



Student Handbook

Vision

To provide a continuum of education for children and local families who want to live the full life as promised in God's word by creating an environment for academic excellence, skills training, health education and spiritual nurturing.

Mission Statement

Educating for today, tomorrow, and eternity.

Philosophy

As an educational institution sponsored by the Mount Dora Seventh-day Adventist Church, Gateway Christian School is founded upon Christian principles and beliefs. Together with our Christian teachers, we are committed to serving our students for their physical, mental and spiritual development. Each school day begins with devotions for the students and teachers. Assemblies are conducted at various times by pastors of the Seventh-day Adventist Churches, special guests, or teachers. We believe that parents are responsible for the spiritual and moral training of their children and we support them in their pursuit of Biblical principles. God has given parents the mandate by His Divine word to teach, instruct, and train their children the way they should go, and it is upon this foundation that we base our organization.

Statement of Faith

Gateway Christian School is a ministry of the Mount Dora Seventh-day Adventist Church and supported by the Florida Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. We believe in Jesus as our Lord and Savior and worship on the Seventh-day Sabbath.

Gateway Christian School is a private non-profit Pre-K through 8th grade Christian school. We are accredited by the Southern Union Conference Department of Education, the Florida Conference Department of Education, and the Florida Association of Academic Non-Public schools, which is recognized by the State of Florida Department of Education as a private school.

Seventh-day Adventists are a Christian faith community rooted in the beliefs described by the Holy Scriptures. If you would like more information about Seventh-day Adventists, please contact our Pastor at 352-383-4100, ext 12 or visit us at:

<http://mountdora22.adventistchurchconnect.org>

Faculty and Staff

Louise Hendrickson
Caroline Joachim
Astrid Borges
Sharlene Curet
Angela Singh
Sandra Geach

Pre-K, Kindergarten, and Sign Language
Pre-K, and French
1st and 2nd Grade
Principal, 3rd and 4th Grade
5th/6th Bible, History, Literacy for grades 5-8
7th/8th Bible, History, Math/Science for grades 5-8

Simone Tomlinson Office Manager
Donna McDonald Teacher Assistant
Lora May Aftercare Director

**Please note that due to COVID-19, we are not offering aftercare for the 2020-2021 school year. We hope to resume this service for the 2021-2022 school year.*

Office Hours

The school office is open from 7:30 am - 3:15 pm Monday through Thursday and 7:30 am - 12:15 pm on Friday throughout the school year. You may also leave voice mail messages at the office at any time, and we will return your call as soon as possible. The office telephone number is (352) 383-9920. Our Fax number is (352) 383-4140.

Summer hours are Monday through Thursday, 10 am to 2 pm.

School Hours

Classes are held Monday through Thursday 8:00 am to 3:00 p.m. and Friday from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm with several Wednesday early release days for teacher study group. Early release days dismiss at 2 pm. On early release days, school office hours end at 2:15 pm.

Early student drop-off begins at 7:30 am Monday-Friday. Please note that the faculty and staff of Gateway Christian School and the Mt. Dora Seventh-day Adventist Church will not be held liable for the safety and/or well-being of any students dropped off before that time. Any students arriving before 7:30 am must remain in the care of their parent/guardian until transfer of care occurs.

Admissions Procedures & Policies

Parents and students seeking admission agree to support the school's principles, programs, and personnel. They will consent to act in harmony with the standards, requirements, and philosophy of the school. No student will be denied admission due to religion, race, gender, color, nationality, or ethnic origin. Students will receive all rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally made available to students. All prospective students will be evaluated and brought before the admissions committee to determine if Gateway Christian School can meet the needs of the child.

Requirements for Enrollment

The following are requirements for enrollment at Gateway Christian School:

- Families of prospective students should understand and support Gateway Christian School's Mission statement and Philosophy.
- All financial or academic obligations from previous schools attended are satisfied before applying to Gateway Christian School.
- Parents attend orientation prior to the beginning of the school year.
- If parents choose to register their child at Gateway prior to the registration date, they must submit a \$25.00 Intent Fee for each student. The fee is credited toward the registration fee due at the time of registration. Registration fees are non-refundable if the student is accepted into the program.
- An enrollment packet must be completed for each student prior to the interview. The enrollment packet will include the following:
 - Registration Form
 - Medical Consent Form
 - School Record Request Form
 - Technology Forms

- Pick up Permission Form
- Field Trip Permission Form
- Handbook Acknowledgement Form
- Each family must also provide a copy of each of the following
 - ✓ Immunization records (HRS 680 blue form updated from doctor's office.
 - ✓ Physical Examination (HRS 340 yellow form from doctors office.) New Florida student's examination should be dated within one year of admission.
 - ✓ Copy of Birth Certificate

Upon completion of the enrollment package materials, an interview with a member of the Admissions Committee will be scheduled. Parents will be notified of the decision by mail.

