

*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions  
to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

**TRANSCRIPTION**

**Tiffany Kyser:** Good afternoon. Welcome to the region three Midwest and Plains equity assistance center communities of care Virtual Coffeehouse Series. This series is intended to provide a space to virtually land and decompress as we discuss our collective efforts to meet the needs of our students and families in the face of abrupt changes and response to COVID-19.

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 three Midwest and Plains equity assistance in our Communities of Care Virtual Coffeehouse Series intent is to center the perspectives of you all, the assets and the expertise of you all.

We encourage all of us to come together in this virtual space, share our experiences, and use dialog and conversation, just as you would in your local coffeehouse.

Session one of the Virtual Coffeehouse Series, which we're beginning today, is focused on advancing out community of care amongst each other by sharing our stories, approaches, lessons learned. This is not a didactic instruction-based experience. This virtual engagement experience aims to acknowledge the need for us to come together in a virtual community to discuss barriers, discover, and be encouraged by what we've learned collectively as we all work to meet the demands of teaching and learning in the wake of COVID-19.

*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions  
to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

This is an opportunity for us to learn and dialogue together, to fellowship, and to provide collegial support. Please be ready to take notes as we engage in conversation and coffee together.

We are thrilled and excited for the response that we've received regarding the Virtual Coffeehouse Series. We want to welcome participants from seven state departments, 39 districts and schools, 25 education based organizations, service centers, and foundations, four institutes of higher education representing 18 states and the District of Columbia. So again, welcome.

My name is Tiffany Kyser and I serve as the associate director of outreach and engagement for the MAP Center. I have the privilege of serving as your host for today. Joined with me are Nickie Coomer, a graduate assistant at the MAP Center who will serve as a cohost. Nickie, I don't know if you want to have an opportunity to say hello.

**Nickie Coomer:** Hi, everyone.

**Tiffany Kyser:** Thanks, Nickie. I'm also joined by Diana Lazzell, who's going to serve as our technical director and chat moderator. And Diana's going to provide some technology supports and some guidance here shortly. Diana, you want to say hello to everyone?

**Diana Lazzell:** Hello, everyone.

**Tiffany Kyser:** Rosiline Floyd is our Assistant Director of Technical Assistance at the MAP Center. She will be serving as a virtual teacher. So for those that have a child, children, or youth that they are supporting and caregiving for, Rosiline

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A PROJECT OF MIDWEST & PLAINS  
**EQUITY**  
ASSISTANCE CENTER

*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions  
to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

Floyd is being their virtual teacher as we speak. So I want to send a hello on her behalf.

Additionally, Kathleen King Thorius, Executive Director and Principal Investigator of the MAP Center, and Executive Director of the Great Lakes Equity Center. In addition to Seena Skelton, Director of Operations at the MAP Center, are joining as critical contributors, to dialogue along with each of you. I'll provide an opportunity for Seena and Kathleen to say "hello."

**Seena Skelton:** Hello, everyone. Just really ecstatic to see you all and I'm looking forward to a great conversation.

**Kathleen King Thorius:** Hi, everyone. I see familiar faces and new faces. It's great to be with you. I'll introduce my dog [crosstalk 00:04:24]. This is Mary Francis Hot Sauce and then here comes Rufus up the other way. Good to be with you all.

**Tiffany Kyser:** Thanks, Seena. Thanks, Kathleen. I also want to welcome three really special partners with the MAP Center that are going to serve as our conversation starters. Our conversation starters not only represent state departments and/or districts that the MAP Center currently partners with, but also will support in providing their perspectives and insights to quote-unquote "break the virtual ice" as we pepper in three reflective prompts throughout today's virtual coffeehouse.

Our three conversation starters are Pamela Booker, who's an achievement Integration Specialist at the Minnesota Department of Education. Ken Morris, Junior, who's a Director of Equity at Ankeny Community School

*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

District, which is located in Iowa. And Shavana Talbert, who's a Coordinator of Eequity from Rochester Public Schools.

Pam, Ken, Shavana, I'll give you an opportunity to say "hello" and address everyone.

**Pamela Booker:** Hi, everyone. Good afternoon. I'm hoping that our time together today finds everyone well. I look forward to some good conversation.

**Ken Morris, Jr:** Hey, peace all. Ken Morris, Junior. I'm delighted to be here, be a part of this. Excited to have a break from my monotonous new norm. So looking forward to getting into some really good dialogue.

**Shavana Talbert:** Hi, everybody. I'm Shavana Talbert. I'll cosign both what Pam and Ken just said. I'm really happy to be here. Thanks.

**Tiffany Kyser:** Thanks, Shavana, thanks, Ken, thanks, Pam. Ken, I appreciate the low bill. A lot of style you're bringing to the conversation. I appreciate that.

**Ken Morris, Jr:** It's to cover up the George Jefferson that's going on.

**Tiffany Kyser:** I see.

**Ken Morris, Jr:** Yeah.

**Tiffany Kyser:** Well thank you all. And again, our conversation starters will help us get started and continue the momentum through our conversation today.

One of our goals at the MAP Center is to engage participants in well-defined, content rich technical assistance, such that knowledge and

*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

expertise are shared in a way that results in transformative, systemic change. As we all personally ... excuse me. As well as personal reflection and growth.

