

Points to consider to open your Montessori school during COVID-19 pandemic

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Inform your Board of any state requirements for licensing/accreditation.

1. Check with your state licensing to determine requirements.

- What are the ratios for staff to students at each program level?
- What are the square footage requirements at each program level? You must let parents know now - the restrictions you may have in the fall.
 - Caps on classrooms? Indoor Square footage requirements? Outdoor?
 - CDC recommendations for summer are (this may stay the same into fall).
 - Toddler 10:2 (cap at 10)
 - Primary 20:2 (cap at 20)
 - Elementary 20:2 (cap at 20)

2. What are the specific requirements according to your state, county and city in addition to licensing

- Any questions - get the answers in writing from your licensing inspector or accrediting agency in case it comes up again.
- All requirements and protocols MUST be backed by the licensing requirements for your state. For example: CDC recommends masks for children over 2, some states do not require this. It is hard to enforce, if your state does not require it.

3. How are you going to inform staff and parents of the new guidelines?

- Recommend creating a working document that gives guidance to everyone regarding these guidelines.
- It will include distancing protocols, face coverings, cleaning process, pick up procedures, taking temperatures (how and number of times a day), serving food or not and those protocols, how children are going to be placed into groups?

4. Training for staff on COVID-19

- Look for state training that is available, many are free at this time. We use Texas A & M Agri-Life training but many states may have a similar program.

5. Logistics of all areas of your campus on how you will incorporate protocols that are required by state.

- Masks are usually required by states to be worn by staff -you may also consider clear protective face coverings made of plastic to help with communication for young children. Children can see staff forming words and speaking clearly.
- Infrared thermometers- your staff need to be able to take temperatures quickly. We are taking temperatures while the children are in the car before they get out. You will need multiple thermometers to create a faster process. Make sure the thermometers take accurate temperatures (try out several kinds and order now.)
- Some states require that you record each child's temperature and to take temperature multiple times a day and record - how are you going to do this?
- Disposable masks need to be on hand in case staff have forgotten theirs, any visitor entering your campus must wear a mask.
- Hand Sanitizer- many states are requiring hand sanitizer (CDC recommends over 60% ethanol or 70% isopropanol) available across campuses before entering buildings, on the playground, front office.
- Industrial sanitizers- Foggers, electrostatic disinfectant sprayers, ionic units will sanitize large areas effectively for classrooms, administrative offices, libraries, gyms, playgrounds.
- Cleaning products: Lysol, Lysol wipes, hand washing soap, bleach, green products like Simple Green and Seventh Generation.
 - If using bleach solution to wash down areas - best practice is to check liquid with a litmus paper (chlorine test kit) the bleach solution with water should be between 100-200 PPM. The litmus paper has an expiration limit.
 - Do you have enough on hand?
- Additional products; gloves (sizes M & L), toilet paper, paper towels, disposable cups, plates, napkins, server ware on hand.
- Limiting visitors and parents? Observations, conferences (via zoom or digital platform) Many states require limits to any large group gatherings - you MUST communicate to parents any changes in the school calendar of events. Many states are prohibiting large gatherings and you need to consider if additional individuals on campus are going to benefit the community during COVID-19.
- Create a table with masks, hand sanitizer, thermometer for any visitors to use before entering the campus- post your requirements with the items.
- Air filters for HVAC units- do they have additional filters for COVID-19? Nothing is on the market at this time, however some filters are designed to filter out viruses.
- Playgrounds, benches, outdoor balls and outdoor tables need to be wiped down daily.

6. Contracts

- Staff contracts do they address COVID-19, calendar changes, requirements for safety protocols for themselves and community?
- Do you have a staff waiver or acknowledgement in place that addresses COVID-19 which needs to be formally acknowledged in writing?
- Parents - do you have clear verbiage that addresses pandemics, calendar changes, etc. in your contract. Do you need an addendum?
- Parent waiver of liability for COVID-19 for all children at your campus- needs to be formally acknowledged in writing.
- Recommend a Human Resource attorney that can also do contracts for parents.