The School Board reserves the right to refuse admission based on the following:

- Unwillingness of parents and/or students to support Gateway's Mission Statement and Handbook.
- School records that may raise concern in the following areas:
 - Academics
 - Irregular Attendance
 - Behavior
- Special needs exceeding Gateway's services
- Non-compliance with recommendations stipulated for admission and/or re-admission
- Unresolved financial accounts from previous years

Re-enrollment

The Admissions Committee annually reviews all students for re-admission. Occasionally the committee will assign recommendations for a student/family. In this event the committee will seek to partner with the family to ensure the successful re-admission of the student.

Re-enrollment dates are established annually. Completion of the registration form and payment of the annual registration fee will secure a position for the next school year provided the current student of Gateway is considered to be in "good standing." Your family is in good standing if:

- All financial obligations with regard to Gateway have been met.
- Your family has not accrued three infractions over the course of the school year.
- The student you wish to re-enroll is in good academic standing.
- Fulfillment of all acceptance conditions.
- The following through of any recommendations made to optimally meet the mission of educating today, tomorrow, and eternity are met.

Student Tests & Evaluations

All new students will be given a placement assessment test in the areas of reading and math. In order to be accepted, the student must fall within the normal standards of the test. Acceptance is determined based upon Gateway Christian School's ability to meet the needs of the whole child.

Financial Responsibility:

Parents are responsible for payment of annual registration, tuition, curriculum, and field trip fees for each student. Financial agreements will be reviewed and signed annually by the parent or guardian of each student. The annual tuition may be paid in full before the 1st day of classes or broken down into 10 payments with the first payment due before the 1st day of classes and the last payment due in May.

Tuition is due by the 1st of each month. Failure to keep an account current could result in dismissal. In the event of a financial crisis, the parent must communicate with the financial

officer in a written agreement submitted by the parent and approved by the financial committee who will consider each family's situation separately and carefully. If no such communication takes place, a late fee of \$25.00 will be assessed after the 10th of each month. If monthly tuition is more than 5 days past due, and no financial agreement has been made between the family and the financial officer, the student will not be allowed to attend classes until the account becomes current, or a financial agreement has been reached.

Checks being applied to a student's account should be made payable to Gateway Christian School. The student's name should be written on the check to ensure credit is made to the proper account. The school charges \$50.00 if the bank does not honor a check. Debit and credit cards may be used but a convenience fee will be added.

Please note that in the case of student withdrawal, transfer or dismissal, all accounts must be paid in full before academic records are released.

Academics:

Parents are responsible for following and supporting the homework procedure as prescribed by their child's teacher.

Grading Scale

Students in Kindergarten through 2nd grade are evaluated and use the following scale:

- I **Independently** achieves objectives and performs skills
- P **Progressing** toward achieving objectives and performing skills
- NT **Needs more Time** to develop

Students in grades 3-8 use the following grading scale:

GRADE	GPA POINTS	PERCENTAGE
A	4.00	100-93
A-	3.67	92-90
B+	3.33	89-87
B	3.00	86-83
B-	2.67	82-80
C+	2.33	79-77
C	2.00	76-73
C-	1.67	72-70
D+	1.33	69-67
D	1.00	66-63
D-	0.67	62-60
F	0.00	59-00

Report Cards

Printed copies of quarterly grades will be issued at the end of each quarter. Grades should be viewed on Renweb weekly. Parent/Teacher conferences are required at the end of 1st and 3rd quarter while other appointments should be made as needed.

Parent Involvement

Gateway Christian School encourages parents and guardians to volunteer a minimum of ten hours throughout the school year. This includes assistance and attendance for performances, meetings, field trips, special events, etc.

Absences

Excused absences include:

- Illness (must have a doctor's note)
- Court mandated appearance
- Death in the family

Children should not attend school if they are ill. Students who are absent due to illness beyond three days will need a physician's note documenting the illness, verifying eligibility to return to school and any limitations the physician recommends. Furthermore, it is important to schedule vacations, mission trips and family conferences with school attendance in mind. If a trip is unavoidable please fill out a "*Leave of Absence*" form (available in the office) at least one week prior to leaving, so that you can work out a plan for missing/late work with your child's teacher.

