



## SAFER SCHOOLS AND CAMPUSES **BEST PRACTICES CLEARINGHOUSE**

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### *Lessons from the Field - Returning to In-Person Learning: Supporting Students, Especially Those with Disabilities, through Intensive Instruction, Effective Learning Environments and Family Engagement*

*Wednesday, May 25, 2021 | 3:00 - 4:00 PM ET*

#### *Transcript*

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Tim Duffey:

Welcome to today's Lessons from the Field webinar, returning to in-person learning: supporting students, especially those with disabilities through intensive instruction, effective learning environments and family engagement. Good afternoon everyone and thank you for joining today's webinar. On behalf of the US Department of Education, I'd like to welcome you to today's event.

Over 2,200 people registered for today's webinar, so additional people will certainly be joining us as we begin kicking off here for the event. And it's been a pleasure to see the wide array of locations being posted in the chat from where you all joining us. So, thank you for that. And thanks to those of you who are online with us here at the very beginning as we kick off. My name is Tim Duffey. I'm the training specialist for the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments or NCSSE, and I'll be moderating today's webinar. NCSSE is funded by the Office of Safe and Supportive Schools within the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education.

And on this slide, you will see on the left an image of our center's website, homepage along with some of our key products that you see on the right-hand side of your screen. We invite you to visit our site

following today's session, and you'll find current and relevant information for your use. For example, in recognition of Mental Health Awareness Month, a number a suite of resources related to supporting student mental health are posted on the site. And so, we encourage you to visit it for that information. And please do note that all materials that you'll see referenced today will be noted on the webpage and the archive of the recording of this event will also be available there for your listening or to share with colleagues.

Before I introduce today's first speaker, we'd like to use these two polling questions to get a better sense of who's joining us today. And what form of instruction you've been seeing in your local communities. We're going to give a moment for you to respond to those on that poll, the radio buttons and to hit Submit so we get those responses to those two questions. Oh, great. Thank you for those. Shoshana or Claire, the poll seem to be concluded, let's take a look at the results.

On terms of roles for those of you who used the poll, thank you. It looks like the largest percentage indicated education agency staff at 30%. That closely followed by other and events seeing the wide array of roles coming into the chat. And in terms of the form of instruction that had been used or is currently being used, hybrid model takes the day again, that's been pretty consistent throughout our webinars over the past several months. So, there's confirms that that is still the case today.

Okay, great. Thank you for that. With that, let's take a quick look at the structure for today's event. So, we're nearly wrapped up with item one on the agenda, the introduction and logistics that will be followed once I've introduced the moderator for the rest of the event, will be followed by initial remarks from Dr. David Cantrell, the acting Director of the Office of Special Education Programs.

The bulk of our time will be an item three and four kind of combined, which is we will have a panel discussion of. It will include Dr. Cantrell, but also practitioners from the field discussing their approach to providing supports to students as they're returning to instruction and particularly those with disabilities. And at the very conclusion, we will have a brief wrap up and closing period and that will close us up for the day. So, we're encouraging you to hang with us right to the very end of that so we can get your feedback there.

And with that, we're ready to move to the first speaker. And so, it's my pleasure to introduce to you Ruth Ryder, Deputy Assistant Secretary in the office of Elementary and Secondary Education. Ruth has been a real

advocate and champion for this Lessons from the Field series of webinars. And we greatly appreciate her leadership along the way.

As Ruth shortly here and over the next several agenda segments introduces the rest of the speakers, I just want to make you aware that their bios are on file as you see at the bottom of the screen, you can follow that link. It will also be posted into the chat box, that link so that you can access those. All right with that, let me turn it over to Ruth.

Ruth Ryder:

Thank you so much Tim, and welcome to everyone. I was watching the chat box, and we have people from Virginia, my current home state, to Washington, my past home state, and Alaska to Louisiana, Guam, Hawaii. We're very excited to have you here with us. I want to welcome you on behalf of the entire Department of Education, but particularly on behalf of our secretary Miguel Cardona. I want to thank you for joining us today, we're all keenly aware of the challenges that educators, parents, caretakers, and students have faced throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. And our resilience has been tested, but we've learned critical lessons and we are trying to get that information out to inform practice as we return to in-person instruction more completely this fall.

