

Welcome to the latest edition of the GRACE Newsletter, where we delve into business and finance topics to illuminate our organization's fiscal practices. In these pages, we aim to introduce you to key decision-makers, provide insights into the decision-making process, and outline our organizational priorities.

The True Value of GRACE



I am fortunate to have attended Notre Dame of De Pere for grade school where I received an excellent Catholic education. I was a student there years before Notre Dame and the other Green Bay area Diocese schools came together in what we now know as the GRACE System. Fast forward (many, many years) to 2023 and my wife and I are now

blessed to have three students enrolled in a GRACE school and be part of a vibrant school/parish community.

I am a firm believer in the value of Catholic education. I am particularly passionate about keeping that education affordable for all families, especially for our middle-income families who reflect the majority of our community.

That's where GRACE excels. Today, tuition at GRACE elementary schools is about \$3,500 per year for active parishioners. While that amount certainly represents a significant sacrifice – and investment – that parents make for their children, GRACE tuition is reasonable as compared to other Catholic schools. For example, parishioner tuition at a Catholic grade school in the Milwaukee area is \$4,990, and in the Fox Valley tuition ranges from \$4,300 to \$5,300 per year.

How does GRACE do this to maintain affordable tuition? In two ways: (1) By limiting *costs*, and (2) by drawing *funding* from a broad range of funding sources.

First, let's consider the cost side. Today the full actual cost of educating a student in a GRACE school is about \$8,000 per year. Here are the components of this cost:

- 64% - Educator pay and benefits
- 11% - Facilities (buildings and grounds, rent, etc.)
- 8% - Medical Insurance Benefits
- 6% - Books and technology
- 4% - Administrative pay and benefits
- 3% - Food service
- 4% - Other operational

This cost would be significantly *higher* without GRACE. That's because GRACE provides key economies of scale (think: purchasing textbooks and technology in bulk; limiting administrative costs). Without GRACE each individual school would need to pay for its own benefits, manage facilities, and provide books and technology – all without the robust platform that GRACE provides. Before GRACE was formed, our parishes were investing upwards of 75% of their annual parishioner giving to support their parish schools.

Let's turn to the *funding* side. As noted above, tuition of \$3,500 falls well short of the \$8,000 actual cost to educate a student. Generous

support by our community allows GRACE to coordinate funding sources that bridge the gap. Here are GRACE's key funding sources:

- 36% - Tuition
- 28% - Wisconsin Parental Choice
- 19% - Parish subsidies (remember, there are 23 parishes supporting nine schools).
- 6% - Food Service
- 6% - Site-level Third Source Funding (e.g. \$ from so many great Site Advisory Committee ("SAC") events/auctions)
- 5% - GRACE Development

Some good news: while GRACE's overall enrollment has been increasing throughout its existence, GRACE's reliance on parishes and third source funding (SAC) has, in that same timeframe, decreased. To maintain this positive momentum, centralized GRACE development will be a particular area of focus in the coming year. GRACE recently formed a Development Committee to explore the best ways to fund Catholic education, better collaborate with our outstanding SAC leadership, and support GRACE's objective to continue to systematically reduce reliance on the amounts that individual parishes invest.

I will admit when I first heard about the GRACE System, I made some faulty assumptions. I jumped to the conclusion that GRACE was an unnecessary bureaucracy – I thought each school could simply run itself. But I was wrong. I have since asked a lot of questions, learned more, witnessed GRACE in action in many facets, and come to realize the wisdom and vision of the parents, priests and Bishop who formed the GRACE system over 12 years ago. The math shows that, absent the power of the GRACE System, any lone individual school would need to charge more tuition and/or engage in far more fundraising in order to manage the administrative and operational costs needed to maintain a high-quality school experience. As a parent I am grateful for the support of our great SAC leaders, volunteers, parishes and donors, all of which help keep Catholic education affordable and attainable to our Green Bay community. And *that* is the true value of GRACE.