In order for your child to reap the full benefit of their education, it is important that they attend school on a regular basis. For this reason, our policy is as follows:

- * No more than 5 absences per quarter
- * Once your child reaches 5 absences, you will be issued a warning and asked to attend a mandatory refresher course to review the GCS policies
- * A signed affidavit will be placed in your child's file.
- * If your child exceeds the given absences per semester, they automatically forfeit the right to attend honor roll trip and principal's lunch at the end of the year

Illness/Absence and Make-up Work

When there is an illness or approved absence, all work must be made up in a timely manner. Missed assignments are due two school days after an excused absence. Additional days may be permitted, on an individual basis, by the teacher for extended absence. No work will be accepted after two weeks of the original due date for the assignment. If the teacher does not receive the assigned work within fourteen calendar days, a zero will be given for the missed work. Parents will work in accordance with each individual teacher's homework policy, which should be worked out in advance of the intended absence.

Tardiness

School begins at 8:00 am. Students are expected to arrive on time. A grace period of 5 minutes is extended after which students will be marked tardy.

Excused tardies include:

- Medical appointments or illness
- Court mandated appointments

Gateway's tardy policy is as follows:

- Any time a student is tardy will require parent/guardian to walk their child into the building. Please note that your child is under your legal care until acknowledgement and transfer of care has taken place with an authorized GCS staff member; for this reason it is imperative to accompany your child into the building.
- After 10 tardies within the first semester, you (and your child) will be asked to come before the admissions committee to create an action plan for resolution. If the action plan is not followed, it will be interpreted as your decision to no longer attend GCS.
- If 18 tardies (excused or unexcused) are accumulated during the school year, the student becomes ineligible for honor roll field trip and principal's lunch.

Early Pick-Up

The academic day is from 8:00 am - 3:00 pm Monday through Thursday and 8:00 am - 1:00 pm on Fridays. All classes are equally important for the development of the whole child. Picking up your child before dismissal interferes with this development; therefore, we ask that you do so only in emergency situations. In the event that this is unavoidable, we ask that a request be submitted in writing, preferably the day before but no later than the morning of the same day.

Students who leave early are expected to make up the work, or activity, at home or during the school day upon their return.

Student Health & Wellness

Parents are asked to cooperate with the school in minimizing the spread of communicable diseases among the students and staff. Therefore,

- Any student who comes to school ill or becomes ill while at school, will be taken to the office and parents will be called to pick up the student.
- Parents should not send their child to school if he/she has been vomiting, has a temperature above normal (98.6 degrees F), is suspected of having a contagious condition or has not sufficiently recovered from an illness. If your child is sick please do not send him/her to school until he/she has been free from vomiting and/or fever for 24 hours.
- If a student is sick more than 3 days, he/she must have a written doctor's note for absences to be excused.
- A first-aid kit is available in the office for minor cuts, bruises, or burns.
- The State of Florida HRS requires school personnel to have a program that will be safe for children at all times. The staff members are required by law to report any suspected incidents of child abuse to the nearest HRS child abuse center.
- Insurance: The school purchases school accident insurance coverage for each student. The cost of this insurance is included in the registration fee. The school is responsible for only the amount covered by insurance. Parents are urged to carry additional insurance to supplement the amount covered by the school.
- Medication Policy: Florida law does not allow school personnel to administer medication without explicit written instructions. This includes prescriptions and non-prescription medication. The following medication procedure must be followed in order for school personnel to administer any non-prescription and/or prescription medication.
 - A form available in the office and providing the child's name, medication, dosage, and time to be administered and parent's signature must be filled out.
 - The medication must come to school in the original prescription bottle or manufacturer's package.
 - The medication must be sent or carried directly to the office. Medication may not be kept in the student's desk, lunch box, or his/her person. This is a violation of Florida State law.

Dress Code

The purpose of a dress code is to set guidelines which will ensure a neat and modest appearance that will serve us in representing our Lord, our school, and our family well. To encourage students to dress simply and attractively and to ensure that the students' appearance is appropriate for a school setting, compliance with the following dress code is required for students.

- No jewelry of any kind.
- No portion of underwear is to be showing.
- All shirts must cover the entire midriff.

What to Wear

- Burgundy polo shirt bearing the logo of Gateway Christian School is the accepted shirt for school days.
- A Gateway Christian School logo t-shirt with the school name will be required for field trips and other designated days.
- Gateway Christian School P.E. shirts and shorts are required for grades 3-8.
- Khaki/tan or navy blue "school uniform" pants.
- Khaki/tan or navy blue "school uniform" shorts. Shorts must be at least mid thigh length.
- Khaki/tan or navy blue "school uniform" skirts, capris and skorts may be worn by girls. Skirts and skorts must be at least knee length.
- Belts are recommended for grades 3-8.
- Uniform pants should not resemble jeans or have decorative items.
- Students are able to "dress down" on Fridays with appropriately fitting denim jeans and their Friday shirt.

