



# WEEKLY CHECK IN NOTES



**Head of School Weekly Check In  
July 31, 2020**

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## **How are you doing?**

- Took some time off - doing better as a result
- Just got back from 3 weeks working away from home in a new environment. Was really good for me. Work wise, one key admin came down with COVID, consultant stepped in. The consultant was a life saver, but it revealed a very real hole in our system.
- Really anxious community, b/c we're a couple miles away from the COVID epicenter.
- Working together with competitors to push in-person start date.
- More stress than I've ever experienced.
- Not nauseous for the first time in a while b/c we know which path to go down.
- My team is bonded for life
- This week has been a sprint, in the middle of the marathon, which is really hard.
- Trying to project confidence about what we do know and con
- Struggling deeply with the ethical responsibility of opening in person.
- I feel like I'm unraveling and so is my community.
- A lot of unknowns and a lot of responsibility on our shoulders.
- I'm not even looking at how I'm doing. Just need to keep on marching.
- Unplugged on Tisha B'Av.
- This is a lot. Leading during this moment in history is unbelievably challenging.
- How am I? Changes day by day. I've adopted the stance of "Don't get too worked up and overwhelmed by a problem today b/c they'll be a different problem tomorrow." This has been exhausting due to the extent of the processing with so many people.
- Academic team is doing very well. We had a LOT of processing before announcing our plans.

## **Are Pandemic Pods impacting your parent population?**

- Most heads reported less than 10 families currently speaking with the school about this option. Some indicated that they won't know the extent of this until the day school starts.
- One head: Parents are trying to work with us, rather than working around us.
- Using 20-somethings to be assigned to a family.
- Extremely worried about the inclusion factor

- Legally, we will not be sending teachers to anyone's home
- Sending 20-somethings to people's homes is a liability issue. Want to know how schools are paying for this. And how they're dealing with the liability and health issues on this.

### **What's on your mind this week?**

- Remote engagement. Hybrid/in-person balance
  - Sharing from Ari Leubitz at Atlanta Jewish Academy about his school's new plan which includes 3 choices for families: face-to-face, remote (teacher is on the computer, students are on the computer), and live streaming (teacher is in the school classroom with in-person students, Swivl/Owl allows a student to join the class via computer). Families can opt in for periods of time.
  - Helena Levine at Donna Klein Jewish Academy has similar options for her families.
- This is changing by the day, based on parent and teacher feedback. Just submitted our 15 page plan to the NY Dept of Health and now I feel that I have encyclopedic knowledge and we are in a great place. Spread rate is less than 1%. Our governor is due to say that we're reopening on 8/7. This is a hard earned victory.
- Staff and parent town halls are this week.
- Sent our reopening plan to parents today at noon. We are doing a staged opening, a couple of grades at a time.
- Ethical decision making is weighing heavily on a number of heads this week.
- Ran an in-person Board meeting with social distancing, everyone sitting at a desk in a classroom 6 feet apart, nurse screened everyone's temperatures upon entry and did symptom checks. Used an Owl camera for distance. The board did NOT like the experience and fully supported the school's decision to start with online learning.
- We are not considering keeping our building closed. I don't believe that the students will be less exposed in our school, than in other circumstances.
- We have families signing a commitment of behavior.
- Montgomery County, MD announced that they do not believe that independent schools should not return to the building. It is not safe. It is not a mandate, but it was highly directive. That made our decision to delay an in-person return quite easy.
- Finalized handbook, welcome back letters, pandemic response plans, got a foot in the door with our DPH where we will need to apply for a waiver to open in person as soon as they become available.
- Black leader in the community told all the independent schools that all schools are NOT independent, we're interdependent - and if schools of the privileged communities open, it will have negative consequences for those without privilege. All independent schools in the area decided not to open in person at that moment.
- Pediatricians in the area are advising young parents not to send kids. Kindergarten teacher is not able to come into the building.
- We don't have the money to pay for the safety equipment that we have ordered and need.
- [NYT article](#) - Viral load in young children is very high.

- Three of our key administrative team members got hit with non COVID medical situations. It's a terrible moment for us.

### **Resources**

- Series on Race and Racial Equity in JDS - keep your eyes on the HoS Digest and HoS Reshet for more information about this series.
- JFNA/JCC/Leading Edge partnership with Prizmah to bring learnings from the organizations that were open during the summer to the day school community. August webinar dates/times will be announced in the HoS Digest on Monday morning.
- Shiva d'nechemta - 7 weeks of consolation from the depths of Tisha B'Av to the heights of the yamim nora'im - the high holidays.