



# St. Gregory the Great Academy

A Ministry of the Church of St. Gregory the Great

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## MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 3, 2020

TO: All Parents, Faculty, and Staff

FROM: Dr. Jason C. Briggs, Principal

RE: **Return to School Update #5**

Perhaps you may not have noticed, but August rolled in this past weekend. Each year when the calendar turns to August I begin to look toward the beginning of the school year a bit more intensely. This year, of course, August brings new challenges and issues to be worked through. We are still working toward being prepared to physically open the school at the end of this month. Below are some updates for your review. Remember, everything in these updates is subject to change based on conditions and how the virus progresses.

19. **Elective Remote Instruction** – As you probably know, the state has indicated that all students should have the option to begin the school year on remote instruction. Since I was already working on a plan for this process, this change of position on the part of the state was not terribly disruptive to us. The Elective Remote Instruction Policy is attached at the end of this memo and will also be posted on our website. If you are interested in this option, please read through the procedures very carefully. In order to make this work, there are timeframes and processes which need to be observed.
20. **Outdoor Space** – Outdoor space continues to be a significant part of our plans for opening school. Morning arrival and afternoon dismissal will use outdoor space. At this time, I also envision all grades using outdoor space to eat lunch, unless the weather does not cooperate. We have several tents which will be erected to provide shelter during these times, and we will also use overhang areas which are available to us.
21. **Ventilation/Indoor Climate** – As much as I wish we could spend all day, every day outdoors, this will of course not be possible. As a result, improving our indoor ventilation is a very important aspect of reducing risk. Thankfully, I can report that the response to my “wish list” has been extremely generous, and this has allowed me to purchase additional ventilation fans for our hallways to help



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pull fresh air into the building. This is very good news. This improvement to our ventilation comes at the cost of using our air conditioning systems in most classrooms, however. One cannot simultaneously have windows opened to maximize the intake of fresh air AND run air conditioning units to recirculate and cool existing air. As a result, more often than not the classroom air conditioning systems in the school building classrooms will not be used in order to facilitate fresh air intake through the windows. This requires reasonable accommodations:

1. Teachers (as well as students as previously stated) will be permitted to wear gym attire which is appropriate for the temperature. This will include shorts if the weather is hot. (Now those who have been here for any length of time know that I never could have envisioned myself writing the words in this item; however, these are unusual times. Of course, the teachers will have to adhere to the same requirements for shorts as the students!)
2. In the event that a Heat Advisory or Excessive Heat Warning is issued or becomes likely, we **MAY** need to have an early dismissal from school. An early dismissal from school, for this reason, would be announced no later than the night before.

22. **Masks** – As I was composing thoughts to share today, Governor Murphy announced revisions to the reopening guidelines regarding wearing masks in schools. You can find the complete document [HERE](#), however, I have included the parts of the guidance which are of particular importance to us:

Students are required to wear face coverings unless doing so would inhibit the student's health. It is necessary to acknowledge that enforcing the use of face coverings may be impractical for young children or individuals with disabilities.

- Exceptions:
  - Doing so would inhibit the student's health\*.
  - The student is in extreme heat outdoors.
  - A student's documented medical condition\*, or disability as reflected in an Individualized Education Program (IEP), precludes the use of face covering.
  - During the period that a student is eating or drinking.
  - Face coverings should not be placed on anyone .... face covering without assistance (e.g. face coverings should not be worn by Pre-K students during nap time).
  - Face coverings may be removed during gym [and music classes\*\*] when individuals are in a well-ventilated location and able to maintain a physical distance of six feet apart.
- Also:
  - Currently, the CDC does not recommend the use of face shields as a substitute for face coverings. Therefore, they may not be used to satisfy the face covering requirement detailed above. However, they may be an option for students with medical or other challenges that preclude the use of face coverings
  - Students and educators that rely on facial cues may consider the use of clear face coverings where available. This might include students who are deaf or hard of hearing, students receiving speech/language services, young students in early education programs, and English-language learners.

At St. Gregory the Great Academy, the following will apply:

\* In order for a person (child or adult) to be permitted to wear a wrap-around face shield instead of a mask, a documented health and medical condition will need to be exactly that in order to be considered, that is, documented by a doctor who is qualified to make the stated diagnosis and printed/signed on official letterhead. (Thus, a note scribbled on a scrip pad will not do, nor will a diagnosis from a podiatrist.)

\*\* Music class WILL NOT be an exception for us.