To this end, we aim to really provide this unique learning available on our website via recording and transcription. Additionally, sharing photos of today's conversation on our social media platforms. We encourage participants to consider this disclaimer as they share and engage today.

I'll turn it over to Diana to provide a little bit more guidance in terms of technology and etiquette for the day.

**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 please mute their microphones when not speaking.

**Diana Lazzell:** Further, we will post additional resources to the chat bar. And I am moderating the chat today. Lastly, the video camera function has been turned on. Thus, if you have webcam and would like to join, please feel free to do so by clicking the camera icon at the lower right of your screen.

**Tiffany Kyser:** Thanks, Dia-

**Diana Lazzell:** Again. Oh, sorry, Tiffany. Please don't forget to mute your microphone when not speaking.

*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions  
to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

**Tiffany Kyser:** No, no, no. I interrupting you. Excuse me. Thank you, Diana, for providing that guidance. And again, if anyone has any issues or barriers to technology, don't hesitate to contact Diana.

I'll turn it over to Nickie.

**Nickie Coomer:** Thanks, Tiffany. All right. So thank you. Pam, as you work to support districts and schools in ensuring racial and socioeconomic integration in Minnesota, I'm wondering if you would mind starting us in today's conversation by sharing any creative strategies that you have observed districts and schools developing to increase access to distance learning.

And then I'll ask participants to join with their shots, or with their thoughts. So go ahead, Pam.

**Pamela Booker:** Okay. Thank you. Well, the one incident I'd like to share, the one strategy I'd like to share, is that there were district staff working in a building. And they noticed that many of the folks that had come to volunteer to deliver meals to families or other things to families during our unusual times were actually previous students, previous multilingual and bilingual students that had attended the school.

And so they were either home from college or they weren't working because of the pandemic. And so what they decided to do was to hopefully get stipends for these students, these alumni, to call current families who were multilingual or bilingual, and just to ask how they could be better supported with distance learning.

*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

And so what those students then would do would be to call families, or have chats with families, and ask them what kind of support they needed. What they felt was lacking, how they could better help their children at home. They would then bring the information from the conversations with those families back to the school administration and teachers and then collaborate with them on follow through on the findings they had when talking to these families.

So I thought that was really creative. They were kind of glomming on to the relationships that had already been set with these students, and the students with these families and their communities. And I thought it was a really, really creative idea to get that much needed input from families whose language, whose first language is not English.

**Tiffany Kyser:**

Thank you, Pam, for kicking us off. Anyone else want to chime in? Feel free to use the “raise your hand” feature, to make a note in the chat, or you can just share out. Any thoughts in terms of leveraging the assets of communities? And Pam's really kicking us off at the state department level.

We have a couple of folks that are on the line from state departments and other organizations, service centers that work with state departments, as well.

Angela, go for it.

**Angela:**

Hi. One really neat thing that I have at my school is we had a couple of churches that have volunteered for years and they did afterschool programs and tutoring and different things. And we were lucky in that not long before

*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions  
to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

COVID hit, two of these churches that partner with us had actually gone together and formed a not-for-profit.

And so they are in the neighborhood. They actually have an office in the neighborhood. And they have been helping do things like passing out food. One of these is a smaller church in the neighborhood and one is a bigger church, kind of out in the suburbs, that work together.

And they deliver food. I've had them deliver messages. They've helped people with utilities, housing, food. Just they're going to pass out some books for me. But that all started from a few members of a church close by who just wanted to come in and volunteer. And it's grown from that. And that's a real blessing because I talk to other social workers who don't have that kind of backup right now.

**Tiffany Kyser:** Thanks, Angela.

**Eulalia Valdez:** I'd also like to share. I live in Oswego School District [inaudible 00:12:57]. And initially there was a team that was formed for the purpose of attempting to pass a referendum. While the referendum didn't pass, that team stayed together.

And those volunteers actually coordinated their efforts so that they delivered food to the homes of families that, for whatever reason, weren't able to go ahead and pick up the food. So that was something that I thought was very creative and a well use of our community resources.

**Tiffany Kyser:** Thank you, Eulalia. Appreciate it. Any other thoughts? We've heard two comments around linking some social service supports in terms of utility



*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

support, in terms of food access. Any other thoughts around how districts and schools specifically are working or liaising? In Angela's case it was a church group, in Eulalia's case it was an existing group of stakeholders who were interested in supporting students. And explicitly historically marginalized students.

So we've talked a little bit about class. We can make some inferences just to begin to name it in the conversation in terms of how our students begin to, or experience inequitable stratification. Any other thoughts in terms of creative strategies or perhaps barriers that you all are experiencing at the district and school level to creatively work and leverage your assets?

**Diana Lazzell:** Tiffany, Jennifer C. raised her hand.

**Tiffany Kyser:** Thank you, Diana. Jennifer, please.

**Jennifer Cherry:** All right. Thanks. Hi, Tiffany. It's good to see you. It's Jennifer Cherry from Anoka-Hennepin.

**Tiffany Kyser:** Absolutely. Good to see you.

**Jennifer Cherry:** Glad to hear Pam's perspective, too. She is our consultant coordinator at the Department of Ed., too. One thing that we have done is that we partnered with our ... so we cross two different counties in Anoka-Hennepin.

