

Virtual Coffeehouse Session 1
*Supporting Parents and Caregivers During
Virtual/Hybrid Schooling*
December 8, 2020

TRANSCRIPTION**Nickie Coomer**

For introductions, I'm going to try to make this quick because my kids are coming out of their assigned spaces. So I'm Nickie Coomer, I'm a Doctoral Research Assistant at the Midwest & Plains Equity Assistance Center. I am in my fifth year with the Center, and I have the privilege of serving as one of your hosts for today. So joined with me are Je' Nobia Smith, who is also a Graduate Assistant at the MAP Center and she and Diana Lazzell, who is our Outreach and Engagement Manager at the MAP Center, will be serving as technical director and chat moderator. We are so thrilled to have four conversation starters who will support in providing their perspectives and insights to break the virtual ice as we share some prompts, discussion prompts with you all. We have with us Dr. Craig Willey, who is an Assistant Professor of Urban Teacher Education for the Indiana University School of Education IUPUI. We have Latosha Rowley, who's a Doctoral Candidate in the Urban Education Studies program, as well as a Graduate Assistant at the Office for Community Engagement at IUPUI and an adjunct instructor in the IU School of Education at IUPUI Teacher Preparation Program. We're also joined by Dr. Dania Bazzi, who is the Superintendent of Ferndale public schools in Michigan, and Melissa Zipper who's an Academic Instructional Coach for Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville, Kentucky.

Je' Nobia Smith

Thank you so much, Nickie. One of our goals at the MAP Center is to engage participants in well-defined, content rich technical assistance, such that knowledge and expertise are shared in a way that result in transformative systemic change, as well as reflection and growth. And to this end, we aim to make this unique learning available on all of our websites via recording as Nicky previously described. Additionally, sharing photos of today's conversation on social media platforms, we encourage participants to consider this disclaimer as they share and engage today.

Nickie Coomer

Alright, and again. So, this Virtual Coffeehouse is intended to be interactive. So, we ask you to interact in real time via Zoom. To reduce noise, just if you can mute your microphone when you're not speaking. And also we'll be posting additional resources in our chat bar. So, if you don't know where to locate that just, you know, let us know. And we can guide you there. And then lastly, the camera function has been

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turned on for all participants so, if you have a webcam, and you'd like to join, please feel free to use that. If again, if you can't locate it, just let us know and we can help you there. And so just as a final reminder, again, it's just it's easier for everyone to hear if you can mute your microphone when you're not speaking.

Je' Nobia Smith

So, to get us started today with our, with our overall topic, and with our prompt, we're going to first address the following prompt: *What are supports that schools can offer that can be helpful to parents during this period of virtual or hybrid education?* And Dr. Craig, could you please start us off by addressing some of your thoughts to this prompt?

Dr. Craig Willey

Sure, thank you, Je' Nobia and thanks for having me. Um, I just want to say a couple thoughts. And I'm sure that it will kind of generate some talk. I've got two E-learners, they've been E-learning all year. And I think the schools have done some things really well, but some of the things that have struck me that I wanted to bring to the fore, I think might be helpful for other educators and parents and care providers too in terms of advocating for your children. Three, two things I mention big and then I'll just have an aside at the end. They're not groundbreaking, but I think about communication, and I think about expectations; two oldies that need to be flavored with a large dose of reality. So, I'll give you an example of expectations. The schools where my children attend are really big. Of course, they're going to want kids to be attentive. And they're also pretty clear that they're aiming to produce learners who are autonomous and self-directed. Now I'm not trying to discount or dismiss those goals or compromise them in any way. I think even in virtual context, we can work towards those goals. But when young children are all of a sudden confronted, confronted with unlimited freedom on the internet, and trying to develop self-control, that's where we need a bit of reality.

So, if we are going to develop learners who have, can demonstrate self-control, who can be autonomous and self-directed, it's going to need a whole lot of explicit adult nurturing and guidance. Similarly, with communication. Communication has always been an important thing in schools, right? We need to know how our kids are performing, we need to know how they're, if they're doing what they're supposed to be doing. But there's other things that we might want to know too. And when we cannot be there, when parents who might not have the capacity, most likely don't have the capacity to monitor their children all day. And that's if they're doing things that are unsafe, on let's say, visiting sites and chatting with

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strangers. So we've had this conversation with our child about people misrepresenting themselves. And, you know, we know things, you know, we can't explain all the things we know. But we just know things. And so that's important too. And I really appreciated the teachers, teachers kind of pointing that out. The last thing I just want to say, and especially in light of the comment about marginalized and disenfranchised communities is I think schools can be really cognizant of what they're offloading onto families and caregivers, in terms of work. So, um, I've had a conversation fifth grade math is hard, you know, you can, here some study guides kind of thing. And to go over with your families every time you do that, not I know teachers' best intentions are to help. But every time you do that, you've got to expect that that's going to be unequally supported, and, and enacted at home. And we all know who is going to be more likely to enact it than others, not that there are families that can't or won't, because they're choosing not to, but because of particular circumstances. And so, I just think that's something to be cognizant, cognizant up to.

