



St. Gregory the Great Academy

A Ministry of the Church of St. Gregory the Great

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 12, 2020

TO: All Parents, Faculty, and Staff

FROM: Dr. Jason C. Briggs, Principal

RE: **COVID-19 Status Update #6**

COVID-19 Operational Levels

It seems that every couple of hours we learn of another institution, activity, or event being cancelled or postponed. Given the uncertainty of this rapidly evolving situation, I would like to outline the various operational levels which we will be using for school operations. Before describing each, I would like to make two points very clear:

1. Remember that, as parents, **you make the final determination as to whether or not your child comes to school, regardless of the operating status of the Academy.** Any parent who does not feel comfortable sending a child to school can simply keep the child home. In our setting when school is physically in operation, attendance is either “present” (physically in the school) or “absent” (not physically in the school). We do not classify absences as excused, unexcused, etc.
2. We will make every prudent attempt possible to keep our school operating in some fashion, hence these various levels of responses. That said, this list is not to be considered sequential, meaning that any of the response levels can be bypassed at any time. **There may come a time when we are ordered to close by the Department of Health and/or the State of New Jersey.** In such a case, we will move directly to Level 4 and comply immediately.

Below please find the COVID-19 Operational Levels for St. Gregory the Great Academy:

LEVEL 0 – Planning and Awareness: The school day and extra-curricular activities will take place as scheduled. The Administrative Team will review protocols, initiate preparatory activities, and be in contact with diocesan, state, and local officials.



A 2014 National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence

LEVEL 1 – Social Distancing: The school day and extra-curricular activities will take place as scheduled. Social distancing protocols will be initiated, which include: disusing spaces which are not easily cleaned and/or open to outside groups (including Ferrante Hall and the Church); staggering the lunch periods and locations to reduce the number of students present in one area; and cancelling any planned large gatherings.

LEVEL 2 – Suspending Nonessential Activities: The social distancing protocols described in Level 1 will remain in place. Only the essential educational functions will take place, that is, only regularly scheduled Preschool – Grade 8 classes will occur. All other Academy activities will be cancelled. Cancellations will include: The Extended Day Program (EDP), off-campus trips, all after school clubs and practices, and all after school sports. Volunteers will be asked to remain home. K-8 dismissal will occur as scheduled at 2:30pm, Preschool dismissal will occur as scheduled, and the Academy will close for non-essential personnel at 3:30pm.

LEVEL 3 – Split Sessions: The social distancing protocols described in Level 1 will remain in place. Essential educational functions will be scheduled so that students are not present in the building for an extended period of time, eating will not take place in school, and the total number of people in the building at one time would remain under 300. Operation at this level would mean that Preschool 3 – Grade 4 will attend school 8:00am-12:00pm and Grades 5-8 will attend school 1:00pm-5:00pm. The Extended Day Program, all after school clubs, and all after school sports will be cancelled. At this level, there will be no bus transportation and parents will be required to bring students to and from school at the appointed times. While operating at Level 3 would be a serious inconvenience, this level is envisioned as an alternative to a full closing if conditions are safe.

LEVEL 4 – Physical Closure: If a full physical closure is required, the COVID-19 Continuity of Education Plan will be initiated. 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 2 (**this is an adjustment from the originally published plan**). School will remain closed until thorough cleaning and disinfection take place and we are advised that it is safe to reopen school. Please refer to the **COVID-19 Continuity of Education Plan**.

I have taken, and will continue to take, all steps that I can to ensure that we do not have to cancel school for any grade levels due to lack of appropriate staff (as I have done for Preschool 4 tomorrow, 3/13/2020). Please understand that we have several staff members who fit the CDC's definition of being at a higher-risk of infection. The fact is that I cannot (nor would I try) force staff members to come to school if they are medically at-risk, if the need arrives for them to self-quarantine, or they are not feeling well. We only have so many substitutes available, and if staff absence becomes an insurmountable obstacle, I will have no other choice except to cancel particular grade levels. I recognize that this is a huge inconvenience, but if it happens it is because I have no other choice.

We will NOT be closing for planning days/in-services, as our plans are in place and the teachers (God bless them) are ready to begin implementation. I am especially grateful to the teachers for preparing for this unprecedented challenge. We will also not be closing for cleaning **unless there is reason to believe that exposure to COVID-19 has occurred**, as we have been fully implementing our cleaning and disinfecting protocols since March 3. To send everyone home for a closing, conduct a cleaning, and then bring every single person back would recreate the same environment which existed prior to the closing. **Again, if there is reason to believe that exposure to COVID-19 has occurred, we will move to Level 4 immediately.**

The unfortunate fact of the matter is that we are in uncharted territory, and we are going to manage the coming days as best as we can. **Again, you make the final determination as to whether or not your child comes to school, regardless of the operating status of the Academy.** To state it plainly, if you do not think your child should be in school, do not bring him or her to school. At this time, there are no diagnosed cases of COVID-19 in Mercer County, and no school district in New Jersey has been ordered to shut down physical operations. As to when this will change is anyone's guess, but until it does, I plan to continue to take a deliberate and calm approach to this situation with the goal of neither overreacting nor underreacting.

Finally, not to worry – our supply of toilet paper arrived as scheduled today.

Thank you.