We've partnered just recently with Transient Link, which is our local not bus transportation, but we serve some pretty remote areas. And we've noticed that some of our families can't make it to the meal distribution sites. And so we've been able to partner with our county transit services to distribute not

*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

only our meals, but that's kind of how we're identifying some students that can't make it to those drop off sites. But also learning materials.

And so we've been able to get learning materials and also basic needs out to more families that way.

**Tiffany Kyser:** Jennifer, do you mind sharing with everyone where you're located? What state and what school district.

**Jennifer Cherry:** Yes. Sorry. Anoka-Hennepin school district and it is located in the state of Minnesota, just north of Minneapolis. And so we're a large school district, we cross Anoka County and Hennepin County. And we have some pretty remote areas where public transportation doesn't reach.

And so we do have a portion of our community that is more urban in nature. A lot of it is suburban and some of it is more rural.

**Tiffany Kyser:** Thanks, Jennifer. We've also got some comments in the chat from Cameron. It says, "In Detroit we have homework packets for students." And then Katherine noted in the chat in Ferndale, which is in Michigan, a school district just outside of Detroit, that they're engaging, Jennifer, in a similar approach in terms of ... or excuse me, Angela, in terms of Blessings in a Backpack that are delivered each week to various bus stops.

**Diana Lazzell:** Nicole Andres and Julie Somme have a comment.

**Tiffany Kyser:** Thank you. Go ahead, Julie. We'll start with Julie and then Nicole.

**Julie:** Hi, guys. So I'm Julie. I work at the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind. We're in Stanton, Virginia. And I know at least one of my coworkers is

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CENTER

*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions  
to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

on here with me. Becky White is our school counselor, or one of our school counselors. So sorry.

And one of the things, or not one. We've been doing a lot of things to support our family. We are kind of a unique situation, but we are one school but we essentially service our entire state. And so we have quite a variety of needs.

And so, I think it was Dawn was saying that the community has kind of rallied behind to support them. And we've got a lot of support from our community also, local and across our state. We've been working with our local education agencies, so other school districts across the state that have students at our school have partnered with us to help make sure that our kids have resources. Especially food, in relation to the school lunch programs.

And then we have other just kind of local, I guess just private nonprofit resources, that have been available across the state that have been really helpful. We have also been kind of like a lot of other schools, sending home packets and resources. And then our team, I mentioned Becky, one of our school counselors, a small group of us, myself and the school counselors and some other people, have been calling and just checking on our families intentionally.

Not necessarily only the students in relation to education, but the families. Just based on, "How are you doing?" And I think that's been really well received by our families and they've felt really comforted to know that somebody is just checking on them to care.

*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions  
to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

So I think we've had such a good community of support around our school. And it's been really nice to see that something that can feel so scattered is actually not even very scattered. There's just so many people there to support us. So that's my little two cents about our school.

**Nickie Coomer:** Thank you. Appreciate it, Julie. And Nicole? You said in the chat that you had a comment as well.

**Nicole:** So I'm at Rochester Public Schools in Rochester, Minnesota. And we've also been doing deliveries as well. We have some sites set up at our schools and then we do some deliveries to the larger apartment buildings around our area, in some of our hardest hit areas where we know families may not have transportation.

We have a very slow bus line that doesn't go everywhere. And so we try to make sure that our district vans are now used to deliver food to those areas. We also have resource lines with our social workers. Our social worker on our early education side has delivered car batteries, food. Just different resources that families need in order to get through this.

And then one of the things we're doing with our family literacy program is we found there was a disconnect between the early childhood educators. They were able to get information from families, talk to families, get stuff out to students. But then the adult education side of that was not getting the same response.

And so we partnered to make sure that if we're serving the same families, all materials can go at the same time. One translator is used to speak to the

*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

entire family. We support education just with one delivery versus multiple people reaching out.

Because obviously the family's focus right now has been their children. So we want to make sure that we're still serving them and getting their education just as much as we're serving their children.

**Nickie Coomer:** Thanks so much.

**Diana Lazzell:** Tiffany, I have a couple people raising their hands. There's quite a long line now. Jennifer C., Marissa, Rafi, Anthony Lewis, and Rebecca Zernhown.

**Tiffany Kyser:** Yeah, thanks, Diana. I think if you chat those to Nickie, we can interweave those comments into our second prompt. Yeah, really appreciate that.

**Diana Lazzell:** All right.

**Nickie Coomer:** That's great. There's a lot to share.

**Tiffany Kyser:** So if I can recap really quickly some ... just to get us going. Starting out in the question around what creative strategies or approaches have we observed in our local context.

Angela really opened up with this idea of, and it was threaded throughout the comments of Nicole, of Julie, of Jennifer, of this idea of leveraging community members and community partners. A second was this idea of negotiating both public transit and district transit.

But also Nicole mentioned not all of our transit systems are created equal. And we need to think thoughtfully about how we still provide proximal and

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CENTER

*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

realistic satellite options. And wanting to surface that students and families in our school communities walk and wheel and move differently. And so how do we continue to provide access for not only food but also this idea of providing humanity. Right? Supports around supplies, to engage as a member in the school community, to have conversations that identify and pinpoint what other support, such as car batteries, that may be needed. And so those are kind of three takeaways. Leveraging community members, being really thoughtful in terms of both city and municipal resources such as public transit, as well as school and district transit. Using satellite options and public transportation or busing transportation. For not only satellites of food, but also what was commented in the chat for different resources, learning materials, homework packets, so on and so forth. So just to recap that question as we move into the second.

