American Christian Academy exists as a partnership with parents to instill Christian character and academic excellence for all students.

Statement of Faith

American Christian Academy is a non-denominational Christian school dedicated to teaching biblical truths related to the understanding of the Father God, Jesus Christ, His Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Philosophy of Christian Education

The philosophy of education at American Christian Academy is rooted in the belief that Christian education encompasses both academic instruction and the teaching of attitudes and values. We believe that all teaching should stem from a Biblical worldview and be seamlessly integrated into everyday life. While rules and requirements are established to ensure the smooth operation of the school, their primary purpose is to support the character development of our students. In Luke 2:52, we read that as a young man, “Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.” This serves as our model for achieving a balanced approach to a child’s development. We emphasize education in four key areas: spiritual, academic, physical, and social. Our goal is to partner with parents in this endeavor, fostering consistency in a child’s instruction across the home, church, and school.

Principal Objectives

Spiritual:

- To educate students so that they successfully integrate Christian morals into their total lives

Intellectual:

- To provide an academic climate conducive to learning
- To encourage the learning of necessary skills required for meaningful participation in society as an adult
- To encourage thoughtful logical, and analytically sound decisions that have a foundation in Scripture

Social:

- To provide children with opportunities for growth in the social skills required to participate as a Christian in today’s society.
- To enable students to understand and appreciate the role of government in society

Cultural:

- To promote appreciation for creativity in the arts, realizing that artistic vision is inspired by God’s truth
- To encourage students to understand and appreciate cultural patterns different from those of their own mission outlook and to know their own culture thoroughly so that they are protected from the influence of relativism.

Physical:

- To provide opportunities for growth in physical motor skills
- To provide opportunity for learning physical skills necessary to participate in lifetime sport activities

Interpersonal Relationships

In today’s world, there are lifestyles and choices that do not align with biblical standards. As a result, it is essential for us to affirm these biblical principles in our school policies regarding admission and dismissal. These policies are outlined below:

Family Structure

American Christian Academy adheres to the biblical and traditional definition of marriage as a covenant between one man and one woman, joined by God in the holy state of matrimony. Families that do not align with this biblical definition of marriage cannot partner with us in fostering Christian character in children. ACA reserves the right to deny admission to any family unit that does not reflect biblical principles. (Genesis 2:24; Proverbs 15:23; 1 Corinthians 7:2–40; 1 Timothy 3:2–4; 1 Timothy 5:14)

In today's culture, the physical aspects of relationships are often overemphasized. At ACA, we believe that the physical nature of relationships should not be overtly displayed. Public displays of affection are considered inappropriate. We emphasize that lasting commitments must include a strong spiritual foundation in addition to physical attraction. Our goal is to prepare students for future marital relationships and homes built on a Godly, spiritual foundation.

Sexual Orientation

At American Christian Academy, we believe that God created men and women in His image and likeness. In His divine plan for humanity, God established the marriage relationship between one man and one woman to produce godly offspring and reflect His holy purpose. Denying one's God-given biological sex is viewed as rebellion against God's design. Each individual is uniquely created at conception as male or female, in alignment with biblical teaching.

Students or parents who actively support or validate homosexuality or transgenderism are in conflict with the Christian character we aim to cultivate as part of our mission. Students engaged in non-biblical sexual behavior or identifying outside of their biological sex will not be eligible for admission. Additionally, any current student who openly advocates or demonstrates non-biblical sexuality, including through behavior or social media, will be dismissed. (Genesis 1:27–28; Genesis 19:5; Leviticus 18:22; 1 Kings 14:24; Romans 1:26–27; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 1 Corinthians 6:9; Jude 7)

While maintaining these biblical standards, ACA upholds a respectful environment. Slander or offensive language related to sexual orientation will not be tolerated.

Organization

The School Board

The School Board at American Christian Academy is responsible for hiring and evaluating the Head of School, ensuring leadership aligns with the school's mission. The board also approves the annual budget to support programs and growth. Additionally, it monitors progress toward long-term goals and adjusts as needed. Board members serve three-year terms, balancing continuity with fresh perspectives to support the school's success and growth.

Head of School

The Head of School at American Christian Academy oversees all operations, ensuring the school meets strategic goals and academic standards across grade levels. This role includes managing facilities, academic programs, and the annual budget. The Head ensures curriculum consistency and upholds a Christian worldview in decision-making, guiding the school's academic and spiritual direction.

Academic Program Director

Academic Program Directors at American Christian Academy ensure academic standards are met across all grade levels. They work with teachers to align curriculum with the school's mission and assess program effectiveness. They support teacher development and ensure students, including those with special needs, receive appropriate support. Their leadership reflects a Christian worldview, fostering both spiritual and academic growth.

Principal

Principals at American Christian Academy oversee daily operations, managing students, faculty, and staff. They ensure high teaching standards, maintain a positive learning environment, and handle student behavior, discipline, and safety. Principals also make decisions on faculty and student selection while adhering to budget guidelines. Their leadership reflects a Christian worldview, supporting both academic and spiritual growth.