Nick Anderson
GRACE Board of Trustees Chairperson

Forward Planning and Budgeting for GRACE

By Melissa Wolcanski, GRACE Controller



As we settle into the winter months, we look ahead to the next school year and planning. Details like next year's academic calendar and just as important, when spring break will be, need to be determined well in advance of the actual dates. One such detail that takes significant planning is next year's budget. There are so many factors that go into the GRACE budget, some we

can control, others we can only estimate. The two items we spend a considerable amount of time on each year are tuition rates and employee compensation.

I can assure you there is so much more that goes into determining tuition rates than just an arbitrary percentage increase. The GRACE Finance Committee analyzes tuition and regularly discusses various options to ensure affordable tuition for our families. These past several years have been challenging in so many ways for our families as everyday necessities like food and gas have increased at a higher rate than cost of living increases. We are very sensitive to the fact that increases in tuition can become a barrier for middle class families as they experience financial struggles in the current economy. Over the last several years, we have implemented annual increases in tuition of 4% and last year we made an inflationary increase of 6%. For the 2024-2025 school year we are committing to increasing tuition only 2.5% and it is our hope that we can target the same 2.5% increase for the 2025-2026 school year. It is our commitment that the cost of Catholic education is not a barrier to families who desire Catholic education for their children. We have many resources to help make Catholic education affordable so please take a look at the "Navigating Tuition Affordability" section of this newsletter. We would also like to hear from you any ideas you may have to ensure the cost of tuition is not a barrier for your family.

Regarding compensation, GRACE has completed a compensation study which has enabled us to better understand where we have some gaps, but also where we are doing well. We have implemented the first phase of our compensation plan and will continue to strategically elevate compensation with resources available as we are committed to this initiative as outlined in our GRACE Strategic Plan. In addition to providing fair wages, we have a solid benefits package with affordable health insurance, a competitive retirement contribution, employee tuition discounts, YMCA



reduced membership fees, and discounted childcare for employees with children in our GRACE Little Saints program, to name a few. Added to the monetary benefits are the benefits of working in faith filled, safe schools with engaged family and church communities.

GRACE is blessed to be in a fiscally healthy state more than 10 years after being formed. We have accomplished this through the responsible use of funds as well as thoughtful stewardship of revenue opportunities. Since GRACE was formed we have been able to shift our revenue structure from being heavily reliant on parish support to diversifying into the Choice program and increasing development revenue through the annual appeal, grants and stewardship of generous donors committed to Catholic education. This has enabled us to open our doors to more students, decrease our reliance on parish support and site fundraising while also increasing the amount of funds available for compensation, technology, facility upgrades and rent. We have also been able to invest in staff development and educational resources to ensure we are providing high quality education for all of our students. Over the years we have centralized resources, increased buying power and implemented strategic planning and execution. We will continue to evaluate our long term goals and look for ways to provide fiscal stability for the long term health of our system, providing Catholic education for generations to come.





Teacher Compensation

By Kimberly A. Desotell, GRACE President

Besides education and faith, one of the very top priorities of GRACE leadership is to continually elevate educator compensation. I am proud to say, through the support of our Board of Trustees and our sound fiscal practices, GRACE has been able to make significant gains in employee compensation over the past six years. This is part of GRACE's Strategic Plan to enhance compensation for our valued employees in a fiscally responsible and equitable manner. We are proud of the specific actions, which include:



- GRACE employee wages have increased every year with raises historically between 3% and 5% annually.
- We have developed, and are implementing, a multi-year, sustainable plan to continue to retain and attract top talent, including via competitive compensation which includes, in part, competitive compensation.
- GRACE offers a robust benefits package to teachers and staff, including medical and dental benefits. Candidates seek to join our GRACE employee ranks to take advantage of not only our mission, but our benefit package as well.
- We offer childcare for employees at below market rates through our GRACE Little Saints Child Care program.
- GRACE employees receive attractive tuition discounts so their children can attend GRACE Schools. Tuition discounts are also available for our employees who have children attending Notre Dame Academy as well as St. Norbert College through our CatholicLink relationships.
- Recognizing talent with our GRACE Teacher Excellence Awards through both Top Teacher Talent Awards and a Master's Path Program which involves a fully paid Master's Program for teachers through St. Norbert College.
- From time to time, through generous support of donors and sound financial governance, GRACE has been blessed to provide special bonuses to our employees. Such bonuses reward performance achievements enabled through dedicated, valued teachers, staff and administrators - the most recent bonus distributed in January 2024.