I'll turn it back to you, Nickie.

**Nickie Coomer:** Great. Thank you. So and I think some of the comments that, as we're talking about, there'll be different ways that states and districts are getting creative around reaching families.

For those of you who haven't had a chance to talk yet, I think that you'll find that the next two questions are connected as well.

So we're shifting just a little bit to talk about from these sort of broader approaches to really specifically what are some creative things that you've seen educators do. And some different strategies that you've seen educators engage in increasing access to distance learning or using distance learning to foster different types of relationships.

*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions  
to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

So Shavana, would you mind sharing how you have seen educators get creative?

**Shavana Talbert:** Yeah, absolutely. I think there's a lot of overlap, like you said, from that first question. But I'd really like to stress, I think Julie Sahm had said earlier the idea of checking on families just to make sure that they're okay.

That they have access to some of the most basic resources that they need to survive. And Nicole alluded to that too, like what are we doing to make sure that families are getting what they need.

And so I think that was a really great thing that a lot of our teachers specifically have been doing, that maybe has changed and shifted from that traditional in-person learning. Along with that is personalized learning plans for each student.

I feel like in that traditional setting a lot of the learning has been kind of general for a majority of our students. And now I think teachers are really getting creative around what does Shavana need in this class. How can I provide specific learning opportunities for her to close some of those gaps that might exist. And I think that's been something that's really great.

Another thing that I would stress too is the learning and streamlining for kids. So we found in some of the surveys that we got back from families that people were getting a lot of different contacts. You might've had a bilingual specialist contact, you might've had your classroom teacher, you different people who are just calling.

*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

So we said “Hey, teams, in your PLCs can you talk about how you can have one person streamlining all of this communication so we're not overloading families?” And I think that's been really helpful.

As well as getting in some more professional development opportunities that are specific to our current global context, as well as some of those virtual learning opportunities, as well. So doing screen castifies, just quick updates for teachers to be able to access that learning very quickly so that they can try out a bunch of different things and see what works for their students in their classrooms.

**Nickie Coomer:** Great. Thank you. I think that your point about streamlining communication is honestly something I hadn't considered. I have three kids myself and so I'm experiencing this from a different perspective. Which is getting the e-learning plans in my email.

And then I did some things, like set up my kids own emails so I could just forward those things to them. And then log them on these antiquated devices that we had given to us from family members. But it's hard right? And it's nothing that can really be centralized.

And so I think maybe streamlining communication, I mean per student, per grade level. But then also through specialists and through whatever it may be. Right? So therapies or intervention specialists or ESL services.

But I guess it kind of forces us into a space, too, to move from a siloed approach and then into this other truly collaborative approach to teaching kids. So thanks so much for sharing that.



*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions to Support Students & Families During COVID-19***Tiffany Kyser:**

Nickie, may I make one point before you center folks? And this is just I want to kind of honor all the great contributions. And then also continue to push us. It might be because my coffee's running low in my cup, I'm not sure.

But we've begun to talk about the logistical solutions and strategies that we've begun to leverage. And as we ... I want to build on Shavana's comments around this idea of being really intentional and thoughtful in not only just communication, but I'm going to extend that, Shavana, into how we're interacting and responding to students and families. Particularly those who've been historically marginalized.

So a lot of what we're talking about are amplifications, right, and resurfacing of inequities that have long existed, I would be so bold to say, within our school communities. And I think it's Circe, and if I pronounce your name incorrectly I apologize.

But Circe sort of provided a blog post and gently nudged and lovingly is pushing us in the chat to consider not just the ways in which we are responding through providing food and access to the internet and homework packets. Which we don't have time to discuss the research around the effectiveness of homework packets.

But this idea of do educators, in response to this question and the comment around professional development, are educators aware of why these needs exist in communities. Are educators thinking through how they're interacting? Which I think was Circe's point, with students and families.

So what language is being used, what assumptions as community members and educators are providing these supports. And not falling into

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A PROJECT OF 

*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

the trappings of pity, moving and operating from contempt of pity or that someone is in need and that idea is conflated with is less than. Or doesn't have the capacity to contribute, to be a thought partner, to be a leader during this unprecedented pandemic.

So I just wanted to connect Circe's comments and provide Circe and opportunity, if I misinterpreted anything, and put that in the backdrop as we continue the conversation today. So I'll give a moment to Circe if you wanted to unpack that anymore before I Turn it back to Nickie.

Okay. Nickie?

**Nickie Coomer:** Thanks so much, Tiffany. I really appreciate that. And I think that I had just opened up the blog post myself. And so there are some ... well, I'll just go ahead and ask some of the questions that are posed in the blog so that we can tag those on to our current conversation around innovation and how educators have ... some of the ways that educators have gotten creative.

And even before I ask those questions, though, too, I'll say there is a whole ... there are so many things happening in the chat right now that are really a lot of resource sharing. And a lot of idea sharing. It's really exciting.

But some of the questions that Circe poses are “How do we keep racial equity front of mind? How are we doing everything we can to avoid conflating race, poverty, and trauma?” And then pulling teachers in to question “what assumptions do I make about my students of color and how do I know my decisions ... how do I know how they will ... how my decisions will impact students of color?”