Nickie Coomer

Absolutely. Thank you so much, Dr. Willey. Latosha, do you do you want to chime in on this as well?

Latosha Rowley

Yes, thank you for having me participate today. And yeah, like to piggyback on what Dr. Willey said, as far as communication, that's a huge piece seems like a lot of times, the communication I get is when there's a problem, like, okay, he didn't log in, because I have a 16-year-old son in high school. And so, instead of maybe some positive communication to kind of balance that, that would be helpful. Because then I have to, you know, come down on him for the negative instead of, you know, maybe some positive things that he might be doing. And since he is in high school, the social emotional learning piece is a huge gap. And I know that schools, you know, because we're virtual, it's difficult, but I think if there was ways that in the class, they have more group, or chat, or some kind of interaction, that would help instead of just a lecture, because that's what it seems like.

I kind of sat in on a couple of the high school settings, and I'm like, okay, you know, he's 16, he's, you know, his attention is not going to stay with you for, you know, a 40 minute lecture. So, you know, that would be very helpful, because then he wouldn't be so burnt out by the time he's done with his Zoom day. So those are some things and then as he talks about expectations, a lot of times I'm finding that the teachers are not very clear on all of the things that they're wanting to happen. He thought that he had his

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work turned in on Canvas, but then it was a group project, not a group project, a project that's due over the course of the semester. So he thought he was on task and on point. So just that expectation, you'll map it out, you know, give the details. And that helps me too as a parent, because then I can kind of pinpoint some things that he may need to do. So, that's been a challenge for us. But I'm sure some of you other may, may be having some challenges in that area to them at all I wanted to add.

Je' Nobia Smith

Thank you so much, Latosha, for some of those perspectives. Definitely some things that I had not thought about, since I am coming from like a Higher Ed perspective, definitely in a space where we do utilize some of those other Zoom functions and so I'm very interested to hear other people's thoughts and experiences in the entire room. We would like to open this up to everyone at this point.

Nickie Coomer

We have a couple comments in the chat. Does anybody who shared in the chat want to share out here?

Charmaine Bell

I can. Hi. My name is Charmaine, and I'm a family liaison at a school in Hopkins. I think one way we can provide support for parents is to take their comments and push them to our leaders. So, Canvas is one of the platforms that we use at our elementary school. Well, for our whole district, but I'm finding with our elementary students, Canvas isn't necessarily kid friendly for them, and so pushing that to our leaders to reconsider maybe using a different platform for our younger grades. Because I'm getting a lot of parents that are very, very frustrated. So, I just take their comments, I note the date, and I push them to my principal. I might share them with my superintendent when she comes and visits the building. So, kind of being that voice for them, encouraging them to join the PTO, because the more they get together and kind of work together to raise their voice about what they're concerned about, probably, they'll probably get better results. Um, and communication is big. As a family liaison, we actually just had a conversation about this, I'm getting emails from teachers to say, hey, reach out to this kid, because they didn't log on. And I've been really encouraging our staff, and especially our teachers, and I tell them, I need you to be that first contact, because a lot of parents get upset if they hear from me first, that there's a problem instead of hearing from the directly from the person that is working with their child. And I and I tell them, don't just call and say it's a problem, give them solutions, give them options on how they can help their children be motivated to get on.

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Nickie Coomer

Thank you, Charmaine, I heard so many things that you say, and there are things that are that folks are chiming in with the chat, or in the chat as well that I think make a lot of sense, but might not always, if, if schools at different levels, you know, maybe operating in silos. Or if teachers are using the platforms that are most familiar or accessible to them, without kind of thinking through what parents, families, and kids might be dealing with. In particular, in mind--mentioned, you know, it gets really difficult, you know, when you're when you're talking about three or more kids, and then parents trying to work with their kids to navigate multiple platforms for multiple classes. And then, Candace added as well, that having physical school materials for students who don't do well working on virtual platforms, as well as--And then Valerie had suggested in the chat, that having teachers use the same platform would be very helpful for parents. And also, you know, having everything where you can find it. So that parents are able to find what kids are supposed to be doing when, you know, in the same-- to have that type of information all in the same place, almost like a communication had. But it really does put us in a place. And I think, you know, and I heard this from, from everyone who's spoken so far to really reconsider what a school day looks like on a virtual platform.

