

Social Justice Change Agent: Connecting Students and Families to Social Service Supports in Response to COVID-19 *Virtual Coffeehouse Session 2*

TRANSCRIPTION

Tiffany Kyser: Afternoon, everyone. Thank you so much for joining us today. As folks are logging on, I'm checking the chat and if there are any tech issues, I think there is one, potentially, feel free to contact Diana via the chat and we'll go ahead and get started. Good afternoon and welcome to the Region III MAP Center's Communities of Care Virtual Coffeehouse Series. This series is intended to provide a space to virtually land, decompress as we discuss our efforts to meet the needs of our students and families in the face of abrupt changes in response to COVID-19.

Tiffany Kyser: As we work to pursue our consistent stance on realizing educational equity, we want to use this time as an opportunity to share what is going well, in addition to our struggles. To be clear, the Region III Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Communities of Care Virtual Coffeehouse, they're intended to center the perspectives of you all, of the participants. We encourage all of you to come together with us at the MAP Center in this virtual space, share our experiences, and use dialogue and conversation just as you would in your local coffeehouse.

Tiffany Kyser: Session two of our Virtual Coffeehouse Series is focused on advancing our community of care amongst each other by sharing our stories, by sharing our perspectives, by sharing lessons learned. This is not a didactic, instruction-based experience; this virtual engagement aims to acknowledge the need for us to come together in virtual community, to discuss common challenges, discover, and be encouraged by what we've learned collectively as well as work to meet the demands of teaching and learning in the wake of COVID-19.

Tiffany Kyser: This is an opportunity for us to learn, dialogue together, to fellowship, and to provide collegial support. We want to welcome everyone today. You may have been getting signals in the chat box from Diana to if you want to introduce yourself via the chat and the organization which you represent. You'll see here on the image in front of you. We have a lot of different stakeholders who are involved today, we have seven state departments. We have 40 districts and schools

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represented today. 23 education-based organizations, service centers, community organizations, and foundations.

Tiffany Kyser: We have eight institutes of higher education. And this all culminates to the representation of over 18 states, including the District of Columbia, so we welcome you. My name is Tiffany Kyser and I serve as the Associate Director for Engagement and Partnerships with the MAP Center. I'm joined today by Nickie Coomer, Doctoral Research Assistant at the MAP Center, who will serve as co-host. I'll give Nickie an opportunity to say hello and greet everyone.

Nickie Coomer: Hi, everyone. Good to see you.

Tiffany Kyser: Nickie, I think your volume's a little low. So I'll give you an opportunity to adjust your volume.

Nickie Coomer: All right, let me fix my Bluetooth.

Tiffany Kyser: Okay, we can hear you now.

Nickie Coomer: Okay, great. Hi, everyone [crosstalk 00:03:33].

Tiffany Kyser: Welcome, Nickie. We're also joined by Diana, who's our Outreach and Engagement Manager, who will serve as the technical director and chat moderator. Diana I'll give you a chance to say hello to everyone.

Diana Lazzell: Hi, my name's Diana Lazzell. I'm Outreach and Engagement Coordinator and I'll be monitoring the chat. If you have any technical difficulties, please send me a message.

Tiffany Kyser: Thanks, Diana. We are also supported in spirit by Sophie Richardson, Office Manager, and Rosiline Floyd, Assistant Director of Technical Assistance. They are currently, if you have a child, children or youth that you're care taking for, and you've wanted them to participate concurrently to allow you to focus on today's session, they are currently the virtual teachers for that concurrent session. And

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Diana has provided the link to the youth session if you are interested and weren't aware. If you have a child, children, or youth in the home that you think might engage.

Tiffany Kyser: The content for that session is open to all youth; however, it's focused on ages five through ten, just so that you're aware. I'm also pleased to announce that we're also joined by Kathleen King Thorius, Executive Director and Principal Investigator of the MAP Center and Executive Director of the Great Lakes Equity Center. I want to give Kathleen an opportunity to say hello.

Kathleen King: Just great to be with everybody today, and good to see your faces. Thanks for joining us.

Tiffany Kyser: Thanks, Kathleen. We're also joined in spirit by Seena Skelton. She may join us later on. Oh, she just logged on. I see her now. So Seena Skelton, the Director of Operations at the MAP Center, is also joining us as a critical contributor to dialogue along with each of you. And I'll give Seena an opportunity to say hello.

Seena Skelton: Good afternoon, everyone. Happy to see you all.

Tiffany Kyser: Thanks, Seena. I'm excited to announce we have three conversation starters. So, if you were with us for session one, we had great conversation starters from around our region and received feedback that that was very much appreciated. And so we're thrilled to introduce three more conversation starters for session two. They not only represent state departments and or districts that the MAP Center are currently partners with, or who have partnered with, or have been involved in previous roles in partnership with our Center.

Tiffany Kyser: But they'll also support Nickie and I as co-hosts in providing their perspective and insights to break the virtual ice, as we pepper in three reflective prompts throughout today's Virtual Coffeehouse session. We have Eulalia Valdez, Jennifer Cherry, and Sandra Dukhie. I'll start with Eulalia and then Jennifer and Sandra to

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introduce yourself. So, Eulalia, do you want to kick it off just who you are and what district you're from.