These actions are important and vital steps in our ongoing strategic efforts to elevate compensation overall for our valued GRACE employees.

Competitive compensation is crucial for retaining and attracting excellent teachers and staff in all areas of our schools. This in turn, helps to build and support skilled and dedicated professional teams within our schools and our system.

Compensation is only one piece of the puzzle. Our educators feel valued when GRACE parents and students take time to express their genuine thanks for the excellent Catholic education teachers provide. This gratitude, coupled with attractive compensation and benefits makes GRACE an employer of choice and, in turn, contributes to the stability and continuity of our GRACE school communities.



FATHER ALLOUEZ CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Principal: Mrs. Kay Franz
920-432-5223 (Elementary)
920-336-3230 (Middle)
www.fatherallouezschool.org

HOLY CROSS CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Principal: Mrs. Kari Peterson
920-468-0625
www.holycrossfamily.org

HOLY FAMILY CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Principal: Mrs. Sarah Sharkey
920-494-1931
www.holyfamilygreenbay.com

NOTRE DAME OF DE PERE

Principal: Mrs. Molly Mares
920-337-1115
www.notredameofdeperre.com

OUR LADY OF LOURDES CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Principal: Mr. Jeff Young
920-336-3091
www.lourdesschooldeperre.org

ST. BERNARD CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Principal: Mr. David Gusloff
920-468-5026
www.saintbernardgb.com

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST SCHOOL

Principal: Ms. Dana Vance
920-434-3822
www.sjbhschool.org

ST. JOHN PAUL II CLASSICAL SCHOOL/ CHESTERTON ACADEMY

Headmaster: Patrick McKeown
920-617-9542
www.sjpclassicalschoolgreenbay.org/

ST. THOMAS MORE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Principal: Dr. Jamie Tyrrell
920-432-8242
www.stmoregb.com

Navigating Tuition Affordability

GRACE is committed to partnering with families to ensure that Catholic education remains accessible and affordable, irrespective of income levels. Our dedication to this mission is evident in the various avenues available to manage and reduce tuition costs.

GRACE proudly offers **financial aid** to support families in need for children enrolled in grades kindergarten through 12th grade, with over 300 students annually benefiting from GRACE Financial Aid. Generous private donors, who share our belief in the value of Catholic education, make it possible to reduce tuition through scholarships and financial aid for families. The average GRACE Financial Aid award is around \$1,500 per student. Families can access the GRACE Financial Aid application through our online TADS enrollment management portal.

Tuition costs for 2024-25 are \$5,565 for grades K-5, \$5,685 for grades 6-8, and \$8,385 for Chesterton Academy of St. John Paul II Classical School grades 9-12. Active, registered parishioners completing the parish verification form with our GRACE 23 supporting parishes qualify for a \$2,000 tuition reduction (**Active Parishioner Incentive**) per child enrolled in grades kindergarten through 12th grade.

To cater to individual family needs, GRACE provides an array of tuition reduction opportunities in addition to the aforementioned Active Parishioner Incentive. These include a **New Family Referral Incentive**, **Sibling Incentive**, **SCRIP Program**, **Parish and School Scholarships**, **Payment Plan Options**,

Field Trips

Class Retreats

In-Class Activities and Experiences

In-Class Celebrations

Extracurricular Activity Registrations

Guest Speakers

All School Celebrations: Catholic Schools Week, End-of-Year

How are GRACE Activity Fees spent?