And what I've experienced, even with my own kids is sometimes there seems to feel like a replication of the physical school day through the computer. And even when it comes to time management, right, managing kids time. And as Dr Willey said, you know, there's an element of safety involved in this too, right, and keeping kids attentive and keeping kids engaged, but also really thinking through, you know, what are those spaces between managing kids behavior, managing kids time, manage, you know, attending to kids safety, but then also really thinking about what learning looks like in a virtual space, and how that might really kind of-- that might even alter the way that we think about time in the school day. And so and I want to just attend to another comment that I believe Candace made in the chat around having additional caregivers in the home, and what this you know, how this might be helpful to parents, and I-- am parents and caregivers and I-- and I can imagine that that is true. And Candace, I may have misread your quote or your comment as well. So, if I did, please chime in and clarify. But just in thinking about the idea that virtual learning for kids doesn't, isn't often independent, right. And so, for some kids, and particularly in younger grades, it may require an adult in the house to be nearby, and what that means for parents who are also working from home, and the-- you know, the feasibility of that for caregivers and families. So thank you so much, everyone. We does-- would anyone else like to share on

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this particular question? and our other questions relate to this, so the conversation will continue to build, but if anybody wants to share in this particular question, we'd love to hear from you.

Jerry Anderson

Hi, I'm Jerry Anderson. I'm a high school principal and just kind of speaking to what was spoken to. One of the things that I do is I have a Parent Advisory and before I roll anything out to all of my parents, I have this group of parents and I say, okay, I need you to look at this and I need you to vet it and you tell, you tell me what's right about it, what not right about it, what doesn't work, and what do you need. And we meet pretty regularly. I have a regularly monthly meeting scheduled. And when we do something that is going to be a change, like I'm going to, we're gonna have a change coming up here pretty soon, I'll call a meeting like just-in-time meeting, say, okay, I'm getting ready to roll this out. And I need to know what to think about it. And those pants who can come will come, I actually have over 100 parents in the group. So I always have a core group of parents that can meet just about at any time. So, I just wanted to share that as a strategy.

Nickie Coomer

Thank you so much. That's great. Thank you.

Je' Nobia Smith

Anyone else regarding this specific prompt? Right, thank you so much, everyone, for your thoughts. I would like to move us on to our next question. This is actually regarding teachers and their perspectives here. So, what are some considerations that you take into account when you are planning lessons? And how do you plan or collaborate with parents and caregivers? Melissa, if you could get us started on some of your thoughts regarding this?

Melissa Zipper

Sure, um, thank you all for having me. My name is Melissa Zipper, and I am a teacher and an Academic Instructional Coach in Jefferson County Public Schools in Louisville, Kentucky. And just to kind of follow up on what we were talking about, we are a large district with close to 100,000 kids, and we've been virtual since the-- well, since the spring, we've never even gone back in person since this fall. So, I really understand the struggle between different platforms, each one of our schools, each one of the grade levels has a teacher has the autonomy to choose, which as a teacher, I get that. However, I can

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understand as a parent, that could be very frustrating. Because if you have an elementary student and a high school student, and a middle school student, they're all learning different ways on different platforms. So that's definitely something that I take into account. When I'm playing in lessons virtually and in person, I still do the same process, which is starting with the end goal in mind, I always think about what I want my students to know and be able to do at the end of that lesson. Although I will say that virtual learning has somewhat changed that approach.

Now I like to create-- we use Google Classroom exclusively in my district and I really like to create a Google slide show, every day that has all of the links has everything the students will need, any codes, passwords, anything like that, and then I just update that every day. I found that that is really helpful to parents, to students that are absent. I am at a middle school and we have a lot of students that do not like to get up early. And a lot of times just have not gotten up early throughout this entire virtual learning experience. So they are able to still log on, we still obviously want to teach them the content. So, they're able to log on access that slideshow, and then they can come see me during office hours. or something else that we've started is that we are having some evening hours, it actually is starting tonight, where we are going to be online, some select teachers will be available from five to seven. So that's another thing that we're thinking about when we're working with parents, caregivers, and students to try to work around everyone's schedule. You know, we're all in this, I think, as we all need to give a little grace to parents. During this time, especially. And I know as a teacher, we would all love a little grace for parents as well. I understand, you know, the difficulty of working from home as well. So I think that that is definitely something. We're all definitely ready to be back. So, you know, we're trying our best to navigate this and to come up with different ways to kind of think outside the box.

