

TRANSCRIPTION

Crystal M.: On March 19th 2020, COVID-19 forced schools to abruptly close and shift to online and hybrid learning, uprooting the lives of caregivers, students, and all school personnel. This podcast series will center the voices of caregivers, students, and school staff members as they discuss their online and hybrid learning experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through this podcast series, multiple stakeholders will gain first-hand insight into the various ways caregivers, students, and school staff members navigated and continue to navigate schooling during a pandemic.

Crystal M.: The goals of this podcast series are to provide stakeholders first-hand accounts of caregivers, students, and school staff members experiences during online and hybrid learning, and provide opportunities for stakeholders to better understand caregivers, students, and school staff members' challenges and triumphs so they can support caregivers, students, and school staff members during the continuing pandemic and beyond.

Crystal M.: We would like to thank the students, caregivers, and school staff members for taking the time to share their experiences with us. We appreciate you all.

[Transition Music]

Student Support Staff (SSS): I came to speak with you today about being an educator during the time of COVID. Let's go to COVID last year, this year. Let's go back to COVID when school first started this year.

Teacher: Okay.

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VI: In the Midst of Chaos: Schooling Experiences During a Pandemic: *Another Teacher's Perspective* *Equity Spotlight Podcast Series*

Crystal Hill Morton, MAP Center Equity Fellow – Indiana

SSS: How was that experience for you as an educator?

Teacher: Well, it was difficult. Back in August, the state of our county and our school district decided to not have us start in-person, so everybody was working remotely. The teachers here were required to be in the building with the children being virtual, either in their homes or in other learning environments such as at daycares. If they weren't in their personal homes, they were at family members' homes or at a daycare or other type of daycare setting.

Teacher: I would say it was fairly difficult, especially for students who were not able to be in their own environments. Particularly within daycares or other types of daycare-type settings, it would make for... it would make for really difficult learning environments for them, and teaching environments for us, because they would have a plethora of different challenges, whether it be scheduling. If they didn't have... If they didn't have the correct amount of staff, they might have not allow the kids to be on their computers, because they wouldn't have people there to support them. It would be loud. The connections, the Wi-Fi connections were not always the best, so there was lots of glitching and technical issues that way. Within the home environments, sometimes...and this isn't to speak ill of parents, but if they had to go out or they were doing things, sometimes they would take the kids with them so the kids weren't always consistently getting on virtually.

SSS: Did you have any parents who had difficulties understanding the platform in which they were trying, but they just did not understand that?

Teacher: Yes. They did. They did have a very difficult time with understanding the platform, how to access getting on digitally with the teachers. We are using

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Zoom, so the parents had a hard time understanding how to use Zoom, how to access Zoom, where to access Zoom, where to get to the curriculum, how to submit work for the teachers. It was extremely difficult for many parents-

SSS: How would you say-

Teacher: ... to navigate.

SSS: I'm sorry. How would you say your administration assisted with teachers and parents and students?

Teacher: I think they did as best that they could in the circumstances that we were under. I think we were all kind of in the same boat with making sure that the kids were getting the correct teaching that they were to be getting, while also being understanding of the different scenarios and situations that both the kids and the parents were being in, in the moments. So, I think that they are trying to be as supportive as they can to both the teachers and the families.

SSS: Okay. From August, and now we're in March, and you guys have hybrid going on, so some of your students are at home still learning virtually and some are here?

Teacher: Yes.

SSS: How can...what's the comparison between August till now, as far as comfortability on platforms? Helping students with their work...

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Teacher:

Since I work with the older kids, I think that they are getting to be, they are understanding the online platform better. We're still using it consistently with the in-person students, so they are still navigating...what we were doing online, they're still navigating that on a regular basis. Most teachers, if not all teachers, have just converted to putting everything online now anyway, so that that way the kids are still familiar with it and it makes...we're using less paper, less paper pencil just because of passing papers back and forth, and the spreading of the virus, making sure that we're doing all that we can to...making sure that we're doing all that we can to not cross-contaminate, and not spread any unnecessary germs.

SSS:

Last question. In a perfect world, what would help you most during this COVID experience, and in learning moving forward? In *teaching* moving forward?

Teacher:

I think...well, having the kids all back in person. Especially at the elementary level, I don't think that kids need to be on computers all day, every day. I don't think it's...it's not good for them and it's also not conducive to helping them to build those relationships. I think that we have seen a little bit of, I don't want to say regression, but kids just aren't conversing with each other like they used to. I know that we are going into a way more digital age than we have ever before, but just being able to have verbal interactions with people is becoming kind of less and less, and so we kind of need to get back to that in order for kids to be able to hold conversations, both with their peers and with the teachers and other staff members.

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