As you saw from the poll, many are still in hybrid instruction. But I think most everyone is hoping to return to in-person instruction more completely in the fall. This webinar is one part of the work that we're doing here at the department to uplift promising practices from the field. This is something that is very important to the secretary that we learn from schools, from districts and states that are doing great work and have been doing the hard work of educating all students but especially our most vulnerable students throughout the last year.

Part of our effort at the department to showcase effective practices is the establishment of the Safer Schools and Campuses Best Practices Clearinghouse, and you should be seeing the web address for the clearinghouse in the chat box so that you can access it. Through the clearinghouse, the department will continue to provide resources for community schools, educators, and families. And I noted a lot of family representatives when you were identifying your roles. I'm glad to see so many family organizations included.

We will be working together to reopen our schools for in-person learning and support and we want to do our part to support you in that work. If you, your school, district, or state have a promising practice that you think could benefit the field, please submit those practices to the Safer

Schools and Campuses Best Practices Clearinghouse. And you can submit those to the email address [bestpracticesclearinghouse@ed.gov](mailto:bestpracticesclearinghouse@ed.gov).

I'd also like to encourage you to check out the Summer Learning & Enrichment Collaborative. This is a professional learning community that support states, districts and community organizations that are partnering to provide summer programs that ignite a love for learning, exploration and enjoyment for students, particularly those hardest hit by the pandemic, and educators as well. The web address for the collaborative is also posted in the chat box for your access.

As an extension of the Clearinghouse, this lessons from the field webinar series has been part of our effort to highlight effective tools, techniques and strategies employed by everyday practitioners to address the challenges of the pandemic and strengthen the resilience of the education system. Today's session is another opportunity for us to continue that journey by exploring resources and strategies for supporting all students, but especially those students with disabilities in returning to in-person instructional settings. To help us explore this topic, we're joined today by several speakers with significant experience in this area. And I want to acknowledge the support of our colleagues from the Office of Special Education Programs, especially Renee Bradley, for her work in organizing this webinar.

Today, you'll be hearing first from Dr. David Cantrell, who is the deputy director and acting director of the Office of Special Education Programs at the Department of Education. Following David's comments, we'll explore this topic further through a panel discussion. At that time, Dr. Cantrell will be joined by Dr. Joseph Davis, Superintendent of Schools and Dr. Bonita Jamison, Executive Director of Integrated Support representing the Ferguson-Florissant School District in Missouri.

And also, Thom Jones, who is the state systemic improvement plan coordinator for the Wyoming Department of Education, and Jill Gallegos, special services consultant with the Laramie County School District 01. So, let's begin by hearing from Dr. David Cantrell. In his role at the department, Dr. Cantrell has responsibility for overseeing administration of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. His areas of interest include homeschool partnerships, early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and drop prevention program for students with disabilities. David?

Dr. David Cantrell: Thank you Ruth. Good afternoon everyone. Thank you for asking me to join this webinar and to focus on the OSEP resources. I also want to give a

special thank you to our two stakeholders sites. First, our friends from Wyoming, Thom Jones, and Jill Gallegos, and in Missouri, Dr. Joseph Davis and Dr. Bonita Jamison. My team and I are excited for the opportunity to share our resources today, and specifically focus on three areas.

First, intensifying instruction. Second, creating effective learning environments. And lastly, engaging families. We see these as critical focus areas as we all prepare for the coming school year 21/22 when students begin re-entering into in-person instruction. However, these topics are very appropriate for all of us, not only important for students with disabilities, they're just as important for considerations for students in the general education setting.

As many of you know, differentiating instruction in our tenants of the foundational practices and special education, excuse me. You will hear today from our stakeholders in Wyoming, their implementation story and results from focusing on instructional screening, good teaching, matching supports to students and progress monitoring. There're two particular OSEP centers I'd like to bring to your attention. The first is the National Center on Intensive Interventions, and the second, the Progress Center. Both of these centers offer resources on enhancing instructional practices.

