



# St. Gregory the Great Academy

*A Ministry of the Church of St. Gregory the Great*

4680 Nottingham Way, Hamilton Square, NJ 08690

Voice: 609-587-1131

Fax: 609-587-0322

Web: [www.stgregorythegreatacademy.org](http://www.stgregorythegreatacademy.org)

Rev. Michael Hall, Pastor

Dr. Jason C. Briggs, Principal

Mrs. Michele L. Rivera, Assistant Principal

---

August 26, 2024

Dear St. Gregory the Great Academy Families,

Peace be with you! I think that we lost a week of summer. Seriously, did anyone else wake up one morning last week, step outside, and think that we were already well into September? Maybe you slept with the windows open and the crisp breeze made you think of pumpkin spice (truly one of the most awful flavors ever invented!) Perhaps the calendar did not deceive us, and there actually are going to be four full weeks of August this year, but it sure did not seem like it. Of course, as I am writing this letter an Excessive Heat Watch popped up in my inbox, so it seems that those crisp days are gone for now. I hope that this summer season has brought you refreshment, joy, and a welcomed change of pace for several weeks. Perhaps your child is secretly (or overtly) looking forward to getting back into the routine of a new school year. For some families, this will be the very first year for their children at St. Gregory the Great Academy, and we welcome you to the family. On the other hand, for some families, this will be the final first day of school for their "last" child at our school. Where has the time gone?

We have had a busy summer here at school, and I am grateful to everyone who worked this summer to prepare our school for a successful opening. I am eagerly anticipating the opening of school this year in a few short days, as I am anxious to begin the important work of education that God has called us to. As I have mentioned many times in the past, when I see our students walk through our doors each day, I often wonder what it is that they are dreaming about for the future. I cannot walk through the hallways these days and see the shiny floors, stacks of books, piles of new supplies, and desks set up for each student and not be filled with anticipation about the new school year (not to mention the aroma of a brand new box of crayons is a wonder all its own.) We are all so excited that in a few days, the rooms will be filled with students! The quiet and change of pace that comes with summer are nice for a time; however, by the middle of August, it starts to seem way too quiet around here! As the night music of the crickets and cicadas reaches its zenith during these late August evenings, I anxiously await the first day of school.

These days are challenging ones for our students, for you, and for our society as a whole. Our nation continues to suffer from caustic disagreement which too often transforms into poisonous words, ideologies, and actions. There are too few examples of respectful disagreement for our children to witness. It is easy to become discouraged, especially when it seems like disagreement so often degenerates into loathing and



**A 2014 National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence**

hate. It is also no secret that the world of education is facing more challenges at this time than it has in a long time (maybe even ever.) Social media, A.I., bullying, vaping, irresponsibility – we hear all of the words. It is easy to become discouraged. Still, as Catholic Christians, we are people of hope. This year’s theme, **“Faith Grows Through SGGA’s Prayer and Actions”** calls into focus the role that each of us has as a follower of Jesus. Our Lord’s message is timeless throughout history. **SGGA exists to partner with parents to get their children to Heaven.** This is the purpose of a Catholic school; it is why we do what we do. The definition of prayer is “The raising of one's mind and heart to God.” If we are to pave the road to Heaven for our children, it must begin with a foundation of prayer. We must also remember that we exist in the world as it is, and not as it ought to be. Those poisonous words & ideologies that I mentioned before can be countered with our actions. It is incredibly easy to judge a situation that one has never been in. It is tempting to jump into an echo chamber. Our conscience helps us to look inside ourselves and assess our actions. This year, we will marry prayer to action, for to have one without the other roughens our path.

It is not simply by random chance that we are all called to this place; God has put into motion His plan for us to work in partnership. We are incredibly blessed – students, parents, faculty, and staff – to come to this place. God’s hand is at work here. I see it in our graduates as they continue their life journeys. I see it in students who come here, learn about the faith, and ask to be baptized or to complete their sacraments of initiation. I see it in our youngest students as they learn the basics of the faith. I see it in the child who needs guidance because not only is a behavior unacceptable but it is also contrary to God’s plan. Your child is here because we are partners. While home and school have different roles, we work together to love, protect, and help each child grow. It is my hope that we help each other grow as disciples over the course of the 2024-2025 school year.