23. **Mornings** – Here is a little nugget to think about next time you want to stay awake way past your bedtime: Imagine the morning of the first day of school! As this critical time comes into focus, the following are specifics that I have developed thus far:

- Each grade level will have a designated arrival location outside of the school. There will be no early drop-off, except for buses. There will also be no "drop off line." **All parents will be required to park their cars.** Period. I am literally going to chase anyone who tries to "drop and run." Once parked, there will be two choices:
  1. Bring your child(ren) to the designated morning arrival location
  2. Keep your child(ren) in your car with you until his/her grade is called.
- Grades will have specific building entry times, which will be announced. We will begin the entry at 7:45 am and proceed according to the designated order of grades/doors. The first few days will have to take place before I have a sense as to how long the entry process will take. So, for the first several days, anticipate arrival taking place between 7:45 am and 8:15 am. I reserve the right to completely change these times if they do not work.
- Parents will not be permitted to linger anyplace near the arrival locations. Take your photos at home, or better yet, stop by the week before school opens to take a photo by the school sign. Once school opens, parents get no closer to the arrival locations than 6 feet.
- When a homeroom is lined up, the teacher will temperature check each student with a no-contact thermometer. As a condition of attending St. Gregory the Great Academy during this emergency, parents will be required to agree to temperature checking for their child, subject to these safeguards. Temperatures will be recorded as "enter" or "investigate." Students whose temperature is 100 degrees or higher will fall into the "investigate" category and will be directed to the administration for a recheck. If the recheck confirms a temperature of 100 degrees or above, the parent will be called to pick up the student. The "investigate" checkpoint will be as private as possible; there will be no scarlet "100s" issued. (Yes, I am still a bit scarred from reading Nathaniel Hawthorne in high school).
- The students will then enter the building in a single-file line and proceed to their homerooms.

As you might imagine, this process is going to take some time. It is not going to run smoothly at first, and it is not going to be conducive to dropping children off quickly and taking off. It is my hope that as time goes on it starts to run a bit more smoothly. PATIENCE will be required by all.

I am going to leave dismissal for another update so that some recovery can take place.

24. **Accommodations** – Let me be direct. Unlike the students, the faculty and staff do not have the option to begin the year on remote instruction. We have some faculty and staff members who are immunocompromised and/or high risk. Without going into all of the specifics here, in order to reduce risks for some adult individuals, it will be necessary to have other staff members monitor students during non-instructional time, make classroom accommodations, make increased use of outdoor learning space, and/or other appropriate accommodations. I will tell you that every single teacher who begins the school year with us is doing so because they very much want to teach our children. That said, I will need to take some steps to protect those who are at higher risk. I ask for your patience in such a circumstance and know that it is critical that I protect the adults in the school as well as the children.

#### **Items from Updates 1-4**

1. **Class sizes and teachers changing classes instead of students** – No changes.
2. **SGGA school supplies and no backpacks** – No changes.
3. **No transporting of books home** – No changes.
4. **SGGA adopting mask usage** – Superseded by Item #22.
5. **Freckle Math** – No changes.
6. **Desk Shields** – No changes.
7. **Remote instruction for individuals** – See Item #19 and the policy attached to this memo.
8. **Student homerooms, cohorts, and clustering** – No changes.
9. **Bus transportation** – In the near future, we will be contacting all students who have been placed on a bus to see if you intend to actually use the bus. This will be important as I plan dismissal procedures.
10. **Screening and quarantining** – No changes.
11. **Masks and shields** – Superseded by Item #22.
12. **Uniforms** – No changes; Flynn and O’Hara has been informed.
13. **In-house Class Livestreaming** – This is not currently scheduled for any class/grade but will be kept as a backup in the case of the inability to find a substitute teacher when one is needed.
14. **Full Remote Instruction** – No changes.
15. **Sanitizing Procedures** – No changes; I am continuing to build our stock of supplies via donations and purchases.
16. **Ventilation** – We are able to exceed my original plans due to the generosity of donors to the wish list.
17. **Desk Shields** – These were delivered today; those who ordered one will now be charged.
18. **Wish List** – I am humbled by those who have made donations; it is enabling us to take further steps to reduce risk.

#### **Current Wish List**

Below is an update to our list. Donations for the wish list may be acknowledged or anonymous.

1 – Cost of heavy-duty classroom model electric pencil sharpener - \$50.00 each (can designate for a grade level if desired)

2 – Covers for water fountains (which we must decommission until further notice). I am hoping someone may know someone who is handy with a needle and thread who can make a few so that we can avoid the Penn Station Black Trash Bag Cover look.

3 – Cost of 4 Gallon case of hand sanitizer - \$112.50 each

4 – Cost of (1 remaining – 2 have been covered) electrostatic sanitizing devices to be used in preschool and kindergarten - \$799.00 each

5 – Plastic chain (any color of length) to help with organizing indoor and outdoor spaces

6 – Containers of alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol – any brands/sizes appreciated

7 – Packages of disposable gloves – all sizes appreciated

8 – 9x12 or 10x13 envelopes (any color; printed ones from a company that has gone out of business, etc. are fine) for teachers to keep photocopies sealed until they are used in class.

9 – [THIS](#) portable sink for use before lunch (it would be great if 3 people gave one).

10 – [THIS](#) no-touch thermometer (it would be great if 5 people gave one).