From our Missouri stakeholders, you'll hear about the value of focusing on a framework to organize practices to support safe and predictable learning environments for all students. As students return to in-person instruction, how to build or even rebuild successful school relationships will be a key to successful return to school. The National Center on Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports or PBIS, co-founded by OSEP at OASC, actually co-funded I should say, provides resources and tools on creating effective learning environments.

And of course, we continue to salute our teachers and providers who have stepped up during this time to continue teaching and providing services to students with disabilities. The importance of focusing on supports for our teachers and providers has never been more critical, not only ensuring that they have the sufficient skills needed to effectively address student needs, but also to support their own well-being.

There are two centers I'd like to bring to your attention in this regard. First, the CEDAR Center and second, the IRIS Center. Both of these centers provide training modules and resources for educators. Both of our stakeholders today will talk about the importance of engaging families in their planning. Earlier this week, the OSEP funded Center for

Parent Information and Resources, which is actually our hub for supporting parents and families release some tools and products to support parents navigate the changes that we encounter at this point and gearing up for the new school year next year, so please check out those resources.

Finally, although OSEP's primary responsibility may be focused on students with disabilities, all of the resources and technical assistance centers OSEP funds are very applicable to all teachers and educational leaders in the general education setting. In closing, I share with you two slides that provide easy access to the many OSEP funded centers. The first page identifies the centers by content area, which is now displayed, and the second slide identifies the various type of centers by the area of focus. So, I encourage you to access all of the technical assistance centers which are free to anyone's use. Thank you again for joining us today, and good luck in your continued efforts. Now I turn it back over to Ruth to introduce our primary speakers.

Ruth Ryder: Thank you so much David for that really helpful information about the many OSEP centers that support the work of our colleagues in the field. I'd like to invite Dr. Davis to turn on his camera, we're going to start the panel by learning a little bit about our panel representatives, starting with Dr. Davis from the Ferguson-Florissant School District. If you could join us, that would be great.

Dr. Joseph Davis: Awesome.

Ruth Ryder: Great. Before we begin the panel, if you could talk a little bit about the work that you've been doing in your school district, thank you.

Dr. Joseph Davis: Absolutely. Thank you, Ruth for inviting us to be a part of this conversation. You can see the demographics of Ferguson-Florissant School District, we're somewhat diverse, mostly African American students here. I joined Ferguson-Florissant probably six years ago now. I'm originally from North Carolina, little old town called Wilson, North Carolina, just outside of Raleigh, and came here from the East Coast after the killing of Michael Brown. And from Michael Brown to George Floyd and all the things that we've dealt with in this country around race, not just in the last five years, but for centuries.

We're excited about some of the things that we've been doing to support our children. I can tell you that one of the pushes that we've had, especially for our students who have many challenges, whether they have an IEP or students in regular ED is making sure that they get a good

quality education. We build some really strong programs in our schools, specifically around STEM and IB, we have a 92% graduation rate. We're graduating students with disabilities at a high rate, and especially our black male students. We're graduating them around 90%. So, we're excited about some of that work.

But what we know in Ferguson-Florissant is that students can't get to their academics until they get those other needs met, those social emotional needs. And one of the things that I'm proud of and Dr. Jamison will go deeper around is figuring out where those challenges are for our students, whomever they may be, and mitigating those barriers so that they can get to AP Calculus for example. And for those who know me know I love math. And I think it's important that we make sure our children get that quality.

What we also know and what we're very proud about in Ferg-Flor is that we've been keeping up with our children. We've done a pretty decent job, we can do a better job, certainly with some of our children. But for the most part, we've kept up with almost all of our students during this pandemic, and that's been exciting for us. And I think a lot of it has come because of relationships.

I was a principal for a good long time in Wilson and relationships are really important. And I think that that's been at the heart of us keeping up with our students. Our principals, have good relationships with their students and teachers, teachers with students and so forth. But particularly our families, student voice has been a huge part of us keeping up with our students. I've been on many zooms with students and families with our advisory meetings, and so forth. But we're looking forward to the fall, we will push for in-person learning for as many of our students as we can, but we also know that they're going to be families who need virtual and we're going to do everything we can to accommodate them, and to support our families in that way.

