**Questions to Ask and Issues to Consider When Forming a Pod**

The idea of changing your child(ren)’s fundamental approach to learning can be disconcerting, especially in the age of COVID-19. Many parents are turning towards the creation of pods to supplement a hybrid model, augment distance learning, or as the basis for homeschooling.

While it may seem simple to find like-minded parents with children in the same grade(s), there are areas families ought to discuss upfront to avoid disagreements and allow for the optimal running of a pod. Therefore, we present these questions to you and the other parents with whom you are considering formulating a pod to explore and achieve a consensus.

If you have asked Integrity 1st Learning Support Solutions to place you in a pod, then we are already on the job for many of them, but you will want to hold frank conversations with any family you’re considering before entering into an agreement with them.

Please contact Debbie or Joyce at Integrity 1st with questions or for assistance mediating these and other topics.

1. How many children are you permitting in your pod?
   1. Research shows that pods work best with four children.
   2. The greater the needs of the children, the more personalized the instructor needs to be to help them succeed.
2. What are each family’s expectations for the duration of the pod?
   1. We know this one is difficult because no one knows how school will evolve. Some families are anticipating continuing the pod for a full year while others only anticipate one term.
   2. It is possible for one family to replace another between terms.
3. How many days, and which ones, do you want your child to be in the pod?
4. How many hours a day of instruction time do you prefer?
   1. Try to establish a range so that you can try to negotiate with other parents.
5. If you requested a certain specialization (e.g., Reading, Math, TESOL, and/or Special Education) as an additional certification, are you seeking other parents likely to want that same support? Are you willing to compromise here?
6. What arrangements are you making to communicate to your instructor prior to the start of their workday what material the children are covering in class so they can prepare? Who is responsible for this communication if the children are in different classes?
7. Parents are responsible for securing a clean and regularly disinfected meeting location. Ideally that location should include some windows, a workspace/desk area for each child, and a whiteboard. (Ask Integrity 1st about our educational package sent to your home with supplies.)
   1. Are you, or is there one family in your pod, prepared to provide that space?
   2. If your pod is considering moving between households, is each hosting family committed to cleaning that area daily?
   3. How will you transport school supplies, whiteboards and markers, etc.?
   4. Have you exchanged contact information for each host family?
   5. We encourage you to drive to the home of each host family before the first pod meeting for clarity.
   6. What schedule have you created for who is hosting certain dates?
      1. This information needs to be presented to Integrity 1st at [Tutoring@Integrity1stLSS.com](mailto:Tutoring@Integrity1stLSS.com) and to our instructor so they don’t accidentally show up at a different home.
   7. Where on the property are you designating instructor parking? Please try to mark it prior to the first day so the instructor doesn’t accidentally block an area they shouldn’t.
8. Integrity 1st LSS provides educational support services but is not a childcare agency. Therefore, there must be a legal adult onsite at all times for issues ranging from bathroom assistance for younger children to an upset stomach or a meltdown. (The adult does *not* need to be in the room with the children but must be within the home or immediately outside.) This adult will be responsible for supervising children when the instructor is on break for lunch if applicable.
   1. What schedule have you created to ensure an equitable calendar for families to rotate providing this adult?
   2. If any family cannot take a rotation(s), are all families in agreement that this arrangement is acceptable?
9. Personal protective gear:
   1. What is the most permissive you are willing to be?
   2. What is non-negotiable for you?
   3. You should answer these questions in relation to the children, the hosting family, *and* the instructor. (We don’t mind if there’s a discrepancy between what you want for the children vs. our instructor.)
10. What approach is your pod taking if someone in the pod or an immediate family member is *exposed to* someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 but is *not* symptomatic? (In this situation the instructor will be available online as a minimum unless they are the exposed person and ill.)
    1. The pod will move online for 14 days/until everyone is verified as COVID negative.
    2. The exposed party/parties will agree to a rapid response test. The pod will be suspended until those results are back and show negative. (DOCS provides rapid response tests locally.)
    3. The pod will move online until the exposed party/parties have tested and received negative results. (This option entails testing but doesn’t require a rapid response test.)
    4. The pod will continue to meet in person unless/until someone is symptomatic but will not require the exposed person(s) to test.
11. What approach is your pod taking if someone in the pod or an immediate family member has tested positive for COVID-19?
    1. The pod will move online for 14 days/until everyone is verified as COVID negative.
    2. The pod will continue to meet in person without the affected person(s).
       1. What is the financial responsibility of all parties in this situation as it will not change the contractual terms for the instructor?
       2. The instructor will be receptive to doing some additional online instruction once the sick child(ren) is/are feeling better, but there will be an additional cost for that time as they are still fulfilling their obligations to the other children in the pod.
       3. If the Integrity 1st instructor becomes ill, we will attempt to provide a short-term replacement for that individual as quickly as possible at no additional charge. There will be no charges for days we cannot provide an instructor. Credits, if applicable, will be applied to the next invoice or refunded if the contract is concluding.
    3. The pod will move online until the exposed party/parties have tested and received negative results.
       1. If the Integrity 1st instructor becomes ill, we will attempt to provide a short-term replacement for that individual as quickly as possible at no additional charge.
12. Does the hosting family agreed to disinfect the meeting area after each use?