Shoes and Outerwear

- Flat closed toe shoes are required to be worn at all times. Ladies refrain from wearing heels unless given permission for special occasions.
- Sneakers or tennis shoes are required for all athletic activities.
- Jackets with zippers or cardigans maybe worn during cooler weather. The color should be a solid navy or gray.
- Hats and sunglasses should only be worn outdoors.

Standard of Conduct

In order for students to achieve success, they are expected to maintain Christian values and uphold the vision and mission of GCS both in and out of school. We are to remember that as faculty, students, and parents of GCS we represent Jesus and our school at all times. To teach accountability, behavioral guidelines will be consistently and lovingly implemented. These include maintaining respect for faculty and staff, classmates, and property.

In order for students to harmonize with the mission and high ideals of Gateway Christian School, certain standards of conduct are expected. The standards align with the principles of Matthew 7:12 ("So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets." NIV). Typically, a student who desires to follow this principle will choose what is right and will seldom find it difficult to follow the rules. It is the desire of administration, faculty, and stakeholders of GCS to nurture and develop a level of spiritual maturity in students where conduct and attitudes are directed by God's guiding principles as outlined in His Holy Word. By enrolling at GCS, each student is pledging to live according to the purposes and regulations of GCS.

The policies contained herein have been developed and adopted by the stakeholders and governing body of Gateway Christian School for the physical, emotional, and spiritual welfare of the entire GCS community. They are designed to create an environment in which Christian character and academic success are encouraged. Students are reminded that they represent

GCS and Jesus both in and out of school. In addition, anything posted to the internet should be of a positive and uplifting nature.

According to this principle, disciplinary or corrective actions are not to be interpreted as punishment to fit the offense, but rather, discipline for the refinement of the individual. This philosophy will prevail on the GCS campus in general; however, there may be specific acts that so affect the individual or entire school and are so removed from the purpose of GCS that one violation will automatically sever a student from the institution.

If, after learning what is expected as a student of GCS, you find that you are not in harmony with the principles and purposes and cannot wholeheartedly support them, you are encouraged to seek out a faculty member to elicit spiritual guidance and support. If you find that you are still unable to align yourself and support these purposes, you are urged to seek another school wherein you can be happy. It is strongly suggested that parents lead their children by their example and set an appropriate standard of compliance and cooperation.

Parent-Teacher Communication

Teachers will maintain open and consistent communication with parents regarding students' academic, social, emotional, and spiritual development. Parents are encouraged to seek out the teacher if they have questions regarding their child's progress. We understand that misunderstandings will occur periodically. If this happens, we believe in the Biblical procedure for conflict resolution as outlined in Matthew 18:15-17. Here is what we suggest:

Address the issue directly with the teacher. We find that, most often, clear and honest communication resolves the issue. If further communication is needed, we suggest you take the next step and address the issue with the teacher and principal together. If you believe the issue has not been resolved after that, you may address the school board of directors in writing and/or request an audience with said members for the purpose of final resolution.

Redemptive Disciplinary Process

We realize that, at times, children will err and transgress the code of conduct. When this happens, corrective and/or disciplinary action will be administered. The purpose of disciplinary action is to raise awareness of the behavior, take responsibility for one's actions, and create opportunities to develop Christ-like character through a redemptive process that aligns with the mission of Gateway Christian School.

This process begins in the classroom.

- Teacher will address the issue with the student privately to raise awareness of the behavior.
- If the behavior is not corrected in a timely manner, parent(s) will also be made aware to assist in the redemptive process.
- If necessary, administration will be included (along with the teacher, parent(s), and child) in this process.
- If the behavior continues despite these efforts, the situation will be brought before the admissions committee to determine further action. It may be necessary for the child and parent(s) to be present during this discussion.
- After a determined amount of time to allow for correction of the behavior, the admissions committee will reconvene and decide the next step. If the behavior has improved, the student will continue to be monitored. If the attempts at corrective action prove to be unsuccessful, the admissions committee may recommend that the student no longer

attend GCS which will then be forwarded to the governing body of Gateway Christian School for a final vote.

Cheating/Plagiarism

Cheating is defined as *any effort to obtain credit for work that is not one's own, including copying the work of other students, making a cheat sheet for a test, plagiarizing the thoughts or words of others, accessing prohibited materials or resources (such as calculators if banned by the teacher), or otherwise claiming credit for or taking advantage of material the student did not produce and for which he/she is not responsible.*

Students who transgress will have the redemptive disciplinary process applied.