As we prepare for our new school year, we welcome our newest faculty members. **Mrs. Barrett Stillitano**, our new Preschool 4 Blue teacher, is not exactly new to SGGA since she was an educational assistant in the classroom last school year. Prior to coming to SGGA, Mrs. Stillitano worked with preschoolers at the Goddard School as well as taught Dance to students of all ages. She earned an A.A. from American InterContinental University and is currently enrolled in a CDA certification program. Also joining the Preschool 4 team is **Mrs. Bernadette Burns**, who will be our Preschool 4 White teacher. Mrs. Burns was a preschool supervisor at The Children's Center of Lawrenceville for many years. She earned a B.S. from Immaculata College and an M.Ed. from Trenton State College. Mrs. Burns returns to Catholic education, as she taught at Incarnation School in Ewing early in her career. **Mrs. Julia Stozub** is our new 2A teacher. She earned a Bachelor’s Diploma from the Ukrainian National Pedagogical University and an M.S. from the City University of New York. Mrs. Stozub’s prior teaching experience was in the New York City School District prior to relocating to the area. **Miss Shelby Lapierre** is our new 3A teacher and will be teaching ELA, Religion, Science, and Social Studies classes. Miss Lapierre earned her B.A. from Rider University and she comes to us after working as a substitute teacher in several districts in northern Monmouth County. She is also a graduate of one of our diocesan high schools, St. John Vianney in Holmdel.

Finally, we are happy to welcome back **Mr. Laik Green**, who was with us in a long-term capacity last school year while Mrs. Kane was on maternity leave. Mr. Green is a 2022 graduate of Saint Francis College, Brooklyn Heights, NY where he earned a B.A. He is currently enrolled in New Jersey’s Alternate Route to Teaching program. Mr. Green will be teaching Religion and Social Studies to Grades 6 and 7 this year. I am certain that you will join me in welcoming our newest faculty members to our Academy family. Additionally, a few of our returning faculty members will begin adjusted assignments, with Mrs. Hoover moving to middle school, Mrs. Ratzlaff working exclusively with Grades 1 and 2 ELA Lab students as well as teaching a second grade Religion class, and Mrs. Lim working exclusively with Grades 3 and 4 ELA Lab students. We are also happy to welcome **Mrs. Megan Bladel** as our 2A Assistant and **Mrs. Patricia Wilkolaski** to the Preschool 3 Assistant team. Finally, I would like to introduce **Mr. Adriel Fernandez** who will be facilitating a new biweekly Resiliency and Communication program for Grades 7 and 8. Mr. Fernandez earned a B.A. from American Military University and an M.S. from St. John’s University. He is a New Jersey Licensed Associate Counselor (LAC), a Nationally Certified Counselor (NCC), and a Certified Anxiety Informed Professional (CAIP.) I am certain that you will join me in welcoming our newest faculty members to our Academy family.

Once again, we took advantage of the summer months to make needed improvements to the Academy building. The replacement of the carpet in the Sr. Georgine Media Center (library) is racing to its conclusion before the first day of school. This project was long overdue, and the total cost for the project is \$12,424.36. The project was funded by \$11,750.00 from the 2024 SGG Gala, with the remaining amount funded by a donation from a generous SGG family. The next phase of the multi-year window replacement project took place in Room 207 this summer. The cost to replace the windows in one classroom is \$22,250.00 and the cost of the required replacement of the room’s air conditioning system (necessary since the existing air conditioning is built into the old windows) is \$14,619.45. This classroom work has been funded from the regular operating budget (I imagine that these numbers make it clear why we are only able to complete one classroom per summer!) The third major project was the replacement of the final two old sets of doors on the Academy building. The cost to replace these doors was \$33,450.00 which was funded by the New Jersey Nonprofit Security Grant Program (with a net zero cost to us.) It must be noted that we are able to make these improvements because of the success of our Annual Family Carnival and the SGG Gala. 100% of the proceeds from both the carnival and the gala flow into the operation of the Academy. (In other words, this is why we can have nice things.) Additional important information continues below

