



## **The Midwest Academy 2020-21 Reopening Plan: An Open Letter**

Dear Midwest Academy Community,

Below you will find our reopening plan. It threads together prior emails and provides many more details. As you all know change is occurring daily at this time in our lives and we may need to make changes again soon, but we have presented all of our definitive plans as of today.

I chose the style of an open letter rather than a PowerPoint or video because the familial tone of a letter fits our community better than other methods of disseminating information. We are a true community and I wanted you to still be able to feel the connection and caring we have for your child and your family. So, while this is rather long, I apologize, but there has been much to consider and we must share generously to assure you that you continue to be in good hands. Truth be told, coming from me, you knew it was going to be long any way.

### **Introduction**

In late May and early June the leadership team began discussing our reopening plan. We reviewed our student, parent and staff survey results and referenced documents provided by healthcare officials, legal experts and educational organizations through website research, document review and webinars. We quickly determined that student and staff safety had to be prioritized beyond our usual procedures and we needed to consider circumstances as they would exist in August to provide the best education we could in the safest manner possible. This required us to pay close attention to the state's reopening plan, remain open minded and be nimble. We prepared for many scenarios that would value a balance of safety, quality of education, students' needs for teacher interaction and peer socialization and logistical concerns.

### **Process**

We started by reviewing the parent and student surveys, analyzing the size of our classrooms and our ability to meet social distancing needs and walked through two imaginary student's days - one of a middle schooler and one of a high schooler. We asked ourselves:

- When these students stepped out of their cars what needed to happen?
- Once they entered the building how would we care for them and educate them?
- How would this be the same or different from our usual daily functioning?
- If we had to make changes to our relationship driven culture and processes, how could we maintain the same feel, even though we would have to act differently?

Answering these questions and "following" these students throughout their days helped us to see the challenges, how they conflicted and to begin problem solving. Once we devised a plan we shared details with the faculty, staff and the board. Both of these groups contain current families. So they also served as family focus groups. We then made modifications as necessary and began sharing pieces of the plan with families and reviewed the feedback they provided.

### **Major Challenges**

The process of analysis led us to determine we had to address the following challenges:

- |                       |                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| -Exposure             | -Home Tech Variance |
| -Social Distancing    | -Timing             |
| -Cleaning             | -Childcare          |
| -Masks                | -Commuting          |
| -Method               | -Fatigue            |
| -Supplies for classes | -Continuity         |
| -MS electives         | -Quality            |
| -HS credits           | -Staffing           |
| -Socialization        | -Finance            |

The questions we asked ourselves begat new ones that often layered upon another. Many of the potential solutions conflicted with each other but we chose to prioritize:

- providing a safe environment for all,
- focusing on student needs,
- maintaining our faculty and
- accounting for parent needs the best we could.

To do so we added outdoor teaching spaces, hired additional teachers and counselors, and made many logistical and procedural changes. We then considered the modifications we needed to make that would become static no matter the teaching plan that we devised and implemented.

### **Solutions**

#### **Our Learning Plan**

We will begin the school year implementing a hybrid learning plan which is built upon a cohort model and offers the best of several options we considered. This will include both in-person and remote learning methods.

#### ***Middle School***

Middle school students will be grouped in small cohorts. Teachers will rotate to each room of students with the exception of science. They will travel to the lab for science. Middle school students will attend class in this manner Monday through Thursday. **On Fridays, middle schoolers will participate in remote learning from home in the morning.** Middle school students will not attend classes in the afternoon on Fridays. Middle school/high school hybrids will be contacted individually as their schedules vary by student.

### ***High School***

The high school will be divided into groups labeled the Green and Gold Teams. Half of each grade is represented within each team. The Green Team will attend classes Monday, Wednesday and Friday each week. The Gold Team will attend on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday each week. This will decrease class sizes and allow for social distancing to occur in the classroom. On days when students do not attend class, they will be assigned work to accomplish at home and may attend the lesson for the other cohort remotely.

On Fridays, all high school students will be in the building and classes will be taught in larger spaces or remain divided in separate rooms. Since middle school students will not be in attendance, more rooms can be used to maintain social distancing and some staff can be reassigned to assist high school teachers on these days. Of course this increases the need for cleaning which will be conducted.