Je' Nobia Smith

Thank you so much, Melissa for sharing that. It's really interesting to hear the different strategies and techniques that you're trying to utilize in your own district and in your school, and from changing hours to be more accessible to parents and students, to also making sure to incorporate all of the day's materials in one place so that it's easier to locate and situate those resources. And I would like to hear from the rest of the room if you have any ideas about this or what you all's experience is with navigating some of these strategies and how that may have changed your, the ways that you plan now that we are in this space of virtual and hybrid education due to the pandemic. And so what are some approaches that you've all taken or what have you seen as parents or teachers?

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Diana Lazzell

Je' Nobia, there's a couple questions in the chat for Melissa.

Melissa Zipper

Yes, I saw those. I was going to, um, try to respond. Sorry, Je' Nobia, I didn't mean to cut you off, but yeah, so the first thing, there was the question about: *How did the students meet you online?* So with Google Classroom, your class, you're always able to create a Google Meet code. And students then can join you in your room. It's kind of like your classroom. Now, we pretty much in our district do not use Zoom. And since all of our teachers and all of our students have access to Google Classroom, that has really been the best platform that we've used. So, the students can also they also have access to email us and Google Classrooms. So, it's really kind of like a one stop shop. Most of our students have used those throughout their high-- their elementary school career and their middle school career if they've been in JCPS. And then the question about the single slide show, so I just-- so there's a typical-- my Google Meet code will not change, my classroom code will not change. So those things can remain, but I will update it daily with any new resources that I give to students, it really is pretty much like what I would do daily for my class, when I was in person, they would have their due now, they would have their mini lesson, and then their independent work. And I just continue to add to that. So, the students have access to that throughout the entire quarter. Think that was-- anything else I'll try to catch up in the chat, too.

Je' Nobia Smith

Thank you so much for responding to those and I'm catching up on some of the chat as well, as you all are offering some of your ideas about what works well within this. I know Charmaine has put the texting works great for parents. So maybe thinking through other modes of communication, rather than simply email, or maybe the inbox function. I know, you mentioned Canvas, Canvas has an inbox function, perhaps people aren't accessing that particular inbox, so thinking through different ways that you can reach and connect with parents. So that is also a very, very good suggestion.

Latosha Rowley

Yeah, I'd like to add something with those extra hours. I also work with tutoring and mentoring through our Office of Community Engagement and we've partnered with the School of Education and so some of the interns have been available to support schools and students on our tutoring. And and so if we can get

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more collaborations, such as that with the schools, and then in the community, as well as the university, that definitely supports the teachers and helps with the families.

Charmaine Bell

I agree with that Ms. Rowley. In our school district, we actually partner with high school students to tutor our younger students. So my daughter, she has a high school tutor that does reading with her through Google Meets. So that way, we're getting our older kids engaged with our younger ones as well.

Je' Nobia Smith

I also see here, Kimberly Eversman: *I created a parent website for a school so that they have a central location with all sorts of info, including each teacher schedule and tech tutorials.* So even creating portals for parents to access as a companion tool to whatever you may be doing in the classroom, that could also be a useful strategy that teachers and even district leaders can partner together and develop to further assist parents as they're navigating, learning with their kids. Are there any other thoughts?

Nicole Andrews

I added to the chat. My name is Nicole Andrews, I work with early childhood education. So ours is very different because it's very family-centered. And we have to have parents involved. But a lot of the issues we ran into, were parents having multiple children with different age groups, and what level of attention do I give to each student. Also, our district is not, not every school is one to one with devices so some of our families are sharing a device for multiple kids in the household, and so we found by just talking through what their daily schedules were, who has Lives when and helping them to create in their own Google Calendar, like who can use the device when creating the schedule for their family was really helpful. And then a lot of visuals around what attendance looks like, that became part of the issue of like, well, are they attending if they don't go to all the Google Lives and so we talked about how we can do that with asynchronous learning and maybe Thursdays are your days for your little ones to log on. And so that way they can connect more often. And they can do one of the fun Google meats, and they can get that social emotional skill. And then they'll do a synchronized learning on another day. And so we really had to practice through working through schedules for parents, just like we would create our own schedules in the classroom, helping them to create personal schedules at home. And then we also created bitmoji classrooms or interactive classrooms, so that the students could use them, or if they had older siblings with them, again, a lot of our young kids are there with their older siblings, and so the

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interactive classrooms, they can cook-- click on things, and their teachers are reading a story, or it's the teachers doing the mindful minute, and so they're still interacting with their teachers. But it's something that can happen asynchronously, and it can happen no matter what the literacy rate is for the parent, or for the caregiver at the time.

