



# 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: August 20, 2020

TO: All Parents, Faculty, and Staff

FROM: Dr. Jason C. Briggs, Principal

RE: **Return to School Update #8**

Good afternoon to everyone! While it may seem hard to believe, in one week's time our reopening will be underway, God willing. As time continues to tick away toward the "big day," it is important for us to begin to get a sense of how some common procedures will be taking shape. I have found, especially during these last two weeks, that this process has been very similar to opening a brand new school. This situation has caused us to have to examine just about every facet of school operation and figure out how to reimagine it in order to help us reduce risk as much as possible. So, with this in mind, please find the following items:

40. **Morning Arrival** – Keeping in mind what I have shared in previous updates, I have developed the logistics for our morning arrival process. Please [CLICK HERE](#) for the details and instructions. You will notice my very crude diagram at the end of this document. Remember, a visual artist I am not. Hopefully, these instructions and the extra special diagram will help you to clearly determine where your child(ren) must be and the process for getting them there. Remember, the arrival window between August 28 – September 2 is no **EARLIER than 7:30 am** and no **LATER than 8:00 am**.
41. **Afternoon Dismissal** – As happy as we will be to have the students back in school, we do have to return them to you. As a result, a dismissal procedure is also necessary. Please [CLICK HERE](#) for these details and instructions. (There is another super special diagram as well!) The plan is to begin the actual dismissal procedure at 12:30 pm, which means that the staging will take some time. Also, note that this is going to take a good deal of time to accomplish safely in terms of both virus and students leaving with the right adults. If you think arrival is going to require patience, double it for dismissal. Remember that there are **NO BUSES** between August 28 – September 2, and there is also no EDP at this time.
42. **Extended Day Program (EDP)** – I know that many families (including my own, in fact) have relied on EDP to manage the operation of their households. I mentioned several updates ago that I did not



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know if and when I would be in a position to resume EDP. Unfortunately, I still do not have a firm path forward to share with you regarding EDP at this time. A program like EDP is simply not designed for social distancing. There are significant issues to deal with, namely:

- i. Keeping students across grade levels properly separated
- ii. Planning activities that are appropriately socially distanced
- iii. Using space appropriately and safely
- iv. Hiring an appropriate number of staff members

I am continuing to have conversations with Mrs. O'Neill as to what our possibilities are. If we are able to offer EDP at some point, it will require significant changes (at least to start) including:

- i. Reduced capacity to address staff numbers, distance, and activities – offering each family either a Monday/Wednesday OR Tuesday/Thursday option
- ii. Canceling EDP on days when the outdoor space cannot be used

I realize that these changes are not convenient and will probably make the program unusable for some people. The bottom line is that I will only move forward with any EDP offering if it can be accomplished safely. From those I have been hearing from I have gathered that “some EDP is better than no EDP.” It seems to me that it would be easier to plan for after school child care for only 2 or 3 days per week instead of all 5 days each week. For this reason, we will continue to see what we can organize. At this time, however, I cannot give a firm date as to when EDP would begin even with these changes.

43. **Screening and Quarantining** – By now, we all know that there are New Jersey guidelines from quarantining that have been published by the New Jersey Department of Health ([CLICK HERE](#)). Specific guidance from the document states **“The self-quarantine is voluntary, but compliance is expected. Travelers and residents returning from impacted states typically will not need to check-in with public health officials, unless otherwise they are involved in contact tracing efforts or required to do so by their employer or any other federal, state or local law or order. It is expected that individuals will follow the recommendation to self-quarantine.”** As you can probably see, the verbiage does not exactly set a clear path for someone in my position to implement. Regardless of anyone’s feelings on this matter, our school is in step with the state in that compliance with the current self-quarantine guidelines is expected. Allow me to be blunt – if you are traveling to one of the locations on the travel advisory, it is my expectation that your children do not return to school until the recommended 14-day self-quarantine period is over. I do not have the legal authority to enforce this since the state has not put a process in place to legally enforce it. **If you lie about being in a place with a travel advisory, or simply decide that you are going to defy my expectation, you are working against every effort that we have put into place to create an in-person school environment that has reduced risk to a reasonable level.** Put simply, to do this means that you have decided that it is acceptable for you to risk the ability of SGGA to conduct in-person instruction for the over 400 students whose parents desire this right now. Those of us who are set for in-person instruction have decided that we want this for our children right now; while you may not have a strictly legal reason to follow this expectation you do have an ethical reason. Please make your decisions carefully.

44. **School Nurse** – Johnna Stinemire has resigned from her position as school nurse. As you might imagine, this is causing me great worry. Recruiting and hiring our school nurse is not a process that I have control over, so every time there is a change of sort it is very worrisome to me. The current pandemic has made this even more critical. There are many moving parts to this process, and I actually have direct control over very little of it because of the way that the public funds must be allocated.