- Eulalia Valdez:** Yes, good afternoon, I'm Eulalia Valdez. I'm the Director of English Learning at Berkeley School District 87 in Illinois.
- Tiffany Kyser:** Thanks Eulalia. Thanks again for joining. Jennifer?
- Jennifer Cherry:** Hi, I'm Jennifer Cherry. I'm the Director of Student Services from Anoka-Hennepin School District, from the state of Minnesota. Very happy to be here. Thank you for the invite.
- Tiffany Kyser:** Thanks. Jennifer and Eulalia, if you missed it, her district is in Illinois. Is that correct Eulalia?
- Eulalia Valdez:** Yes, that is correct.
- Tiffany Kyser:** Okay, thank you. So we have Illinois and Minnesota so far and then Sandra.
- Sandra Dukhie:** Hi, I'm Sandra, Student Service Director in Bloomfield Hills Schools in Michigan. But I work with the MAP Center as a school board member in Ferndale.
- Tiffany Kyser:** Thanks, Sandra. And Sandra, you're also a parent, is that correct?
- Sandra Dukhie:** I am also a parent of five.
- Tiffany Kyser:** So, a lot of roles, of five.
- Sandra Dukhie:** Of five.
- Tiffany Kyser:** Well, thank you all three for joining us today. Before we get started, 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 results in transformative systemic change, as well as personal reflection and growth. So, before we get started in our conversation, we aim to provide this

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unique learning available on our website via recording and transcription. Additionally, sharing photos of today's conversation on our social media platforms.

Tiffany Kyser: We wanted to encourage you all to consider this disclaimer as you share and engage today. I'll turn it over to Diana for a little bit of guidance around access and interaction via our virtual format. Diana.

Diana Lazzell: This MAP Center Communities of Care Virtual Coffeehouse is intended to be interactive. Participants are asked to interact in real time via our teleconferencing format. To reduce noise, we ask that all participants mute their microphones when not speaking. We will post additional resources to the chat bar. Lastly, the video camera function has been turned on. Thus, if you have a webcam and you would like to join, please feel free to do so by clicking the camera icon in the lower right of your screen.

Diana Lazzell: If you have a question or comment, please utilize the raise hand feature in Zoom. You may also say in the chat bar, "I have a question." We will try to attend to the most questions and comments and we thank you for your patience in this process as we ensure equitable representation during this event. When your question or comment has been addressed, please lower your hand. And so, again, please don't forget to mute your microphone when not speaking.

Tiffany Kyser: Thanks, Diana. And just to underscore again, we want to sit on everyone's perspectives, in ways that you feel, modalities you feel either in typing chat or speaking live, that you feel comfortable sharing. Feel free to raise that virtual hand or signal us in the chat that you have a question or discussion. If you rose that virtual hand and the answer to your question was provided, feel free to hit that raise your hand button and that will effectively lower your hand so that way, we keep everyone in queue for the conversation.

Tiffany Kyser: Nickie, I'll turn it over to you to get us started on our first prompt with our conversation starter just to get us going.

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- Nickie Coomer:** Great. Thanks, so much Tiffany. So, the title of our session today is *Serving as a Social Justice Change Agent: Connecting Students and Families to Social Service Supports in Response to COVID-19*. And our first question is really about how school communities, or what things that you've seen school communities, leverage to connect students and families to social service supports, and what considerations would you recommend others consider as they approach these strategies from a social justice perspective? So, Eulalia, would you like to kick us off?
- Eulalia Valdez:** Oh, absolutely. So, at our district, what we did is we basically coordinated some meetings with our counselors, our social workers, our director of special services, and I participated to put the language acquisition lens. And what we did is we basically went ahead and generated a list of resources depending on the needs of our community. So, our community is high poverty. So, we wanted to make sure that we had information for our families in terms of where they would be able to receive food, shelter, the immediate care, and that information got communicated in multiple ways.
- Eulalia Valdez:** In English and Spanish because we have nine languages in our district; however, 98% of our families are Spanish speakers. So, we provided the information through our weekly updates by building administrators through our Superintendent message. And then the information got posted to our website. And as we received additional information from agencies in terms of different types of support; we continue to update and maintain that particular family resources document.
- Nickie Coomer:** Great, thanks so much. I have a couple questions if you wouldn't mind.
- Eulalia Valdez:** Absolutely. Uh-huh [affirmative].
- Nickie Coomer:** So, how are the weekly updates and the Superintendent's message communicated to the families in your community?