Faculty

The faculty at American Christian Academy consists of passionate Christian educators committed to teaching from a biblical worldview. They bring diverse backgrounds and experiences, focusing on academic excellence and character development. Teachers receive strong training to maintain accreditation standards and provide Christ-centered leadership, guiding students in both academic and spiritual growth.

Parent and Community

The parent organization of American Christian Academy plays a key role in supporting the school's mission, vision, and overall operations. It is typically composed of parents, volunteers, and community members who are dedicated to fostering a strong partnership between the school and families. This organization helps facilitate communication, promote school events, and contribute to fundraising efforts, ensuring that the school can continue to provide a high-quality, faith-based education. It also plays an essential role in creating a supportive environment for students and teachers alike.

General Policies

American Christian Academy has established guidelines to define acceptable behavior, ensuring a positive and productive learning environment. As ACA is a close-knit community, the implementation of discipline is crucial to maintaining order and supporting our educational mission.

By enrolling their child at ACA, parents/guardians acknowledge and agree that discipline will be administered promptly when necessary, in accordance with the guidelines established by the school. This may include the assignment of conduct points, detention, suspension, a request for withdrawal, or even expulsion. Parents/guardians understand that they are responsible for supporting these disciplinary actions and agree to abide by them, as referenced in Proverbs 29:15, 17 and Hebrews 12:11.

Additionally, parents/guardians understand that failure to meet financial obligations in a timely manner may result in expulsion. This ensures that our community functions smoothly and all members are held accountable to their commitments.

Attendance and Absences

Regular attendance is essential for academic success and personal growth. Beyond academics, consistent attendance fosters self-discipline, punctuality, and responsibility—values that carry over into the workplace and daily life.

Students who miss class not only fall behind but also create challenges for themselves and their teachers in making up missed work. Parents are strongly encouraged to ensure absences occur only when absolutely necessary.

To be counted as present, a student must attend at least **3 ½ hours of the school day**. Absences are classified as **excused** or **unexcused**, both of which affect the student's learning and grades. Excessive absences are considered **truancy** and must be reported to the Department of Human Resources (DHR) as required by law.

Excused Absences or Checkouts

Absences or early checkouts are considered excused for the following reasons:

- Personal illness
- Death in the immediate family
- Medical or dental appointments (documentation required)
- Pre-approved absences must be authorized by the administration and require notification at least five days in advance.

Students must provide a written note upon returning to school explaining the absence. For medical-related absences, a doctor's note is required. The timeframe for making up missed assignments will be determined by the teacher.

Unexcused Absences or Checkouts

- Absences that do not meet the criteria for excused absences are considered unexcused. Students who are absent or leave early without a valid reason will not be permitted to make up missed assignments.

Excessive Absences

To receive **grade level credit**, a student's total absences may **not exceed 20 days** per school year, regardless of whether they are excused or unexcused.

- After **10 absences**, parents/guardians must provide **medical or legal documentation** for future absences to be excused.
- Tardies that accumulate into missed days also count toward the **20-day limit**.

Exceptions may be granted in unusual circumstances after consultation with the administration. If a student experiences a **catastrophic event** leading to excessive absences, a physician's letter or written verification of the situation must be submitted for review.

Check Outs and Check Ins

- All students must be checked in or out at the Elementary Building Desk.
- Students may not leave campus without being signed out by a parent or guardian.
- If someone other than the parent/guardian is picking up a student, advance notification must be given to the Elementary Desk and/or the student's teacher.

- Checkouts after 2:30 PM are not permitted except for emergencies or professional appointments to maintain an orderly dismissal process.
- Parents or guardians who choose to pick up their child in person at the Elementary Desk for regular dismissal may do so starting at 2:50 PM.

Elementary Early Morning/Afterschool Care

- Drop-offs before 7:30 a.m. or pick-ups after 3:30 p.m. will incur a \$7 daily fee.
- Late pick-ups after 5:30 p.m.:
 - \$6 fee for pick-ups between 5:30 – 5:35 p.m.
 - \$1 per minute charge for pick-ups after 5:35 p.m.
- Additional fees apply for student care during Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Spring Break and/or dates when student care is available.

Morning Arrival Procedures

- School begins at 8:00 a.m.
- Students arriving between 7:00 – 7:30 a.m. must be escorted into the cafeteria and signed in for morning care.
- After 7:30 a.m., parents may use the elementary drive-through, where a teacher will direct students into the cafeteria.
- At 7:50 a.m., students will be dismissed to their homerooms.

Parent Guidelines:

- Parents may walk children to the elementary doors, but goodbyes should be said at the door.
- Parents are not permitted to enter the Elementary Building during morning arrival unless they have a scheduled conference.

Tardiness

- Students arriving after 8:05 a.m. are considered tardy.
- Late students must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian to the Elementary Desk to receive an admit slip.
- Work missed due to an unexcused tardy cannot be made up.
- Every 10 tardies will count as 1 unexcused absence.