Je' Nobia Smith

Thank you so much for sharing some of that, Nicole, there's so many things that you brought up that are so fascinating to me. The idea of actually sitting down and planning and, almost doing a needs assessment in a way with each family to say, okay, how many devices do you have at your disposal, when are they able to be used and just doing that in depth piece of planning with families so that you are aware as educators how you can address those various aspects, and just having them also think maybe parents think a little bit differently about scheduling and planning too for their own situations. And then the idea-- I've never heard of a Bitmoji Classroom, I know a Bitmoji is. And for those of you who may not know, it's essentially a graphic, it makes graphical representations of you, you can create your own avatars. And they're kind of cartoonish and fun and so it's, it's fun for older kids, I know I use emoji myself, but it's also a way to get younger age groups engaged and involved and give them something a bit more tactile in a way through, as virtual as possible. And so definitely, you brought up a lot of really good ideas and strategies and techniques. Thank you. Are there any other thoughts before we move on to our next prompt?

Charmaine Bell

I agree with Ms. Zipper, she was talking about the social emotional aspect of virtual learning. Some ways that my-- my children's teachers are doing that they do lunch, Lunch Bunch, where they eat lunch together on the camera. Before the numbers got too high, we were going to meet at parks with the kids was still socially distancing, doing socially distanced activities to get to know each other. But we can't do it anymore, because the numbers are too high. But I do see it as a big need.

Vanessa Gill

One of the things we've done in one school in Osseo Area Schools is for students that aren't logging in regularly to their Google Meets, they have sort of set up a schedule, so those students are getting a champion. So it's a staff member from the school, it can literally be anyone from the front office staff to a

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TA or EA in the classroom that sits down with that student, I think it's about a 30 minute meeting. And it's directed by the scholar, so they choose what they talk about whether they're doing assignments, but obviously that staff person is informed about what may be missing and can provide that academic support, but it's also just an individual that's like, everyday we check in at this time, we do what you want to do to really build that connection to ensure students are logging on.

Nickie Coomer

I just want to add to that, I think that that's one thing that may be out of all of this and out of the responses that schools have engaged and have developed and have been innovative and developing, you know, how much of this can be brought back into schools? Right, when we return in person. So, like I love, like this idea, you know, having like a point person for kids in school, right? Where your function is the adult in schools to be that safe person, and not the disciplinarian and not you know, the instructor but to be a companion. And then also, you know, the considerations around how much families differ, you know, and the degree to which families might do things differently and might address school differently and might have different resources in order to support their kids in school. So, I just thank you so much. I always feel, you know, critically hopeful and optimistic and blown away by, by the work when I have an opportunity to hear of it. So, thanks so much everyone.

Leah Whitford

If I can share? We had a few schools in our district start, they have been virtual all year, and they started using on family coaches, which sounds very similar to what you just shared that you're, you're doing with individual students. And it's something that our school is, we've got a list of kids and staff members. But they're going to reach out so that all the contact doesn't come from the point of like your child's not attending. But to give them a point person, the family, whether it's a tech issue, you know, connectivity, or not understanding that math homework that came home, to be able to have one person to reach out to and it can't always be the classroom teacher, because they're often teaching when stuff is coming up. But to have this, have that resource, and then if we don't have the answer, because we're not going to have all of them, but we do know, other resources within the district that we can find answers for them. So, I think kind of creating that that village approach, it seems to have been really working well. And it's got us excited to try it here at our school as well.

Je' Nobia Smith

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Thank you so much for all the great shares, and there's a lot of ideas being recapped in the chat right now. And so I thank you so much for all of your engagement and sharing these different ways in which you're trying to innovate. I want to move us on to our next prompt. So, this is actually directed towards the district leaders. And we would like to know, *What are some of the questions or concerns that you have heard from parents? And how has the district addressed some of these concerns?* And so we've already heard a number of these concerns from teachers and parents and caregivers alike, here so far, but I definitely would like to hear some of the thoughts of the district leaders. So, Dr. Bazzi, would you mind kicking us off with this prompt?

Dr. Dania Bazzi

Yes, thank you, um, a number of concerns that we've heard from our families within the district really have centered around things that have been really easy to solve, in terms of, for example, and I say this, that we're lucky that they were easy to solve, in terms of having enough devices. Many times, parents felt like okay, with one or you know, with, with one or two devices in the home, that would work except for now, both parents, or a parent, are working from home, students are working from home, and now they need four or five devices with much stronger Internet bandwidth. So, we've a, we've put out quite a few devices, we have enough to provide every student with the device as well as a hotspot if needed, so that the student has the capacity to have internet and a device on their own. So those are some of the technical aspects that we've been able to fund through some of the COVID relief dollars. Some of the other issues is not knowing how to use the tools, right, parents have had difficulty with Seesaw, which is more of an elementary platform that we use, as well as Canvas. And in ways that we've been able to combat that issue is providing online, virtual professional development for families, and then reaching out at the elementary level about each teacher working individually with our families to make sure that they're able to utilize those tools.