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- Eulalia Valdez:** So, the weekly administrator messages are newsletters--that gets sent out via email, and then they get posted on the internet. The Superintendent's message, it's a weekly message and it's a video message ... And it's a YouTube message. So, the YouTube has the capability of changing the closed caption to whichever language you need to access. So initially, we weren't aware of that feature. And so, we actually did manual closed captioning. But once we figured out the feature, then we went ahead and we explained it to our community members on how to use the closed caption feature to go ahead and access it in the language that they needed.
- Eulalia Valdez:** So, they have it available to them in both languages and like I said, the Superintendent message goes out weekly.
- Nickie Coomer:** That's amazing. I didn't realize that. So, does YouTube shifts the captions to another language?
- Eulalia Valdez:** You have to work with the gear and in the gear, there's a closed caption and it defaults to English, but you can change the default to a different language. So as the Superintendent's message is being said in English, if you switch the feature on, at the bottom you have the closed captioning in Spanish or Arabic for our Arabic speaking families or French for French speaking ... and so forth. So there's a lot of different languages available. We did go ahead and review what the closed captioning translation was like if it really needed us to go ahead and do it or if that feature maintained the meaning of the message of the Superintendent.
- Eulalia Valdez:** And it does. And so, because it does, we went ahead, and we defaulted to that.
- Nickie Coomer:** That's great. Thank you.
- Eulalia Valdez:** You're welcome.
- Nickie Coomer:** That's very cool. I have one more question if that's okay.
- Eulalia Valdez:** Uh-huh [affirmative].

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- Nickie Coomer:** And that is, you mentioned a moment ago, agencies that you work with or as agencies would communicate to the district new services that they're providing. What types of agencies are you working with?
- Eulalia Valdez:** So, the first one is the Regional Office of Education within West 40. And the reason for that is that the Regional Office of Education and the districts, they coordinate efforts to make sure that the same type of information is being shared out. And then from there, the different medical centers for suicide intervention for any type of counseling. We focused on making sure that for our district that the resources were both in English and Spanish because we have such a high population of students that are Spanish speakers, and so it was hospitals in terms of that piece.
- Eulalia Valdez:** We also had the food pantry. So the local food pantries and the local organizations that were dispensing food, such as our school was included in the listing, but because we have so many different schools in the area that are also providing food, and we learned through conversations with our parents that our times for the school district were not necessarily conducive to the pickups, but some of the other schools within our region, their times were more conducive to what the parents' schedules were. So we shared all of those resources and that way, the parents don't have to prove that they are in our district, they just show up during the times that the foods are being distributed.
- Eulalia Valdez:** So those are some of the organizations that we went ahead and we shared out. I'm happy to share the link with you if you would like to take a look at it.
- Nickie Coomer:** Sure, that would be great. Thank you. You [crosstalk 00:16:14] absolutely. Sarah Dennis has her hand raised. Sarah, do you want to go ahead?
- Sarah Dennis:** Sure. Thanks. It was just a super quick question about the Zoom closed captioning multi-lingually. Does the viewer select that option so that multiple people in different languages are watching it at the same time or does the district control in only condition?

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- Eulalia Valdez:** Okay, so I'm going to clarify that, the video is a YouTube video. Okay? That the Superintendent releases every week. Within the YouTube features, there's the gear and it's that gear that has the closed captioning. You take a look at the gear and then me as the user, like I'm a Spanish speaker, I will go ahead and look at the gear and I will change the language. That information was provided and ... just is like a graphic and I can go ahead and forward that so that you can see the steps that are taken to make the other languages accessible as you're going through a YouTube video.
- Nickie Coomer:** Did that answer your question?
- Sarah Dennis:** Yes, thanks. And so, is it not accessible for a live video? Like a live stream that. It doesn't do the closed captioning translation in real time? It's only after-
- Eulalia Valdez:** I don't have an answer for that. We pre-record those messages.
- Sarah Dennis:** Okay, thank you so much. Thank you.
- Eulalia Valdez:** Absolutely.
- Nickie Coomer:** Great. Thank you, Sarah. Are there any other questions or comments, or does anyone else want to share some creative strategies your organization has engaged in or that you've seen others? You?
- Sandra Dukhie:** So, I can follow up. In Ferndale, the school district did the same thing. So, we get messages every week from our respective building Principals with information about what's happening, what they're doing for the kids, what's available as far as food. We, also in the district that we live in, food is open to all. So, we don't question anyone who comes up to get food. It was every day. So, it was Monday through Friday. Now it's Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and it's a couple of days' worth of food, based on the number of kids in the home. We also have a website that lists services that are available.
- Sandra Dukhie:** We also have our Community Health that is mental health that was in our high school, but they're doing virtual visits with students and families as needed. There's no requirement, no insurance. We're reaching out on Facebook and

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Twitter, phone calls, but most of our stuff is coming in an online method. So, whether it's the Superintendent's email or the weekly district e-blast, or the administrator of your building's newsletter, or your teacher's newsletter. Everything's coming online, text message, via the kid's Zoom and Google Classroom. So, there's lots of reach outs.

Nickie Coomer: Great, thank you, Sandra. Rebecca in the chat has a question. Rebecca, would you like to ... Or I'm sorry, would like to share a resource, Rebecca, do you want to share?

Rebecca: Yeah, thanks. So, I only have six to nine kids on my own case load. But all of them have siblings in my building. So, I have leveraged my donors choose history as a teacher for the last year and a half. And they have a keep kids learning challenge or opportunity for \$1,000 right now on Amazon. So just a funding stream for a small group of people who I've been able to have it ripple out to families. So, clothes, food, definitely books, and some educational stuff. Just as another way to get stuff on the porches of some of our students.

