
AMI/USA HOS 6.24 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.

6.24.2020

10 am PT / 12 noon CT / 1 pm ET

AGENDA

1. Alan Preece introduction and additional details.
2. Austin Montessori School's Grae Baker and Dawn Michal join the call to share the Operating plan that was developed for the summer of 2020 and their strategies for reopening.
3. Heads of Schools participant Q & A and discussion.

MEETING NOTES

NAME	INFORMATION SHARED	ACTION ITEMS
	~38 participants	
Alan Preece	Introduction to meetings format, after today we will pause the weekly meetings to pause and see how conditions develop then will resume. Appreciation to Lynne and Samantha for their work on these calls. Welcome todays presenters.	Contact welcome: alan@amiusa.org
	Upcoming AMI/USA HOS Zoom calls – resumed after break.	
	Alan introduces Grae Baker and Dawn Michal – HOS and Director of Operations to speak about their work.	
Grae Baker	Thank you for having us. Will share their process for creating the operating plan to provide a common framework for discussion. Brief orientation to their school. Governance model became more inclusive as a consequence. Crisis management policies and procedures. Formed a long-standing risk-management team. Would recommend setting this up. Comprised of senior admin/teachers/board representatives.	Austin Montessori School Operating Plan Summer 2020
	Administrative and faculty resources have gone toward converting to the online learning. Has 3 campuses with all-day classes, summer programming was scheduled. Became clear that the families were suffering especially for younger ages – regarding online learning, wanted to reopen (responsibly) as soon as possible, mitigating the risk, and following safety procedures.	
	Started to develop summer plans in April – with all of the unknowns regarding if they would be able to reopen with mitigated risk. CDC guidelines for essential child care centers were used as a base line to create their plan. Early planning, teachers/guides included in making sure all things were considered.	

	Texas A+M published guidelines for online training that were used.	
	TX – begin phased reopening plan starting May 1, May 18 for schools – guidelines released. Schools can reopen June 1. All of these requirements were included in the operating plan. The plan was then sent to the Risk Management team and then to the Board.	
	The plan was then communicated to families. How to explain all of the considerations and procedures, acknowledging this is not a risk-free environment. Acknowledged mutual responsibility. Feedback from families received from survey, about 50% were comfortable with returning. Open format town hall – reviewed the Operating plan page by page. Acknowledge mutually shared responsibilities. Emphasis on acceptance of adherence to the plan.	
	Each family then met with individual guides and had a meeting to go over classroom specific routines. The summer experience is now being used to help plan for reopening the school this Fall. Inclusive of all perspectives.	
Dawn Michal	Timeline: early engagement was important. State of uncertainty – but engaging everyone helped with the comfort level of the parents. Including the Guides was also important. Two-hour training with the Guides, to review procedures. Acted out scenarios, for example arrival in the car line. Helped everyone to prepare for various.	
	Handouts are ready for Guide to hand to Parent if a child needed to be sent home. A binder was created for each classroom	
	Contactless thermometers, process to take temperature: temperatures are checked 3 times per day. If above 100.0 it would then checked with another thermometer. If still over, call parent. Isolation room, turned out contactless thermometer was not accurate.	
Grae Baker	Overview of 4 areas and preparations for Fall will be covered, then open up to questions.	
Dawn Michal	Child Screening: If a child has an elevated temperature at the home check, they share this with the school (form sent), then Dawn calls the family and sends the document. Automated but not sustainable, needs to be improved upon. Families are following through on the requested procedures.	
	Staff Screening: staff members are screened also, everyone must understand why it is necessary and importance of following through.	
	Cleaning: procedure is to clean/sanitize each material at this time, will need to update this because it will not be sustainable with a larger group. Electrostatic cleaner is used. Will meet CDC guidelines.	
Grae Baker	Important when thinking about Fall, looking at the different levels of risk and then adapting your procedures accordingly. Their social distancing model is the cohort group. The environment is adapted to allow for social distancing and cohorts to remain separate. Each child has individual table and work mat. When more children return in the Fall, they are considering each	