*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

And then how can we avoid reinforcing stereotypes and implicit biases?"

Those are just some of the questions.

All right. Rafi, I see that your hand is raised.

**Rafi:**

Indeed. It's good to see you all. Yeah. So I wanted to just briefly mention how here on Monroe County in Bloomington, Indiana we went about with the response.

And again, I think in terms of just timing, we were on spring break when we obviously received the orders from the governor. So it was fortuitous in that we had a few days to work with some of our local partners. Monroe County has a foundation where we are able to assemble supplies.

And again, just some of the things that you heard from so many others who talked about community resources and supports. One of my, as the equity and inclusion coordinator, as primary responsibilities has been to work with our social emotional learning coordinator and our efforts.

And part of that has been to really take an approach where we're looking at our entire community. And I say that with an awareness that many of our teachers, as well as families, parents, caregivers, as well as students, were impacted by this. Right away we were tasked with developing language that we would post on letters, our website, any of our platforms, that just simply talked about taking an asset based approach to individuals that may have been diagnosed with COVID at the time.

I think early on the president was making remarks that were at least anti-Asian. And so we're fortunate that we're here at IU Bloomington where I

*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

partner with our Asian culture center. So we had webinars right away, so we were able to post information right away about not only being aware of any anti-Asian and xenophobic comments, reporting those. Providing our community with ways that they can report the information.

But also making sure that our teachers knew and understand the importance of pressing it and addressing it as a community. And certainly how all folks can be impacted by what's happening. As much as so many of the challenges that have been brought on by the pandemic for many of us that work in equity, it's been, again, and I think Dr. Kyser made remarks to this about how this has just simply amplified a number of things.

I don't think it's for us, I think we've always been at a place where we're trying to identify the inequities and making sure that certainly for our staff members that this is something that they not associate in our families. Or look at our families through a deficit lens. But ultimately how they can leverage supports within the families.

So thank you for allowing me to speak.

**Nickie Coomer:** Thank you so much for sharing. All right, I see two raised hands. Janetta?

**Janetta:** Hi. I had a question about there was a rush to get technology out to students so that we could utilize online platforms. I'm wondering if any of you have any ideas of how districts are handling tech support when it's beyond the teacher. You know? Sometimes it's beyond our level of expertise as far as troubleshooting.

Does anybody have any ideas on how to handle that?

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EQUITY  
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*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions  
to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

So at Berkeley School District 87 in Illinois, what we did is we coordinated efforts with our IT department, where there was a dedicated help desk ticket type of a request. Where the teacher actually fills in the request in terms of what is needed.

And our technology department will go ahead and look at those tickets. And respond to our teachers quickly in terms of any type of support that the teachers need.

In addition to that, a teacher can also fill out a help desk ticket where our tech department will go ahead and contact parents to go ahead and troubleshoot any of the devices or if they need assistance.

Thank you so much.

**Tiffany Kyser:** And who was that that made the comment? Just so I can note the name again.

**Eulalia Valdez:** Oh. This is Eulalia Valdez.

**Tiffany Kyser:** Oh, Eulalia. Thank you. Appreciate it.

**Nickie Coomer:** Thank you. Is there anyone else that would like to share out? And I also want to point to the chat. There are a lot of different folks are chiming in with what their districts are doing in regard to Janetta's question.

**Rafi:** Nickie, if I can just briefly. One of the things I've had to publish information to our teachers, just to simply be aware of how some parents have limited data plans. Realizing that there's a lot of internet service providers that are providing either free or some type of discounted rate for internet service.

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*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions  
to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

But again, I think I've talked to parents who have children staggered, and they have one device. And so it's a situation where I'm very intentional about making sure our teachers know not to have either things that can just simply be done or submitted in one way. Or being aware of how time, for a single parent that may have three or four children, what challenges come with just simply trying to get time with technology.

So I think ideally we'd like to make sure that everybody had something. But obviously the reality is that not being the case. But I think in terms of remote learning, and I know a lot of school districts even put out information about how either missing or late work or changes, but I think just from a perspective given reassurance sometimes. So.

**Nickie Coomer:** Great. Thank you. And thank you very much, Rafi, for sharing that. Absolutely. And Rebecca, I know Rebecca had her hand raised as well.

**Rebecca:** Hey, I just unmuted myself. Hi, everybody. I am a special educator in Indianapolis, in a school where my students have a predominant disability which goes to how I am supporting them with technology. Which many of them cannot access consistently, week to week, day to day, because they all have siblings.

So when you're talking about connectivity and how many devices, if the devices still work, if the hot spot got delivered by the district. Everybody's trying their best. But I've been able to supplement with paper and pencil that we deliver more than six feet away, so that kids can stay active doing the same things they had done in my classroom.

*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

Which is building projects and baking and involving their parents. And bridging the language gaps not just on a weekly basis, but through text and through email and definitely through Google Classroom and Zoom.

And nobody does the same thing every day, let alone every week. So just checking on each other regularly to watch whose situations have changed, kids have moved during the pandemic, and having the social worker connect to local resources. Not just for food, but for diapers. And we're talking for siblings.

So just knowing that the communal effort, it's a marathon, it's the long game. Not just the short responsiveness. And I think that I'm grateful for the parents that serve their own children, the students that I serve, that they're willing to respond to my texts.

