

# Grace Academy

Strategic Plan 2014  
*Updated August 2008*

Soli Deo Gloria

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# Introduction

## **Our Motto**

Johann Sebastian Bach, one of the most prolific composers of the classical age of music, is said to have signed every composition with the initials “S.D.G.”, meaning *Soli Deo Gloria*. We have adopted that phrase as our motto and motive for all we do at Grace Academy - *Only for God's Glory!*

## **Our Mission**

Our Mission is to glorify God by serving parents in providing their children a distinctly Christ-centered, academically excellent, classical education as a foundation for life-long learning.

## **Our Desired Result**

We aim to graduate young men and women who think clearly and listen carefully with discernment and understanding; who reason persuasively and articulate precisely; who are capable of evaluating their entire range of experience in the light of the Scriptures; and who do so with eagerness in joyful submission to God. We desire them to recognize cultural influences as distinct from biblical, and to be unswayed towards evil by the former. We aim to find them well prepared in all situations, possessing both information and the knowledge of how to use it. We desire they be socially graceful and spiritually gracious; equipped with and understanding the tools of learning; desiring to grow in understanding, yet fully realizing the limitations and foolishness of the wisdom of this world. We desire they have a heart for the lost and the courage to seek to dissuade those who are stumbling towards destruction; that they distinguish real religion from religion in form only; and that they possess the former, knowing and loving the Lord Jesus Christ. And all these we desire them to possess with humility and gratitude to God.

We likewise aim to cultivate these same qualities in our staff and to see them well paid so they may make a career at Grace Academy. We desire them to be professional and diligent in their work, gifted in teaching, loving their students and their subjects. We desire they clearly understand classical education, how it works in their classroom and how their work fits into the whole; that they possess a lifelong hunger to learn and grow; and that they have opportunity to be refreshed and renewed. We desire to see them coach and nurture new staff and to serve as academic mentors to students. We look to see them mature in the faith, grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, and to see their own children walking with the Lord.

We aim to cultivate in our parents a sense of responsibility for the school; to see them well informed about the goals of our classical and Christ-centered approach. We desire them to grow with the school, and to be involved in and excited about the journey. We aim to help them to follow biblical principles in addressing concerns, to be inclined to hearing both sides of a story before rendering a verdict, and to embrace the Scripture's

injunctions to encourage and stir up one another to love and good works.

Finally, in our relationship with our community, we aim to be above reproach in our business dealings and supportive of the local business community. We desire to be a visible presence for good in the city of Georgetown. We further seek to exemplify the unity of the body of Christ, to develop greater fellowship and understanding with the local churches, and to bring honor to our Lord in all our endeavors.

## Strategic Analysis

### Introduction

This section of the strategic plan describes the strategic position of Grace Academy as of September 2003. It seeks to be an assessment of the School's mission and provide the basis upon which the strategic plan is founded.

### Background and Historical Information

Grace Academy, a non-profit corporation, chartered in Texas, is a classical, Christian elementary and secondary school. The School currently meets at Grace Bible Church, located at 302 Serenada Drive, in Georgetown, Texas.

The Board of Trustees of Grace Academy held a strategic planning retreat in September 2003 to develop the School's first formal, written strategic plan. The purpose of this strategic plan is to define the vision for the School through 2010 in order to provide focus of vision, unity of purpose and direction to our ministry, as well as to communicate our vision for Christ-centered, academically excellent education to our constituents, supporters and friends.

Grace Academy was begun in August 2000, by three families seeking a truly Christ-centered, academically excellent education for their children in Georgetown. In the first year of operations the School essentially functioned as a home school coop, with parents of the families sharing the teaching responsibilities. During that year, the School formed a formal Board of Trustees and began developing policy, procedures, and academic structure in anticipation of opening to the public the subsequent year.

Grace Academy opened to the public, as planned, in August 2001, enrolling 24 students in grades K-4<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup>. The School relied heavily on volunteer teaching in the initial year. Additionally, the administrative duties were shared by the faculty and members of the Board of Trustees.

The Board of Trustees added a paid headmaster position in July 2002, and has steadily increased the number of paid, full-time faculty positions, reducing the School's reliance on volunteer, or "tuition-waiver" only faculty.

