
AMI/USA HOS 6.10 Zoom meeting

To share strategies, questions, and concerns regarding the COVID-19 outbreak, school closings and reopening, and remote learning among AMI/USA Heads of School.

6.10.2020

10 am PT / 12 noon CT / 1 pm ET

AGENDA

1. Alan Preece introduction and additional details.
2. Char Baccus, the head of school at Waypoint Montessori in Texas, joins us to share their preparations and strategies for reopening the school this past week. We will discuss ideas and solutions for addressing new regulations with regards to Montessori programs.
3. Heads of Schools participant Q & A and discussion.

MEETING NOTES

NAME	INFORMATION SHARED	ACTION ITEMS
	~23 participants	
Alan Preece	Invitation to share resources you have found helpful.	Contact welcome: alan@amiusa.org
	Upcoming AMI/USA HOS Zoom calls: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 6/17/2020: 10 am PT / 1 pm ET: Paula Lillard Preschlack• 6/24/2020: 10 am PT / 1 pm ET: Grae Baker	
	Introduces Char Baccus: head of school at Waypoint Montessori, TX, AMI primary diploma holder, M.Ed. MINT board member and Montessori child.	
Char Baccus	Document on the screen will be shared, along with list of materials and suppliers, and the thought process behind creating this document. School has been opened for one week and a half. Starting with toddler, primary and elementary – and also after school on campus. Has been working on creating this document over the last 3 months. Hope the document can be helpful for others to start preparing for reopening.	“Points to consider to open your Montessori school during COVID-19 pandemic”
	Check your state requirements and CDC requirements. Speak to licensing or accrediting organizations for any local requirements. Make sure to find out what is the ratio of staff to student at each level for your state. TX changed from June to CDC regulations.	
	Square footage also is regulated per student. TX: even though there are 20 children, this is considered 2 sets of 10 in a class. So, the outdoor time is split between both groups. Each group of 10 is always kept within a set parameter for distancing. This is a bit	

	challenging at the Toddler level. They use tape on the floor to indicate the spacing. Each table is labeled for an individual child.	
	Suggestion to get answers to questions regarding licensing and accrediting, in writing.	
	Create a document with your policy , with specifics that are required by your state documented in the document. A working document with school guidelines, to inform parents of the procedures for mask wearing, distancing, drop off/pick up procedures, etc. Provide this to parents and staff so they know ahead of time what is expected.	
	Waypoint is taking each child's temperature in the car upon arrival.	
	TX is allowing them to serve food to toddlers, but no longer family style. They have decided to have children bring all personal food.	
	Training for staff: rely on state agencies for resources. The state accrediting agency often has training resources available.	
	Logistics/items needed: start early and make plans, gather items, start now. Char will provide a list of items needed.	List of items purchased for COVID-19
	Masks - needed for staff and children. Some masks incorporate clear section, so younger children can see the mouth. These were given to all staff to have the option. These can be handmade. They also hand a mask to each person coming on to the school campus.	
	Thermometers - temperature often needs to be taken many times throughout the day. Various thermometers have been tested and the Infrared were found to be the most accurate and cost-effective. Each classroom has a thermometer. Should be on hand and tested in advance of the school opening. The temperatures are recorded each day.	
	Hand Sanitizer - multiples bottles throughout the school, follow CDC criteria. May be difficult to procure. Test in advance. Pump is recommended.	Link to recommended sanitizer provided.
	Industrial sanitizer - foggers (please note that these can set off the fire alarm), electrostatic, or ionic units (go through HVAC) recommended. Sprayer can do large surfaces quickly, and drying is quicker than disinfecting the whole classroom by hand each day or fogging. But they are only for indoors.	
	Outdoor sanitizing - playground, picnic tables, etc. daily cleaning. Consider and plan procedures for how to sanitizer the outdoor equipment. Lysol, Lysol wipes, bleach: covid-19 is fragile and will respond to Lysol. Check with state licensing for recommendations.	
	Gloves - used in toddler classes. Order extra gloves. Stockpile supplies. Items that you usually stock up at the beginning of the school year, get more.	
	State is recommending that disposable plates, cups are used for food service.	
	Calendar updates - Consider policies for visitors, observations, and parent/teacher conferences. Limit the number of adults on	

