



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: November 14, 2021

TO: All Parents, Faculty, and Staff

FROM: Dr. Jason C. Briggs, Principal

RE: **SGGA Life Update #8**

As we begin the second half of the month of November, sunsets still seem shockingly early as we continue to march through autumn toward winter. Advent is on the horizon, however, and we can take comfort that into these longest nights of the year will be born the Light of the World. With this in mind, please note the following:

8.1 – What Do the Next Several Weeks Hold for Us? – There have been predictions that COVID-19 cases will increase during the next 6-8 weeks because of more indoor activities, travel, and holiday gatherings. Whether or not this comes to fruition remains to be seen; however, BE PREPARED! **Plan ahead NOW as to who would pick up your child during the school day if we must have an early dismissal and who will be responsible for your child while he or she is on remote learning.** As indoor sports seasons get underway, it is reasonable to anticipate that we may see an increase in COVID-19 exposure via this vector. I hope that this will be minimal. Still, I bring this up because no one should be shocked if you receive a message that your child's team needs to quarantine, as I anticipate that this may be our most vulnerable vector. It is the nature of the beast, so to speak.

BOTTOM LINE: COVID-19 numbers have been good for us In fact they have been excellent, with no cases in the past 30 days and very few quarantines. Will it stay this way? I have no idea. We are ready to adjust as and if needed.

8.2 – Quarantine Guidelines – I hope that this paragraph winds up being a waste of time for me to write because we do not need to use any of its information. As long as we remain at the **YELLOW** risk level in Mercer County, the following timelines will remain in place for one-time COVID-19 exposure:

- 1. NOT VACCINATED STUDENTS:** Students will quarantine outside of school for 10 days from the established date of exposure, or 7 days if the student has a negative result from a PCR test taken on Day 5 or later.



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2. **VACCINATED STUDENTS:** Students will not need to quarantine for Days 1-5, but must be tested on Day 4 or 5 to continue to avoid quarantine.

These are not my rules, ladies and gentlemen; they are from the Health Department. Be aware that if Mercer County moves to the **ORANGE** risk level, these timelines will become longer.

If your child is exposed to COVID-19 and/or is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, please notify me right away. Upon being notified, I will compute the official timeline for school purposes and send it to you. **This will include the allowable dates for testing.** Not all pediatricians are familiar with our protocols and the recommendations of the Hamilton Township Division of Health. Remember, it is your pediatrician's job to deal with the health aspects of COVID-19 and my job to deal with the timelines for our school. I do not set the policies for your pediatrician's office because I am not responsible for his/her patients, and he/she does not set the policies for our school because he/she is not responsible for our students. **IF YOU DO NOT CHECK WITH ME FIRST PRIOR TO TESTING IN THE CASE OF COVID-19 EXPOSURE, YOU RISK WASTING TIME, MONEY, AND NASAL SECRETIONS BECAUSE YOU HAD THE TESTING COMPLETED TOO EARLY.** Check with us first, because all of the ranting and raving and phone calls to others in the world are not going to change anything unless I made a mathematical mistake in the computations.

BOTTOM LINE: Our current quarantine guidelines are not a secret, so please have a contingency plan in place. I will compute a child's return to school timeline upon being notified of a case/exposure. Check with us **BEFORE** scheduling any testing that you want to use to affect the return to school timeline. I **guarantee** that screaming and insulting any SGA staff member will not change the timeline.