Afternoon Dismissal Procedures

- Dismissal begins at 2:50 p.m. Each family receives two ACA carpool I.D. cards with a unique number.
- To maintain order, parents may only enter the building after 2:50 PM to pick up their child at the Elementary Desk unless they have a pre-scheduled conference.
- All check-outs must occur before 2:30 p.m.
- Students not picked up by 3:30 p.m. will be sent to after-school care.

Drop off and Pick up Procedures

The dismissal system ensures the safety and order of all students during arrival and departure. Parents are asked to follow these guidelines:

- Elementary students (K4 – 5th grade) will be picked up in the elementary drive-through.
- For safety reasons, K4 and K5 students **MUST** be picked up from the inside lane.
- Drive with care, keeping safety in mind for all people, both seen and unseen.
- No cell phone use (talking, texting, etc.) while entering or leaving campus.
- Enter 14th Street via Claymont Drive and turn left onto Patriot Drive.

Pick-Up Process:

- Show your dismissal card to the staff member entering numbers.
- If you don't have a card, you must show identification for verification.
- Keep your card displayed until your child is in the car.
- A teacher or safety patrol member will place students in your vehicle.
- Follow staff directions for traffic flow and movement through the carline.
- No parking or waiting in the drive-through, as it disrupts the traffic flow.
- If your student is not ready in time, you may be asked to pull forward and re-enter the line.
- To pick up both middle school and elementary students, do not enter the carpool line before 3:20 p.m.
- If you wish to park and walk to pick up your child, please stand on the sidewalk with your dismissal number.

Birthday Celebrations

We are happy to celebrate your child's birthday at school with treats or snacks. However, we kindly ask that you **do not bring party favors or decorations**, including balloons. Please coordinate with your child's classroom teacher in advance to ensure everything runs smoothly.

Invitations to private parties may only be distributed at school if every student in the class is invited.

Responsibility for School Property

Students are expected to take responsibility for maintaining and preserving the school's property, including furniture, fixtures, facilities, and grounds.

- Any student who damages or destroys school property or the belongings of others will receive conduct points and will be required to pay for the repair or replacement of the damaged items.
- Students must also contribute to keeping the cafeteria, restrooms, gym, classrooms, and outdoor grounds free of litter.

Cafeteria/Lunch

Lunch is served every full day of school. Students in K4 – 3rd grade will have a choice between milk or water with their lunch. Daily options include pre-made salads and sandwich boxes containing bread, cheese, ham or turkey, chips, and a cookie.

- Payments must be made through family accounts on FACTS.
- Credit card payments can be processed through Sherry Ballard by calling 205-553-5963, Ext 16.
- Menus are posted on FACTS and the ACA website.

Visitor Guidelines:

- Parents are welcome to eat with their child during lunch.
- Visitors must check in at the main office or elementary desk to receive a name badge before heading to the cafeteria.
- Due to the crowded cafeteria, you may need to move to a different table to eat with your child.

Campus Security

For security purposes, all doors remain locked during the school day. Students and parents arriving on campus must be buzzed in through the main entrance or the elementary building. Both locations are equipped with a camera and intercom system for visitor access.

- Students and teachers are instructed not to open any outside doors.
- All access decisions are managed exclusively by office staff.

Visitors:

- All visitors must sign in upon arrival and wear visitor stickers while on campus.
- Visitors must check out at the elementary desk when leaving.
- If there are legal restrictions regarding who may visit a child, official documentation must be on file in the main office. Elementary parents should also provide a copy to their child's classroom teacher.

Student Shadowing:

- Students wishing to shadow an ACA student must receive prior approval from the division principal, with arrangements coordinated through the Director of Admissions.
- Student visitors must adhere to ACA's dress code and cell phone policy.

Family Visitors:

- Family members are welcome to attend lunch and chapel.
- The administration reserves the right to deny access to any visitor or restrict access to school or students.

Electronic Devices

- Elementary students are **not allowed to have cell phones or smartwatches at school.**
- The use of portable gaming or music devices (including iPads, Kindles, Nooks, Apple watches, VTECH watches, radios, electronic games, iPods, etc.) is not allowed between 7:00 a.m. and 5:30 p.m., including during Before and After School Care and school trips.

If a student violates this rule, the device will be placed in the school office, and the parent must accompany the student to retrieve it. Repeat violations will be addressed according to the discipline plan.

- Students who need to call home should use the school phone at the elementary desk with teacher permission.

Internet Usage

At ACA, our goal in providing internet service is to promote academic excellence by facilitating resource sharing, innovation, and communication. However, we recognize that this access may also bring material that is counterproductive to our mission of instilling academic excellence and Christian character in our students.

To address this, ACA has implemented precautions to restrict access to controversial materials. The privilege of internet access for students and teachers comes with the responsibility to use network resources in a moral, ethical, and legal manner.