**I. 2024-2025 CLERGY, ADMINISTRATION, FACULTY, AND STAFF**

Rev. Michael Hall	Pastor		Returned to SGG 2020
<i>B.A., St. Mary’s Seminary and University; M.Div., St. Mary’s Seminary and University</i>			
Rev. Cyril R. Albert Johnson	Parochial Vicar		Started at SGG 2023
<i>B.A., Good Shepherd Seminary; M.Div., Good Shepherd Seminary</i>			
Dr. Jason C. Briggs	Principal	Latin 7 & 8	Started at SGG 2005
<i>B.A., Caldwell College; M.A., Caldwell College; M.A., Georgian Court University; Ed.D., Neumann University</i>			
Mrs. Michele Rivera	Assistant Principal	Social Studies 8	Started at SGG 2005
<i>B.S., Elizabethtown College; M.Ed., The College of New Jersey</i>			

Mrs. Lisamarie Vannozi <i>B.Psy., College of Staten Island; M.S., Touro College</i>	Academy Counselor	Started at SGGA 2019
Mrs. Mary Lynn Adams	Academy Admin Assistant	Started at SGGA 2000
Mrs. Tracy O'Neill	Academy Admin Assistant/EDP Coordinator	Started at SGGA 2009
Ofc. James Vardanega	Security Officer	Started at SGGA 2018
To be assigned by ESCNJ	Academy Nurse	
Mrs. Regina Ratzlaff <i>B.S., Trenton State College; M.Ed., The College of New Jersey</i>	Director of Services; Religion 2; ELA Lab 1 & 2	Started at SGGA 1998
Mrs. Cheryl Kobren <i>C.D.A., National Credentialing Program</i>	Pre3 Blue	Started at SGGA 1998
Ms. Maureen Smitley <i>B.A., Trenton State College; M.A., Trenton State College</i>	Pre3 White	Started at SGGA 1983
Mrs. Barrett Stillitano <i>A.A., American InterContinental University</i>	Pre4 Blue	Started at SGGA 2023
Mrs. Bernadette Burns <i>B.S., Immaculata College; M.Ed., Trenton State College</i>	Pre4 White	Started at SGGA 2024
Miss Kathleen Holub <i>B.S., Trenton State College</i>	KA Self-Contained	Started at SGGA 2000
Mrs. Nancy Darrah <i>B.A., Rider University</i>	KB Self-Contained	Started at SGGA 2007
Mrs. Amanda Mantuano <i>B.A., Rider University</i>	KC Self-Contained	Started at SGGA 2020
Miss Sloane Lobell <i>B.A., Rowan University</i>	1A Self-Contained	Started at SGGA 2019
Mrs. Gina Todd <i>B.S., University of Delaware</i>	1B Self-Contained	Started at SGGA 2021
Mrs. Julia Stozub <i>B.Dip., Ukrainian National Pedagogical University; M.S., City University of New York</i>	2A Self-Contained	Started at SGGA 2024
Mrs. Maureen Satz <i>B.S., Rider University; M.B.A., Rider University; M.A.T., The College of New Jersey</i>	2B Self-Contained	Started at SGGA 2020
Miss Shelby Lapierre <i>B.A., Rider University</i>	3A Religion 3; English Language Arts 3; Science 3; Social Studies 3	Started at SGGA 2024
Mrs. Annabelle Certo <i>B.A., Rutgers University</i>	3B Religion 3; English Language Arts 3; Math 3	Started at SGGA 2018
Miss Amanda Smith <i>B.S., Albright College; M.A., Drexel University</i>	4A Math 4; Science 4; Social Studies 4	Started at SGGA 2022
Sister Natalie Panas, OSF <i>B.A., Neumann College; M.Ed., Boston University; M.A., Georgian Court University</i>	4B Religion 4; English Language Arts 4	Started at SGGA 1983
Mrs. Jennifer Gallagher '02 <i>B.A., Neumann University, M.A. St. Joseph's University</i>	5A Science 5 & 6	Started at SGGA 2010
Mrs. Caitlin Kane '01 <i>B.A., University of Scranton</i>	5B Religion 5; English Language Arts 5 & 6; Social Studies 5	Started at SGGA 2022