So, a lot of PD, a lot of evenings, Zoom lives, Facebook Lives, and then recording those and then making those available to our families. Some of the more, trickier things that we've heard from parents are, you know, the self-monitoring, right? I'm not sure that my child is keeping up, is on task. We've really taken a different approach within our county, we don't have students online for more than three to three and a half hours per day, and elementary breaking that up in the morning and afternoon. Because we know that engagement and motivation decreases as time increases online. So rather than have our students, whether at the secondary or elementary level, we have age-appropriate time online. And then our teachers are able to progress monitor more frequently in small groups, and individually reach out to

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families and provide the support they need. So that the two-way communication is happening, immediate. Whereas if the teacher was online during synchronous instruction the whole time, it wouldn't make it much more challenging. Lastly, it has been balancing right balancing having students at home. we've committed to having learning labs, meaning in each of our buildings, anytime that we're offering synchronous instruction, we offer learning labs where students are able to have a safe, warm, dry place to continue their education so parents can drop them off at the school, we have everyone 10 feet apart, socially distant, we have a phenomenal staff who's willing, you know, and able to come in and provide our students so that we can feed them breakfast lunch, and provide them a safe space to do their work, and have some adult interaction with, with the student.

To me, that's the main issue is that I understand we're in a pandemic, and that most things have to be done virtually. And I, listen, I understand the small business aspect, but the priority should be students being in school. Teaching and learning can't be replaced virtually, it can't at a K-12 level, we've learned more than ever, the importance of in person connections, and social emotional learning that really needs to take place in person. So I wish the focus was everything shuts down but schools, right? That's, schools, hospitals are essential services that that are human rights for our students. So we've committed to that, same thing with our special education. I'm in Michigan, we're seeing our numbers go through the roof, but we really do have a bubble for our students, we're providing in person special education services to our students. And I don't want to, you know, I don't want to, I don't want that to change, but we've been able to keep our students and staff relatively safe in those spaces. So and we've been virtual since March, coming into now. So we surveyed families every two to three weeks, where they tell us what they need, and then every need is followed up by an administrator, counselor, social worker, the appropriate person. So lots of surveys, lots of data and lots of follow up.

Je' Nobia Smith

Thank you so much, Dr. Bazzi, you have given us a wide variety of things to consider. And I would really like to hear, before we go to some of the questions in the chat, I'd really like to hear from maybe any other district administrators if they have any experience with some of the things that you have discussed, because you definitely presented a lot of different strategies that your district is utilizing in order to address parents needs and some of their concerns, to provide a safe space for students, even physically as much as you possibly can. I also heard that you're using a variety of learning management systems, I heard Seesaw and Canvas, depending on the age group. So trying to be responsive there in terms of offering different platforms, depending on the needs of the students. And so I very much would like to

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hear other perspectives of some things that may, some concerns that you may have heard, and some things that your districts are addressing.

Melissa Zipper

As just I really would like for us to maybe talk a little bit about what Jennifer had said that I think that all of us have offered a lot of really good ideas, some of those, in theory, some of those in practice. But I think that, you know, this is a safe space. And I think I can easily admit and readily admit that there's lots of things that we've done wrong. There's lots of students that we're not connecting with. And I think what Dr. Bazzi, I hope I'm pronouncing that right, had just said is that, um, you know, we realize that there's no, for in home or not, for in person learning. So, I don't know what the answer is, I guess. And I think that that stems-- a lot of the frustration that teachers feel, I think stems from that we don't know what the answer is, either. And that's definitely very difficult.

Je' Nobia Smith

And just to point, everyone to the question that Melissa is referring to, and this was a very excellent question posed by Jennifer Nichols: *When all of these great ideas don't work, what's next? Any ideas for connecting with families who do not sign in on a daily basis? Home visits? Daily check in with an adult? Delivering resources and even lunches, but students are not connecting? Any ideas?* And Jennifer, if you feel free to chime in and offer some of your thoughts or things that you've been experiencing, but anyone who can respond to this question, please feel free to do so.