Rebecca: I have kids who have a diagnosis of autism, but they have different communities that they're also part of. So, I've been grateful for that. Donors choose flexibility and that they've evolved to respond to not just forward-thinking projects, but also responsive to what's happening right now with so many of our kids virtually learning. And they have match grants, like the Chan Zuckerberg Foundation currently matches every donation. So, I just got three Chromebooks for some of my kids who had zero connectivity, because other people matched monies, and then they just got delivered to my porch today.

Rebecca: Because our public school district had to close down the rollout in any way those devices are getting ... Come, they have to get collected back from the school, so one of my concerns is and I don't know if people are starting to talk about summer is, what it looks like when all this stuff we're doing day to day, week to week, connecting with families just stops on June 4th. So that's a question, too, about, what does the summer look like in different places.

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- Eulalia Valdez:** So, I can share a little bit about the summer in terms of we're in the process of planning. Some of the areas that our firm and we will continue doing will be the meal distribution. And the reason for that is that there was an extension that was provided at the federal level, which then trickles down to the state level, which will allow us to go ahead and provide the food distribution past the time that we had initially anticipated. So, we will have the meal distribution available during the summer months, because of that additional fund source that came through.
- Eulalia Valdez:** In addition to that, we are seeking to have some of our teachers help us to stay connected, even if it's just once a week with our students and their families, by providing one particular learning product that we're going to be using, it's called myON. Doesn't require very much, if any, teacher participation, but we still want to have some monitoring in place. And so, we're going to be implementing that. Right now, like I said, we're in the planning phase. Those are the two areas that we know we will continue. In terms of the parent and the student at the district level, we will continue collaborating with the Regional Office of Education to keep our community resources document updated.
- Eulalia Valdez:** And, the Superintendent will send out messages initially during the summer. She was scheduled to provide updates on a monthly basis, but given the circumstances, the frequency may increase, to go ahead and maintain the communication and the connectedness with our community.
- Nickie Coomer:** Great, thank you so much. There's so many good follow up questions and comments that are ongoing in the chat. And so, the conversation is dynamic here in a variety of different ways, even in just this one format. Thank you so much for sharing, Eulalia thanks so much for kicking us off on that question. There are still more questions about this topic, like I said, ongoing in the chat. So please if you are navigating between the video and the chat, hop on in there. So, Tiffany, do you want to go ahead in some of this particular part and then move on to the next question?

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Tiffany Kyser: Yeah, absolutely. I just want to recognize Dominic's question around supporting students in a rural context and appreciate Randy for answering. So, as we're moving forward to honor time, don't hesitate. Ask these questions or pose. Again, we want to center you all and your perspectives and your assets. So as you have a perhaps a solution in your school community that could support a colleague, feel free to follow up in the chat and then also Seena noted that our flip grid, which will highlight at the end of our Coffeehouse series. It's a virtual way to ask questions and get answers in a very fun, easy, accessible format that allows for enhanced accessibility.

Tiffany Kyser: So that might be a way to continue conversations and get more immediate feedback. Also, Renee is really pushing us as a critical friend to think through access and how do school communities continue to provide access to social service supports, if not already connected. And by that, I'm inferring already connected to technology, to Wi-Fi to have the capability as a lot of online communication has dominated.

Tiffany Kyser: And so, hopefully, Renee, as we continue to move through questions, this idea of connectivity across multiple modalities may become more perceivable. And if not, feel free to continue in the chat pushing us. Just to quickly summarize before we move to Jennifer, who's going to conversation start us on the second prompt, which is really zooming in from school communities into specifically districts, is this idea of ... for those who've had an opportunity to read the newsletter that was sent out to confirm the registration, around social justice, what does it mean to connect students and families on the margins to social service supports through the social justice lens and becoming a social justice change agent.

Tiffany Kyser: And I just want to surface some things that Eulalia kicked us off with. Not only connecting students from disinvested ... students and families from disinvested communities... but it's thinking through the languages, it's thinking through the communication styles, and it's thinking through the approach. Also, Eulalia

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mentioned that she is on a group of educators who meet to think through what will be messaged and she noted the term through a language lens.

Tiffany Kyser: So this idea of multiple representation, so thinking through not just connecting students and families, but also how do we thoughtfully engage in social justice activity by including those voices, perspectives, and lived experiences in decision making about what is going to be communicated and the ways in which we're going to communicate. And then finally to Sandra's point, this idea of providing open and accessible support via food access, via mental health access. And then there was one more comment, I think it was Rebecca, around fundraising, being creative around continuing to extend and build upon supports that can be provided for educators as they engage in social justice activities.

Tiffany Kyser: So, I just want to quickly summarize that again, there's great resources and information being shared in the chat as well. So, moving into our second prompt, what creative strategies, in this case has my district leveraged, have I observed that have been leveraged to connect students and families to social service supports? And what considerations would you recommend others be aware of as they approach these strategies from a social justice perspective? So again, Jennifer is going to kick us off.

Tiffany Kyser: But, what are ways that you all have discovered or observed through a social justice lens in doing the work of connecting students and families to social service supports? So, I'll turn it over to Jennifer to kick us off.

Jennifer Cherry: All right, thank you. Coming from Anoka-Hennepin, we serve just under 40,000 students and their families in our district, we cross two different counties. So, I think about the way that our district is able to leverage the economies of scale, really, to provide some strategic supports, partnering with our community experts that do a lot of the social services outside of our district. The supports that we are able to connect our families with, is oftentimes ... I would say that's more of a coordinated effort, but also I think because of our size, at times it's more difficult than if we were in maybe a one high school community where we could move

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pretty fast because we had maybe a better understanding of the parameters around who our families are and who we're serving.