### **Calendar Changes**

**School will begin on Monday August 10<sup>th</sup> for the Middle School and the High School Green Team. The High School Gold Team will begin on Tuesday August 11<sup>th</sup> to allow all students to begin the year with their teachers.** Also, since Fridays will be the most challenging and draining days for all, we will provide relief by moving regularly planned days out of school to Fridays. We will split conference days so they are implemented remotely on two Fridays (November 6 and 13) and divide fall break into two three-day weekends beginning on Fridays (October 16 and 23). Staff development days will be cancelled and school will be in session on those days. The semester will end with classes as planned on Friday, December 18<sup>th</sup>. (If these date changes conflict with plans already made, please do not worry. Division heads will work with families on an individual basis to allow for missed work.)

### **Full-Time Remote Learning Choice**

Students who need to stay at home due to health concerns may attend via video conference. They will work as if in class with teachers adjusting assignments and methods as they are able. Please note, use of this methodology in conjunction with teaching in-person classes is not innate. While it has been experimented with, this continues to be a learning area for the faculty. Families that choose to stay home must acknowledge in their minds that teachers are learning and will vary in their success in this area. Over time it will improve, but there will be an adjustment period.

A staff member will be assigned to serve as a liaison to families on full-time remote learning. The staff member will contact families and assist with issues that arise. To enroll your child as a full-time remote student, please contact your division head as soon as possible. The division head will review and approve the request, then put the Remote Learning Liaison in touch with your family.

### **Secondary Learning Plans**

While we have decided to begin the year in a hybrid model, we have created two additional plans of action, an in-person learning plan and an e-learning plan, in the event we need to change directions in response to health concerns or improvements. These plans are described below.

### **100% In Person Learning**

This is the simplest but most challenging plan from an exposure perspective. Using this plan, we would teach as close to the usual Midwest way as possible, adding all of the safety requirements necessary with all students present.

### **Remote Learning for All**

If we have to return to e-learning at any time during the 20-21 academic year, staff will begin by teaching live remote classes on Monday, Wednesday and Friday each week. On Tuesdays and Thursdays staff will be available for office hours as students work on assignments provided the day before during class and as sent to students.

Some families think 6 to 7 periods a day is too much for their child. Our community shows little consensus in this area and we understand that different ages and each individual student will have different tolerances. As a result, we will allow students to drop off due to fatigue as needed. They will be able to review work missed on Alma and we will ask teachers to record lessons for playback at a later time for those who need reteaching or missed a lesson. If we need to adjust our approach we will. An extended period of e-learning will require us to evolve over time and we will communicate openly about changes.

### **Procedures**

#### **Screening**

All families must complete a screening form before coming to school this fall. It has been sent out attached to a separate email. There are numerous “I statements” and questions to be addressed. Please complete this form as well as the usual enrollment forms **before** the first day of school. **Students will not be able to enter the building if these forms have not been completed. Exceptions cannot be made to this policy.**

#### **Carpool**

Carpool will continue to be structured in the same manner in regard to driving around the school to the drop off area. The drop off area will however be located further away from the door as tents will be erected in the parking lot for outdoor classroom work. A line of cones will be placed at the area where students used to load and unload. The cones will lead drivers to a space where signs stating “drop-off area” will be posted. Passengers will load and unload here.

In the morning two staff will greet each car, ask a few safety questions and take the temperature of the student being dropped off before they exit their vehicle. To keep the staff safe, please wear masks during this screening. If the student does not have a fever, nor answers the questions affirmatively, he/she will exit their car and enter the building. If a temperature of 100 + degrees exists the student will remain in their vehicle and leave campus. The school will call the family later in the day to discuss next steps in the safety protocol.

After dropping students off, cars will then proceed around the building and off campus as they did previously. For afternoon pick-up students will be outside in the larger coned off area. Inclement weather may require us to use the outdoor tents for carpool or we may have to call students from their rooms. **Driving slowly** has always been important but will be even more so

now as people, especially children, take time to recognize new traffic patterns. **Please be patient with these procedures as it will take more time to drop off/pick up your student.**

### **Late Arrivals/Early pick ups**

After morning drop-off, the entrance to school will be closed to traffic. Students who are dropped off late or picked up early will be met at the entrance to the school's main driveway by a staff member, have their temperature taken and escorted into the building. A drop off spot with instructions to call the front desk will be posted. Please be sure to plan accordingly for these types of drop-offs/pick-ups as staff will be engaged in other duties and might need a few moments to come meet you. Please note students cannot be pulled from class before the parent calls from the pick-up space. Students should not be left or told to meet parents at this entrance. All communication about these arrangements should be made with the school, not through a child's cell phone.