Computer Acceptable Use Guidelines

- Accountability: All users are expected to demonstrate exemplary behavior at all times.
- Supervision: Internet access requires the direct supervision of a faculty or staff member.
- Report Violations: If you encounter inappropriate content, turn off the monitor and notify an adult immediately.
- Content Standards: Only access content that aligns with Philippians 4:8: "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things."
- Respect for Others: Using the computer or internet to hurt, harass, attack, or harm others is not tolerated.
- Stewardship: Protect the computer and network from damage or misuse.
- Network Integrity: Do not post chain letters or unnecessary information to avoid degrading the network.
- Software Installation: Ask for approval before installing software, downloading files, games, or programs.
- Copyright Compliance: Always observe copyright laws.
- Appropriate Content: Refrain from obscene, vulgar, or disrespectful content or behavior online.
- Password Protection: Keep your password private and do not share it. You are responsible for activities under your account.
- Personal Information: Protect your personal information and respect the privacy of others online.
- Account Access: Only access your own account, email, work, and folders. Do not use others' accounts.
- Educational Use: Computers are for research and educational purposes only. Social media, gaming, and non-educational emailing should be avoided.
- Food and Drink: Do not eat or drink near computers.
- Messaging: Refrain from instant messaging, chatting, or social networking.
- Streaming Video: Requires prior approval from a faculty or staff member.

Note: The administration reserves the right to **read emails** or access files stored on school computers if necessary.

Social Media

Due to the wealth of new social media tools available to students, student products and documents have the potential to reach audiences far beyond the classroom. This translates into a greater level of responsibility and accountability for everyone. As an ACA student or parent/guardian, you represent the school anytime you post to social media.

Social Media is any form of online publication or presence that allows interactive communication. This includes social networks, blogs, photo-sharing websites, internet forums, and wikis. Social media tools are constantly changing. Below is a list of tools that might be used by students, parents/guardians, faculty, and staff:

- Social Networking: Facebook, LinkedIn, Ning
- Microblogging: SnapChat, Tumblr, Twitter, and Facebook
- Social Media: YouTube, Vimeo, Google Video, Flickr, Instagram, Vine, Reddit, TikTok
- Social Collaboration and Creativity: Prezi, Slideshare, Wikis, Google Apps, Blogging
- Social Bookmarking: Delicious, Digg, Wakelet

Reminder: Social media platforms are not appropriate outlets for dealing with school issues. Parents are asked to refrain from making negative or disparaging comments about American Christian Academy, its staff, or students on social media sites. **American Christian Academy reserves the right to dismiss families who violate this request.**

Conflict Resolution Procedures Matthew 18

The Matthew 18 Principle of Conflict Resolution

If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. (Matthew 18:15)

American Christian Academy is a Christian school and the Word of God governs all of its affairs. As members of a Christian community, we enjoy the privilege of relating to one another not merely as parents and educators, but as brothers and sisters in Christ.

When conflicts do arise, it is important that they be handled in a biblical manner and in a way that leads to an effective resolution. The foundation of Matthew 18:15 is a direct, one-on-one meeting between individuals in conflict. Therefore, the first step in conflict resolution should always be communicating directly with the person involved.

In accordance with this principle, an administrator's first response to a vocalized complaint regarding a teacher/staff member will be to ask whether a discussion with the teacher in question has taken place. If one has not, the administrator will strongly encourage a meeting with that teacher. All questions, problems, or complaints should be brought directly to the teacher/staff member first before anyone else is involved. If the issue is not cleared up at this level through direct contact, it should be brought to the appropriate division head, which is the final authority on the matter. If the situation involves a moral or legal matter and the principal is unresponsive, parents may contact the Head of School under these extraordinary circumstances. School board members do not deal directly with the daily operational issues of the school and are, therefore, not directly involved in most of the conflicts that arise. Therefore, school board members should not be called to voice complaints or seek their influence in individual matters or conflicts.

Parents and students should work through the process outlined above as the appropriate means to settle conflicts.

Student Behavior and Discipline Philosophy

At ACA, we believe that every student has the right to learn, every teacher has the right to teach, and every parent has the right to expect a high-quality learning environment. In this environment, students are expected to demonstrate respect and an understanding of the responsibilities that come with being part of a learning community.

We believe the responsibility for behavior lies with each student, and our goal is for students to glorify God through their actions, words, and deeds. The school environment is where future learning, academic success, attitudes, study habits, and behavior are nurtured and developed.

Our Discipline System is rooted in the biblical principle of Proverbs 22:6:

"Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

This reflects our commitment to guiding students toward responsible behavior and shaping them into respectful, God-honoring individuals.

Discipline

At ACA Elementary, we use a point system to maintain a respectful and orderly school environment. These points are recorded on both a paper copy, which requires parent signatures, and electronically in the student's FACTS behavior file.

Point System:

- **1-Point Offenses:**

These are minor infractions, such as:

- Talking without permission
- Lack of responsibility
- Disruptive behavior
- Disobedience
- Not listening or following directions
- Misbehavior outside the classroom
- Other offenses as determined by the teacher's discretion

- **3-Point Offenses:**

These are more serious infractions, including:

- Rudeness or disrespect to others
- Cheating
- Theft
- Lying
- Inappropriate physical contact
- Verbal or physical abuse of others
- Fighting
- Disrespect to the teacher
- Other offenses as determined by the teacher's discretion

This system is designed to help students understand the consequences of their actions while encouraging personal responsibility and respect for others.