8.3 – When Will Things Start to Resemble the “Before Times?” – At some point during Advent, Grades 7 and 8 are likely going to return to attending Mass in Church on weeks that outdoor Mass cannot occur. The fact of the situation is that students age 12 and up have had 5+ months to be vaccinated if their parents so desired, so at some point it becomes time to begin peeling away some of the more stringent mitigation protocols. There is a difference between providing a COVID-19 bubble for entire groups of students who are ineligible for vaccination even if their parents desire it and maintaining a COVID-19 bubble for students whose parents have decided to not vaccinate. In reality, there are risks involved with COVID-19 vaccination and risks involved with not vaccinating for COVID-19. From the moment you get out of bed each day, there are risks; they vary in severity and likelihood. The bottom line is that parents need to decide which risks are reasonable for them to accept and to what degree. No decision is without its logical consequences. Certain things may or may not happen for vaccinated students, and certain things may or may not happen for non-vaccinated students. If you buy a car that costs \$30k and I buy a car that costs \$130k (not likely, of course), I cannot demand that I have the same car payment as you. We can both drive to the shore, but our experiences along the way may be different in some respects.

Of course, we are not going to be reckless about this and will not be throwing all caution to the wind and allowing situations that are inherently riskier to occur. We are not going to stuff the whole school into a common indoor area. Maskless activities like eating and activities like singing that expel lots of droplets by their nature remain problematic and will be the last mitigation protocols to go; however, short periods of time where masks can be worn and proper spacing can be enforced are going to wind up being the first places where we drop mitigation strategies. For now, we will not be changing any protocols for Grades 6 and below. The way I see it (and I could be wrong), there is a group who wish to vaccinate their children now

and there is probably a group who want to wait to do so after the holidays. By the end of January/beginning of February, however, once parents of the age 5-11 group have had a reasonable time to consider vaccination and to vaccinate if desired, some of the more stringent mitigation protocols will also begin to be peeled away.

Keep in mind, of course, that this will depend on COVID-19 numbers in our county and our school. Changes may need to be made at any time, and with very little notice. Moving toward what things looked like in the before times may not be a straight line.

BOTTOM LINE: Vaccination remains a choice that every parent needs to make. I cannot guarantee that some things will not affect vaccinated and non-vaccinated students differently (such as quarantines); however, there will never be a time that any intentional distinction will be made. We are going to make cautious and deliberate steps toward school life as it was in the “before times.” I will make any possible accommodations to make vaccination easier to accomplish for those who wish it, and I will make any possible accommodations to avoid any difference in experience for students whose parents choose not to vaccinate.

REMINDER, if and when your child is fully vaccinated, please report his/her vaccination status by using [THIS LINK](#)

8.4 – Staffing – Some staffing changes have occurred over the past couple of weeks. Mrs. McKenna Hoover resigned from her position as the Classroom Assistant for 1C. She is being succeeded by Mrs. Gina Todd. Mrs. Todd was a 4th Grade teacher in the East Windsor School District during the period 2002-2009, and more recently has served as a substitute teacher at a private preschool and in the Robbinsville School District. Preschool 3 had some adjustments with the classroom assistants. Thankfully, as of last week, Mrs. Kerriann Caudill has joined the Preschool 3 team. Mrs. Caudill has a daughter at SGGA and also has a background as a licensed practical nurse (LPN). Finally, the 2B Classroom Assistant position is soon to be filled. I anticipate that Miss Gabriella Price will assume this position, hopefully sometime this week once the onboarding process is complete. Miss Price graduated with her BA in Psychology in May 2021 and began working toward her degree in School Counseling this semester at Rider University. I ask that you extend a warm welcome to our newest SGGA staff members!.

BOTTOM LINE: It takes time to find the right fit for openings at SGGA, but thankfully we have found three excellent candidates over the past couple of weeks for openings that we had.

8.5 – Important Upcoming Dates – Please note the following, as appropriate:

- 11/19/2021 - Trimester 1 ends
- 11/19/2021 - Thanksgiving Food Drive ends
- 11/24/2021 - 12:30 dismissal for Preschool 3 – Grade 8 – **THERE IS NO EDP ON THIS DATE**
- 11/25&26/2021 - Thanksgiving Recess
- 11/28/2021 - First Sunday of Advent

12/08/2021

- **SCHOOL CLOSED** – Immaculate Conception is a holiday in all diocesan schools