But I encourage us and urge us not to return to business as usual. This pandemic has caused us to learn a whole lot. And one thing that we do know having pivoted on a dime in a short period of time is that as teachers, we invent when the necessity jumps in front of us. And we've been able to do Zoom and been able to provide students with the connectivity and so many other resources through Canvas and the light but we cannot return to business as usual. And we believe that in Ferg-Flor, and you'll hear some of that in just a bit here.

As I end, I want to talk a second or two about some of the work we're going to do this summer. We built a Summer Learning Academy, not a summer school, but a Learning Academy. Students will be doing not only academic work, but also some of those engaging things that they want to see happen over the summer. We know they've lost a lot having been home for a good amount of time. We didn't return to in-person learning until March of this year. So, they were out an entire year if you will. So, we're going to have some summer learning activities for our students and we've already gotten close to 2,000 students to sign up for it, is volunteer but we want to support our families as much as possible.

And then I'll say finally that we're going to keep pushing for quality for all of our students, right? Our students with disabilities, our students who have other challenges, and students who just need support to thrive. I'll end by saying that for me as a math teacher, we've been pushing really hard around elementary mathematics to make sure that our students get the quality of learning they need before they get to sixth grade, so that they can get to AP Calculus by the time they graduate from high school. Not saying every student is going to go to college, we want them to have the skills they need to be successful in life, whatever they decide to do. So that is who we are in Ferg-Flor. We're really excited about the work we're doing, our board is on board. We have an amazing school board who supports that work in that learning. So again Ruth, thank you for inviting Ferguson-Florissant to the table.

Ruth Ryder:

Thank you so much for joining us. It was exciting to hear you talk about the great work coming out of your district, I was especially impressed that you have been able to keep up with all of your students. I know that's been a challenge for many districts. Some students just disappeared when the learning went to virtual and your graduate rate for African American youth was also that was exciting to hear about that. And I think we all would agree that we have learned a lot and cannot return to business as usual. Thank you so much for your remarks.

Now we'd like to turn to Wyoming. And Thom, if you could turn on your camera, we're going to gain a little insight into the work that's going on in Wyoming. I'm hearing from Thom Jones, who is with the Department of Education in Wyoming.

Thom Jones:

Thank you Ruth and thank you for the opportunity to share this wonderful work we've been doing here in the great state of Wyoming. Before I get started though, I do want to mention quickly that the work that we've done would not have been possible without the support and guidance of the National Center on Intensive Intervention. We partnered

with them for the last five years and the amount of information and guidance and tools they provide has really helped sustain this work we've done, so we'll talk very quickly about some state context, look at the impact of COVID and some of the lessons that we've learned as part of that process.

In 2016 and '17 as part of our state's systemic improvement plan, Wyoming adopted the database individualization framework to improve outcomes for students with disabilities. DBI of course, is a systematic method for using data to determine when and how to intensify interventions based on student need and their unique subset skill deficits. Initially, our focus was very narrow, we focused on developing special educator capacity to use DBI to support literacy development for third grade students with disabilities in the resource room. However, currently, that has changed.

So based on positive impact on students and system outcomes, we've expanded our supports to build teacher and leader capacity to support the intensive needs of students in Pre-K through the eighth grade. Additionally, we've taken a more domain agnostic stance to support students and teachers in areas that have the greatest need. Some of the phenomenal positive outcomes that we've observed with this, of course, as you would expect, we've seen increased student performance. So, 96% of the students in the first cohort made progress on their IEP goals. And this is something that's been fairly consistent over the last couple of cohorts that we've observed. We've seen increased teacher confidence, which is going to have a huge impact on what's going to happen during our COVID closure. And we'll see that here on the next slide.

We've seen greater teacher efficacy, and then of course, an increase in more positive relationships with families. And this comes from a lot of the data that is produced to provides a common language that parents can understand. We've seen a lot of things coming out of this beyond just more positive relationships. Some of our implementers have talked about more parental engagement at home because there's a very specific skill deficit that they're aware of, and that they know they need to work on.