WE ARE GRACE



GRACE Employee Tuition Discount, and a CatholicLink Tuition Discount (for employees who qualify.) Detailed information on these options can be found at gracesystem.org/admissions/tuitions-and-fees/.

In addition, the State of Wisconsin permits residents to leverage private tuition costs. The **Wisconsin Parental Choice Program** offers vouchers for full tuition at a GRACE school based on family income and eligibility. Families are encouraged to apply between February and April 2024. Find more details at gracesystem.org/admissions/wisconsin-parental-choice/. In addition, families can take advantage of Wisconsin Tax Deductions for private

school tuition. Families are encouraged to check with their tax advisors regarding options that may apply to their situations.

GRACE is not just committed to academic excellence and the formation of children, but also to ensuring that quality education is within reach for all families. Our goal is clear: **no child should be denied a Catholic education due to financial constraints**. We remain steadfast in our commitment to making Catholic education available, accessible, and affordable to every interested family. We know Catholic education is a transformative gift for each child and family.



K-5 Tuition Example	Tuition Reducing Opportunity	Total Cost	Per Installment Cost via 10-Month Payment Plan
Standard Tuition Rate	n/a	\$5,565	\$556.50
Active Parishioner Incentive	\$2,000	\$3,565	\$356.50
New Family Referral Incentive	\$200	\$3,365	\$336.50
Financial Aid (average)	\$1,500	\$1,865	\$186.50

GRACE Board of Trustee Finance Committee



Sarah J. Green

President, Pension Inc.
Worked here since: 1997

Why do you support GRACE?

"The education that our children are receiving through the GRACE school system is providing them with a strong academic and spiritual foundation for high school and beyond."



Mary Wall

President,
Mulva Cultural Center
Worked here since: 2021

"I believe that education is the key to success. GRACE offers strong academic and faith-filled education that serves to promote the success of its students."

Why do you support GRACE?



Eric M. Guzowski

Commercial Banker, J.P.
Morgan Chase Bank
Worked here since: 2005

"I support GRACE because it has provided my children a strong foundation of faith, family, and academics. The teachers are committed to nurturing the whole child, and for that I am so grateful."

Why do you support GRACE?



James Nooyen

VP Finance, Home Instead
(We Care Senior Care)
Worked here since: 2006

Why do you support GRACE?

"I support GRACE because I believe in the high quality educational and faith-based opportunities our schools provide to our children. I support GRACE's goal to educate the whole person and am grateful to provide that gift to our children, just as our parents did for my wife and I."



Melissa Wolcanski

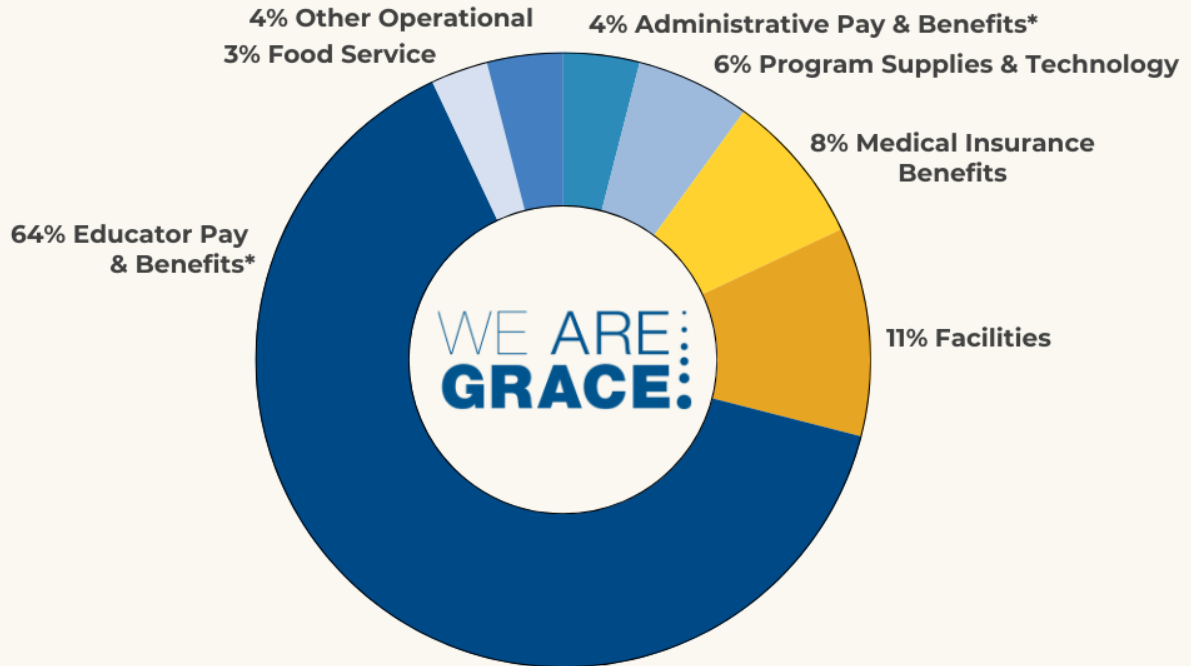
Controller, GRACE
Worked here since: 2018

