June 10, 2020

Dear Parents,

Many of you have heard that the Pennsylvania Department of Education has issued preliminary guidance for the opening of schools. The Department is requiring each school entity to develop, obtain School Board approval of, and post publicly a detailed Health and Safety Plan prior to opening schools. We want you to know that we are already working vigilantly to develop a plan in compliance with this guidance that will allow us to open our specialized classrooms and resume service delivery in the community as safely as possible.

The preliminary guidance also suggests that schools “may want to consider piloting approaches [to reopening] on a smaller scale to inform broader implementation in the fall” and that “such activities may begin as early as July 1, 2020.” Many of our families have inquired if we will be taking this approach, especially as some early childhood programs and summer camps are opening in Philadelphia. We appreciate how eager families are to end virtual learning and return to in-person instruction. For several reasons, we cannot resume in-person services this summer.

First, development and approval of a detailed Health and Safety Plan will require careful thought and engagement with experts to ensure that our plan includes all guidance provided by the Department of Education.

Second, implementing such a plan will require staff training, school and transportation preparation, and resource acquisition, all in a relatively short timeframe.

Third, shifting at this point from planned virtual instruction to in-person service delivery will require a commitment of teachers, paraprofessional, and transportation staff at the last minute and well after we have already committed staff for virtual learning.

Fourth, and most important, we are unwilling to conduct a “pilot” with our most vulnerable learners as the safety of our students and families is our first priority.

We realize the frustration that many of you will feel at this decision. As we continue with virtual programming for the summer, we ask for your patience and trust. Our foremost goal is to ensure that our students—your children—resume in-person services in just a very short while in a safe, supportive, and orderly manner. Please contact your service coordinator with additional questions.

Regards,

Veronica Williams
Director, Early Learning Services