And maybe email's never going to work. Google Classroom is a bust for a lot of our families and everybody's trying their best. But it is hard. And just to reflect that it's hard. And for some families it's getting harder for those of us with kids at home.

So just acknowledging for that SEL perspective to say you know what? Today's not the day and I'm going to check back with you tomorrow and I missed you. So that's kind of how we're rolling in our community.

**Tiffany Kyser:**

Yeah. I have a reaction and I want to open it up to others too. And I appreciate your comment, Rebecca. For me, what I'm learning is this distinction between e-learning and distance learning. And Rebecca, you are continuing to help me grow this idea that we as educators are trained to

*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

think about teaching and learning as a lot of times a very siloed experience that happens in schools and communities.

Well, we know that our students are learning all the time. And we know that how our students learn and the knowledge production that they engage in and the knowledge and wisdom that they possess, particularly if they have one or more historically marginalized identity, has not been valued. It has not been centered. Just to be really explicit in our public school systems.

And so how do we grow as educators to be better and to do better? And I think this idea of acknowledging one's home experience and lived experience as valuable and a fertile ground for ongoing learning that perhaps we as educators have missed, for far too long.

**Cynthia:**

If I can jump in. Nickie, do you mind for a moment? One of the things that I've been trying to do as ... my name is Cynthia. I'm the technical assistance specialist for cadre two. So I recognize some of you and have worked with many of you in the various MAP Center events.

One of the things that I find I'm talking about a lot with my partners right now is thinking about like we know all this stuff. Right now we're sitting in this room, this virtual room, and we're kind of saying we have to be thinking about how our teachers are thinking about our students. And we have to continually do that.

My question is how are we ensuring our teachers have that opportunity? In what ways are we helping them? Extending them the grace that they need, because. Man. If teachers are not the most persistent and resilient group of people on the face of the planet, I don't know who is.

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*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

How do we support them in a nurturing way, while extending them the grace of trying to figure all of this out? To continually push them and say what are you learning about your students? What are you learning about your families? And how are you taking those lessons that you've learned and centering equity? Centering educational equity in them.

Because we are all very siloed right now and we know what can happen when teachers silo themselves in their classroom and shut the door, without having an opportunity to collaborate. And I feel like we need to be really deliberate about that.

I'm wondering if anybody has had any experiences with offering teachers those reflection opportunities.

**Nicole:**

So, I just shared in the chat that we at Rochester Public Schools, we've partnered with two mental health organizations and we have a resource line just for teachers that they can call. They would be able to talk to some of our social workers and counselors. And then they can be funneled to do telehealth with those two resources.

We also do our program specifically for preschool sends out mindfulness activities weekly. Specifically just for the teachers. We know we have teachers that hate mindfulness and so then we send them other activities they can do that help them just re-center and refocus.

We then also schedule weekly meetings within each building, each group. Just to decompress. We don't talk about the students, we don't talk about ways that they can fix their lesson plans. We just talk about how they're doing and checking in with them.

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PROJECT OF The logo for the Equity Center, featuring a stylized 'E' and 'C' in orange and black, with the text 'EQUITY CENTER' around it.

*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

It is difficult on admin part because we have to schedule all of these meetings. But we know that it's come from a really good place and we know that they need it. And so and then we've been trying to use reflective practice.

So we reach out again to those mental health organizations to teach us how to do some reflective practice and answer questions.

**Seena Skelton:** Hi, this is Seena Skelton. I just want to reflect and comment on Nicole and your sharing. I think that's great. I think what has been a missing piece in this discourse often is the support for educators.

So Cynthia, thank you for raising that. And Nicole, I thank you for sharing those ideas.

Many of our educators are also parents of multiple children, who are at home as well. And so they are trying to teach their classes of children and maybe anywhere between 15 to 20 to 25 and some even 30. As we know, students even beyond that in the classroom.

As well as parent their own children at home and help their children do their schoolwork. And so it can be overwhelming. And not only for our parents, not only for our students, but for our teachers, as well.

And I think sometimes it's an assumption that our teachers have the devices that they need and they have the appropriate internet bandwidth and they have all the technology that they need. I think we make a lot of assumptions about that.

*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions  
to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

Many of our teachers are young and they're just starting out in their career. And they may not have those multiple devices and broadband bandwidth. And even the space in their own home to separate themselves from their children in order to teach online.

And so I just applaud what you all are doing in Rochester. That's great in terms of helping providing a space to provide some care. Right? Some love and some care for your educators.

And I just encourage us all to understand. It's becoming somewhat of a cliché, but we are ... it is true that we are all in this together. And the challenges that one of us is facing, we're all facing very similar challenges. So thank you both.

**Nickie Coomer:** I think what an important point to make during ... isn't this week is Teacher Appreciation Week? Is that right? Yeah. So I've seen signs around different schools.

I know there aren't a whole lot of things to be able to do in person for teachers around that. But I have seen different ways that families and students have expressed their support as well.

So I think that as we're talking about the different types of I'll say ... well, the current moment and the ways that people are experiencing this moment. There's a lot to think through in terms of how teachers navigate and the hardships that they're facing.

But then there's also this other side, right? That we're talking about, too. Which is how we're innovative in reaching out to teachers, how teachers are

*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

innovative. And then also we can also think about how families and communities ... we kind of started our conversation with this, right?