The impact of COVID, there's really a great story in this. So once the COVID shutdown began in March of 2020, my division in the department began working on guidance to assist our DBI implementing teachers in transitioning the DBI process itself to a virtual setting. And I could go on for hours. It's amazing what our teachers did, because by the time we got the guidance ready to go out, what we found is that the teachers didn't need it. They had already adapted the process, their interventions and

service delivery to a virtual setting to a very high degree of impact. We had a building administrator that even relayed to us that in some cases he noticed that those students involved in the DBI process outpaced their non-disabled peers in terms of growth while receiving instruction virtually.

And I think the main point here is that the focus on developing teacher capacity to design and implement database individualization allowed them to adapt more easily to the COVID environment. The impact data, and I've included four small tables here at the bottom, really demonstrate this effectiveness. The first three looks specifically at reading words correct per minute, and the gains made by students up to and through the COVID shut down. The table on the bottom right is a student who joined the building mid-year but was still able to make significant gains in math while receiving instruction through the virtual format. Overall, for those students involved in the DBI process during the COVID shutdown, we saw 92% of them continue to make progress on their IEP goals.

So, with lessons learned in some of the things that we've changed moving forward, and we really tried to look at this to a broad land right focus on what was necessary for teacher's success, especially under COVID. And in this context, we develop asynchronous learning options through the State Learning Management System. We have six modules developed that cover all the core components of DBI that are ready to be disseminated to interested districts and practitioners. We launched a community of practice to provide opportunities for peer coaching, cross-state collaboration, it was designed to assist teachers in learning from each other. And during the COVID shutdowns even address feelings of isolation that they may be experiencing.

We sought to engage leaders, while simultaneously building sustainable system in which special educators and interventionists could benefit from support and alignment with the new Wyoming MTSS Center, which we just launched this past month, we're all really excited to see the benefits from that.

I will close by mentioning this, and this is really the way that we try to view the work that we do. And that is that all students with disabilities, our general education students first and the supports in the systems that we've developed prior to and refined during the COVID shutdown were specifically designed to ensure that those students with the most persistent and significant learning needs had access to necessary services

and supports to be successful in the general education curriculum and environment. Thank you.

Ruth Ryder:

Thank you so much Thom. As a former special educator and a former OSEP staff member, it's exciting to hear you talking about students with disabilities as general education students first and the supports that you provided them. So, thank you for that work. I'd like to ask all of our panelists now. Thom and Jill from Wyoming and Dr. Davis and Dr. Jamison from Missouri and David Cantrell to all join us on camera now. What we're going to be doing is we're going to be moving into a Q&A conversation. I'll ask a question and I'll direct it to a particular either Missouri or Wyoming or David, and then we'll just go from there with our conversation.

I'd like to start with our colleagues from Missouri with the first question, which is how has COVID impacted your district's approach to serving students with disabilities? Are there some lessons learned you're carrying into the fall? Dr. Davis, Dr. Jamison?

Dr. Bonita Jamison:

Thank you Ruth. So COVID has forced us to be very creative and intentional how we support our learners with disability and how we work with our special education partners. This is critical for us to share as we partner with another school district to provide our students with disability support. The district's approach has included reviewing and analyzing multiple data points. And we use this to determine the needs of our students and our staff. And so, this system underpins our work and part of that is our use of our district level multi-tiered systems of support team. And so that team includes multiple subcommittees, and those subcommittees are evaluation and that's our department that looks at data. They pull data, they provide specific data around our goals to our schools, and help them to unpack that data to support our students with disabilities.

We have a coaching team. So, as we look at that data that is received from the district level, and we see that a school needs specific support, we are able to provide that support to their teams and also to their teachers, including professional development. And so, our professional development team, which we call our makers team, actually creates the professional development and uses a train the trainer model and we use a cross section of our district staff from each building to facilitate the professional development alliance for our goals.

