

August 26, 2019

Greetings St. Gregory School Families!

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to the 2019-2020 school year. The teachers and staff are excited and look forward to the beginning of a new year. I am delighted for the opportunities that await your children this year; your child is attending a school with a tradition of excellence.

Everyone at St. Gregory School is committed to ensuring that your child achieves academic excellence and a love for their faith. As you send your child to his/her new teacher, and for many to a new school, I hope that you will join me in setting high expectations. I expect challenging and engaging instruction along with regular communication from teachers and the school. We are transitioning away from the Bloomz app and the teachers will now be using Class Dojo. This is a classroom communication app used to share class activities between parents and teachers. The teachers will **not** be using the messaging or behavior system on this app; instead, it will be used primarily for classroom stories. Please communicate with the teachers through email or phone calls only.

This year we welcomed a few new people to the St. Gregory School staff: Christine FitzGerald is our new preschool teacher and Dawn Hack is her classroom aide. In 1st grade, we welcomed Jan Benec and her new classroom aide Nancy Davis. The newest hire is Cassandra McHugh who will join our middle school team as the science teacher. Below is a short autobiography:

I am incredibly excited to begin the school year at St. Gregory's and be your middle school science teacher! I want to take this opportunity to give you a little background about myself. I graduated from Penn State, where I earned a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and a minor in Special Education and then a Master's degree in Learning, Design, & Technology! I also have certifications for Middle School Mathematics and Science. Lifelong learning is a goal I hope to continue to pursue! Before coming to St. Greg's I taught 4-8th grade math and science at St. Wendelin School. I also have held long-term substitute positions at North Allegheny, Hampton, and Ellwood City school districts teaching primarily in grades 4-8. Last year, my husband and I welcomed our first little one into the world. Romy will be 8 months old on September 1st! She has certainly given me a new perspective toward teaching! With school-home communication in mind, I plan to use Class Dojo to communicate on a more regular basis for all of the things that happen at school.

Please join me in welcoming all of them to our school family! There have been a few changes to some teachers' schedules. Mrs. Brittner moved to kindergarten as Mrs. McElree's aide. After almost 20 years, Mrs. Drew has decided to retire (although she can't stay away from this place, so we know she will be around)! Mrs. Karasack and Miss Guerriero will each teach 6th grade math now that we decided to split their math class. If you would like to join our staff, I am looking for additional help in our after-school care program from 3 – 6pm. Please contact me directly if you are interested in this position.

We are teaming up with the Zelienople Police Department again this year. Similar to last year, a Zelienople police officer will make a visit or two to the school each day. This has been a great partnership with the department for years. If you would like to contribute to this program, please send your donation (made out to St. Gregory School) in an envelope labeled "Adopt a Cop."

I feel that the school and parent relationship is critical. To help us ensure a successful school year, please make your child's prompt attendance to school a priority. Regular tardiness will be reported. Our new tardy policy states that "it is the responsibility of all parents to ensure their children arrive on time for school." Children who arrive late (after the 8:50 a.m. bell) MUST be signed in by an adult and REPORT DIRECTLY TO THE SCHOOL OFFICE TO RECEIVE A TARDY SLIP AND THEN REPORT TO THEIR HOMEROOM TEACHER BEFORE REPORTING TO CLASS. It is strongly suggested that a note explaining a reason for tardiness be presented. Excessive unexcused tardiness will result in the following actions: Primary/Intermediate students (Grades K-5): three late arrivals within one month will result in a parent meeting with the principal. Grades 6-8: three late arrivals within one month will result in a detention. Please expect homework regularly, and return all requested forms and documents to school promptly. And most importantly, please keep the lines of communication open with your child's teacher. Our instructional program will be far more effective with your active participation.

St. Gregory School's focus this year is on the virtue of love and attitude. We will express this love and respect to one another through a variety of activities and reminders throughout our day. Every day, we will use Sarah Young's *Jesus Calling for Kids*. These daily devotionals are written as if Jesus is speaking directly to a child's heart. We feel this will be a great way to connect scripture to day-to-day life. Our goal through this virtue focus and daily reflection is to promote our Catholic identity so that we can strengthen your child's bond with Jesus Christ. We will also continue our "fish sticker" program. Each time a child performs a good deed he/she will be rewarded with a fish sticker; they will then be able to turn in their stickers for various prizes.

Another important item to note is our arrival and dismissal plan for our preschoolers. Although you may not have a preschooler, this may affect you. Drop off is at the main school doors in the front of the school at 8:50am. Pick up will be at the same location at 11:30am. Therefore, if you volunteer for cafeteria duty, please do not park in this drop-off area. We ask that you either park across the street or in a parking lot. If you are volunteering in the cafeteria this year, please lend a hand to the teacher who supervises the lunch. You can do this by opening snacks and drinks, standing near the lunch tables during prayer time, and setting a good example during prayer as well. Additionally, if you are working the snack table, **only your child and one friend** are permitted at the snack table. **All students are to remain in their seats during lunch and are not permitted to walk around and visit with parents. Additionally, please do not clean up their tray when the students finish. We want the students to clean up after themselves.**

As I mentioned last year, Catholic schools are a bright light amid this darkness that we are experiencing as a church. I can assure you that we do everything to keep your children safe and happy. For those of you who have been a part of the school for a long time, you know the love and light that permeates this place. I promise you that we will keep that light and love shining bright. *We are the church*. This school is an example of Christ at work.

I look forward to seeing you at school activities. Your presence is not only welcomed, but it is greatly needed! Our PTG and the new Family Share Program is a great way to get involved. Everyone is part of the St. Gregory School family. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call.

God Bless,

Mrs. Harris