7. Distance Learning

- If and when you have to go into a distance/remote learning situation what are your plans to engage your students at each level: Toddler, Primary and Elementary?
- Do you have a plan for the children? What are you considering as support?
- Will you have a digital platform ready? What does it look like?
- Will it have lessons, links, material? Are you providing supplies like pencils and paper? Do you have materials prepared to send out that can correspond to a lesson? Do you have a lending material program?
- How are you going to accommodate all levels? How will you organize this?
- How will you get the info to your parents if you have to shut down for many weeks?

Considerations

- Google classroom platform, along with your school's pre-made packets for a weekly basis roll out that has all corresponding material for students. In addition, zoom sessions multiple times a week, more detailed emails and additional curriculum for smaller group of children based on ability.
- Create the packets now with help from staff and assistants- copy and bag according to lesson and week per program level.
- Lending materials like ten bars and units - do you have enough to share to each family that can be cleaned and bagged and sent out (keep a record to help track who has checked out items).
- Create materials like parts of plant/animal or sandpaper letters for sound games in Primary, create language cards for Toddlers using images, Elementary lessons will need supportive material.
- Create videos of lessons given by leads that will be posted on a weekly basis (many lessons can be created over the summer - aim for all areas of the

albums/classrooms and these will be posted to every student at that level based on the weekly Google classroom platform).

- Links on videos or additional online websites that support the curriculum can be posted weekly with the video lessons created by guides.
- Videos can be shared and are stored on the Google classroom platform.
- Specialty teachers like art and music can also create these weekly lessons and videos along with the content that can be shared.
- Videos of books being read by assistants can be placed on the Google platform and an online library is now available.
- Elementary level- do you want lessons turned in and work accounted for to determine if the student is staying on grade level? Google classrooms has a capability for teachers to review and comment on work turned in.

8. Reimbursement

- What is your Board or owner considering if your school goes to distance learning?
- If you did not reimburse this past Spring, what has been the reaction towards this policy? Does your school believe it will keep this policy into the next school year based on the pandemic?
- Budget versus keeping your students and good will for 2021-22?
- How will this impact your overall finances? If you reimburse how do you make payroll?
- How will you communicate the decision to reimburse or not reimburse? Consider how a timely decision can help you families commit for the fall.
- If your school reimburses, do students still get to access online learning?

9. Staying Open

- Does your school hold child care licensing? Typically, most schools will have this designation for toddler and after care but some schools have child care licensing toddler through 6th grade.
- If your state allows you to remain open- what are the guidelines?
- Essential workers versus all families are eligible- this will be determined by state.
- Who works during this time - how are staff allocated? (some may have children in other schools)
- Additional compensation?
- Is this cost effective? Does the risk for families and staff outweigh the ability to keep students on campus and learning?
- Would you have assistants step in to watch students on campus while lead guides are conducting online learning?

- Would you be able to provide computers for students on campus to participate in zooms?
- Would you instruct parents that if their student remains on campus that the online learning from the school's platform must be done at home?

10. Guidelines of COVID-19 while your school is in session

- If you have kept students/classroom separated and an individual comes down with COVID-19 or has been exposed to COVID-19 what are your requirements per your state?
- Quarantine for 14 days, COVID-19 test before returning and letter from physician clearing the individual?
- Whole classroom must quarantine and any siblings in other areas of school - does their classroom quarantine?
- Staff member with children at your school gets COVID-19 - what is required? All classrooms the staff member serves and staff's children's classrooms are quarantined?
- Do you shut down the whole school?
- Report positive COVID-19 test results to the state - this is required by every state.

11. Calendar

- All functions like meet the teacher, potluck dinners, parent education nights, observation for parents, parent/teacher conferences, book fair, soirees etc. must be put on hold depending on your state's requirements for large group gatherings.
- Staff meetings - on hold if you have 10 or more in a group, or conduct multiple meetings or zoom meetings.
- Consider a book club for staff for staff development and come together on zoom to discuss.
- Communicate calendar changes to your staff and parents due to COVID-19.