Jennifer Nichols

Thank you. I appreciate, sorry, I appreciate the opportunity to share that question on and I gotta say, appreciate that "I don't know the answer" answer. Um, you know, we have a handful of families that, that our principals are doing everything, our principals, our social workers, they really, really are doing a great job. They're, you know, we've even talked about in there trying to just provide that social emotional support for the parents too, you know, this is a difficult time for families. And so, you know, even what do you need as a family. So even just starting at that level to build that relationship, and we just have some handful that we're worried about, I mean, that's really what it comes down to is, we don't want to go down the route of truancy and things like that, because it says that it's not very helpful anyways, and it's more of that we're worried about the kids, we're worried about the families, and I'm just looking for new ideas.

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Jerry Anderson

So I don't know if my idea is new. Again, Jerry Anderson, high school principal, Homewood Flossmoor High School, but one of the things that we did is we identified those students who were not having success in the remote learning environment by looking at, you know, their attendance and looking at their grades. And we offered families the opportunity to bring their students into building to socially distance, and we assign virtual mentors to those students. So those students are still learning from a distance, but they have an adult that they're connected with, actually, two, who meet with those students help to put help them put together a plan for success, look at their grades while they're missing. And this is also about some level of negotiation because if you've missing a lot, how do we re engage the student, you know, what assignments are critical, and then re engage them. And we really had students who took advantage of that program, do really well, we did go to their homes. When kids when answering via email, we did home visits with kids, um, kind of like you recommended, but that offered to bring kids in seems to have really worked, and we didn't have any issues with, you know, because of the social distancing. So we were really good in that the COVID 19 stuff.

Jennifer Nichols

Thank you, Jerry. And we have a few of our older kids that we've been able to, to do those types of things. And they've helped some of our ones that at the moment that I'm most concerned for little ones, so we have some kindergarteners first and second graders,

Jerry Anderson

My feeder Elementary School District, actually they are the first ones that open the Learning Labs in their school.

Jennifer Nichols

--And we are open. Yeah, we, we are open, which we do have in person learning, but the families have chosen not to come in person. And we've even offered to say, if you're not comfortable, how about every other day, because we're full in, in person. So we've even offered like, if you How about start two days a week, you know, and try to bring them in that way. And they said, Yeah, we're gonna come and then they, they didn't come. So um, and again, it's not a lot of families, but they're the ones that keep you up at night, because you worry.

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Jerry Anderson

So, the safety issue was the issue for some of the families at the elementary school level, they just didn't want their kids in all those different classes with all the different people. So even, even when the elementary school closed, they opened up their own separate learning lab for younger kids with so many adults to help them during that time period. So, they wouldn't be around a whole lot of people wouldn't be changing classes and doing that type of thing. And they actually had parents who bought into that, for the younger kids. Just sharing.

Jennifer Nichols

So maybe an idea of, of offering for them to come in, in a smaller environment. Thank you.

Je' Nobia Smith

Any other thoughts? Regarding this, or any of our prompts?

Kristen Hicks

I was just gonna share one thing if I could, one of the things that we, I'm from Iowa, and one of the things that we started our in-school year that we were not anticipating dealing with on top of COVID was the derecho that came through our community. And so not only did we have I mean, we had to spend time finding a lot of our families and tracking them down. Because many of them lost their homes, and we didn't know where they were, and then families that typically have, I mean, our community didn't have internet and power for weeks. And so just to be able to find out where people were and what their needs were. So, I mean, we have that battle on top of COVID. And so, in our Return to Learn plan that was already established, pre-derecho, our plan was, is that every student was going to be contacted. And one of the things that we knew head on was that there were a lot of teachers that just don't feel comfortable making calls home. So, we just put that in our Return to Learn plan with a script that was to make a contact. So, if you didn't feel comfortable, then at the very least it's written there, and you can read it.

And so at least our goal was at that point is that if this student or family wasn't connected with this person, then perhaps they would be connected with this other teacher so then we're just trying to grasp and trying to get as many connections to families, and then keeping track of, okay, after two to three contacts, then it goes to the next level, and then it would ultimately end with a home visit. But then, like I said, that's kind of where our next battle was trying to find some of those families. But that's, that has

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nothing to do with COVID. That was our issue. But that was, we were thankful to have that kind of set parameters. And then I think is a really good school or really good skill, to mandate, so to speak, all of our staff to have to do kind of rip the band aid off a little bit, and then hoping to get people feeling a little bit more comfortable to make those phone calls home. And it's an easy thing like, hey, how are you doing? What do you guys need? So that's been helpful.

Charmaine Bell

Also, what's been helpful at our school is there, our kids kind of live in clusters. So, there's like apartment complexes where there's like tons of kids. And so, when I'm going to like deliver, like, let's say, school supplies to a family, I try to reach out to as many families to let them know that I'll be in the area by their apartment complex, and that they can reach out to me and I'll be sitting in like my car in a certain spot, and they can come to me and ask questions if they need to.

