

August 24, 2021

Greetings St. Gregory School Family,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to another unusual but special 2021-2022 school year. While this is proving to be another year of challenges and changes, the staff and I are up for it! After the success of last year, we are more confident than ever about keeping your children safe and in school.

This year we are thrilled to welcome Tara Garczewski to the St. Gregory School staff! Mrs. Garczewski comes to us from Holy Spirit in New Castle. She has been teaching for many years and is certified in Bus-Computer-Info Technology PK-12, Technology Education PK-12, Elementary K-6, Educational Leadership, and Early Childhood N-3. Mrs. Garczewski also has a master's degree in Reading & Literacy Specialist/Coach K-12. Mrs. Garczewski will primarily help in grades 4 through 6, enrichment, and with small groups. With the help of Mrs. Dunn and Mrs. Garczewski, it is my intention to improve our existing Special Education program for our MTSS kids to ensure they receive the support they need.

Instruction and our daily routine should return to some normalcy this year. As I mentioned last year, we ask that you show patience and grace to our staff as we navigate another year of the pandemic. We will not be offering virtual learning this year unless your child has a medical excuse and is out for a prolonged period. This will only be necessary under certain medical circumstances and in cooperation with the teacher. **All students are required to wear a face mask.** If you want your child to go without a mask or wear a face shield instead, you must have a note from your child's pediatrician or specialist.

I'm sure many of you are already envisioning the changes we have had to make to ensure every child and staff member is as safe and protected as possible. The use of face masks, regular cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting, social distancing, and washing hands regularly are only some of the precautions in place to keep your child safe and healthy. However, even with the implementation of these safety protocols, St. Gregory School cannot guarantee that you/your child/a household member will not become infected with COVID-19 and attendance at St. Gregory School and/or participation in the school activity, sport, or event could increase you/your child/a household member's risk of contracting COVID-19. Therefore, the Diocese of Pittsburgh has put out a Memorandum of Understanding that you will all be expected to sign. Please have these back by this Friday, August 27<sup>th</sup>.

Students can be dropped off at the main entrance every morning beginning at 8:30am. If you need to drop off your child earlier, please use the cafeteria doors and drop them off at morning care. Be sure that your child is in the building by 8:50am.

St. Gregory School's focus this year is on the virtue of love. 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. Additionally, the emotional health and welfare of everyone are of utmost importance. We will be showing your child a lot of love and stability during this time of uncertainty.

We appreciate your support more than words can express. If you have any questions or concerns, always feel free to reach out to us. Finally, please take a minute to read the Open Letter to School Boards, Superintendents, and School Administrators in Western Pennsylvania that is included in this folder. As I said in my video, regardless of your opinions it is our goal to keep your child safe and in school. The masks allow us the flexibility to do this without the worry of shutting down classrooms and children getting ill.

As I mentioned before, Catholic schools are a bright light amid this chaos that we are experiencing in the world. 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.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Erin Rice". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mrs. Erin Rice