How communities have been creative and supporting families and supporting students and supporting schools. And how schools have been reciprocal in those relationships as well.

Which brings us to our next question. In terms of what are some of the creative strategies that you've observed families and communities engage in adapting to changes and challenges?

**Ken Morris, Jr:** Can I take a crack at that?

**Nickie Coomer:** Yes. Thank you.

**Ken Morris, Jr:** Oh, no problem. Hey, what's up, y'all? This is Ken again. What I've observed is ... I may be repeating some things that have already been shared.

But, what's been interesting, even in my household and I'll fully disclose. I got a son that's a gamer and one thing that he has really enjoyed, his homeroom teacher, she contacts everyone in the class. And find out what their needs are and what's going on.

But then she'll design games on Kahoot or little trivia things. And it's interesting because I didn't know how much interaction and face to face, how much that meant to him and that's something that he's really ... he thrives and looks forwards to those little once a week gatherings, if you will, virtually.

## *Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

What else? Again, this is something I noticed in my community, one of the local restaurants put together like a drive through barbecue, right? And made certain that there was a lot of advertisement. So those who wanted or needed a meal could just come through and sit in the car, have it delivered or what have you.

I'm also noticing similar to my son's teacher with the Kahoot, a lot of just virtual ... kind of like what we're doing now. Just get-togethers, whether it's coffees, reunions, families. Just using technology to really stay connected. And just do things to sort of take us out of the anxiety of not knowing what's next can have on our psyches or what have you.

What else is interesting too is I know I attended a national forum on black students that was conducted by Dr. Tyrone Howard and Shawn Harper. And that was just a plethora of valuable resources that parents, teachers, experts all across the country are engaging in.

One in particular that really spoke to me was I think Dr. Keith Curry from Compton College was talking about not only making certain that all the students had ... they were mailing laptops. But they was looking out for basic needs like making certain that they were providing students with like a \$100 Grub Hug gift certificates and partnering with Every Table. Making certain that all the students and families had 10 meals per week that was delivered to them. And the college was absorbing the cost.

And so I was just really delighted in thinking about what are, in addition to some of those educational needs that we're navigating, what are some of

*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions  
to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

those basic human needs. Whether it's, like I said, another thing that my son and I do, again because he's trying to leverage his love for gaming.

We connected his virtual headset to Google Earth. And we do virtual field trips and things of that nature. Just try to incorporate some creativity with the resources that we have. Whether it's technology or just going out in the yard and planting or just doing things that we never done before.

But using the resources that we have to keep our minds going and keep us engaged. And most importantly just stay connected and try to minimize fear and anxiety and what have you, throughout this time.

**Nickie Coomer:** Thanks so much, Ken. Let's go ahead and take a response. Anthony, I see that your hand is raised.

**Anthony Lewis:** Yes, thank you. Anthony Lewis, Superintendent in Lawrence, Kansas. Here in Kansas, we were the first state to close schools statewide. And so I haven't seen my scholars since March the 6th. It'll be two months tomorrow.

And so what I just wanted to share was some of the things that we're doing with communities. We made the decision about three months ago to stop our meal services as a school district. And we began to partner with restaurants. Restaurants were already closed.

And so what that did was it allowed some of our parents of our students who were out of work to go back to work. And so we have 10 restaurants that are partnering with our school districts and they are providing the meals. Obviously meeting the federal guidelines as it relates to that.

*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions  
to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

In terms of wifi, we have a map of where all of our students on free and reduced lunch rate are. Their homes. And so we're able to go to their homes and take a hot spot to their homes. We're actually expanded our bandwidth at our school so families can pull up in the parking lot and get on wifi.

What I really wanted to talk about is what this pandemic has done for us. And I'm a firm believer that through every crisis there's a huge opportunity. And I was reading an article about what schools can potentially look like, and it said we have an opportunity to really step back into the messiness of this crisis and reassess how we're seeking to achieve our broader educational goals.

And when it comes to the work that we're doing in Lawrence around equity, this pandemic has really just pulled the cap off of some equity issues that were already there. And so we think about, and I shared this with Cynthia. My concern is, and I have a meeting in about two hours with my parents of color in the district.

My concern is from some of our parents of color and our marginalized families where school did not work for them. And now we're asking them to be teachers. And so that mental health support, and you were talking about support for teachers who have students of their own in their home and class, try being a superintendent of a district who has four kids in the home and also have to run a district. I was about to expel one of my students in my house the other day.

*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions  
to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

That stress is real. That stress is real from a standpoint of I have to make sure I'm on top of their schoolwork, but also making sure I'm taking care of the district.

So when it comes to equity and some of our marginalized families, one of the things we shared with our teachers. Consider not asking families to print things. Consider the materials that are in the homes or may not be in the homes when you're asking students to engage in activities.

We often want to make our students turn on their cameras. But if you think about it, they may not be too proud of their homes. And so not forcing them to turn on their cameras is huge. Asking for a show and tell and things like that.

But when it comes to just ... I heard a question or a comment earlier about what are we doing for our marginalized families, it's really checking in on them. We're asking our teachers not only are you checking in on the students, but check in on the families as well.

Because what we know is this is obviously widening our gaps. This is obviously widening our gaps. What are we doing on the front end to make sure that we are addressing that?