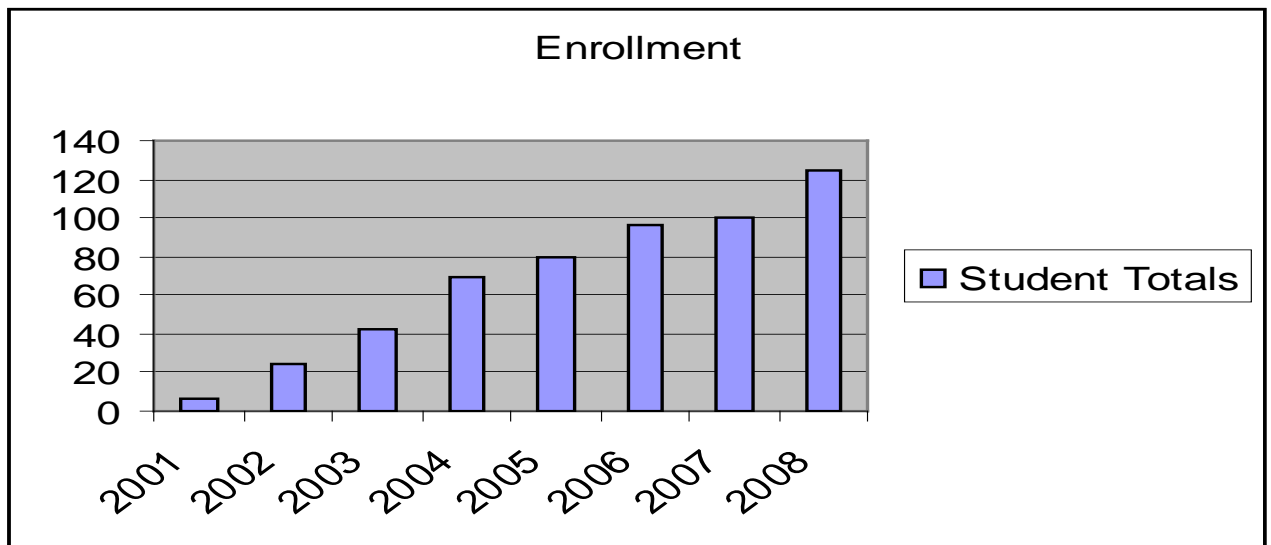
One of the main pillars of our School is the instruction in the Christian faith and with that, the nurturing of the spiritual life of both students and staff. Grace Academy is independent in its governance structure; not formally affiliated with a particular church. Enrollment consists primarily of members of local evangelical, conservative churches. The School's relationship with various churches' leadership has deepened and broadened with its increase in size and corresponding diversity of churches represented by its families.

The curriculum for the School of Grammar (grades K-6) was initially adopted from Veritas Academy, with subsequent modifications to address the needs of our students, culture, mission, and philosophy. The curriculum for the School of Logic (grades 7-9) and School of Rhetoric (grades 10-12) is being developed on a year-to-year basis, using a framework of two School's curriculum guides (Veritas Academy and Logos School), with significantly more modifications than the Grammar School curriculum guide.