Serious Offenses

For the safety and well being of students, faculty, and staff, certain offenses fall outside the realm of our disciplinary process and requires immediate action. Some of these serious offenses include, but are not limited to:

- Bullying (includes cyberbullying)
- Harassment
- Verbal Threats
- Possession of weapons, drugs, tobacco, and alcohol
- Physical harm to self or others
- Van TV
- Any conduct that occurs in or out of school that negatively affects the student body and/or learning environment at Gateway Christian School

These offenses will be handled on an individual basis as best seen fit by GCS administration and faculty. This may include some, or all, of the following:

- Immediate suspension until further action is determined
- Referral to admissions committee
- Referral to legal authorities (if required)
- Student probation
- Expulsion

Facilities Policies

Fire Drills

Fire drills will be conducted monthly. Students are asked to walk to designated positions at the perimeter of the school campus to allow for emergency vehicles to have a clear path to the buildings and to ensure student safety.

Safety

- An adult must accompany children in PreK-2nd Grade when entering the building or walking in the parking lot.
- Parents who are not accompanying their children (grades 3 and up) inside should drop them off at the school entrance of the building.

- Pick up policy -
 - Students will only be released to persons listed on the pick up list.
 - Persons must be added to list prior to dismissal and faculty must be notified verbally, and in written form, of addition or changes.
- Sign in/sign out sheet - If your student leaves school before scheduled dismissal time the student should be signed out on the early dismissal form.
- The facility doors are to remain locked. Students must not open them unless given appropriate permission.
- Volunteers who desire to work with students must undergo a background check. Volunteers must be under the supervision of the classroom teacher at all times.
- Students will not be released to a parent/guardian if the faculty member(s) suspect them to be under the influence of a controlled substance.
- No tolerance policy/weapons/drugs - Immediate action will be taken involving the appropriate authorities. Gateway Christian School administration reserves the right to search any person's possession, i.e., locker, backpack, purse, etc. upon reasonable suspicion.

Field Trips

- Permission slips must be signed by parent or legal guardian and returned prior to leaving.
- Pre-K and Kindergarten must be accompanied by parent or guardian in order to attend the field trip.
- Staff will have necessary consent to treatment forms on all students attending the trip.
- Students will only ride with those who have adequate insurance required by Risk Management.
- Details regarding time, food, location will be noted in permission slips.
- Lead teachers will conduct frequent head counts and instruct all chaperones on appropriate procedures.
- Gateway Christian School Board will approve all field trips before they are taken.

School Lunches

The diet of students affects how they learn. Each child is encouraged to eat a nutritious breakfast before coming to school each morning. Please send a healthy sack lunch. Lunches high in sugar should be avoided. Students are not allowed to drink caffeinated or carbonated beverages during school hours. If students wish to share food for special occasions the teacher must be notified prior and an ingredient list must be available due to allergies or other medical conditions.

Technology

The purpose of the Gateway Christian School technology program is to provide educational services, opportunities and learning for today and the future. Our goal is to promote educational excellence by facilitating resource sharing, innovations and communication. With this educational opportunity also comes responsibility. Access and use of the Internet, local area networks, computers, and related equipment is a privilege. Therefore GCS has a user policy which must be signed. A copy of this policy is listed below for informational purposes.

iPad User Policy

I understand the use of the iPad at Gateway Christian School is for instructional and witnessing purposes. It will not be used for entertainment.

- I may not download an app or any media content on a Gateway Christian School iPad without consent from my teacher.
- I will maintain the operating system and not change it.

- I will not deface the serial number.
- I will not take an iPad beyond my classroom unless instructed by my teacher.
- I will never leave the iPad unattended or share a different iPad
- I will be responsible for the iPad assigned to me and any damages incurred will be my responsibility to pay for and fix.
- I will not take photos or record class lectures, discussions, etc. unless given permission from the instructor
- I will protect the iPad by ensuring it is in a proper case, closed appropriately, and will not stack anything on top of it.
- I will ensure the iPad I have been using is properly charged and stored.
- I recognize the staff and administration at Gateway Christian School has the right to amend this user policy at their discretion. I realize at that time I will have a new user policy to sign.

Other Electronics

The use of cell phones is not permitted on campus. In addition, any electronics which could be a distraction in the classroom or Aftercare are not allowed on campus. If any device is heard, seen, or used, the device will be confiscated and a fee assessed. The device can be claimed after the fine has been paid.