"I support GRACE because I believe in the quality of Catholic education GRACE provides for our children. Not only does GRACE have a strong commitment to high academic standards, GRACE is committed to teaching our children in the Catholic faith which means they grow into adults with strong values, morals, and sense of community."

Why do you support GRACE?

WE ARE: GRACE:

Cost of Education Per Student with GRACE



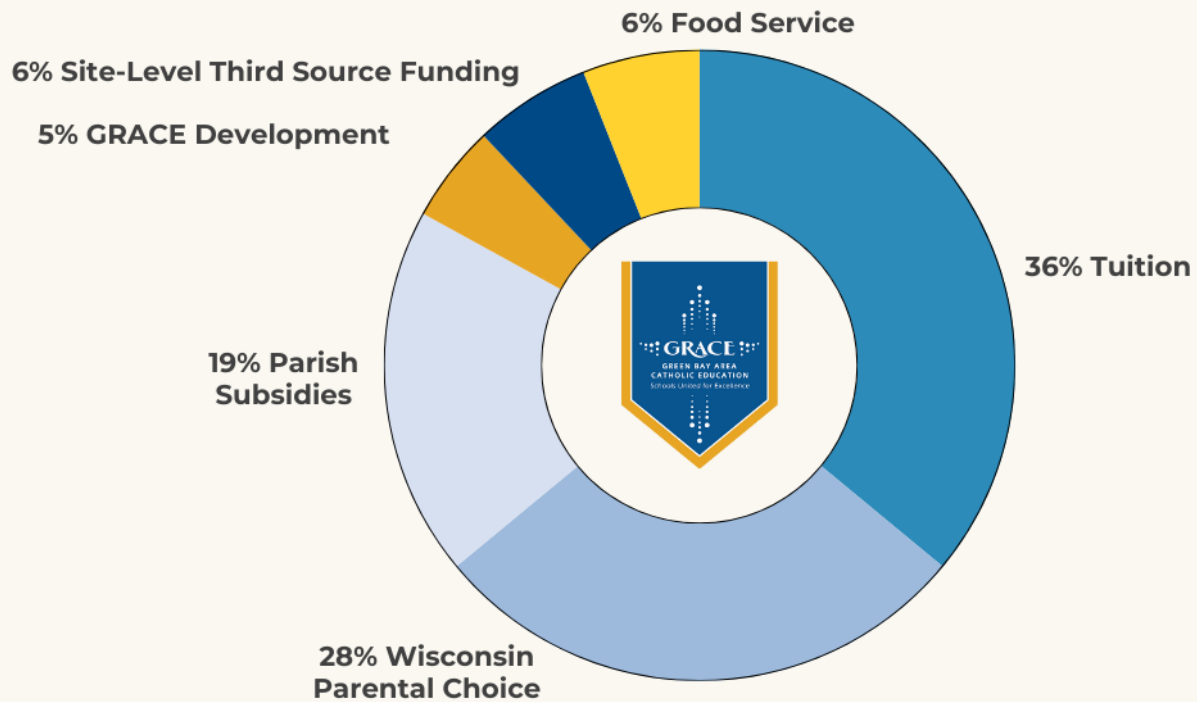
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Retirement
Tuition Discount
Professional Development
Etc.