	classroom divided into 15-person cohort groups, can accommodate this on their campus and can be staffed if everyone is present. Working on how to address this contingency while remaining flexible. Flexible calendar, hybrid learning model. Conversations with staff, to assess availability. Have resources in reserve, have staff available to fill in if needed (their current challenge).	
	Open the forum to hear from other participants for information exchange.	
Jaye Flynn	How do you receive the parent's self-screening of the child each day before arrival? Electronic submission?	
Grae Baker	Wufoo – app that facilitates this submission. Google forms is the same thing. User friendly for parents.	Wufoo
Dawn Michal	App search – had to be careful about HEPA/FERPA re: identifying information. Cross reference of children's initials and names.	
Jaye Flynn	Who verifies the forms each day?	
Dawn Michal	I do – filtered by community to another sheet, cross-referenced, classrooms are called before arrival starts and informed who still needs to be screened. Attendance recorded into Transparent Classroom. If a child is not in attendance at school, the office calls the family to check in.	
Kathy Morrison	Would you share your parent screening questions?	Shared in weekly email.
Hawley Hoggard	Did you require parents to sign a waiver or a form of Informed Consent?	
Grae Baker	Have not required signing of waiver, last sentence in overview document is there with intention – wording shared in meeting.	
Dawn Michal	Modify handbook and not contract, no separate release unless you will act on it. Your contract probably already shows that agreement is to the terms in the handbook.	
JJ Griebel	Have you converted to touchless faucets, touchless dispenser, etc.?	
Grae Baker	No however commonly touched objects are sanitized multiple times throughout the day by an adult.	
Hawley Hoggard	Have you asked staff to limit their travel plans?	
Dawn Michal	Asked staff to minimize travel and inform school. If the staff member is traveling by plane, asked to quarantine for 2 weeks. Also, staff asked to inform school if in close contact (within 6 feet for more than 15 minutes) and will possibly be asked to quarantine if participating in a social protest.	
Bonnie Benham	Does the electronic submission replace a sign in sheet or do the parents also have to sign in?	
Grae Baker	There is no sign in but the daily screening must be submitted electronically – families have to arrive in carline. Process for late arrival laminated and put on all gates.	
Dawn Michal	Each classroom is a converted house – parents cannot enter into the classroom/school. Staff and use of office: staff work room, computers, copiers etc. Parameters were set for how to get help –	

	office is providing more support to teachers. Alternative work rooms set up to provide social distancing.	
Grae Baker	Parents and staff are largely cooperative, challenge is to minimize the amount of cohort mixing.	
Kathy Morrison	Would you review the 4 areas: Screening, cleaning, ?	
Grae Baker	Screening, cleaning, monitoring absenteeism, and contact tracing.	
Jules Laymen	In your primary classes what are your licensing ratio for children to adults and how does that work with your 15 children cohorts in the fall?	
Grae Baker	Licensing is 1:15 for primary. Currently there are two adults with each cohort, however this will have to change for the Fall.	
Alan Preece	How do you feel that your staff are coping - both physically and emotionally with the situation? Do you have any further steps you are considering taking to support them?	
Grae Baker	Right now, there is a lot about guiding children through times of trauma, will consider how to offer this for staff and families. Lean on one another, communications to encourage interdependence. Received a wide range of feedback from parents. Acknowledge that everyone is operating from a baseline of distress. Understanding that everyone is experiencing this differently. Starting to hear that cases are increasing, need to be hyper-attuned and careful with one another, understanding. Doing this now for smaller groups of staff and will be developing more support.	
Dawn Michal	Cohort groups now reporting feeling better about being present at school, much better than the online learning. When someone has to quarantine, this causes distress as well. Just being in the room with the children – children wanted to be back. Worried about the small cohort groups related to children’s independence, but has not been a problem.	
Tracy	How are you not mixing groups when you have siblings in different program levels? Or staff who teach elementary but have a child in primary...	
Grae Baker	For this summer, worked with families individually to determine if siblings should be included in the same cohort. Approach is a case by case basis, conversation with families.	
Dawn Michal	If a child in a cohort gets COVID-19 – everyone in cohort has to quarantine and the family does to0 (any siblings). If the sibling develops COVID-19 then their cohort would need to quarantine. Working on cases as diagnosed or if a doctor suggests COVID-19 can be assumed. Testing can take 5 days to come back. Several rapid test locations. Suggestion to locate nearby rapid testing locations. Results come back in 3 -5 days.	
Man Fai Lua	changed tuition policies? how to justify to families?	
Grae Baker	Difficult – from the beginning, have conveyed that the school will support families to the extent that the school is able to do so. In the spring, while acknowledging that early childhood online learning diminishes the experience. Tuition credit was given to apply to the next two years = predictable financial loss. For families that had immediate financial needs on top of regular	