### **Outdoor classrooms and parking**

We will erect tents around school, some in the parking lot, to provide outdoor spaces for learning, masks breaks, shade and shelter. Parking spaces on campus will be reduced as a result and we will only have room for staff to park on campus. Families will be asked to park at Off The Wall in the spots closest to school if they need to park.

### **Building Entry**

We will limit exposure by limiting the number of individuals who enter the building to students and staff only. If a parent or vendor needs to enter the building they will do so through the East door, speak to staff via the intercom system and in most cases leave the items they need to deliver on the table in the vestibule. Additional access will be planned and only allowed for essential business. Vendors and parents needing access will complete a COVID 19 questionnaire, have their temperature taken and wear a mask covering both mouth and nose.

### **IEP's/CCS staff**

The CCS staff will conduct IEP's and their work with our students as usual. We do not yet know conclusively if this will be done in-person or via video conferencing. The final decision will be conveyed by the counseling staff to families in need of this information at a later date.

### **Cleaning**

Cleaning methods will be enhanced by hiring an inhouse facilities manager and purchasing additional cleaning supplies. In addition to our daily cleaning, door and faucet handles will be cleaned hourly. Teachers will clean desks between classes. While we will ask students to bring hand sanitizer from home, we will also provide hand sanitizer in classrooms and ask students to use it throughout the day. Teachers will have cleaning kits in classrooms containing bleach solution, rags, and wipes. Air purifiers will be placed in all classrooms to filter air as needed.

### **Masks**

We will provide a Midwest Academy face mask to each student but will ask all to provide their own as well. Masks will be required by all who enter the building and will be expected to be worn over mouths and noses. Breaks will be provided outside of the building as needed and at

the teachers discretion during classes. Please write your student's name on their masks, wash them and replace regularly. We strongly suggest students have extra masks in their lockers.

### **Social Distancing – Six feet**

The information provided in this area varies from three to nine feet. Six feet is the most common number cited and is recommended by the CDC and the Hamilton County Health Department (HCHD). We will maintain this distance as often as possible. This phrasing is intentional as we cannot guarantee two people will not come into closer contact than this at all times. We will, however, do our best to maintain this distance.

### **Classroom Materials**

We will divide materials provided by Midwest into individual containers for students to use. If they have to share they will not do so at the same time. Materials will be disinfected and left to dry between uses. Student supplies will remain in the possession of students.

### **Computers**

Computers will be assigned by number. Students will maintain use of the same computer for the day and they will be wiped down at the end of each day. Students are encouraged to bring their own computer if they would like.

### **Seating Charts**

The HCHD has asked that we maintain seating charts to be able to pinpoint contact tracing. This may allow us to quarantine fewer students and staff if we have a positive case within the building.

### **Lockers**

Students will continue to use lockers but they will be staggered and accessed in a structured manner (i.e., a group of students will be sent to their lockers, gather lunch items, then leave the locker area before the next group is sent to retrieve their lunches). This will allow students to be away from others while at their lockers in an effort to create distance. The outside of lockers will be wiped down at the end of each day.

### **Lunch**

High School students will eat in their classrooms or outside when weather permits. Middle school will eat in the big room with social distancing in place or outside when weather permits. Please bring lunches that can be placed in lockers as often as possible. Use of microwaves and refrigerators will be conducted by teachers on a limited basis. Schoolhouse Fare will still deliver to school and can be utilized as in the past.

### **Recess**

We will have recess in smaller groups. Some activities will be modified. Other activities will have to be reviewed and discussed as time passes and students create new or modify existing games. We expect this to be an ever-evolving aspect of our program.

## **Bathrooms**

Middle school students will only use the bathrooms closest to the middle school classrooms. High school students will use the bathrooms off the big room. Staff will use bathrooms towards the front of the building. The faucets, toilet handles and door handles in all bathrooms will be cleaned hourly.