Sequence of Events for Accumulation of Points (per school year)

The following are the consequences for accumulating behavior points throughout the school year:

- 3 points:
 - One day loss of PE or recess
- 6 points:
 - Teacher/parent conference
 - Three days loss of PE or recess
- 9 points:
 - Behavioral Review and Probation Meeting
- 12 points:
 - Out of School Suspension
- Points exceeding 12:
 - Each additional point results in one more day of Out of School Suspension
 - Possible Expulsion from school

This system is designed to help students understand the importance of managing their behavior and the consequences for repeated misbehavior. The goal is to guide students toward positive behavioral changes while maintaining a safe and respectful learning environment.

Behavioral Review and Probation

At ACA, our goal is to see students grow as both Christians and responsible adults, understanding their responsibility toward one another. When a student makes mistakes, our approach is to place them on behavioral probation in order to encourage long-term behavior change.

- If a student accumulates 9 discipline points, it signals a pattern of misbehavior. In such cases, a behavioral review will be scheduled with the parent(s), teacher(s), principal, and, when applicable, the student.
- During the review, expected behavior guidelines will be outlined for the student to follow moving forward.
- After the review, the student will be placed on behavioral probation for the remainder of the school year.
- A behavior contract will be signed by the student, parent(s), teacher(s), and principal, outlining the expected outcomes and goals for long-term behavior improvement.
- While on probation, discipline points may continue to accrue based on behavior, but the focus is on helping the student improve.

Our hope is to guide students toward lasting personal growth and a deeper understanding of their responsibility in the school community.

Out-of-School Suspensions (OSS)

In the case of a serious violation of school policy or the accumulation of 12 discipline points, a student will be placed on Out-of-School Suspension (OSS). The following guidelines apply during OSS:

- The student will not be allowed to participate in extracurricular activities during the suspension.
- The student will receive zeroes in classes missed due to the suspension.
- The principal and/or the Head of School will be responsible for issuing OSS.
- A meeting with the principal and parents is required before the student is allowed to return to campus.

OSS is a serious consequence intended to help students reflect on their actions and take responsibility for their behavior. The goal is to encourage improvement and re-engagement in a positive, respectful manner.

Expulsion Policy

Students who demonstrate a blatant disregard for school policy, fail to respond to disciplinary measures, continue to exhibit negative behavior or attitudes, engage in serious misconduct, or bring discredit to the school—either on or off campus—may be asked to immediately withdraw from the school.

- Expulsion requires a meeting with the principal and a recommendation for expulsion.
- Parents have the right to appeal the expulsion decision to the School Board.
- Students who are expelled for disciplinary reasons will be prohibited from entering school grounds for a minimum of one calendar year following their dismissal.

Expulsion is a last resort, taken only after repeated behavioral issues have not been resolved. The goal is to maintain a safe and positive learning environment for all students.

Behaviors Warranting Immediate Out-of-School Suspension (OSS) or Expulsion

The following behaviors are considered serious infractions and may result in immediate Out-of-School Suspension (OSS) or Expulsion:

- Fighting on school property
- Flagrantly abusive language, bullying, or racial disrespect
- Possession of weapons, including knives
- Leaving school without permission
- Failure of parents to cooperate with the school in implementing discipline measures
- Harassment or threats related to the school environment and/or people
- Assault or battery of a teacher or staff member
- Moral misconduct, including inappropriate contact or conversations of a sexual nature
- Other serious infractions or behaviors deemed by the administration

These behaviors violate the core values of respect and safety at ACA and will be dealt with in a manner that prioritizes the well-being and safety of all students and staff.

Bullying Policy

At American Christian Academy, we are committed to creating a learning environment that is caring, responsive, and safe for all students, free from bullying. We believe that every person is of eternal value, and it is essential that all individuals—students, teachers, and school staff—treat one another with courtesy, dignity, and respect.

Bullying is defined as repeated, unkind behaviors directed toward a student by another student, becoming unrelenting and noted by parents and/or teachers. The school does not tolerate bullying in any form.

If it is determined by the administration that bullying has occurred, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken. The aim is to maintain a safe and respectful environment where all students can thrive academically and personally.

Possession of Weapons and Searches

The possession of any weapon on campus or at any school-sponsored activity will result in Out of School Suspension (OSS).

Additionally, the administration reserves the right to search a student's locker, belongings, and clothing at any time if there is reasonable suspicion of a violation of school policies. This measure is in place to ensure the safety and well-being of all students and staff members at American Christian Academy.

Reporting Offenses

American Christian Academy is required by law to report serious offenses—those that may constitute violations of criminal laws established by the State of Alabama—to the proper authorities. If the situation warrants, the school will also take appropriate steps to press charges against the student involved.

This policy ensures that the school adheres to legal requirements while maintaining a safe and secure environment for all students and staff.