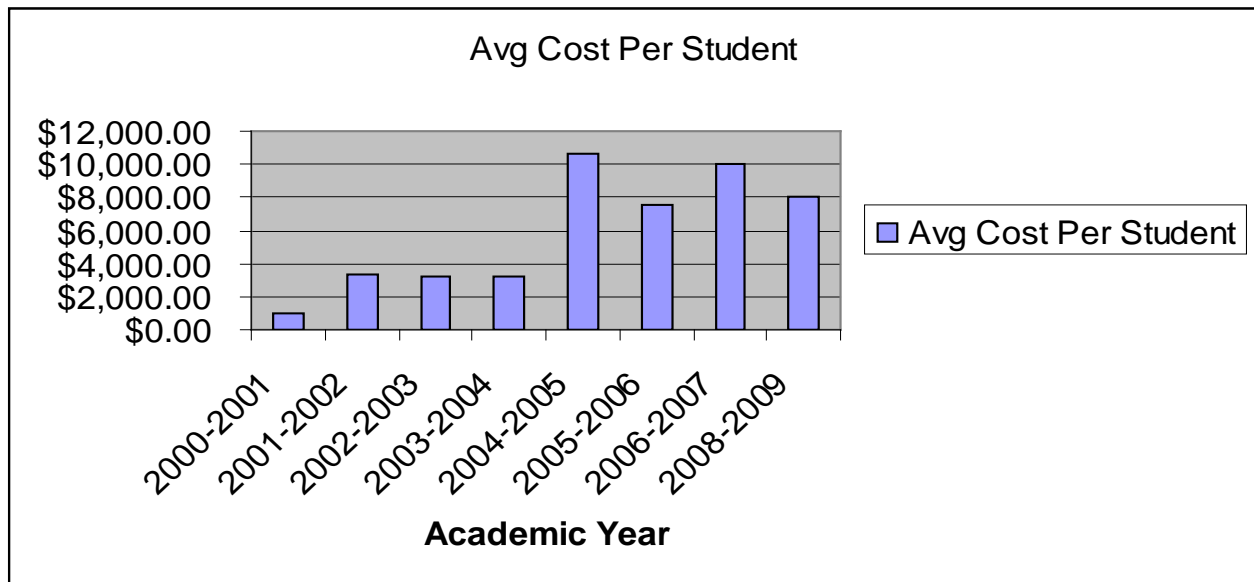
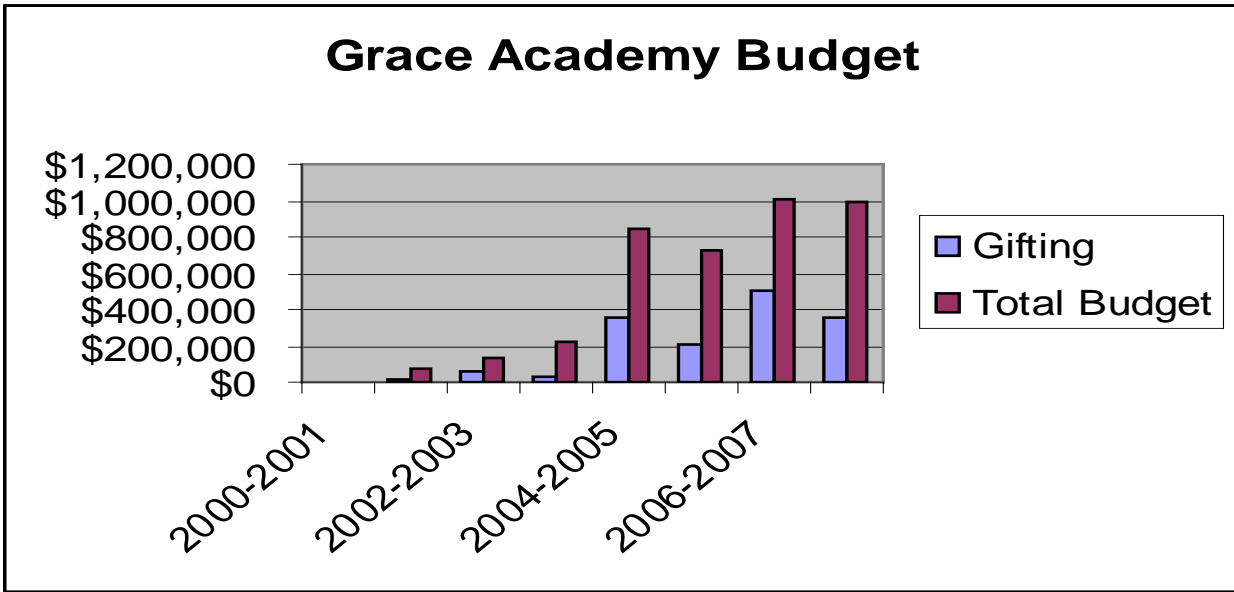
At this time, the school operates from a \$995,000.00 budget.

