

Subject: Important Update on 7th & 8th Grade Athletics

Dear GRACEAC Parents and Guardians,

We hope this message finds you well. We are writing to share some important and exciting updates regarding our 7th and 8th grade athletics programs across the GRACEAC community. After several years of discussion and feedback from school leaders, coaches, and families; GRACEAC member schools have voted to adopt a **regional “Catholic United” team model** for 7th and 8th grade athletics—beginning with basketball in the 2025–26 school year. This model does not apply to K-6th grade sports.

Why Are We Making This Change?

At the heart of this shift is a commitment to providing the best possible experience for *all* of our student athletes. As participation continues to grow, we have seen increasing differences in skill levels within teams, often resulting in lopsided games, discouragement, or disengagement. We believe that we can better support every child’s growth—physically, emotionally, and spiritually by creating teams based on **developmental level and skill**.

This approach mirrors what we strive to do in the classroom: meet students where they are, help them grow, and give them the tools to succeed.

What Is the Catholic United Model?

- **Regional Teams:** Students from multiple Catholic schools will be grouped together to form Catholic United teams, rather than school-specific teams.
- **Try-Ins & Placement:** Athletes will participate in a multi-day evaluation process (called “try-ins”) and be placed on a team with similarly skilled peers.
- **No-Cut Policy:** Every student who wants to play will be placed on a team. No one will be turned away from participating.
- **Trained Coaches:** GRACEAC will oversee the hiring and training of coaches to ensure alignment with our Catholic values and high-quality coaching standards.
- **Phased Rollout:** We will begin with boys basketball in Winter I of the 2025–26 season, expanding to other sports based on participation levels and scheduling logistics.

What This Means for Your Child

We understand that change can raise questions—and we want to be clear: **your child will always have a place on our teams and programs**. This model is designed to help all athletes

feel more confident, engaged, and supported, whether they're a seasoned player or trying a sport for the first time. They'll compete with and against students at a similar skill level, creating more balanced and enjoyable experiences for everyone.

Supporting Our Core Values

This model was developed with input from our Executive Committee and Representative Council and passed by a vote of our member schools. It reflects our shared commitment to:

- Fair play and sportsmanship
- Personal growth rooted in faith
- A positive, inclusive environment where all athletes are welcomed
- A focus on learning, teamwork, virtue, and building Christian character—not just winning

What's Next?

Please see the attached FAQ which will help to answer some of your initial questions regarding this change. We will continue to add to the document as we hear from you. We invite you also to join us to learn more about this change and to have your questions answered at our optional regional parent meeting. This meeting will help clarify how try-ins will work, transportation expectations, and how we'll ensure fairness, transparency, and a positive transition for students and families alike.

The meeting will be on google meet (click here for [video link](#)) and take place at:

1. The Diocese of GR Room B - 2nd floor - 360 Division Ave S Wednesday September 3, 2025 6:30pm

This meeting will be recorded and will be available to you. Meeting in person is encouraged and suggested.

We are grateful for your support and partnership as we continue to grow and strengthen our Catholic athletic programs. If you have any immediate questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to reach out to your school's Athletic Director.

With appreciation for your continued support,

Brad Sturgell
GRACEAC Program Director

Tony Fischer
GRACEAC Exec. Comm. Pres.

Sarah Grey
Superintendent