Dress Code (updated from copy published in agenda)

Rationale:

1 Corinthians 10:31 teaches that everything should be done for the glory of God, and we are called to live lives that reflect this, including in our appearance. At American Christian Academy, we believe that how we dress should reflect modesty and respect for others, while still allowing for individual expression. The school reserves the right to determine the appropriateness of a student's dress, and adjustments may be made based on changing styles.

General Guidelines (Applicable to All):

- Wear ACA-branded shirts and t-shirts.
- Shorts must be longer than fingertip length when arms are rested at the sides.
- Hats and head coverings are not allowed indoors.
- Shirts, sweatshirts, and jackets must be free of offensive writing or offensive pictures.
- Pants/jeans should not have holes, be excessively tight, or ragged.
- Tennis shoes are required for PE and playground activities. No athletic slides (including Crocs) are allowed for safety reasons.

For Boys:

- Hairstyles must not cause distraction and should be gender-appropriate.
- No facial piercings.

For Girls:

- Shirts with modest necklines (front and back)
- Undergarments must not be visible
- Skirts, dresses, and shorts must be longer than fingertip length when arms are rested at the sides.
- Leggings must not be worn as pants. If leggings are worn under tops or dresses, the top/dress must be longer than fingertip length when arms are rested at the sides.
- Shirts should be long enough to cover the stomach, even when students raise their hands.
- Skirts must have bloomers or shorts worn underneath for added coverage.
- Hair must not cause distraction.
- No nose jewelry or facial piercings other than earrings.

This dress code ensures that all students can focus on their academics and spiritual growth in a respectful and appropriate environment.

Health and Safety

1. Medication at School – The nurse must have an authorization form for all prescription or over-the-counter medication. The over-the-counter form is valid for the entire school year, while prescription medication requires the form with the medication. Students should not bring medication to school without first consulting the nurse. All medication must be dispensed by the school nurse; students should not carry medication on their person.
2. Student Illness – Contagious students should not come to school. If a student becomes ill at school, parents must arrange for their child to go home in a timely manner. **Students must be fever-free (without medication) and/or have no vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours before returning.** If your child goes home for fever or vomiting during the school day they **MAY NOT** return to school the following day. For serious illnesses like influenza, students should stay home until cleared by a doctor. ACA will follow CDC guidelines for school closings related to pandemics.
3. Head Lice – Students with head lice or nits must stay home until treated and cleared by the nurse or elementary administrator. ACA enforces a "no nit" policy.
4. Pink Eye (Conjunctivitis) – Students may return to school after 24 hours of prescribed medication.
5. Strep Throat – Students may return after 24 hours of antibiotics and are fever-free (without medication) for 24 hours.
6. Current Medical Problems – If your child has conditions like asthma, food allergies, or seizures, please submit the necessary form to the front office to ensure proper treatment in case of an emergency.
7. Accidents – Injured students should report the injury to a teacher or staff member. The nurse will be consulted if needed.

Forms are available in the front office or on our website at www.acacademy.com under the Current Families tab -> Nurse's Corner.

Lost and Found Policy

Lost items are typically turned in and stored at the elementary desk. Students and parents are encouraged to promptly claim any lost belongings. The school assumes no responsibility for items left unattended or improperly stored.

To help with the return of lost items, please ensure all belongings are clearly labeled with the student's name. Unclaimed items will be donated to charity periodically throughout the year.

Field Trips and Class Trips

Teachers may occasionally plan field trips or class trips. On these occasions, students are required to wear an ACA field trip t-shirt. Both students and chaperones are expected to adhere to school guidelines for behavior and dress during these outings.

Security on Campus

At ACA, we strive to ensure that your students remain safe and secure at all times while under our jurisdiction. There are a series of security cameras stationed around the buildings, an SRO officer, and other security measures in place to provide a safe and secure environment for the students. Therefore, to provide adequate security for our campus, the following rules will be implemented:

- After school starts each morning, admittance for parents and visitors is restricted to the front school doors (Main Office) or elementary building doors (Elementary Desk). All entrances are locked to outside entry. Visitors are buzzed in by the office staff.
- All visitors, whether parents, relatives, or other guests, must sign in at the main office or elementary desk and receive a visitor's sticker, which must be worn at all times while on campus.
- All faculty and staff must wear ACA-issued identification badges during school hours.
- Our campus is closed to the general public.
- Students arriving late to school must be escorted into the building by a parent/guardian.

Emergency Preparedness and Procedures

In addition to day-to-day activities on our campus, there may be unusual or emergency situations that arise. These can range from school closings to emergencies occurring during class. As student safety is our highest priority, all ACA employees are trained to promptly identify, notify, and act to ensure the well-being of every student.

Our campus maintains a comprehensive emergency preparedness plan. Faculty and staff undergo annual training to ensure they are equipped to handle emergencies effectively. Regular fire, tornado, and intruder drills are conducted throughout the school year to reinforce these procedures and ensure the safety of all students.

Fire Alarms

In the event of an evacuation, students are led out of the building according to the evacuation plans posted in each classroom. Re-entry into the building is permitted only at the sound of the all-clear bell or upon receiving a signal from an administrator.

