



St. Gregory the Great Academy

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 9, 2020

TO: All Parents, Faculty, and Staff

FROM: Dr. Jason C. Briggs, Principal

RE: **COVID-19 Status Update #2**

COVID-19 Coronavirus Continuity of Education – Initial Guidance

As you may know, all public school districts in New Jersey have been instructed to formulate a plan for the continued delivery of instruction should an extended school closure occur. Even though we are not a public school, it is prudent for us to have procedures in place as well. At this time, the diocesan Department of Catholic Schools is formulating a template; however, in the interest of preparation I would like to outline what our process will be should we need to implement our plan. Of course, anything in this plan may be adjusted based on future official guidance.

It is important to remember that remote instruction, especially at the elementary school level, is not a replacement for face to face instruction. This is why we have schools! Therefore, our goal would be to provide a level of skill enhancement/maintenance that is appropriate for the grade/age level of the students. At this time, the framework for our **COVID-19 Continuity of Education Plan** is as follows:

Religion – All Grades: Formal Religion instruction will not be assigned by individual teachers. All families will be asked to access the daily readings from the [USCCB website](#) and to read the readings as a family. A family discussion should follow the readings, during which the message that is being taught in the readings is explored. It will also be appropriate to devote time to praying the Rosary and/or Stations of the Cross.

Preschool grades: Formal materials will not be provided.

Kindergarten – Grade 2: Instructional goals will focus on English/Language Arts (ELA) and Math only. The goal will be approximately 30-45 minutes of activity for ELA and 30-45 minutes of Math per day. Keeping the attention span of students at this age in mind, it may be necessary to “chunk” activities



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into manageable blocks of time and provide frequent breaks. Traditionally, we have not established accounts on our Google domain for students until they enter Grade 3; however, we are in the process of creating accounts for all students in Grades K-2. Homeroom teachers in Grades K-2 will establish a Google Classroom for your class, and each family will be able to sign in to join the Google Classroom. This will allow the teachers to post various materials for download at home. All teachers will also be creating a “skills maintenance” packet with materials which have already been covered for home use in the event of an unforeseen situation (technical issue with new account, extra time, a teacher becoming ill, etc.) It is envisioned that the packets will be sent home by Friday, March 13.

Grades 3 – 4: Instructional goals will focus on English/Language Arts (ELA) and Math, with weekly Science and Social Studies enrichment activities. The goal will be approximately 45-60 minutes of activity for ELA supplemented with at least 30 minutes of additional student reading and 30-40 minutes of Math per day. Additionally, there will be a weekly enrichment activity for both Science and Social Studies. Keeping the attention span of students at this age in mind, it may be necessary to “chunk” activities into manageable blocks of time and provide breaks. The main route of home-school communication will be via Google Classroom. Some teachers have existing Google Classrooms established, and the rest will establish them by the end of this week. Teachers will be able to post documents/materials for home download, and students will be able to submit completed assignments via the Google Classroom. If you have not done so already, please take a moment to sign into the SGGG Google account that belongs to your son/daughter. We will be sending home copies of the login credentials this week since many of our third and fourth graders do not have this information memorized.

Grades 5 – 8: Instructional goals will focus on the following core subject areas: English/Language Arts (ELA), Math, Science, and Social Studies. Teachers already have Google Classrooms set up for most classes; the remainder will do so by the end of this week. Students in Grades 5-8 will have a Google Classroom for each of the four core subject areas listed above. The grade levels with electronic access to textbooks will continue to utilize this resource. Teachers will be able to post documents/materials for home download, and students will be able to submit completed assignments via the Google Classroom. Teachers will use the Google Classroom to post questions and initiate discussion threads. On average, there will be approximately 40 minutes of activity per day per class. Grades 7 and 8 may also have assigned meeting times using an online video platform, most likely Skype.

This is a rapidly developing situation, and this outline represents the plan at this time. As of this writing, no COVID-19 cases have been positively identified in Mercer County, and there are no current plans for school closures in our area. Unfortunately, this could change at any time with little or no warning. In a “best” case scenario (if you want to call it that), we will have a least a day’s warning prior to a closing. This would allow students to bring home materials, books, etc. that would help supplement what the teachers plan for the students. Should a development occur over a weekend, we would open the school on a Saturday or Sunday to allow for materials to be collected from school unless directed not to do so by authorities. Our COVID-19 Continuity of Education Plan will not be implemented unless a school closure is expected to last more than five days – implementation would begin on Day 4. We have three unused snow days, thus we will not need to have home instruction days “count” toward our 180 day total until Day 4.

I believe that it is prudent to take precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and to be prepared for serious disruption to the educational process. On the other hand, I think that it is equally prudent to not overreact and allow the frenzied messages emanating from some places to overtake rational decision-making. Again, while I am not a doctor, my opinion at this time is for immunocompromised individuals, that is students or adults, (such as individuals with immune disorders, those undergoing chemotherapy, etc.) to consult their doctors for advice on whether they should be in a school setting. Out of an abundance of caution, given the unknown nature of what is unfolding, it would also seem to me that individuals who are pregnant should avoid being in a school setting at this time as well. Again, however, pregnant individuals should follow the advice of their doctor over anything that I say. Of course, please continue good hygiene practices. Also, if a child is sick, PLEASE do not send him or her to school. There are lots of other things (my highly technical description of usual illnesses) floating around as well, so it is important to not spread “regular” illness which may weaken the immune system at this time.

Finally, I would like to once again stress that we must not overlook the effect that this outbreak is already having on the mental well-being of our children (and us adults as well!) Children are being exposed to news about the spread of cases, COVID-19 deaths, chatter in school and during extracurricular activities, and are hearing parts of adult conversations. We love the imagination that our young people possess, but unfortunately, this same imagination can sometimes take pieces of information and create frightening scenarios that play out in the mind. Attached to this email please find a document that provides several useful points to help families nourish well-being and to guide discussion. My thanks are extended to Dr. Stephanie Marcello for sending this document my way.

Again, let us keep an evenness to our approach as we move through these uncertain times. We must aim for sound practice as we wade through these days and try to avoid both indifference and hysteria.

Thank you.