



St. Raphael Preschool

1154 Chislett Street
Pittsburgh, Pa 15206

May 13, 2020

Dear St. Raphael Preschool Families,

On behalf of myself and Mrs. Kate Taylor, Principal of Sacred Heart Elementary School and Director of St. Raphael Preschool, I hope each of you are well during this pandemic. I know there has been great change to our normal everyday lives. No one knows that better than those of you raising young children.

One of the many challenges that all schools are facing is how to educate small children, who may not comprehend the concept of social distancing, while trying to assure everyone's safety. With this in mind, I have had to make a difficult decision for next year's preschool that weighs heavily on my heart. For the safety of our children and faculty, St. Raphael's preschool program will not open for the 2020-2021 school year.

In the meantime, Mrs. Taylor has created a special virtual classroom for St. Raphael Preschool children within the existing program at Sacred Heart Elementary School where they have the technology to provide such a program. I am deeply grateful to Mrs. Taylor for immediately providing this opportunity for our children. Mrs. Taylor and I warmly invite you to participate in St. Raphael's Virtual Preschool taught by Mrs. Maria Zielinski, whom many of you already know. Your family will be invited to enter this class DoJo (a Google platform designed for young children) via email in the next few days.

I personally communicated with Maryann Nene and Janice Snider today about this decision and assured them of our deep gratitude for their service over the years and especially acknowledged their love for you and your children. They share in our sadness but they assured me that they understand. We agreed that nothing is more important than the safety of our children during this pandemic. They will be communicating with you soon to let you know when and how your students can safely gather their personal belongings from St. Raphael and to update you on preschool graduation. I will also be in touch with you to ask your assistance on how we can thank Maryann and Jan in the special way they both deserve.

Without underestimating the loss we feel, I still want you to know that I will continue to explore the vision I shared with all of you about partnering with Carlow University so that St. Raphael might become a center for a premier early childhood and preschool program. Obviously, due to the nature of COVID-19, those plans are currently on hold but not forgotten. Thank you for the trust you place in us at St. Raphael Preschool. I pledge my prayers for you while we experience another transition in the midst of these difficult times. I rely on your prayers for me and for our entire grouping. With this thought, I remain,

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Father Joseph M. Mele". The signature is written in black ink on a light-colored background.

Father Joe Mele
Administrator

cc: Mrs. Kate Taylor