	<p>financial aid: emergency fund for temporary financial setbacks (ISM recommendation) renewable every 60 days –Awards can be granted on temporary basis. Have not committed to any refunds or credits for next year. Considering no after school programming – if this is decided upon, the tuition will be adjusted for the all-day classes accordingly. The board identified the core tuition – 8 to 3 pm. Applied credit portion to the core tuition and considering this for the Fall semester. Typically, reenrollment contracts begin mid-January, at point of signing families are obligated to pay starting in June. Board approved waiver for families in need - can withdraw through July 15. Not broadcasted, but allowed in a case-by-case basis. Tuition refund plan for exceptional circumstances for families to withdraw without penalty is being considered. Simultaneous distance learning program is also being considered. As a non-profit, the school depends on tuition – finding the balance between supporting families, and willing to stretch their capacity.</p>	
Hawley Hoggard	Do you have permanent substitute teachers on your staff? Or do you call someone up as needed?	
Dawn Michal	Currently have both – for the summer designated 2 regular staff members and 1 sub for each community but will need to review this for the fall. The school has 3 staff that can sub in any given year. This is a challenge.	
Elena Heil	We are obligated to cohorts of 10 in Primary with same adult in each cohort. Enrollment is over 20 in each Primary which means needing 3 trained AMI guides for three cohorts, which we can't do. Are you allowing your guides to move from one cohort to another and if so, for how long? Additionally, are you rotating children from outdoors to inside and how does that work? My guides are concerned about consistency and think it will be very disruptive. We don't have space for three cohorts for each class.	
Grae Baker	For the summer, only one cohort / one Guide possible because of smaller numbers. For Fall planning, whole school will have to allow guides to move from one cohort to another. For example, the guide may spend the morning with one cohort, and the afternoon with the other. Considering how to move from outdoors to indoors, outdoor environment to be prepared for each classroom (with work tables, larger spaces etc). challenge is the heat in TX.	
Dawn Michal	Every Children's House has its own yard, their environment is conducive to keeping groups separate. So sharing outdoor space is not needed at this time. The way the campus is set up right now is a real benefit to keeping the groups separate.	
Jaye Flynn	are your children wearing masks?	
Grae Baker	No, the children are not but the Guides are wearing masks, occasionally removed if needed for the lesson (i.e. sandpaper letter lessons). For the Fall, masks most likely will not be used in 0-6, still being determined.	
Jules Layman	Can you tell us more specifically about how you handle late children?	

Grae Baker	If a family is late, they call the office, then park in the classroom's arrival area. Then the classroom is called by the office and the classroom assistant greets the child outside, using daily procedure.	
Kathy Morrison	Have you limited teacher personal days? How are you changing snack procedures?	
Grae Baker	No communal snack. Individualized or brought from home. For example, the assistant may prepare a snack for each individual child.	
Dawn Michal	Personal days: engaged staff, goal to give everyone real time off. Each guide was given 2 weeks in the summer, allocated some of the home learning time as time off, and added 5 additional days of sick leave for the Fall. (26 days can be accrued.) Sick leave policies may be changing, may be paying for sick days or deferring time off until spring.	
Bonnie Benham	Do you have specialists (art, learning coach, Spanish, etc) who usually come into the classroom? If so, how do you anticipate these adults coming in and out of classrooms?	
Grae Baker	No specialists except in Adolescent program.	
Delia	Could you briefly describe how a guide switches from one cohort to another?	
Grae Baker	Elementary: discussing either staggering cohorts, morning or afternoon, then online learning during the alternate time. Goal is for every child is able to interact in the prepared environment each day. Also looking at having everyone in campus at the same time, then having the Guides/or Children switch.	
Dawn Michal	For Children's House: goal is to have them attend every day. Elementary better for online/home learning. Guides are available for each cohort.	
Community, KY	Kentucky COVID-19 licensing regulations require cohorts of 10 for primary level with 6-foot dividers. Do you have knowledge of the best way to do this? We have 27 children in each primary classroom.	
Grae Baker	We are pursuing the following: Jim Fitzpatrick provided a drawing of a pony wall to divide the classroom has a plexiglass portion.	Drawing will be shared in weekly email.
Alan Preece	Outstanding presentation, appreciate and grateful to Grae and Dawn for sharing their work. There are remaining issues to be discussed, but grateful for this sharing. As mentioned, there will be a short break from the weekly meetings. Keep safe and well and let us know if there are any other issues you would like us to take a look at.	
	Please reach out if you have specific concerns or support needed. Thank you to all who were able to attend! Prepared by Lynne Breitenstein-Aliberti on 6/24/2020	Alan@amiusa.org Lynne@amiusa.org