



led by the spirit,
love that drive,
faith that leads,
We grow and share!

WELMANS/2016

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April 22, 2020

Dear Families,

Another two weeks has passed and today marks our fifth week of our closure. Over the past five weeks, I continue to work connecting with each of you, the Governance Committee, children, and staff daily on Facebook, and with bi-weekly emails and as updates arise.

In my last letter to you all, the Governor declared a stay at home order extending through April 30, 2020 and has now been extended through May 8, 2020. It was my hope that at this time I would have more guidance to give you regarding reopening from the state, however at this time I have heard nothing.

In the reopening plan for the nation, it was mentioned that child care facility reopenings will begin in phase two. No timeline was given when phase two is to begin as it is dependent on the downward slope of positive Covid19 diagnosis and will be driven regionally. Therefore, the Early Learning Governance committee and I are working on developing a soft reopening of the program, writing new policies and procedures, and setting a call back date for employees.

Life as we knew it five weeks ago will look very different when we reopen. We used to welcome families and approved visitors into our classrooms. Unfortunately, this will no longer be the case. We will need to reduce the numbers of individuals in the facility in order to reduce the opportunity for community spread.

How will the reopening look? It will be a "soft" opening. All classrooms will be open from the opening and closing of the center to prevent cross contamination. Schedules will be different as well as a result. Classroom size will be reduced to accommodate social distancing which recommends no more than 10 people in a space, including staff.

How will procedures be different? There will be set drop off and pick up times. There will be a designated staff person upon arrival who will complete the

health check. The health check will take place before dropping off is complete. The side entrance will be the only access to the facility so handwashing can be completed first in the women's bathroom and the health check completed. Children older than three years will then be sent to classrooms without the parents. Once the procedures are more defined, I will be developing a practice video and posting it on our Facebook page.

Staff and children over the age of three may be encouraged to wear masks. If your children have masks that they can bring from home, we will keep them at the center and launder them at center. If your child does not have a mask, we have them ordered and hope they will arrive on time. Remind the children that behind every mask is a grown-up who loves them. Additionally, children's naptime bedding will be laundered at the center as well.

Infants and toddler parents will have staff greet them at the classroom doors. Parents will not be allowed into the classrooms. Cubbies will be moved into the hallway so parents can put belongings in the cubby. Infant food will be put on top of the cubbies that will then be sanitized to be brought into the classroom.

Once the center closes each evening, some staff hours will be extended in order to complete laundry, disinfecting and cleaning procedures for the next day's operation.

How will children be called back? Children of essential employees will be called back first as defined by the state of Pennsylvania. In consultation with the Governance committee a hierarchy of other families will be developed with guidance of the state. So initially, if families can work remotely from home, their children will remain home until their businesses are lifted.

How will the classrooms look? We will reduce the number of toys available to children initially (the group will be smaller, so this should not be a problem). We will eliminate for in preschool, pre-kindergarten and school-age toys that will be difficult to sanitize regularly. Housekeeping will be transformed into something that will discourage toys that are to be held close to the face (like play food). Perhaps into doctor's offices, flower shops or gardens? Soft toys should be removed for the play spaces.

For pick – up, we will ask that families come to the classroom door. Please stay in the hallway and your child and their belongings will be brought to you. Sign – out sheets will be outside. Please bring a pen with you to sign your child out each day.

During this time, families of essential workers will be assessed tuition. Non – essential families will continue to not be assessed tuition payments until further notice the stay at home order is lifted. The only income we will have those of children of essential workers, through our subsidy reimbursement and donations.

As our closure continues, please know there is not a day or hour that you are not in my thoughts and prayers. When isolation comes to an end our world as we knew it will be different. However, we will be stronger and appreciate the time we have missed with each other, the children, and families. Until then, stay calm, stay home and stay safe!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Suzan Seibel". The signature is written in a cursive style with some loops and flourishes.

Suzan L. Seibel Willard, Program Director,
in consultation and approval of the St. James Lutheran Church Early Learning
Governance Committee