And what this has also done is, in the words of one of my students, this has forced staff to build relationships with students. This has forced students to build relationships with teachers, because they're beginning ... we've often talked about how teachers can do home visits. Well, this has forced you virtually in their house. And you're seeing how some of our families are living.

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A PROJECT OF 



*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions  
to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

So I do believe there is a lot of positives that are on the end of this. But we have to make sure that we're providing that support for our families now as well.

**Tiffany Kyser:**

Yeah, thank you, Ken. That's a lot of rich details in terms of really being critical and critically reflecting on assumptions.

One concrete example was different, for a myriad of reasons, perhaps students are uncomfortable sharing their screen. Perhaps students don't have a screen to show. But this idea of understanding there are a myriad of ways that we can allow our students to engage on and off an e-platform.

And then your second point around the multiple identities that we all hold and how for those who possess one or more historically marginalized identity, to use your words, the stress is real. And navigating multiple identities and the need for self-care and support. Hopefully this is one additional space that we can add to our repertoires of different ways we can support.

I wish we can continue this conversation and proceed on, but I also want to honor everyone's time. So Nickie and I are going to move to wrap up. I will note, though, that not only is the meeting being recorded but the chat transcription is also being recorded. The chat has been on fire throughout the entire conversation with a great amount of resources and rich Q&A that was actually happening in parallel during our conversation. And that will be made available after our session. By early next week. And we'll notify you that when that's going to be available in the e-forum.

*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions  
to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

But I'll move us to wrap up. So there are a couple of resources that we want to provide that the MAP Center has created specific to supporting our partners, support various roles that exist within your school community in response to COVID-19. We have our equity in education during COVID-19 Flipgrid page.

And this is an opportunity to continue in a very quick, efficient question and answer format. So if you all have continued questions that you felt like weren't really answered or you just want to continue engaging in dialog, the Flipgrid would be a great resource. And Diana will put that in the chat as well.

We also have our COVID-19 pandemic resources and support page. This has a wealth of information, resources, tools, and MAP Center developed publications as well, to support multiple stakeholders. So not just classroom and building educators, district leaders and educators, parents and caregivers who often are negotiating the myriad roles that we've discussed. Supporting students with disabilities.

So there was some great comments by Aaron in terms of not only supporting students with disabilities but parenting caregivers and adults and educators with disabilities as well, in negotiating inequities in terms of technology interfaces that often aren't inclusive of the myriad ways that we communicate. That we interpret information. And that we demonstrate our understanding.

We also want to highlight the communities of care Virtual Coffeehouse Series e-forum. This is where we will save and archive a recording of

*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

today's virtual coffeehouse. We'll also post on our website. And then a transcription will be available on our website and the e-forum. This e-forum is password protected and specific to those partners who engage in our communities of care series.

The link is on your screen and also in your pre-communication. And Diana will also provide that in the chat should you need that.

We want to provide a special thanks to our design team. We are moving really quickly and our team is also working as best we can virtually. And really proud of the time, the input, and energies that the design team has engaged in.

And so with that, I raise my mug in a virtual cheers, if you all don't mind joining me. If you have a mug. And again, want to appreciate your time and energy. And hopefully this was the beginning of a consistent connection and involvement in having a virtual space.

Nickie, do you want to close us out after Diana gives us some directive on the social media?

**Nickie Coomer:** Great.

**Diana Lazzell:** I ask that you please follow us on social media at Great Lakes Equity Center on Facebook, and @GreatLakesEAC on Twitter. Participate in a discussion directly after this event by answering the question how are you going to use what you learned here today. Please don't forget to tag us and use the hashtag #MAPEquity.

*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions  
to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

I ask that you now please prepare yourselves for a group shot that will be shared on social media tomorrow. So thank you, Tiffany. I'm going to countdown. Everybody smile. Three, two, one.

Thank you.

**Tiffany Kyser:** Oh you all are hams. Look at that.

**Cynthia:** [inaudible 01:04:10] thank you for letting us know a screenshot was being taken. Thank you. So key, so key.

**Tiffany Kyser:** Nickie, do you want to close us out?

**Nickie Coomer:** Sure. Thanks so much, everyone. There is a post-session questionnaire. It will be linked in the e-forum, if you wouldn't mind filling that out. That helps us plan future events.

And we really appreciate your insight into today's session. And we're looking forward to— we'll have three more of these. So stay engaged and follow us on social media. And we'll make sure to get the information out on those sessions, to you.

**Tiffany Kyser:** Thank you. Thank you, Nickie. We really, really appreciate your feedback. We will hang on and play some music as you're finishing up your cup of joe. If you want to take five to seven minutes to fill out the post session questionnaire. The concurrent use activity, if you had little ones that were participating, we hope that they enjoyed their time and would really be interested in ... and we ask them for their feedback too, but we'd be

*Leveraging Our Communities of Care: Sharing Barriers & Solutions  
to Support Students & Families During COVID-19*

interested if you have the time. Just let us know how your child, children, or youth that you're supporting appreciated the session.

So with that, have a wonderful afternoon. Take care of yourselves. And we look forward to seeing you soon.

**Nickie Coomer:** Bye, everyone.

**Seena Skelton:** Thank you, everyone. Stay healthy.

[End of Audio]