Total Cost to Educate: \$8,007

based on 2022-2023 audited financials



GRACE Key Funding Sources





Giving Planned Gifts to GRACE

By sharing meaningful donations with GRACE that benefit students today or by leaving lasting gifts for generations to come, your generosity creates a legacy for Catholic education.

Ways to make a planned gift to GRACE:

- Will, Trust or Bequest
- Memorial Donation
- Beneficiary Designation - life insurance, annuities, IRA, CD
- IRA Required Minimum Distributions
- Securities and stocks
- Cash through checks, online transfers or monthly giving
- Birthday/Anniversary/Death Commemorations
- Endowment and Scholarship Funds

For additional information or questions about different ways to support GRACE, please contact:

*Lisa Niemuth
GRACE Director of Development
920-499-7330 ext. 1011*

**WE ARE:
GRACE:**



“Everybody here is really nice. The teachers we have are really good and understand what the students need to learn, and they do a good job teaching us new things.”

Nana, Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic School

We Asked Students... Why GRACE?

“Lo que me gusta de mi escuela St. Thomas More es cuando hacemos actividades dinámicas para aprender a convivir con todos y experimentar nuevas cosas haciendo trabajos en equipo y que nos enseñan a prender más.”

Axel, St. Thomas More Catholic School



“What I like about my school, St. Thomas More, is when we do dynamic activities to learn to live with everyone and experience new things by using teamwork that teaches us to learn more.”

Axel, St. Thomas More Catholic School





WE ARE GRACE

Important Dates

gracesystem.org/about-us/calendar

February 9, 2024: No School – GRACE In-Service

February 23, 2024: Early Dismissal – Teacher In-Service – End of 2nd Trimester

February 29, 2024: Evening Parent/Teacher Conferences

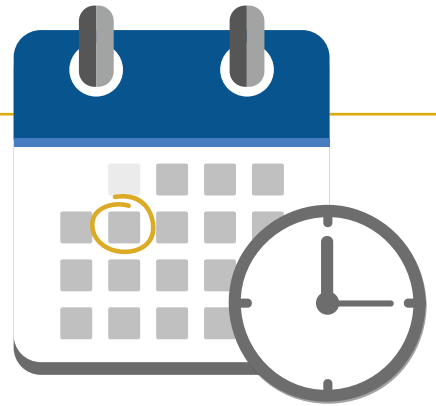
March 1, 2024: Early Dismissal – Afternoon Parent/Teacher Conferences

March 4-8, 2024: No School – Spring Break

March 29, 2024: No School – Good Friday

April 1, 2024: No School – Easter Monday

April 19, 2024: No School – Teacher In-Service



May 10, 2024: Early Dismissal – Teacher Workday (Weather Make-Up Day If Needed)

May 27, 2024: No School – Memorial Day

June 7, 2024: Early Dismissal – Last Day of School

June 10: Teacher Workday

2024-2025 Academic Calendar Now Available Online!

Enrollment Now Open

Enrollment for the 2024-25 school year is now open for 3-year-old Preschool through 12th grade. If you have a child or grandchild interested in our schools, apply today or schedule a tour at a school of interest. GRACE works hard to make education affordable for all children.

Weather Alerts

Please be alert to updates from your GRACE school in the event bad weather forces a “snow day” or early dismissal.



LET US HELP YOU

Call 920-499-7330 ● E-mail graceoffice@gracesystem.org

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