Jennifer Cherry: I think because we cross two different counties, and we really have families that are located in rural areas, and very wealthy suburban areas, as well as some communities that are at a lower socioeconomic status, it's different the way that we approach that in each one of those communities. But our district is... they've been able to leverage I think those relationships. And so, I'll just tie it back to the last topic we were just hosting some conversations around, what are we doing to center ourselves up for summer?

Jennifer Cherry: And I think this is one thing where we really are leveraging those social service supports and the experts in our community that provide basic services, that provide mental health supports, and our role as a district has been to connect our families with those supports and the experts who do that work so well. So, I'll give you just one example, and that's in regard to food insecurities. We continue to provide meal service for students through our Child Nutrition Department. We will continue that service through the summer, but we have been able to add on and support that work with a community partner that provides a backpack meal program for us.

Jennifer Cherry: So we're able to supplement those meals and provide families with more meals, and then also partnering with a variety of different transportation mechanisms, through our county for a certain set of students, through our Type 3 vehicles or shuttles and taxi services, through a specific group of students, and then also now reaching out to other more dynamic and responsive individual partnerships at the local school community, to get as many resources out to families as possible. And that is just creating that network of supports that's hosted through our district or coordinated through our district.

Jennifer Cherry: But it's really just the coordination, I think, that a large district is able to leverage all of those supports and meet a variety of student's needs. And rather than try to

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recreate something where we're not experts, we really are trying to build up and lean on the supports that have been created in our communities.

Tiffany Kyser: Thanks, Jennifer. I know there are a couple follow up questions. Alicia, I'll kick it over to you.

Alicia: Great, thank you so much. I thought I'd show my face just while I'm talking. Thank you. I'm enjoying this and this is the second Coffeehouse. Thank you so much. A couple of things that I thought was interesting. We are doing something in our community, where our local United Way leadership has about 100 of us, honestly, on a Monday Zoom call every week. That includes the funded organizations, non-funded organizations, funding then the organizations that are funders, that includes clergy, and then of course, school leadership.

Alicia: And what we have found is that we just started sharing based on like, "What's happening with COVID? How has your target audience been affected? What are your needs?" And it has been a great place to not just send links and share, "Here's where you can go." But organizations are getting ... "I have this and I'll bring it over." We're getting the thermometers, they're on back order, but we'll add you all, too. So, it's really been a neat place to just share. Almost the needs are met immediately just because our organizations are coming together to talk about those things.

Alicia: So, I've heard a lot of that and I just wanted to highlight that our local United Way has brought us together on that. Another thing that we're doing in terms of our district in preparing for summer, a lot of places are doing food giveaways--that is happening in our community more than ever before. And so, we're thinking about marginalized communities; the community that I serve and live in is identified as such. And what is happening in homes in terms of kids' reading, they have books, and so we're using those food distribution sites also to give books away and I know people have thought about these things, but just all these connections.

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Alicia: We're just trying to find ways to get families what they need and to help teachers, our after-school program has a summer program. We're coming alongside teachers in schools to provide an extended time, we know that our kids have lost a lot with just half of a school year. So, we are picking up, so to speak, where they left off to do as much virtual, but also sending packets to hands-on kinds of things to students and families to try to continue some level of learning in the summer. So those are some of the things that we're doing. And I'm looking at some of the amazing things that you're doing. Thank you so much for letting me share.

Tiffany Kyser: Thank you, Alicia. Renee, you had a follow up question, and some critical friendship. Renee, if you happen to be speaking, we cannot hear you. And so, I'll circle back to you. But feel free to continue to type in the chat. I also want to ask a question if I could, Jennifer and Alicia, this could possibly go to YouTube, this idea of leveraging scale in your school community. And before I ask this question, Alicia, to the extent you feel comfortable sharing either your school community or city or state, just to give participants some context.

Alicia: Well, I am in Muncie, Indiana. And so, we're in Muncie Community School District.

Tiffany Kyser: Okay, thank you. A question for both of you. As we're talking through not only connecting students and families on the margins, all students and families, but particularly on the margins, that are experiencing exacerbated inequities that have long standing histories within our school community. Are there some lessons learned or strategies that you all have observed in the way we talk about students and families, and the way we advocate for connecting these conditions to greater systemic inequities, in ways that maybe provide some momentum to push local leaders either within our school or within our school community, to recognize that these solutions that we're trying to ...

Tiffany Kyser: I'll just say triage in terms of food and technology access and mental and physical health supports and, for our homeless youth, safe shelter, so on and so forth. Would you have any recommendations just about the way we think and we talk about historically marginalized groups? The way we consider the way systemic

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policies, maybe in practices have contributed to what we are experiencing? Just any words of wisdom, Jennifer, and then I'll go to Alicia.