## **Before and After Care**

Both of these programs will exist as they have in the past, beginning at 7:30am and ending at 5:30pm. We encourage families to only use them if they absolutely have to use them. If most middle school students arrive between 7:45 and 8:10 all temperatures can be taken and students will be able to go to mentors and classes on time. If most high school students arrive between 8:05 and 8:30 all temperatures can be taken and students will be able to go to classes on time.

In the afternoon, please pick up students as early as possible. For some that will be at the end of school day for others that will still be at 5:30. We simply ask everyone to do their best to pick up as early as they can so the building can begin to be cleaned from top to bottom.

## **Clubs and Activities**

We will start the year without clubs for the first nine weeks. If we can add clubs later on, we will. Activities listed on the school calendar will be implemented as we are able. If we have to cancel, we will let everyone know as soon as possible.

## **Toys/Personal Possessions**

Unfortunately, toys and other formerly shared personal items (stuffed animals, Beyblades, Legos, etc.) will have to remain at home. This does not include books, handheld technology or computers. Students are encouraged to bring their own computer if they would like. If students wish to read books during lunch or recess, they may do so. They will not be able to share these with others, however.

## **Symptoms and Positive Cases of COVID 19**

If a student has entered the building and is later discovered to have a temperature or multiple symptoms we have been advised to quarantine the student and call the parents to immediately come take their child to be tested. We will then contact the health department to share our documentation of the event and seek incident specific instruction. At that time a class, a division of the school or the entire school will be closed for a minimum of 24 hours for cleaning. The details of where the student was, who was exposed and how many people were involved will dictate the magnitude of the closure and how many community members will be quarantined for 14 days. **This process is not a choice we are allowed to make and will occur every time we have a positive case in the building.**

We ask families to self-monitor daily and not to send a child to school if sick or if a family member has COVID 19. This sounds obvious, but occasionally a student attends school when they are ill. In the latter case, the student should be quarantined for 14 days as well.

We have been advised to ask you to keep students out of school if they have a fever or a minimum of two of [COVID 19 symptoms](#). This is true even if they do not have a fever. We

realize that keeping a child home could be difficult for families and might create consternation for those with pressure to work, etc. Unfortunately, this is our situation and as we have said previously we all have to take this seriously, be responsible community members and protect each other. We have a duty to care for others and keep sick children at home.

**If you have a case at home, we cannot legally force you to share this information but encourage you to do so voluntarily. If you do not, others may have been exposed before you knew you had contracted the virus and may unwittingly spread it to others who are vulnerable.**

### **Return to Campus**

Any person suspected of having had the virus will need a written note signed by a doctor stating

- the person is symptom free,
- has fulfilled quarantine requirements or
- had a different illness and is cleared to return to school.

All cases will be handled on a case-by-case basis. If a lingering concern exists on behalf of the school, we may ask for further clarification or documentation before allowing a student to return.

### **Messaging**

We will message families directly if their child has symptoms or is determined to be part of any contact tracing occurrence. We will only share limited information about a positive case with the entire community. This will allow us to care for those in need, protect the privacy of all and assure everyone has the information they need to monitor the school's COVID 19 situation for their own family's needs. **If the school is closed, we will send out messages and post on the website like we do for snow days.**

### **What Comes Next**

We will continue to review the situation and be responsive to changes that occur. While far from ideal, we may have to make a change as late as the day before school opens. We will email the community if this becomes a reality. We will also set dates for parent video conferencing opportunities by division to discuss our community's needs and processes.

### **Conclusion**

We have considered many of our challenges but we know we have not thought of every scenario that will occur. We also know that some will be happy with our decisions. Others will not. But we are doing our best to create a positive experience for all.

While we have shared all of our plans to provide previewing for our families, this is a fluid situation. We must be prepared to adjust our processes in real time. We may have to implement more than one plan or close multiple times during the school year. We may have to start with one plan, move to another, then return to the original plan. We may have our choice taken from us as it was last spring. That will be confusing and frustrating but we will remain flexible and responsive to meet the safety and educational needs of our community.



In all, please know our desire is to have as many students in the building together for as many days of in-person education as possible. Anything else is due to safety concerns, edicts from entities beyond our control or a yet to be predicted circumstance.

Thank you for all of your support and feedback. We appreciate being able to serve our students and families and hope this year ends far less tenuously than it will start. We will do all we can to make it a wonderful year of learning and growth for your child. They deserve no less.

Thank you,  
Kevin