



Weekly Heads of Small School Check In June 17, 2020

For additional support, reach out to amyw@prizmah.org

Resources Mentioned:

- As you communicate scenario plans and decision-making with your community over the coming weeks/months, please share your letters and plans with colleagues in [this crowdsourced folder](https://prizmah.org/sites/all/modules/civicrm/extern/url.php?u=30497&qid=2056767)
- Mental Health and Wellness <https://prizmah.org/mental-health-and-wellness>

Amy Wasser's update

- Last night, Prizmah hosted a conversation with board leaders of small schools. Board members want highlights of things working well in other small schools. They are also looking for best practices - salaries, enrollment, tuition/revenue/net tuition/budget numbers, % of financial tuition, etc. Odelia Epstein working on those.
- Art teachers getting together - almost 20 of them enjoying their time together. Music teachers or those responsible for music in your building are also asking for connection. If your music person is interested, send their email to Amy who will connect them and they'll take it from there.
- Anna Hartman - Chicago Federation and Paradigm Project. What can they do for day school early childhood programs? Anna's working on proposals about how Paradigm and Prizmah can be partners in the work, providing PD opportunities in the Fall. Likely, the charge will be something nominal.
- No update yet about the JCRIF grant acceptances. Over 100 applications for both financial aid and creative projects.
- Will additional funding be available for people who will be laid off after the PPP deadline or end of fiscal year? Prizmah is aware of the request.

How are we addressing the fears of teachers who are concerned about re-entering a physical space?

- Reaching out to individual teachers. Plan laying out what we think the return to the building might look like (even though we know that it will change). Those one on one conversations have enabled the individual accommodations.
- Spoke with the school's labor attorney (speak with your own), unless the teacher is actually ill with COVID, if they're simply afraid and we're taking all the precautions, they are essentially quitting and I can replace them with another teacher and not pay unemployment. Other schools in the area are taking that hardline stance.
- Pressure to give answers already.
- Health committee met last night to make major (Flexible!) decisions. "Adaptability quotient" in lieu of the EQ. Katharine Jensen said that Size is our Superpower. We don't need to create a three tiered system, we put in a fourth tier. As long as the state governor does not shut us down, children can come to the building with health

precautions in place. Staff will be monitoring and facilitating. Teachers who don't feel safe can still teach from home b/c staff is supervising.

- Streaming all classes so that any student can be at home. Teachers will update Google Classroom regularly.
- Teacher taught in the classroom, teacher is livestreaming the classroom, how will that student be a part of the group?
- Forward Thinking task force - here are the things we're considering.

PR

- Getting a lot of new inquiries to the Jewish day school given how well we're doing and have been doing, especially as the area public school reports are coming out with their plans for limited teaching.
- We have a maximum of X students/classroom. We know how to do that well. Let's share that with the world!
- If only there was a grant that could help us with that kind of marketing ;)
- We've had Zoom meetings with (hand picked) parents. Recorded testimonials of how parents have experienced the last three months. Beautiful interviews to use in our PR.
- Any uptick in HS interest? One head said yes - uptick in "nibbles". For another, our middle school enrollment has tripled (had 23, now have more than 60 and 8-10 more inquiries). It's our first time since we've started the school to pick and choose applicants. Want to keep everything small and controllable. That's why parents are coming to us now. Part of the interest is due to our low tuition compared to other schools in the area, and our expertise in online and distance learning.
- Getting messaging out is hard, especially given our bandwidth

Questions/concerns regarding Parents who are concerned about their students re-entering the building:

- Gave parents the choice to have their children learn from home. We'll charge them 1/2 of the in-person tuition. Our tuition is \$15,000 for HS and \$12,000 for MS. If the kids stay home, they will have access to our online curriculum and help from the teachers one-on-one, and access to all of the in-person classes that will be recorded. Our teachers manage the classes and grade all of the work, so we have to compensate them for the extra work. We are charging \$5000-\$6000 for MS and \$7500 for HS, which is half-price.
- parents are so overwhelmed with information that they are not reading things carefully. Be cautious in the way you're choosing to provide information. Multiple ways to share information is worthwhile.
- Schools are making visuals for parents. Graphs, portrait of stick figures, school blueprints, etc.

Additional topics

- Board has cut budget by 25% and cutting salaries by 10%. Working with a PR firm to send communication to community.
- Similar experience with enrollment questions. Last week we were feeling challenged about low enrollment, this week we have a lot of interest. Long-term sustainability is in question. Board breathing down my neck about the numbers.
 - Have teachers signed contracts? Yes. They are at-will contracts. And we want our teachers to be prepared.
 - Cutting staff positions, not teaching positions.
- **Back to School Training Ideas**
 - BetterLesson/UnitED is full. We really hope that it will be extended.
 - Changed standardized testing to formative rather than summative testing. Aimsweb program 3x/year. training on that program
 - PBL support will be a major focus for all grade levels. These were particularly helpful for student engagement during distance learning.
 - One of our teachers is leading virtual PD to teach her colleagues.
 - Health and safety precautions training
 - Asked the teachers what they're interested in. They want online training. We collected PD that's available in SEL, Google Classroom/Seesaw, engaging online learners. Gave them 15 choices and told them to sign up for 30 hours. They'll do it all summer, rather than in the Fall. August 3 is teacher work day. Aug 17 starts 2 days of individual parent meeting. Each grade will start on a different day the next week.

- Mental Health and Wellness Program
- Will there be additional times available for BetterLesson/UnitED? We really want some.
- Moving this meeting to every other week. In the meantime, reach out to the Small School Reshet or Amyw@prizmah.org with ideas, questions, concerns.