The following charts summarize the historical activity of the School:

- Enrollment has grown steadily each year, with 120 students currently enrolled in grades K-12<sup>th</sup>



- Operating revenues have increased from \$8,994 in fiscal 2000 to **\$995,000.00 (budgeted) for 2008-2009**



- Average expenditures per student have risen dramatically as paid faculty positions have been added
- Faculty and staff salary comprise 75% of the operating budget for 2008-2009

## Our Philosophy of Ministry

*"I am much afraid that schools will prove to be wide gates to hell unless they diligently labor in explaining the Holy Scriptures, engraving them in the hearts of youth. I advise that no one place his child where the Scriptures do not reign paramount. Every institution in which men are not constantly occupied with the Word of God must become corrupt."*

--Martin Luther

Our philosophy is centered on four distinctive foundation stones. It is rooted in strong parental support because we are concerned with the family. It is biblical because we are concerned with truth. It is Christian because we are concerned with behavior. It is classical because we are concerned with effectiveness.

Scripture teaches in Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Ephesians 6:1-4 that parents are responsible for the education of their children. This education includes instruction in the Scriptures, the building of godly character, training in righteousness, and inculcation into a Christian culture and worldview. At Grace Academy, we believe that our role is to assist the parents in this process. We are therefore delegates of the parents. All duties and activities are performed with the clear recognition that our authority and responsibility, exercised in the educating process, are bestowed upon us by the parents. We welcome and encourage parents to be active participants with their child in the educating process both at home and at the school.

We believe God is the author of all truth. All of His creation reflects His power, order and glory. Jesus said "...thy Word is truth" (John 17:17). We affirm that Scripture is the inerrant and authoritative Word of God. It is from Scripture that we derive and confirm truth. In view of this, we approach all other "truth" from the fundamental perspective that the truths of Scripture form the foundation upon which all other learning and investigation of the universe is built. Therefore, we will always endeavor to teach all subjects as parts of an integrated whole with the Scriptures at the center.

A truly "Christian" education is also concerned with behavior. James 1:22 affirms the importance of being "doers of the Word, and not hearers only". We believe right behavior and right thinking is not had simply by the accumulation of the right data. It requires the correct application of the truth (God's Word and biblical principles) to daily activities. At Grace Academy, we are strongly committed to providing a clear model of biblical Christian living through our staff and board, and to encouraging and training every student in moral and spiritual development.

Finally, we are concerned with effectiveness. Many throughout church history have marveled at the great writings and accomplishments of men such as St. Augustine, John Calvin, and Jonathan Edwards. One wonders where such men are today. One reason for their profound influence and accomplishments is the foundational education they received, which was classical in method and content.

The classical teaching model is a time-proven method based on what is referred to as the “Trivium”, or a three-pronged approach to each subject. Beginning with the Grammar, the student studies the basic particulars of each subject. Logic (or dialectic) deals with the reasoning, which ties all the various particulars together. It gives one the basis for integrating bodies of knowledge and proving the correct relationships in and between subjects. Rhetoric focuses on the clear and effective expression of facts, ideas, and relationships through written and oral presentations. These three, Grammar, Logic, and Rhetoric, are applied in every discipline.

Classical in content simply means that the foundations of Western civilization will be emphasized in the study of history, philosophy, science, the arts, literature, and language. And central to the study of these disciplines is the study of the orthodox, historical, Protestant Christian faith. This faith provided then, and provides now the foundation for a proper understanding of every other discipline.

## Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

This section summarizes the Board of Trustees’ assessment of the School’s current status; its internal strengths, internal weaknesses, external opportunities and external threats.

### Strengths

These are the key factors that our School possesses which make it both a distinctive and competitive institution:

- Faculty Improvements 2008
- Student teacher ratio
- Campus- New Building
- Board
- Curriculum
- Financial Aid
- Seeking Accreditation
- Enrollment Growth
- Strong Chapel and Assembly program
- Current Upper School Students
- Parent organization
- Growing Library
- A sense of God’s blessing on the work of our hands for the past **eight** years
- We have been provided the opportunity to establish a permanent campus on 35 acres of beautiful land.
- Small class sizes have allowed for more focused student attention.