Mrs. Kelly O’Keefe <i>B.S., St. John’s University; M.S., St. John’s University</i>	6A	English Language Arts 5 & 6	Started at SGGA 2012
Mr. Laik Green <i>B.A., St. Francis College</i>	6B	Religion 7; Social Studies 6 & 7	Started at SGGA 2024
Mrs. Dana Hoover <i>B.A., Gwynedd-Mercy University</i>	6C	Religion 6; Math 5 & 6	Started at SGGA 2017
Mrs. Jennifer Biele <i>B.A., Belmont Abbey College</i>	7A	Religion 6; Science 7 & 8	Started at SGGA 2018
Mrs. Angela Cooper <i>B.S., Trenton State College</i>	7B	Math 6, 7, & 8	Started at SGGA 2019
Mrs. Veronica Ciardiello <i>B.A., College of Staten Island; M.S., St. John’s University.</i>	8A	English Language Arts 7 & 8	Started at SGGA 2023
Mrs. Brittany DiGregorio <i>B.A., Richard Stockton College</i>	8B	Religion 7 & 8; Math 5 & 7	Started at SGGA 2014
Mrs. Amy Parrotta <i>B.S., The College of New Jersey</i>	8C	English Language Arts 6, 7, & 8; Math 8	Started at SGGA 2009
Mrs. Klaudia Lim <i>B.A., Rider University</i>		ELA Lab 3 & 4	Started at SGGA 2023
Mrs. Christine Fuccello <i>B.S., Trenton State College; M.Ed., Trenton State College</i>		Physical Education P3-8	Started at SGGA 2005
Mrs. Katherine Larason ‘03 <i>B.F.A., The College of New Jersey</i>		Art P3-8	Started at SGGA 2015
Sister Barbara Furst, OSF <i>B.S., The College of New Jersey; M.E., The College of New Jersey; M.A., Georgian Court University</i>		Library K-4	Started at SGGA 2013
Mrs. Kristin Bergin <i>B.A., Trenton State College; M.A., Trenton State College</i>		Music P3-8	Started at SGGA 2013
Mrs. Karen Stives ‘87 <i>B.S., Wesley College</i>		STEM K-7	Started at SGGA 1998
Mrs. Loretta Palmieri <i>B.A., State Univ. of Oneonta; M.S., C.W. Post College</i>		Spanish P3-8	Started at SGGA 2001
Mrs. Kari Huang <i>B.A., Adelphi University</i>		Mandarin Chinese 5 & 6	Started at SGGA 2017
Mr. Adriel Fernandez <i>B.A., American Military University; M.S. St. John’s University</i>		Resiliency & Communication 7 & 8	Started at SGGA 2024
Mrs. Donna Haggerty <i>B.A., Rutgers University</i>		Math 6	Started at SGGA 2024
Ms. Darlene Owl		Assistant – Preschool 3	Started at SGGA 2022
Mrs. Hanna Parkhomenko <i>B.Dip., Vinnytsia State Pedagogical University; SpDip., Vinnytsia State Pedagogical University</i>		Assistant – Preschool 3	Started at SGGA 2023
Mrs. Patricia Wilkolaski <i>C.D.A., National Credentialing Program</i>		Assistant – Preschool 3	Started at SGGA 2024
Mrs. McKenna Hoover <i>B.A., Rutgers University</i>		Assistant – Preschool 3	Started at SGGA 2024
Mrs. Jeannine Furman <i>B.A., Trenton State College</i>		Assistant – Preschool 4	Started at SGGA 2016