Nursing in nonpublic schools in New Jersey is funded under New Jersey Chapter 226. Each year, the state budget allots a particular "per pupil" amount to fund nursing in nonpublic schools such as SGGA. This amount is currently in flux because this amount must be set annually in the New Jersey state budget, which has been delayed until October for this year. Regardless of what the final per-pupil allotment is, the funds flow from the state to the public school district that a nonpublic school is physically located within, in our case, Hamilton Township. All local public school districts have the choice to either hire their own employee to send to the nonpublic school OR to contract with a third-party provider to send the employee. Because this is public funding, the money cannot simply be sent to a nonpublic school to make the hire and pay the person. Hamilton Township has selected the Educational Services Commission of New Jersey (ESCNJ) as the third-party provider for nursing, and this is who employed Mrs. Stinemire. I have been informed that ESCNJ does not currently have a nurse hired to send to us for the opening of school. Obviously this is not an acceptable situation at any time, and certainly not during a pandemic. I have been in communication with the Hamilton Township School District, ESCNJ, and our diocesan office. I have been repeatedly told that ESCNJ is continuing to look for someone to hire and assign to us, yet a nurse has not been assigned to our school at my last check-in today. While recruiting and hiring a person for this role is the responsibility of ESCNJ, I have been asked to "send along" any possible candidates for ESCNJ to interview. As a result, I am asking that if anyone knows of a person who would be interested in interviewing for the position of school nurse at SGGA, please contact Nancy Armbruster, Director of Nonpublic School Services for ESCNJ, using the following email address: [narmbruster@escnj.k12.nj.us](mailto:narmbruster@escnj.k12.nj.us). Questions about timeline or how the process works on the ESCNJ side would need to be addressed to Nancy. Since ESCNJ does not provide substitute nurses when our assigned nurse is absent, I do have a limited number of substitute nurses who can assist us. If you know of someone who would be interested in working as a substitute nurse at SGGA, please have them contact me directly.

45. **Parent Portal/Genesis** – Since grade books were pushed out to the teachers this week, students' course assignments became active in Parent Portal. You will notice a distinct lack of messaging from me encouraging you to go into Parent Portal to look at homerooms and courses. This lack of messaging was not because I fell asleep at my desk. In fact, while course and homeroom assignments are loaded into Genesis they do not always reflect the most up to date information during the summer. With enrollments and withdrawals, along with students beginning with Elective Remote Instruction, I am still making adjustments as necessary. Thus, while you are certainly free to go in and poke around Parent Portal, please do not consider any homeroom or course that you see final until I send the "official" homeroom list. For more on the rationale behind this process, and for why I cannot honor any requests for placement changes/teachers, please refer back to Item #8 on Update #3.

46. **Already?** – As if there are already not enough things to worry about and to figure out how to deal with, pumpkin spice drinks and treats have already made their unwelcome return to local establishments. With the disruptions to the supply chain that are ongoing, I was hoping that pumpkin spice might be a casualty. I still cannot figure out how anyone enjoys this questionable flavor.

### Items from Updates 1-7

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** – No changes
8. **Student homerooms, cohorts, and clustering** – No changes.
9. **Bus transportation** – Parent contacting of all students who have been placed on a bus is in progress.
10. **Screening and quarantining** – Superseded in part by Items #26, #27, and #28.
11. **Masks and shields** – Superseded by Item #22.
12. **Uniforms** – No changes.
13. **In-house Class Livestreaming** – No changes.
14. **Full Remote Instruction** – No changes.
15. **Sanitizing Procedures** – No changes.
16. **Ventilation** – Superseded by Item #21.
17. **Desk Shields** – No changes.
18. **Wish List** – No changes.
19. **Elective Remote Instruction** – No changes – Remember that those on self-quarantine ARE eligible with no waiting period.
20. **Outdoor Space** – No changes.
21. **Ventilation/Indoor Climate** – Installation in progress.
22. **Masks** – No changes; please see Item #29.
23. **Mornings** – See Item #40 in this update.
24. **Accommodations** – No changes.
25. **Readiness to Open** – The countdown is on.
26. **COVID-19 Diagnosis in the Building** – Superseded by new NJ DOH guidance.
27. **COVID-19 Diagnosis of a Family Member/Close Contact** – Superseded by new NJ DOH guidance.
28. **COVID-19 Suspicion Based on Symptoms** – Superseded by new NJ DOH guidance.
29. **Exclusion from School** – No changes.
30. **Parents/Visitors/Volunteers** – No changes.
31. **Masks** – No changes.
32. **Water** – No changes.
33. **Opinions** – No changes.
34. **NEW New Jersey Guidelines** – We will be using this framework as outlined.
35. **School Lunch** – The ordering process will be published prior to the first day of lunch.
36. **Freckle Math** – Remember the teachers need this diagnostic information.
37. **Preschool Logistical Notes** – No changes; remember Preschool 3 Welcome Day is 8/31/2020 9:00 am-10:00 am and Preschool 4 Welcome Day is 9/1/2020 9:00 am-10:00 am.

38. **K-8 Logistical Notes** – No changes; remember 8/27/2020 is for Grades 5-8 ONLY and 8/28/2020 is for Grades K-4 ONLY. August 27-September 2 are all 12:30 dismissal days with NO BUSES.
39. **Public School Remote Opening** – No updates.

**Current Wish List**

[St. Gregory the Great Academy Wish List](#)