Jennifer Cherry: Well, I think that this time has really provided many opportunities for us to think about who is served and who is not served by the way that we practice education and educational delivery. And so, I think throughout this, there has been a large focus on getting student's stuff. And we put a lot of effort into ensuring that our students have things that they need to participate in learning, and such that in our district, we have not been a one to one program, and from the very start of this pandemic, our district went from the place of, "We can't deliver online education because our students do not have access."

Jennifer Cherry: To within two weeks, an entire rollout and distribution of every Chromebook that existed throughout our district, ensuring students had devices to them within one more week, partnering with our communities, our foundation, our cities, around ensuring every student had high speed internet access. Everywhere from taking donated phones, cell phones, and creating hotspots, right? So, within a matter of weeks, we ramped up and that was all focused on making sure that students have stuff. Where I think the next leg of that conversation, and where we're still stuck in this circle is, just because a student has stuff, does not mean that they are receiving an equitable education, because they do not have the supports to actually engage with those devices in such a way that they're really engaged in learning.

Jennifer Cherry: And so, as you think about how that shifted the conversation, I think we've moved a lot in our responsibility as an educational system, to provide equal opportunities, and we're just starting to dig into really what does that mean in terms of meeting the needs of historically marginalized students.

Tiffany Kyser: Thank you, Jennifer. I appreciate the stuff, moving from the stuff. That's very helpful. Alicia, and then I'll go to Renee.

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Alicia: Yeah, and I love that and I think also, just ensuring that families and students have stuff does not equal valuing them. I think for me, that has been, unfortunately, a grief, and certainly valuing and respecting and recognizing the power of educators and all of that. I talked to one educator who said to me, "I didn't realize how much families are ..." With tears welling up in her eyes, how much families are really involved and connected. And just because they couldn't be at the school when I wanted them to, I see the resiliency, I see the passion and the compassion, and I wouldn't have ever had that chance. I just didn't put myself out there, in a way.

Alicia: And so now families and educators are having to connect in significant ways, and some are taking full advantage on both sides, and then others aren't. But I definitely think, as Jennifer said, truth has come to light. And we realize, I think more than anything, I don't think we have begun to shift from really stuff to what's really most important, but at least there are red flags. No one can ignore the fact that we've just not done this well. We continue to miss, even in this re-imagining education, we are missing kids and families in an extraordinarily dangerous, devastating way.

Alicia: And so at least now we have to talk about it. If nothing else, we have to talk about it.

Tiffany Kyser: Thank you, Alicia, this idea of using this as a moment to critically reflect and leveraging that we have to have conversations and courageous, thoughtful, authentic conversations. Thank you. Renee, to close us out before we move to the next prompt.

Renee: Well, I was on mute. I'm sorry for that before. And thank you for being on this forum. My question always is, we're on the forum, and this is for educators and parents, that I send it out to everyone. But, how do we get to the parents that really don't know what are the resources that are available? Sometimes you just got to hit the streets. Flyers, I don't know. But yes, we're here. And the parents that are here, they're doing what they see best and so on. But we still need to get to those

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parents that don't know. They don't know that they don't know. And we have, unfortunately, probably a lot of kids that are in that situation.

Renee: Then further, I do think that we have what we have, but I see this as being an enlightening to parents of what really goes on. I substitute teach, that's by choice, and because I see what's going on in different school systems, and I just am looking forward to parents now seeing a bigger picture of what really goes on in the schools, and with their kids, and how they can also be involved in and make changes as they absolutely need to be. Thank you.

Tiffany Kyser: Thank you, Renee, and I'm just answering some questions in the chat concurrently as well. Appreciate that. I want to turn it over to Nickie to transition us to our final prompt, and then we'll move into wrap up. I don't know about you, but I haven't drunk a lot of my coffee, because it's been a very thoughtful conversation so far. So, we'll continue. We'll continue. Thank you. Thank you for sharing. Nickie.

Nickie Coomer: Great. Thanks, Tiffany. So, we've talked about community approaches in ways that districts are getting creative, and we've troubled some of that and dug deeper and raised some good critical questions. And our final question is, what creative strategies have you seen schools leverage to connect students and families to social service supports? And what considerations would you recommend others consider as they approach these from a social justice perspective? So, Sandra, do you want to kick us off?

Sandra Dukhie: Sure. A lot of the things that have been mentioned so far as what I've seen happen at our school. So, text messages, newsletter via email. Just the Facebook and Twitter feeds from the district use, and parents themselves, is pretty active. And there's more parent-to-parent connection. So, there's a lot of community connections of spreading the word. I can tell you that I've lived ... on the street I currently live, I lived here probably for four years, and probably never spoke to my neighbors. I know that the boy next door is either a grade older or a grade younger

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than my youngest son, and we have probably connected more in the past three months than we've connected in four years.

Sandra Dukhie: I've seen school buses come by and deliver things to the younger students. Our youngest is in high school. There's just a lot of connection from the staff via ... we are fortunate enough to have internet, so we get the emails, we get the Facebook messages, we get all of that stuff. But even just parents to parent, we've had parents walk by and drop little notes and post in the mail, we've started a handwriting of letters to one another for younger kids to older kids. But we're making sure that everyone eats. We've had a couple of kids reach out who were having some trouble at home that are currently living with friends.