Miss Olivia Lukowicz '13 <i>B.A., Marywood University</i>	Assistant – Preschool 4	Started at SGGA 2021
Mrs. Victoria Halloran <i>B.A., Kean University; B.F.A., California Institute of the Arts</i>	Assistant – Preschool 4	Started at SGGA 2020
Mr. Colin O'Neill '14 <i>A.A., Mercer County Community College</i>	Assistant – Preschool 4	Started at SGGA 2021
Mrs. Donna O'Malley <i>B.A., Trenton State College</i>	Assistant – Preschool 4	Started at SGGA 2018
Mrs. Cecilia Plunkett	Assistant – Preschool 4	Started at SGGA 2023
Mrs. Jennifer Scenna <i>B.A., Rutgers University</i>	Educational Assistant – KA	Started at SGGA 2023
Mr. Trey Norwood '07 <i>B.A., St. Joseph University</i>	Educational Assistant – KB	Returned to SGGA 2024
Mrs. Ann McMullen <i>B.S., Slippery Rock State College</i>	Educational Assistant – KC	Returned to SGGA 2023
Mrs. Katherine Hughes <i>A.A., Brookdale College</i>	Educational Assistant – 1A	Started at SGGA 2014
Mrs. Allison Maffia <i>A.A., Mercer County Community College</i>	Educational Assistant – 1B	Started at SGGA 2016
Mrs. Megan Bladel <i>B.A., Marymount Manhattan College</i>	Educational Assistant – 2A	Started at SGGA 2024
Mrs. Helena Sharpley	Educational Assistant – 2B	Started at SGGA 2018
Mrs. Robin Muccia <i>B.A., Farleigh Dickinson University</i>	Support Teacher	Started at SGGA 1981
Mr. Jason Bonifazi	Maintenance Supervisor	
Mr. Cosmo Cavallaro	Groundskeeper	

*List current as of 8-25-2024*

## II. SCHOOL HOURS

School begins at 8:00AM for K-8 students, and the late bell rings at 8:05AM. Morning supervision is provided beginning at 7:30AM. K-8 Dismissal is at 2:30PM except for half-day sessions which is at 12:15PM. Full-day and morning-only preschool students may be dropped off beginning at 7:30AM and should be in their classrooms no later than 8:15AM. Morning-only preschool students dismiss at 11:30AM. Full-day preschool students dismiss at 3:00PM.

## III. EMERGENCY FORMS

At Back to School Night, every parent will receive a form that lists all of the emergency contact information that we have on file for your child. It is imperative that you review this information, make any corrections, sign the form, and return it to school the next day. **You MUST list two emergency contacts that are in addition to the primary parents/guardians.**

#### IV. OPENING MASS

We will have our traditional mass to open the school year on Friday, September 9, 2024, at 10:15AM. Parents are welcome to attend.

#### V. UNIFORMS

A. Shoe Policy: **All students in Grades 1-8 are to wear black Oxford-type, Sperry, or Mary Jane shoes. The distinction between shoes and sneakers has become blurry, and provided that the footwear is completely black it will be deemed acceptable unless it is backless.** The shoes are to be **TOTALLY BLACK** and **NON-SCUFF!** **Any shoe that is not entirely black or that is backless, healed, or clog-like is prohibited. NO CROCS!** Sneakers are to be worn by students in Grades 1-8 on Physical Education Day. Kindergarteners are to wear sneakers every day since they are wearing the Physical Education uniform all five days each week. There is no uniform policy for Preschoolers; HOWEVER, please be sure that all preschoolers are wearing sturdy sneakers each day. Dress and decorative footwear are not safe to run around in each day.

B. Grades 5-8: **Remember that the knit/polo shirts are NOT an option in Grades 5-8 for summer or winter uniforms.** For Grades 6-8 (NOT Grade 5), the blazer is an option for summer uniform (September, May, and June) and is mandatory **and must be worn EVERY DAY** (except for physical education day) when winter uniform begins on October 1, 2024. For Grade 5, the blazer is an OPTION at all times of the year.

C. **The summer uniform may be worn through Monday, September 30, 2024.** Please refer to the Family Handbook for the guidelines. If you need to purchase uniforms, please visit our website for the link to Flynn O'Hara uniform company. Remember that used uniforms are available through the school store for a small cost.

