July 29th, 2020

Dear GEMS Families,

We are writing to inform you about an update to our reopening plan for the 2020-2021 school year. The focus of our reopening plan is first and foremost the health safety of our students, families, and staff. Additional factors that weigh heavily in our decision making for reopening include the developmental learning needs of students, bussing, and physical space in our building. The health department advised that schools should not reopen unless there have been four consecutive weeks of a downward trend in new cases. New cases continue to rise rapidly in Columbus and it is not predicted that we will see a downward trend over the month of August. **As a result, we have adjusted our reopening plan and will begin the school year completely virtual on Tuesday, September 8.** We know that this change will be challenging for many of our families and we work diligently to maintain strong communication with each of you and work to connect you with resources within the GEMS and Columbus community.

Families will receive information about online learning, including work completion and attendance expectations, schedules, technology and food support towards the end of August. **After September 8th, we will continue to monitor the number of cases in Franklin county. If there are four consecutive weeks of a downward trend in cases, we will begin to make plans to move to our Level 3 hybrid model of instruction.** We will communicate with families regularly with respect to trends in the number of new coronavirus cases in Franklin county and how that impacts the likelihood of being able to move to a hybrid model in the Fall.

Families who elect to participate in the GEMS Online Academy will complete the first semester in this format. After the first semester families will have an opportunity to elect to continue in GEMS Online Academy or join the hybrid model of instruction, if applicable. If you are interested in enrolling your student in distance learning with the GEMS Online Academy for the entire semester, please email office@gemsschool.org or call 614-253-4000.

We are continuing to think through plans to best support our youngest students in primary grades and our students with special needs. Please be on the lookout for further communications specific to these groups of students.

Thank you,

GEMS Administration