Tornado Alarms

In the event of a tornado warning, students are led to the designated shelter area as indicated in the plans posted in each classroom. Students are instructed to assume the following protective position: kneeling or sitting with their heads bent down, covered by a book, hands, or arms.

For the safety of all, it is our general policy not to release students to parents while tornado warning sirens are active. This policy is in place to prioritize the safety of both students and their families.

Visitors or Intruders

All doors remain locked from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Any individual on campus without a visitor's badge will be approached by a faculty or staff member and escorted to the front office for verification.

Student Search & Seizure

The administration acknowledges that certain situations may arise that jeopardize the health, safety, and welfare of students and staff, necessitating the search and seizure of students, their property, vehicles, or lockers by school officials.

While students have the right to be free from unreasonable searches and seizures, school officials may conduct a search of a student's outer clothing, pockets, or personal property under the following circumstances:

1. **Reasonable Cause:** If there is reasonable cause to believe that a student is in possession of illegal or harmful items, or if there is a perceived threat to the safety of students or staff.
2. **Voluntary Consent:** If the student voluntarily agrees to a search, the search may be conducted by school officials.
3. **Lockers and Vehicles:** The administration reserves the right to search lockers, vehicles, or other personal property on school premises if there is reasonable cause to suspect a violation of school policy.

All searches will be conducted with respect for the student's privacy and dignity, and in accordance with applicable laws and school policy.

Supply Lists

Classroom supply lists for each grade level are available on our school's website. These lists are updated annually to ensure they reflect the current classroom needs.

Parents are encouraged to purchase the listed items and bring them to their child's homeroom during the Elementary Open House. This helps ensure that all students have the necessary materials for a successful school year.

Digital Citizenship

Students are expected to demonstrate digital citizenship by conducting themselves in a safe, legal, and ethical manner when using technology.

School-Owned Devices

School-owned devices, including tablets, laptops, desktop computers, media equipment, and peripheral devices, are available for both teacher and student use. These devices are to be used exclusively for educational purposes. Students should not change settings (such as backgrounds or search settings) on school-owned devices. Vandalism, including damaging hardware, software, or data, is strictly prohibited. This includes uploading or creating computer viruses or malicious programs.

Device Storage

All school-owned devices must remain on-campus and be stored in assigned locations, except for laptops issued to teachers and administrators.

Technology Responsibility

Technology is integrated into instruction at ACA to foster skills like collaboration, problem-solving, and creativity.

Students are encouraged to use technology productively and purposefully, contributing to their Christian communities and addressing real-world issues. Technology should enhance critical thinking and communication, helping students become global citizens who approach their digital lives with a Christ-centered worldview.

Telephones

Office phones are reserved for school-related business and cannot be used by students except in emergencies. Students will not be called out of class to answer phone calls. To avoid disruptions, parents are encouraged to handle communications before the school day begins. In cases of emergencies, messages from parents will be promptly relayed to students.

Textbooks

Most textbooks are provided to students and remain the property of American Christian Academy. Students are responsible for the care and proper handling of these textbooks. Any excessive wear or damage to textbooks will result in a fine to cover the cost of repairs or replacement.

Additional Supplies

Certain classes may require additional supplies, materials, or books that are not supplied by the school. Students and parents will be informed of these requirements as needed for specific courses.

Weather Announcements

American Christian Academy strives to make decisions regarding school closings or early dismissals in a timely manner. In the event of inclement weather or poor driving conditions, public announcements will be broadcast on local television and radio stations.

Additionally, families and staff will be notified directly through a text message, with a follow-up email for further confirmation. Please ensure that your contact information is up to date with the school for timely communication.

Program of Instruction

Academics

American Christian Academy provides a well-rounded academic program designed to meet the needs of all students. Our curriculum emphasizes the skills necessary to graduate students with a strong Biblical worldview, equipping them to thrive in and positively impact today's society from a Christian perspective.

We believe that true reality is rooted in God and His purpose for humanity. As a result, our mission is to teach and nurture the whole child, ensuring that our graduates develop a Christ-centered understanding of the world, humanity, and life. This approach helps students grow not only academically but spiritually, preparing them to live out their faith and serve others with integrity and compassion.

Homework

We recognize that homework can be overwhelming, but we see it as an important tool for academic growth, fostering independence and preparing students for future success. Homework reinforces learning, develops time management, and encourages self-discipline. We ensure assignments are purposeful and balanced, allowing students to manage their time and engage in other activities.

Accelerated Reading Program

The Accelerated Reading (AR) program is designed to foster a love of reading while promoting academic success. To support reading growth, we utilize the STAR Reading Assessment and AR Program:

- 1. STAR Reading Assessment:
 - Administered at various points during the school year.
 - Assesses each student's reading range.
 - Results are shared with teachers for personalized instruction and goal-setting.
- 2. Accelerated Reader (AR) Program:
 - A computer-based tool that evaluates students' comprehension of books they've read.
 - Points are awarded based on the book's difficulty and length.
 - Helps track reading progress.