Sandra Dukhie: But as far as from the school, most of it is just communication of where to get access to stuff. And from what I can tell, everyone's accessible at any time. So, even though school is 8:00 to 3:00, I can tell you that we've reached out at 8 PM for some help, and I've gotten calls.

Nickie Coomer: Great, thank you. I will share that I've experienced similar things with my neighbors. People I haven't spoken to yet since moving here. And all of a sudden, it's like, we have a relationship and our kids have started to know each other. And then it's like, we develop other supports for each other. I'm right now on this call, and I know that if my kids are in the front yard, they're okay. It's been a shift and it's been a good one. So, thanks so much for sharing that. I can relate. Does anybody else have anything they'd like to share? Renee in the chat said, a nice quote it was, "Make sure that we have as many touch points as possible, use every touch."

Nickie Coomer: Is what Renee had said. And I appreciate that and Sandra following up as well with being able to reach out at any time, and being able to contact and connect with people, and shifting some of our expectations around what time means. So, Dina.

Dina: I just wanted to share that in Ferndale, like Sandra was talking about, connections on the outside build those neural connections in our brain. And so, prior to the closure, we had already started working on in our surveys asking our students if

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my favorite person that I could connect to was Tiffany, I had that information as a principal. And we have leveraged that to make sure we're connecting with everyone. So, every week we have a spreadsheet, and teachers go on and say, "I haven't talked to Nickie this week. I haven't talked to Sandra this week. I haven't been able to connect with Tiffany."

Dina: And then we have a tier two and tier three approach with our mental health therapists and our social workers, so that we're trying to make sure that, every week, we have 100% connection with our families, and we're really seeing that pay off in making sure that our families and students know that they're cared about and connecting with them. So, I just wanted to share that.

Nickie Coomer: Thank you for sharing that. So, you said that there are mental health specialists that will reach out as one of your tiers of connection or through your tiered approach. Are the families that they connect to already connected to those mental health professionals? Are they already in a particular system that way or is it...

Dina: Well, in Ferndale, we've been fortunate that our school board ... thank you, Sandra, knows the priority of mental health. And so, at our elementary, we have a mental health specialist, and at the secondary, we partner with Honor Community Health and have a full time mental health therapist. So, these are people within our building that our children already know. And so, that has been very, very helpful. We've also lifted up our restorative practice coaches, and utilizing them to reach out to, because a lot of our children really connect with them.

Dina: So, just being intentional on those connections so that we're making sure we get a hold of our children and that they're doing okay.

Nickie Coomer: Okay. Thank you. I have one more follow up question. So, do you know how your teachers are connecting with families? I know we've talked about a lot of different ways ... through the internet, but I imagine that teachers are probably using other strategies as well that might be a little more personal. Somebody had mentioned in the chat, WhatsApp as one way to connect, so I'm just wondering if you know how teachers are reaching out?

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- Dina:** Well, again, that's in multiple different ways. But like today, we have a drive by from 4:00 to 6:00, so children can wave to second grade classroom teachers. You're in your car, you're social distancing, you're going through the car circle, and you're just waving to your teachers. We've been doing a few of those every week. Also, you're able to pick up supplies that you might need, as well. But how to do that, our teachers have office hours, K-12. And those office hours are one on one connections with families. They also are meeting twice a week for what we call impact hour.
- Dina:** Social emotional learning. That's just to focus on connections. As we move forward with summer school, one of the things that we want to do is virtually, our teachers will only have 10 to 12 students--that will be their cohort that they will focus on starting in this summer. But they'll continue that cohort in the fall and winter after school, to virtually connect with those students. So, the smaller the groups, the better. But we have lots of different ways that we are reaching out to families.
- Nickie Coomer:** Great. Thanks so much for sharing. Jennifer, I see that your hand is raised.
- Jennifer Cherry:** Yeah, I just wanted to share a unique way that we've been doing some of that reach out in our schools, because I think we are very much noticing that it's all about relationships, and finally, very much highlighting the need for really strong relationships with our students. At the high school, in the middle school level, we have different student groups, so things like men's group, women's group, multicultural group, lots of smaller groups. So, if it's on the radar that one of those students in that already intact group has not been participating, the facilitator of that group will say to their peers, "Hey, have you heard from so and so recently?"
- Jennifer Cherry:** And then the students will actually Snapchat their friends and invite them to come into the group meeting. And it's just another way to keep that connection and keep it rolling in those groups that have already been formed. So, I think that that's something we likely wouldn't have ever done in a bricks and mortar environment,

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but now actually really leaning on social media and positive ways to enhance those connections.

Nickie Coomer: Great. Thank you. I want to open it up to any other questions or any other shares before we begin to move to close.

Seena Skelton: Hi, I have a question, Nickie. It's really great sharing a different or organic way that families are connecting with one another, it was wonderful to hear. And I was wondering if there are any examples where schools are actually leveraging that and trying to facilitate family connections and family networking, and actually tapping into families for their wisdom on addressing some of the issues of connections. So, I'm thinking back to the disability like mantra, "Nothing about us without us." And so, I'm applying that thinking with parents. We've talked a lot about families and meeting different needs. And I'm wondering the extent to which we're actually engaging our families and our students, in problem solving dialogue about addressing and being responsive to the needs of communities during this time.