Jennifer Nichols

That's a great idea. Thank you.

Unidentified

That is a great idea.

Diana Lazzell

Nickie and Je' Nobia, or our conversation starters, we have an interesting question in the chat talking about hybrid learning, where it kind of conflicts with the flexibility and parents' schedules, with logistical and transportation issues. They were interested if other districts had experienced the same thing, *How do you target those parents who have to work a full day?*

Christina Summers

I'm with Christel House Indianapolis and what we did is beginning of the year, we went back, or we didn't have students coming back for the most part, we had 10 kids per grade level. But--

Je' Nobia Smith

if someone is sharing right now, we can hardly hear you if you could speak up.

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Christina Summers

Oh, sorry. Yeah,

Je' Nobia Smith

No worries.

Christina Summers

We had, what we did is we had about 10 kids per grade level that we had come in during the day. So those were targeted to be to be like our kids who had some special needs or like really needed the extra resources to be in during the day or kids whose parents did not have any access to childcare, or really, really needed their kids to be in school because they couldn't miss that, miss work or anything. And that actually worked out fairly well for us when we first started back, so it kind of eased everybody in. And then when we went back a little bit later, then we had all of our students in Monday through Thursday, out on Fridays, but those 10 still got to go in on Fridays, because we could not take that away from families. And that seemed to work. And you know, there were some grade levels that we didn't need all 10 spots. But for many we did. And it was something that that really worked well for families that needed that little extra support.

Je' Nobia Smith

Okay, so what I heard you say, was that, and that was Christina, thank you, that you basically, your district is offering alternative time slots, as it were for--It sounds like in person instruction, or additional instruction for select groups of students if they need that additional support, but also their families as well.

Christina Summers

Yeah, yeah. Now unfortunately, we're all out now. We just went to that a couple of weeks ago with the Marion County guidance. So, it has been difficult, but earlier in the semester, it was, it was something you were able to do.

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Je' Nobia Smith

Thank you so much, anyone else?

Charmaine Bell

Sorry, and tapping into county resources. So, I shared with as many parents even the ones that I think may not qualify, or they themselves think they don't qualify, sharing all of the resources. Here's how you can get your rent paid. This is how you can get your bills paid. Here's scholarships for daycares. Here's daycares that are open and connecting with people at the county because they might have extra resources that may not necessarily be on their websites and asking what other information do you have, that I can share with families?

Je' Nobia Smith

Excellent. Thank you so much, everyone for your very thoughtful responses. Thank you so much for being active in the chat. As we're all trying to navigate, on these issues from different perspectives, and with different levels of experience. This, this is new to all of us. And so, it's been very enriching to hear some of your, some of your thoughts as I move us towards close. Before we begin to wrap up, are there any final or lingering thoughts or questions, or anything from the chat that you would like to address? And then Nickie, I don't know, if you have anything additional?

Nickie Coomer

I don't, I'm going to try to say this quickly. I mean, when we're talking about kind of what parents are navigating, I feel like I'm always, you know, on a stage to offer my own experience. So you might hear some kids in the background here. But, uh, no, I just really appreciate it. And honestly, as a parent, as an educator, as somebody working at, you know, with the Midwest & Plains, I appreciate everyone's perspectives, so much, and your ideas, and your input and your questions. You know, I, we, we are already at an hour, which is hard for me to believe. And so just thank you very much for, for your engagement again, in the video and on camera, and then also in the chat. So I think we have a few more slides. Yep. This one, I just want to thank our conversation starters for kicking us off with our prompts. We appreciate so much your time and sharing your experiences and your knowledge and the things that you're doing in your spaces. So thank you very much to our conversation starters. All right. And we have an just a few more. I have a link to share with you all in the chat. This is a survey about our experience today. So if you wouldn't mind filling this out. It's our post session questionnaires. There's a link here. And

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as well. If you wouldn't mind if you are on Twitter or Facebook or any of your social platforms, and wouldn't mind tweeting us or following us on Facebook. We share product information. We have many events that are coming up. So Diana, do you want to talk more about our social media?

Diana Lazzell

Yeah, sure. So answer this question, what are you going, how are you going to use what you learn here today in your own context? Share that on Twitter. You can tag us GreatLakesEAC #MAPequity. And I am going to share the link in the chat if you want to subscribe to our publications as well. Thank you.

Je' Nobia Smith

All right. So thank you, everyone for joining us. As Nickie has said and Diana, they have put links for you all in the chat and this will conclude our first Coffeehouse session. Thank you so much again for joining us and for all of your great shares.

Tracy Aaron

Thank you all