13. Who is responsible for providing hand sanitizer?
14. If the pod is meeting for more than four hours, the instructor is entitled to an unpaid, 30-minute lunch break. If the pod meets for seven hours, including a lunch break, the instructor is entitled to an unpaid, 60-minute lunch break. During those breaks, the instructor is not responsible for oversight of the children and is entitled to leave the premises. Who will be responsible for the children during this time?
15. Where will children, and potentially the instructor, store snacks, beverages (typically water), and/or lunch while onsite?
16. What bathroom will pod participants be using? Does it require them to move through parts of the home that are not regularly cleaned between each use?
17. Do any of the hosting families have pets to which pod members and/or the instructor have allergies? (We will inform you of any allergies our instructors report before pairing them with you.)
18. If there are smokers in the hosting home(s), are all families in the pod agreeable to being on premises with smoke? Will any smokers agree to go outdoors and away from open windows in case members of the pod are asthmatic?
19. If any child(ren) in the pod suffer from food allergies, what precautions is everyone in the pod, including our instructor, agreeing to take to keep them safe?
    1. The adult onsite is responsible for EpiPen administration in case of an anaphylactic reaction. Many of our instructors are trained in CPR and First Aid, but they are not responsible for administering medications.
20. What approach is your pod taking for poor weather? Who will make the call for a potential cancellation?
    1. Respectfully, instructors are still paid on days that families cancel.
    2. Instructors may be willing to move online during this time.
    3. Some instructors may have the flexibility to work later in the day or move to the next day, but others may be working with another family or pod during this time.
    4. If the instructor cancels then they are not paid for that day. If the cancelation comes with sufficient notice that Integrity 1st may be contacted and secure a substitute, the substitute will receive the regular instructor’s payment for that day potentially exempting prep. time handled by the regular instructor. These compensation matters will be handled by Integrity 1st and need not require any participation from the families.
21. What is your backup plan if the family designated to host on a certain day loses power?
22. If anyone in the pod chooses to travel out of state during the period the pod is meeting, what are expectations upon their return for potential quarantining?
23. If a family goes on vacation or visits family during the term, is everyone in agreement that this family continues to pay their portion of the pod costs? If not, what arrangement are you putting in place?
24. If the pod is meeting for more than a few hours, the children will need to be able to stretch and potentially play outdoors for a while.
    1. What area is each host family designating for that purpose?
    2. Is the instructor responsible for oversight during this time, or will it be during a break? If it’s a break, then who is responsible for oversight?
25. Typically instructors follow patterns established in public schools in relation to holidays and acceptable content. Is it acceptable for children in your pod to:
    1. Sing songs with religious connotations and participate in activities such as making art projects with Christmas trees, Menorahs, Kwanza lights, Diwali, etc.?
    2. May the hosting family decorate the space in their home where the pod resides with religious décor around holidays?
    3. May the hosting family burn incense in that space? (This question can relate to allergies as well.)
26. Will your pod be suspended at any time that school is considered in session?
    1. This response must be integrated in the instructor’s contract unless the families are willing to pay the regular tuition during this period.
    2. All instructors understand that they will not be paid when school is not in session unless the pod families have requested to meet.
27. If your pod needs to move online, do all families have a computer with an active camera and microphone (These items may be built in.) their child(ren) can use on these days?
    1. Integrity 1st will provide a complimentary, online platform for up to four families.
    2. If more than four families are in a pod then we will likely move to a platform such as Zoom this fall. (The platform we presently use caps at four logins plus the instructor but is planning to upgrade sometime this fall to permit larger groups.)
28. If you are not choosing a full-year contract, by what date do you agree to notify other families in the pod whether or not your child(ren) will be continuing in it the next term?
    1. We recommend holding this discussion three weeks in advance of the conclusion of the contract.
    2. Integrity 1st must be notified by 14 days prior to the conclusion of a contract for any of the following situations:
       1. Any families are not returning for the next term
       2. There is an adjustment on number of days/hours the pod is meeting
       3. Meeting locations are changing
       4. You are requesting a different instructor
       5. You wish to discontinue the pod
       6. You are requesting to join a different pod
       7. You want to initiate a new contract or renew the current one

Questions for families choosing our remote pod option or for in-person pods if they need to move online:

1. Where will your child(ren) be working so that they are not distracted by general household activities?
2. Have you (and potentially your partner) arranged for one of you to be in the home at all times the pod is running, or have you secured another legal adult to be present in case the child(ren) need in-person assistance?
3. How will the instructor contact you to let you know that your child(ren) need assistance or that they are concluding the session?
4. Are you in agreement that if you purchase a recording of one of our sessions that it will *not* be shared with anyone outside of your family to protect the privacy of the children and the instructor?
   1. Please note that Integrity 1st will never use one of these recordings for any reason without your permission and will never provide access to it to anyone outside of your pod, exempting for legal purposes, without the consent of all participants.

Classroom materials:

Should you wish, Integrity 1st LSS can order on your behalf many of the helpful components of an at-home classroom ranging from a whiteboard to certain types of paper and writing utensils. Specific items are dependent upon the grades/age of the children and subjects the instructors are supporting. These items become the private property of the pod families.