- The faculty has not only been faithful, but encouraging, patient, and extremely generous.
- Our faculty has shown tremendous commitment with all the changes from a rental enterprise to becoming a fully stand alone non-profit.
- Educational vision and focus that seeks to develop a foundation of faith and learning, with God's Word as the center of all we do
- Strong Board support and unity providing a peaceful, stable environment for faculty and staff
- Enthusiastic faculty and staff with unity of purpose and common love for learning and serving
- Curriculum development, especially in the elementary, providing strong academic and biblical foundation for instruction

## **Weaknesses**

These are conditions within our organization that would represent an area for growth or disadvantage to our present program:

- Debt
- Athletics-upper school
- Loss of Upper School Students
- Pseudo - Electives
- Communication (maybe use Google Calendar)
- Refining Curriculum
- There is a great need within the school to provide excellent athletic programs for interested students.
- The school has not met projected growth estimates and must increase enrollment and sustained giving in order to fulfill future needs.
- There will continue to be a strong need for expansion and a continued pressure on managing funds. This critical balance must be addressed.
- There must be a continued focus on establishing a heritage for the students and families of Grace Academy. Consistency in programs such as letter jackets, campouts, specific ceremonies, bonfires, chapels, and the establishment of a permanent gathering place are such examples.

- The board must continue to learn, develop, and hold to the vision of classical education.
- Growth in enrollment producing unanticipated planning and policy issues
- Incomplete assessment loop resulting from curriculum not being implemented through the 12<sup>th</sup> grade
- Culture (biblical) environment of School not fully developed

## **Opportunities**

Opportunities represent external factors that the School might capitalize upon for the benefit of meeting our mission statement:

- Development – Campus
- Growth - Students
- Exposure - Local Churches – New PCA
- Parent organization
- Zion Upper School
- Building Library
- Increased interest in Christian education
- Parents seeking stability in their family life
- Secularization of culture encourages parents to seek Christian education
- Increased interest in Christian education, and communication of the Grace Academy vision.
- Parents seeking stability in their family life
- Utilization of excess capacity as it becomes available. Field usage, facility usage, land usage.
- Bringing the curriculum to life.
- Accreditation through ACCS.
- Partnerships with local universities and other favorable peer school relationships.
- Development of local relationships. Pastor speakers, day care relationships, community outreach, etc.

## Threats

- Economy
- Mission Threat  
Other Schools
- Gossip by disgruntled parents who have no accountability.
- Trust of parents where we lack relationship, lack communication, or lack transparency.
- Worldly culture increasingly hostile to Christianity and families
- Potential excessive government intervention and regulation

## Strategic Formulation

The formulation of our strategic plan is the vision of what we see Grace Academy striving toward and achieving by the year 2014. Grace Academy will focus on the following goals over the next six years (2008-2014):

- Add a second class in each grade of the School of Grammar, as qualified families desire entry into the School, so that the secondary grades are populated primarily by promotion from within, rather than recruiting outside students.
- Develop the campus based off of the master plan.
- Receive accreditation by the Association of Christian Schools International.
- Continue to recruit and develop an academically excellent, godly faculty who have a love for their students and a love for learning.
- Maintain economic access to Grace Academy through financial aid assistance to families in need.

## Strategic Implementation

The implementation of our strategic plan arises out of an expansion of the listed goals in the Strategic Formulation section. These goals are expressed as strategic initiatives (SI) for each of these major goal areas. These strategic initiatives will form the foundation for specific action plans, policies, and budgets for the coming years.

- We will add one grade per year, beginning with 9<sup>th</sup> grade in 2004-2005, and have reached 12<sup>th</sup> grade in 2008-2009. The structure of the School is as follows:

<u>Division</u>	<u>School</u>	<u>Grades</u>
Elementary	School of Grammar	K-6
Secondary	School of Logic	7-9
Secondary	School of Rhetoric	10-12

- We will publish a curriculum guide for the School of Logic by 2008 Fall
- We will publish a curriculum guide for the School of Rhetoric by 2008 Fall
- Finalize and approve graduation requirements
- Expand curriculum and staff
- Expand extra-curricular activities
- Implement upper school trips as approved by the board for grades 9-12

Washington DC (Spring 2008)  
Mission Trip  
European Classical Trip

- We anticipate total enrollment in the School in 2010 to range from 150-175, depending on market demand of qualified families. The following table displays the distribution of the estimated maximum enrollment by year:

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>School of Grammar (K-6)</u>	<u>School of Logic (7-9)</u>	<u>School of Rhetoric (10-12)</u>	<u>Total Enrollment</u>
2005	72	8	0	80
2006	80	7	3	96
2007	82	11	7	100 *actual
2008	104	12	7	124 *est
2009	149	34	16	155
2010	167	36	26	175

**We have acquired a permanent campus of 35 acres, including building space sufficient for our size and appropriate for our purposes. We have developed a formal facilities master plan for the campus.**

- We will develop a facilities master plan (through 2014) by Dec 2008
- Most of it is already in place.

***Receive accreditation by a national, Christian academic accrediting agency such as the Association of Classical Christian Schools or the Association of Christian Schools International.***

- We will apply for accreditation in the spring of 2009
- Goal for initial approval with ACCS will be 2009-2010 school year

***Continue to recruit and develop an academically excellent, godly faculty having love for their students and love for learning.***

- We will increase average faculty salaries and benefits to exceed the Association of Classical Schools International average regional salaries and benefits by **by fiscal 2013**
- We will develop a merit salary system that recognizes excellent teaching, scholarship in the field of instruction, and longevity of service (to maintain strong retention). We will begin phasing in this program in fiscal 2010
- We will recruit needed positions to continue to bring excellence to upper and lower schools.
- We will recruit mostly secondary division faculty with a major in their field of study
- We will adopt a faculty certification program (such as the Association of Christian Schools International) to ensure the faculty progress in their professional development

***Maintain economic access to Grace Academy through financial aid assistance to families in need.***

- We will limit the growth in our tuition charges to no more than 5% per annum through fiscal 2013 if possible.
- We will develop critical partnerships with local area churches to establish financial aid partnerships with the local congregations in support of Christian education in general, and access to Grace Academy, specifically.
- We will continue to build funds functioning as endowment for the purpose of providing financial aid endowment income by transferring up to 15% of all unrestricted gifts received. Income from the fund will be used to assist families in financial need.
- We will encourage donors to establish endowment funds for the purpose of providing financial aid funds, including development of deferred giving vehicles.

***Expand the administrative support staff to support the growth of the School, including initiation of a formal development office.***

- *We have a goal to hire a full-time elementary principal in fiscal 2009*

## Future Goals

Financial Goals for current budget needs:

**Reduce Debt**

**Balance Budget**

*Operating budget being met by tuition*

*Goal by 2011 to see 10% by giving*

*Goal by 2014 to see 0% for operations budget support by budget*

*There are immediate needs that need to be addressed. Each need has an estimated dollar amount and a date of the need. This list can be published independently.*

**Immediate Priority:**

- Gym / Classroom (Goal August 2010) \$2.5 million

**Buildings/grounds**

- New multi-class Classroom (JULY 2008) \$350,000

**Other Goals**

- Evacuation & footbridges for fields \$30,000
- Football/ Soccer field \$10,000
- Baseball field \$10,000
- Road to fields \$200,000
- Nature Center/Prayer/Meditation/ \$15,000
- Shooting range/archery \$5000
- Wired classrooms / Computers \$15,000
- Library \$500,000
- Upper School building \$1 million
- Pond landscaping \$30,000
- Amphitheater for outside group meetings \$15,000
- Landscaping current buildings (2008) \$3,000
- Accreditation, ASCI (multiple?) (MAY 2007) \$50,000
- Fiscal Review (2009) Audit \$7000
- New board members, from inside & outside the Grace community (Goal Aug 08)
- Administrative Software (2008-2009) \$5000
- Policy governance training for board (JAN/FEB retreat 2007)
- Board training and development (MAY 2008)

## Conclusion

Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain (Psalm 127:1). We are aware of the Scriptural warnings regarding presumptuous plans. We also are aware that these warnings do not prohibit planning per se, but rather call us to turn to the Lord, who alone is able to build the house on a sure foundation. As we envision what Grace Academy can become in 2014, we sincerely desire that the Lord build Grace Academy in such a way that we all, with one voice, may say that to Him alone belongs the glory.

—Soli Deo Gloria.