D. **The only acceptable articles of clothing that may be worn as part of the physical education uniform are the Flynn O'Hara pants/shirts OR the "official" SGGA Spirit Day tee shirts (any year).** Effective for 2024-2025, the following are no longer permitted to be worn as part of the physical education uniform: SGGA Spirit Wear, any school or CYO athletic team attire, any SGGA extra-curricular club or activity shirts. Each month, there will be one special day when students MAY wear SGGA Spirit Wear, any school or CYO athletic team attire, or any SGGA extra curricular club or activity shirts.

## VI. NOTICES/CALENDARS

Your portal for all important forms and documents is the (so very creatively named) “Forms and Docs” section of the website. This is your clearinghouse for links to online forms, flyers, and other important documents. Bookmark [FORMS AND DOCS](#) now!

## VII. BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Because of the number of food allergies and sensitivities among our student body, it has become necessary to develop and enforce clear guidelines as to the types of “treats” that will be acceptable for birthday celebrations. **The ONLY acceptable FOOD items that will be permitted for classroom birthday celebrations are pretzel nubs, fruit or vegetable trays, snack packages of pretzels, or snack packages of goldfish crackers. Keep in mind that birthday treats are not a requirement and that if you do choose to send in a treat a pencil or other small item is a perfectly acceptable alternative to food.** Any parent in any grade who wishes to send a treat for the class for a child’s birthday MUST contact the teacher at least 48 hours before making arrangements. The teachers have specific responsibilities they must carry out before distributing any food in the classroom. ANY OTHER TYPES OF TREATS (donut holes, cupcakes, candy, cakes, etc.) will NOT be distributed and will be returned home.

## VIII. FORGOTTEN ITEMS

If a forgotten item is brought to school, students will be called to pick up the item at either BREAK TIME or LUNCH TIME. We will not call students out of class “on demand” at other times unless it is an emergency. Emergencies, by definition, are serious and rare. Forgotten books, Chromebooks, water bottles, etc. are NOT emergencies. (We have extra copies of books, lots of paper and pencils, and water fountains.)

## IX. EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Please be advised that St. Gregory the Great Academy operates under procedures outlined in our Crisis Manual. Information will always be shared with parents on a timely basis; however, please remember that necessary steps to contact emergency personnel and secure students always take priority over distributing information. Our crisis procedures are NOT public information and are shared with the appropriate authorities. This includes plans for both securing the student body on campus and off campus. My primary method of communication is via email, and the emergency notification system is reserved for true emergencies and weather closings/delays. School Messenger will be used to send emails and texts for a variety of reasons; however, voice calls will be reserved for emergency notifications and other critical notices

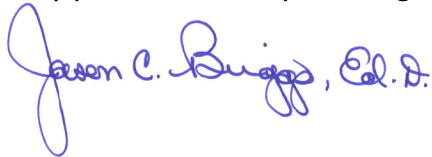


## X. EBOARD

The Academy uses the E-BOARD for student homework assignments. E-BOARD is a web-based program that allows teachers the ability to post homework to one central place for parents and students to easily be able to access. Please see the information in this packet under a separate cover. **The E-BOARD is NOT meant to be a replacement for students writing down their homework as instructed by their teachers; it is meant as a tool for PARENTS to double-check and confirm that what their children have written down is complete and correct.** Depending on the grade level, if parents allow children to rely solely on the E-BOARD and do not reinforce the need to take responsibility for writing assignments down as expected, this will create a bad habit of irresponsibility that will be very hard to break as they grow older.

A new school year brings promise, hope, and excitement. I started this message by lamenting how quickly the month of August passed by this year. I conclude by wondering how this could possibly be my 20<sup>th</sup> first day of school at SGGA. Take time to enjoy every day, week, and month of your child's school year, for this time will never come again. Mrs. Rivera and I look forward to our journey together this year with each of you. On behalf of Fr. Mike, the parish clergy and staff, and all of us at St. Gregory the Great Academy, welcome to the 2024-2025 school year! We are so glad that you are here!

May peace and every blessing be yours,



Jason C. Briggs, Ed.D.  
Principal