Eulalia Valdez: I would like to share something that we learned as we were ... we did something similar to what one of the participants talked about--tracking students who we had not connected with. And so, I got involved with one of those particular situations, and what we learned was, that it wasn't that the parent didn't seek to connect; actually, they tried very many times and many different ways to connect. At the end of the day, the situation was that they lived in the basement of the house, and so they weren't getting any reception. So, they try to go into the staircase, to try to get some connection.

Eulalia Valdez: So now visualize this, the student is trying to connect, the teacher's constantly calling, saying why are you not connected, and the only way this child was able to connect is by going up to the staircase and opening up their device. So, when we were having this discussion, the mom never felt maybe comfortable enough or for whatever reason she did not ask the landlord if they could just go up a number of hours in the main floor, so that at the main floor this child would have access to

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being able to connect for the learning. Through this conversation, we went ahead and she did speak to the landlord.

Eulalia Valdez: It took us almost a week to get the situation all settled where now the student was able to connect, connected multiple times during the day, but the problem was where they lived, and the only place where the child could actually do the work. And so, it did take some problem solving and brainstorming with the family. And then just getting them to feel comfortable with, that this was not like an outrageous request to ask. And so ... yeah, those are some of the things that as we take a look at some of the decisions that we make in the district, we make sure that everyone immediately ... we were very close to being one on one.

Eulalia Valdez: So that's some background information. So, we went ahead and already had hotspots available. That was part of the technology plan. So, we had the Chromebooks, the hotspots. So, we're not understanding why this particular family was not connected. They had everything really, that they needed. But we didn't know about the home situation. And once we found out about the home situation, it really opened up a lot in terms of our viewpoint and how we're approaching it, and that not everyone has the same living quarters that will allow them to access this online training. And so, how do we go ahead in a very sensitive way, address the situation, because we have very high poverty student population.

Eulalia Valdez: And it may be happening with others, how do we go ahead and address it to ensure that there is that relationship and that vulnerability, so that that piece is shared early on, and there's not an immense loss of learning?

Nickie Coomer: Thank you so much for sharing and, Seena, thank you for your comment. We have to go ahead and move to wrap up. I'm going to share though some resources where we can continue the conversation. So, if you have something to share and you didn't have an opportunity to, please join us on our Flipgrid. Also, we have a COVID-19 resource page. And then you also have relative to this session, your own customized, password-protected Virtual Coffeehouse Series E-forum. So, all

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of this is where we will be sharing resources, responses related to trending issues of equity and education at this current time.

- Nickie Coomer:** And a special thanks to our design team for putting together this session. So, cheers, everyone. Thanks so much for joining our Virtual Coffeehouse. I don't know, this is my prettiest mug. I brought up the good stuff for company. Good to see you all, cheers.
- Tiffany Kyser:** Nickie, before everybody wraps up, I'll turn it over Diana for a virtual picture and then we'll give you a little bit of guidance on taking our post-session questionnaire, which we would really appreciate you taking. So, Diana, you want to give us instructions?
- Diana Lazzell:** Yeah, thank you for attending today's session. I ask that you please follow us on social media at Great Lakes Equity Center on Facebook and @GreatLakesEAC on Twitter. Participate in the discussion directly after this event by answering the question, how are you going to use what you learned here today? I ask that you now prepare yourselves for a group shot. You can turn off your video if you're uncomfortable. And that will be shared on social media. So, 3, 2, 1. Thank you.
- Tiffany Kyser:** Do you want any other shots of different pages Diana?
- Diana Lazzell:** Sure, I'll do another.
- Tiffany Kyser:** How about we do a long smile that way you can get all three.
- Diana Lazzell:** Okay.
- Tiffany Kyser:** That way...
- Diana Lazzell:** I see a lot of names on the rest of the pages, but I see people on the first page. So, I'll do a couple. All right? Everyone smile for a while. One more. Just one more second. All right, thank you.
- Tiffany Kyser:** Thanks, Diana. Appreciate that. Again, if you want to continue the conversation, those platforms that Nickie shared, also feel free. If you're not pressed for a time to respond to the prompt, how are you going to use what you learn here today on any

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of our social media platforms? And then finally, we are an organization of continuous improvement. We want to hear from you to understand your perspective about how today's Virtual Coffeehouse went, should you have five to seven minutes, Diana has provided the SurveyMonkey link in the chat box, we ask that you take that five to seven minutes just to share with us what went well, what didn't go so well in this Virtual Coffeehouse so that we're able to improve.

Tiffany Kyser:

We look forward to seeing you on our next Coffeehouse Series, *Supporting Students in the Wake of COVID-19: Focusing on Death, Dying, and Loss*. That is scheduled for early June. You can go to our calendar of events. Diana will also be following up for those who have already registered. But if you have not registered for that session and are really interested in that topic, we hope to see you there and, again, further information will be posted in the chat, and you can go to our website on the calendar of events. With that, thank you all. I'll allow Kathleen or Seena any final words before we move to close.

Seena Skelton:

I just want to thank everyone for your participation, it's been another great dynamic discussion. Please leave your ideas on our FlipGrid if you did not have a chance to share. We are really wanting people to post videos, ask questions, leave ideas, as a great resource, and see you next time on our next Coffeehouse.