	campus. Parents have been informed that meet and greet, observations, group events, etc. will not be held this year until the virus is no longer a concern. Discuss with board and communicate this information to all stakeholders to make sure everyone is informed.	
	The children have adapted – masks can be hot in TX. Paper masks are a bit lighter. Adults are adjusting.	
	Air filters: unfortunately there is nothing on the market that can kill COVID-19, so items need to be cleaned daily.	
	Contracts: include pandemic in contract. School attorney should be consulted to make sure the staff and student contracts include all needed terms.	
	Staff informed about school calendar: will consider starting school two weeks early for 20-21. Consider a waiver (voluntary) for staff and parents, specifically for COVID-19. HR issue: check for state guidelines if a waiver is permitted or not.	
Paula Preschlack	Regarding contracts: have you explored any way to ask parents to make a commitment to the group/cohort for a certain term?	
Char Baccus	Parents will commit to taking the temperature in advance, and the child's temperature will be taken at school, per the waiver. The parent is committing to not being present at the school. Be as specific as possible. Their school's population has many medical professionals, many are reluctant to return children to school, but are trusting the school as they reopen. Reinforce the needed procedures through staff and family education regarding the state requirements.	
	Suggestion to refer to another school's handbook for reopening and modify it for your state. Make sure the school board and attorney have seen the handbook. The school can then guarantee that they will follow these procedures, in order to assure families.	
Question	Have families asked if you can hold their spot until they are comfortable coming back?	
Char Baccus	Yes, families have asked, but – the school and board determined that there is a deadline to sign the contract. If the contract is not signed by the deadline, then the spot cannot be held. Adhered to the contract, and did not give money back this spring. The board is currently discussing if any refunds will be given this fall if a similar school closing occurs. Tuition insurance is offered to families when enrolling in the school. Consider the school's needs, including staff retention. Contracts are needed. Tours of the school given on weekends and after school as need.	
JJ Giebel	Are you using touchless faucets, soap dispensers, and paper towel dispensers?	
Char Baccus	No, the touchless items were not cost effective for our school.	
	Distance learning: unfortunately, we will all probably need to return to distance learning this Fall. Some states are not reopening schools in August until the pandemic is under control.	
	We must prepare for a return to online learning. Build on the work that was done this spring. Waypoint has decided to create a 'Waypoint Google Classrooms' digital learning platform.	

	They also are preparing Montessori materials to loan and a lending library: materials and books are cleaned as they are returned. Teachers held zoom meetings to determine how to proceed by level.	
	Char had her own youtube channel where she read to the children regularly.	
	The school has decided to create 8 weeks of online learning for consistency between each program level. Teachers are creating these lessons now, in preparation for the need to go to online. Each class will meet via Zoom. Each level will have a corresponding packet to guide parents and creating materials to go home with each child, including pencils, beads, all materials that the child would need. Assistants should be involved in this planning.	
	We can do this! Char’s mother started one of the first Montessori training centers in the US. She has the longevity and understanding that we can get through this. Remember we need to have parents on board, so the school will survive. Teachers need to accommodate and understand that it may be necessary to go online again, they need to find a way to get comfortable with the new procedures.	
	Reimbursement: according to their contract, families are not to be reimbursed. Suggested reply to request for reimbursement from families – “I understand your concern, I hear you...” and weigh these requests with what would this look like for your school the year after next. Consider a tier system, or a percentage? By level? Discuss with your board, and then share the decision with families. At this time, Char can inform them that this is currently being discussed. If the family is not satisfied with this response, refer them to the board, let the board help you.	
	If you have to close school again, refer to your child care licensing to see if you can remain open for essential workers. There is a form for parents to sign up and the family would declare that they are an essential worker. Follow state child care licensing guidelines. She could not do this because the materials were not available (masks).	
	Consider allocating staff, inform them that they may be needed if the school remains open for essential child care. Have the conversation now so that staff know what to expect.	
	Guidelines for school in session: what if COVID-19 presents in your school? Consider these scenarios and provide clear strategies that the school will follow for the staff and families. Walk through each scenario and make sure the board is aware, and that licensing requirements can be accommodated. The parents have to sign off that they have seen the document (waiver on transparent classroom). They are informed that this is a working document.	
	Remember that all Positive COVID-19 tests must be reported by the schools to the state.	
	Calendar: remind parents, families and staff that groups are restricted and limited this year. Staff meetings: kept to 10 or under	

	(in person), online meetings, level meetings, etc. Book club for staff.	
	Communicate to parents, ahead of time, if there are any changes or updates to the procedures throughout the year.	
	Admissions: explain the adaptations that have been made in response to recent state licensing requirements.	
	As the head of school, you are the person who everyone likes to come to for help, “We are the fixers”. This is probably why you are in this position in the first place. Your job is to keep your community safe. To be there for your staff and families. Give yourself some grace and take some time to express your feelings. Acknowledge the limits and accept that you don’t have all the answers.	
Alan Preece	Expressing that the presentation gave a lot of inspiration and appreciation of Char’s graciousness in giving this presentation during such a busy time. Appreciation was expressed by members of the call in the chat feature.	
Char Baccus	The key is to let go of the need for control, she has to let go of this and acknowledge that we are not in control of everything or responsible for “curing COVID-19”. It’s ok to say I need help if feeling overwhelmed. Share your emotions with staff and families. It has been great to hear the children on campus this week. The children have adapted, they are loving it and happy to be back.	Char@waypointmontessori.org
Alan Preece	Please reach out if you have specific concerns or support needed. Thank you to all who were able to attend!	Alan@amiusa.org Lynne@amiusa.org
	Prepared by Lynne Breitenstein-Aliberti on 6/10/2020	