



St. Gregory the Great Academy

A Ministry of the Church of St. Gregory the Great

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Dr. Jason C. Briggs, Principal

Mrs. Michele L. Rivera, Assistant Principal

MEMORANDUM

DATE: September 13, 2020

TO: All Parents, Faculty, and Staff

FROM: Dr. Jason C. Briggs, Principal

RE: **Operational Update #12**

We are approaching the midpoint of September, and I am happy to report that our routines are beginning to settle in. While these routines are markedly different from the past and will remain so for the foreseeable future, it seems that everyone is having a safe and productive in-person learning experience. Part of the reason that this has been so is that all efforts have been focused on the 8:00 am-2:30 pm portion of school. I know that the dearth of extracurricular activities, special events, and EDP have been disappointing, and a hardship for some in the case of EDP, the risk of moving too quickly without regard to the evolving situation would be dangerous. We cannot observe strict policies with regard to distance, indoor space, and segregating grade levels during the school day and then simply discard them after school. Still, we are ready to take some more steps toward normalcy. As such, the following developments will occur this week:

62. **School Mass** – (*school Mass is beginning to return*) We will be able to begin restoring a major part of our spiritual life this week as we have our first outdoor Mass for Grades 5-8 on Friday, weather permitting. I am grateful to Fr. Mike for agreeing to find a way to make this work. Provided that this Mass takes place with no unsurmountable complications, we will look to schedule future outdoor Masses and include other grade levels. **NOTE:** At this time, school Masses will not be open to parents or visitors.
63. **Expanded School Lunch** – (*we have hot choices now*) Beginning this week, a hot entrée will be added as an option for lunch each day. All current entrées will continue to be available each day; however, there will be a recurring hot entrée for each day of the week. The hot lunch option is listed on the combined September Calendar/Menu. Remember, **ordering MUST take place in advance using the myschoolaccount.com portal.** There are instructions on how to set up your account if you have not done so in previous years. (You will need your child's student ID number to set up the account, which can be found by signing into Parent Portal.) At this time, the myschoolaccount.com portal is open for



setting up accounts. **No orders will be taken using paper through school**; however, you may order lunch as late as 8:00 am on the "day of."

64. **Dismissal** – (*no more letter calling*) We are eliminating the calling of “letter clusters” for car rider dismissal, as it appears to no longer be necessary.
65. **Daily Absence and Remote Classes** – (*cannot request for daily absences*) There seems to be some confusion regarding remote instruction that I would like to clarify. As you know, our emphasis has been on in-person instruction from the day it was announced that in-person instruction was going to be permitted. Recognizing that not all SGGA families would be comfortable with a physical return, a procedure was established for parents to arrange for their children to engage in elective remote instruction via Google Classroom. While it has not been without its glitches and challenges, remote instruction is underway for those students whose parents elected it. Planning for remote instruction is, quite honestly, an additional challenge that has been placed on the teachers, yet they have approached this additional responsibility with grace and skill.

Taking the realities of the necessary planning, available technology, and ability to communicate in our very compartmentalized current reality, it was never envisioned that students would be able to “drop in and out” of remote instruction on a daily basis. Remote instruction is envisioned for those students whose parents do not feel comfortable with their children being physically in school due to the pandemic and students who are absent from school for an extended period due to COVID-19 related issues. It is **NOT** envisioned for students who are going to be absent for a day and CANNOT be requested via a note in an absence report. Engaging the remote instruction process is not as simple as a call up to a classroom that Student Z is remote today. As a result, the SGGA policy is that remote instruction is not explicitly offered for students who are absent for a day or two; missed work can be requested from a teacher via email.

There is a corollary to this policy. If a student who is absent for the day is in a class that happens to have an established remote student in the same class, and thus the teacher already has the remote feed and plan in place (along with the committed bandwidth and technology), the absent student is certainly free to join the feed by clicking on the Meet link in Google Classroom.

I hope this clarifies any confusion. Perhaps we will get to a point where we will be able to offer remote instruction “on demand,” maybe like Netflix for Schools, but we are not there yet.

66. **Back to School Night** – (*Remote on 9/28 and 10/1*) As you have likely surmised, in-person Back to School Night is not possible this year; therefore, we will be presenting Back to School Night remotely. Remote Back to School Night will take place on Tuesday, September 29th for Preschool 3 – Grade 4 and Thursday, October 1st for Grades 5-8. Teachers will conduct their presentations in timed blocks that will be accessed via Google Classroom. A schedule will be published for each grade level detailing where you will need to “go” and what time you need to “go” there. Back to School Night will begin at 7:00 pm both nights, be formatted into approximately 15 minutes blocks, and end at approximately 8:45 pm.

67. **School Supply Bills** – (*bills coming soon*) As you know, school supplies were purchased by the school this year. Now that just about all of the supplies have arrived, each student’s parents will be receiving a bill via email for the supplies. Please be on the lookout for this bill.
68. **Extended Day Program (EDP)** – (*information gathering stage*) I know that resuming EDP is very important to many of our families, including my own. Still, as I mentioned in my introduction, focus on the 8:00 am-2:30 pm portion of school remains the priority. There are multiple challenges to resuming EDP, including the following major ones: 1) Managing groupings of students in such a way that does not counteract the grade level segregation which occurs during the school day; 2) Having enough staff to properly supervise the groupings and making sure that the staff members are not frequently rotating; 3) Indoor space is neither available nor desirable – all areas are restricted to a particular grade level to maintain grade-level segregation.

As a result, a potential resumption of EDP would be very different than we used to have. Think limited capacity, alternating days, priority for lower grade levels, an earlier end time, and the use of outdoor space that would require cancellation of EDP on days with significant bad weather. All of this would be necessary in order to maintain the safety procedures that we are currently operating under. To not maintain the same level of vigilance during EDP as is done during the school day would be irresponsible on my part.

At this point, I would like to gather data in terms of the INTEREST in using a limited EDP. If you have an interest in using a limited EDP based on the potential outline I have provided, please complete [THIS SURVEY](#) by Friday, September 18, 2020. Again, right now I am simply in the data-gathering stage, and I am not prepared to speculate on a resumption date for EDP. To be perfectly honest, I am hesitant to restart EDP because I continue to believe that it is necessary to preserve the 8:00 am-2:30 pm portion of school at all costs. I do not want to put us in a position that we risk in-person instruction (which would then require finding childcare for the entire day) in order to provide childcare for the 2:30 pm – 5:30 pm timeframe. Believe me, I am sympathetic to those who are struggling to find after school childcare; however, there are already schools moving to full remote instruction due to COVID-19 cases in school.

Current Wish List

Donations toward Penn Medicine arrival screening -OR-

St. Gregory the Great Academy Wish List

(updated as needs develop)

I would like to add my deep gratitude to everyone who has either purchased from the wish list or made donations toward our reopening and safety efforts. To say that the response has been overwhelming would be an understatement. The number of items that have arrived has made it impossible for me to individually thank each person, and many of the donations have been anonymous. Please know that, quite simply, our learning environment would not be possible in its current form without all of these donations. Our improved ventilation, social distancing measures, and important parts of our outdoor “annex” have been made possible by this generosity. On behalf of every student of SGGA, thank you!!! 😊