Book Selection Guidelines:

It’s essential for students to choose books that not only align with their reading level but also match their interest level. Our library is organized to help students easily find books suitable for their reading range. However, it’s important to note that even though a book may fit within a student’s reading range, it may not always be appropriate for their interest level.

Guidelines:

- 1st-3rd Grade: Books within the LG (K-3) interest level range (Early Chapter Books).
- 4th-5th Grade: Books within the MG (4-8) interest level range (Junior Fiction).

Books with higher interest levels may contain content that is inappropriate for younger readers. Books listed as UG(9-12) are restricted and elementary students will not be allowed to test on any book within the UG(9-12) Interest Level.

Parents can also use the AR Book Find Website to verify both the reading and interest levels of books.

By following these guidelines, students can improve their reading skills while enjoying books that suit their developmental level and interests.

Grade	Points per Year	Points per grading period
1st Grade	12	3 (points do not roll over)
2nd Grade	24	6 (points do not roll over)
3rd Grade	32	8 (points can roll over)
4th Grade	40	10 (points can roll over)
5th Grade	48	12 (points can roll over)

The purpose of the school library is to enhance learning by providing a collection of instructional and recreational materials for students and teachers. Parents should be involved in overseeing the books their children select, as not all materials are appropriate for every grade level. All library books must be returned by the end of the school year, and fees will be assessed for lost or damaged books.

Academic Support Services and Student Learning Plans

At American Christian Academy, we believe that ALL children are created in the image of God and are called to support one another in love and understanding, as stated in Colossians 3:23. We are committed to ensuring that every student receives the necessary support to succeed academically, socially, and spiritually.

If a student requires accommodations, parents/guardians must provide proper documentation. Once the documentation is received, our academic team will carefully review the information to determine appropriate accommodations and services based on the student's individual needs.

Accommodations may include, but are not limited to, classroom modifications or additional support services designed to help students thrive.

In order to qualify for a Student Learning Plan a student must:

- Have appropriate and current documentation indicating a need for special consideration. Current and appropriate documentation is defined as a written evaluation from a specialist within three years and includes diagnostic test results from a licensed psychologist, psychiatrist or psychometrist
- Be struggling academically.
- Be determined by the academic team that the disability is having an adverse impact on the student's learning and will make appropriate recommendations regarding eligibility and the availability of accommodations at ACA.
- Both parent/guardian and student show effort and do their part to succeed.

We value our partnership with families and are dedicated to working collaboratively to create an inclusive and nurturing learning environment where every child can reach their full potential.

Teacher Assignment

At the elementary level, classroom assignments are made by the school principal in collaboration with classroom teachers, with the goal of serving the best interests of the students.

While we appreciate and value the input from parents, requests for specific teacher assignments are generally not accommodated. This approach ensures that students are placed in environments that support their individual learning needs.

Grading Scale

A	90-100	Superior work
B	80-89	Above Average work
C	70-79	Average work
D	60-69	Below Average work
F	59 or less	Failure to meet minimum requirements

Report cards for students in grades 1st-5th are accessible online through the FACTS system and are issued quarterly. Parents are able to monitor their child's progress and view detailed grade information at any time throughout the school year. Instructions for accessing the FACTS system are provided at the beginning of each school year.

For Kindergarten students, progress reports are provided twice a year, and report cards are also issued twice a year.

K4 students receive periodic progress reports throughout the school year to keep parents informed of their child's development.

Substitute Teachers

Substitute teachers have the same authority as regular faculty and should be treated with the same respect. They are responsible for making assignments, awarding grades, assessing student performance, and maintaining classroom discipline. Substitute teachers can fill out discipline forms, which the regular teacher will submit to the elementary administrator. We recognize that substitute teachers may face unique challenges in taking over a class on short notice.

Chapel

Weekly chapel services at ACA are an important part of the school's academic and spiritual life, promoting growth in faith and providing opportunities for students to experience corporate worship. These services include guest speakers, musical performances, drama presentations, and contributions from ACA faculty, staff, and students.

Parents are always welcome to join the chapel services, and we encourage them to attend whenever possible to share in the spiritual experience with their children.

Teacher Conferences

Teacher conferences at ACA are available upon request by either parents or teachers. To arrange a conference, parents may email their child's teacher directly.

During the school day, communication between parents and teachers should take place via email or by leaving a message at the elementary desk, where the teacher will return the call. Teachers are not allowed to take phone calls or respond to text messages during instructional time to ensure the focus remains on the students.

School Communication

At ACA, we strive to maintain effective communication with parents, recognizing that communication is a two-way process. Our primary sources of information include the school website, FACTS, and the Patriot Press.

Email is an essential communication tool, so it's important for families to keep their contact information up to date. Weekly announcements and newsletters from the Head of School, Principal, and/or classroom teacher will be sent via email to keep parents informed on school activities and updates.

Conclusion

This handbook is an essential resource for the American Christian Academy community, providing the foundation for the school's daily operations. It is important that parents thoroughly read and understand its contents, as they are responsible for adhering to the policies and guidelines outlined.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the school office, and they will direct you to the appropriate individual for further assistance. Thank you for your partnership in supporting the educational and spiritual growth of your child.