



# St. Gregory the Great Academy

A Ministry of the Church of St. Gregory the Great

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Rev. Michael Hall, Pastor

Dr. Jason C. Briggs, Principal

Mrs. Michele L. Rivera, Assistant Principal

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 8, 2020

TO: All Parents, Faculty, and Staff

FROM: Dr. Jason C. Briggs, Principal

RE: **Operational Update #18**

The first week of November brought some new challenges to SGGA. I suppose I have no one to blame but myself, as I had prayed all summer for a successful and uneventful September and October in terms of COVID-19 at SGGA. My prayers, along with prayers of all who joined in the prayer brigade, were answered with two rather uneventful months. Of course, as soon as the calendar changed to November, things became more complicated. Maybe I should have said September through *December*? Nonetheless, I remain thankful for all of the good that has come our way!

As we embark on this second week of November, here are a few updates:

92. **Policy Change** – As you know, COVID-19 arrived at SGGA this past week. Thankfully, the situation was contained and there is no evidence at this time of any further spread in the quarantined grade levels. Still, the threat of the virus is not an “if” for us. Concurrently, the infection rate in New Jersey has increased considerably over the last seven days, along with hospitalizations. While this is not a cause for any panic for us, I do believe that it is prudent to tighten our absence protocols a bit at this time. When I wrote the protocols in August, the infection rate in New Jersey was significantly lower and the availability of COVID-19 testing was much more restricted. Both of these facts are no longer the case.

**Therefore, effective immediately, all students and staff who are absent for THREE (3) or more successive school days FOR ANY REASON will be required to present a negative COVID-19 test result that was produced from a test no earlier than 48 hours before the return date. To be clear, both students and staff will need to present this test result to the Main Office before being readmitted to school. In order to eliminate the need for wading through various scenarios, “what ifs,” and such, there will be NO exceptions to this policy.**



This policy applies to all possible reasons for absence, including illness, time on remote instruction, vacations, etc. **Basically, if a person does not darken the door of SGGA in-person for three days in a row or longer for any reason, the person must present a negative COVID-19 test result received no more than 48 hours before the date of return.** No exceptions; please do not even ask. If the cost of the COVID-19 test is a hardship for any family, please contact me directly and assistance will be provided.

I recognize that some may find this policy change excessive and may disapprove. Others may be angered. I respect these reactions, but they will not change my mind. At this time, I believe that this adjustment is needed to protect the students, staff, and their families as COVID-19 cases increase in our state.

93. **Thanksgiving** – You may have become aware that some schools are planning to preemptively move to full remote instruction the week after Thanksgiving as a risk mitigation measure. At this time, however, given our safety protocols and the comparatively low case numbers in Mercer County as compared to other regions of the state, as of this writing, a preemptive move to remote instruction is NOT planned. Anything can change from week to week, of course, and if the trend of this week continues over the next few weeks additional mitigation strategies MAY NEED to be implemented. **The next level of risk mitigation would be a move to abbreviated school days, namely the 8:00 am – 1:00 pm school day which eliminates lunch and reduces break time to a brief snack.** Remember, the purpose of the abbreviated school day is to remove the part of the school day with the most risk, lunch, and to keep snack brief and outdoors. The abbreviated school day schedule is designed to deal with weather that makes extended outdoor time inappropriate, increased virus risk/activity which makes it desirable to be in school as little time as necessary while still having a full slate of in-person classes, or both.

The main concern surrounding Thanksgiving is the increased contact and travel that traditionally go with this holiday. Thanksgiving is a very special holiday (I would say it is my favorite of the year), and many traditions are connected with this day. Some people are still going to travel, and they are still going to have contact with larger groups of people. It is not my position to advise anyone on how they should spend their Thanksgiving. **It IS my position to advise everyone in the SGGA family that it is the expectation that if you do travel and/or come into close contact (within 6 feet for a total of 15 minutes in a 24 hour period) with individuals with whom you are not usually in contact, you have a responsibility to be forthcoming with this information and to elect remote instruction for the following week.** This level of personal responsibility is expected on the part of every parent and staff member. Not that we ever want an outbreak of COVID-19 in our school, we especially do not want to have an outbreak as we approach Christmas.

94. **Uniforms** – We will continue with the P.E. uniform through Christmas. That said, I have received a few questions about if students are permitted to wear regular dress uniform. The answer to this question is YES, but the P.E. uniform will continue to be allowed through Christmas.
95. **Super 50/50** – The carnival committee is running a Super 50/50, with the drawing occurring on November 21, 2020, at 7:00 pm. Books of 50/50 tickets have been sent to all families, and I respectfully ask that each family makes an effort to sell the 50/50 chances that have been sent to you. The loss of the 2020 Carnival and the 2020 Gala, the cancellation of Bingo, along with the major

PTA Fall Craft Show have led to income shortfalls. This 50/50 is one major attempt to work toward making up some of this shortfall. If the average income from the Carnival, Gala, and Bingo are added and divided by the 436 students in our school, it comes out to approximately \$615.00 per student! The longer the COVID-19 situation goes on, the effect of not having our usual major fundraisers will become more problematic. I say this not to cause panic or alarm, but to simply encourage you to support the attempts to help close the income gap that the pandemic is causing.

96. **PTA Fundraisers** – The PTA has been working to come up with significant and useful fundraising ideas that are possible to run during this time. If you have not done so already, please check out the three opportunities below. The deadline for the A&M pie voucher sale is the end of this week, Friday, November 13, 2020. We also have a new poinsettia sale which is just being launched, and this will run through Friday, November 20, 2020.

### **Current Wish List**

Any kind of outdoor rug/carpet to deal with muddy tent areas

Donation of time/effort to rake leaves in any portion of our Tent City – anytime between the end of the school day and sunset. (BYOR)

Size LARGE disposable gloves

Donations toward [short-range AM radio transmitter](#) for use when students are called directly from cars (Precipitation Procedure, colder weather, etc.) \$100 of the \$600 cost has been pledged so far; [this form](#) may be used to make a donation for this purpose indicating the purpose in the “Notes” section.

[Donations toward Penn Medicine arrival screening](#)

### **For Your Information**

[A&M Pie Fundraiser - PTA](#)

[Poinsettia Sale - PTA](#)

[Krispy Kreme PTA Fundraiser](#)