And then we have our tier two and tier three intervention team. And this particular team helps us to establish the entry and exit criteria for

students and ensure that there is continuity across the district. But more specifically, our district MTSS team has a representative from our special education partners. And again, as I previously alluded to, we partner with a different district to provide services. So, their participation on our team is critical, as we work to support the needs of our students. And so, we have a special education director on the team, we have a social worker who also supports our special education work, and then also a school psychologist. And so, we work collaboratively and look at our tiered systems of support.

So quarterly, we engage in walkthroughs, to look at not only our ineffective practices as we look at behavior, but also our instructional full size so that we are able to continue to support our learners. And that data then informs additional professional development that is offered coaching to teachers, as well as how we support students through our care team process and then how we engage parents. And so, one of the things I continue to talk about is our partnership with special school district, our special education partners. And so, they offer a parent education and diversity awareness program. And then on the district side, we offer a Parent University. And so, we've offered to them how to navigate campus, as we thought about how do we support our students with disabilities and parents were able to engage in those sessions.

In addition, as we thought about what we've been able to accomplish this year as we've supported our learners with disabilities, we also looked at what are some of the lessons learned as we prepare to return in the fall. And so, one of the things we want to continue to do is explore how we can pool our support and our resources to support our students with disabilities. And so, through that approach, we have been able to adopt and implement systems that will help us to better analyze our data to provide supports to students, and those supports then help to develop intervention plans for our learners. And then as they continue to meet every four to six weeks, we make adjustments to support our students.

The other piece is around how we schedule and the practices we use for that. And then from that scheduling, ensuring that we're not pulling students from core content time, as Dr. Davis mentioned, we really are focusing in on ensuring that students have access to content, which is the other part of the work that we're continuing to explore is how do we continue to strengthen our co-teaching models in our classrooms.

And then lastly, I would like to share that we collaborate to examine data to identify supports for our learners with disabilities. And then we continue to provide that information vertically and horizontally to our

school board during our cabinet meetings, in addition to our teachers within our district.

Ruth Ryder: Thank you so much Dr. Jamison, it was exciting to hear you talk about such a robust, multi-tiered system of support, and especially the use of data and the plan to continue that use of data. That was great. Wyoming, do you have anything you'd like to add to that question?

Jill Gallegos: I would just I appreciate the comprehensive approach that you have shared. I would just add that it has been amazing for our teachers. We have seen that COVID reinforced the impact and the importance of the framework database individualization in meeting individual student needs. We learned that from the National Center of Intensive Intervention specifically with Dr. Tessie Bailey and boy, are we thankful that just prior to the academic was a soft start in January of 2018. We had the solid foundation of DBI. So, we could still move students in this most difficult and unpredictable learning environments that have been thrown at us.

Teachers certainly couldn't prepare for this mass remote learning experience, but they did know the process to move students with the most significant and persistent needs and how to be successful in that we talked in our PLC many times. That boy, we have just found ourselves on uncharted seas and unknown waters, but we know our vessel is solid, and that's the DBI process. We know how to move kids, we just have to now figure it out how to move in this solid vessel in uncharted waters. And so, it really gave us that solid foundation.

Parents love to see their students grow in every situation, whether it's remote or brick and mortar. And so, this process allowed our special education teachers to really continue growth with students. Our special education teachers have become quite protective of this process. They're intense direct instruction time and teaming together because they've seen success. And so, it's really given them the ability to move students despite the chaos that we have found ourselves in.

Ruth Ryder: Thank you for your comments around the database individualization, I think you're going to get a lot of people who want to learn more about that. So NCII will be getting some business I think coming out of your great conversation here. The next question I have is for our colleagues from Wyoming, and it is what have your reopening efforts looked like over the course of the year, particularly for students with disabilities?

Thom Jones: And I'll go ahead and I'll start to provide a little context. But I think Jill can really expand on this. But with the exception of the initial shutdown in March of 2020, the majority of Wyoming's districts were able to open relatively on time and remain open throughout the 2021 school year. So how those reopenings looked were different for different districts. But as I mentioned, I think Jill can probably provide a little bit more information on how that process looks specifically with her district.

Jill Gallegos: So, we were as Thom stated, extremely blessed to be able to open last fall in brick and mortar. We developed some pretty extensive plans as everyone did for addressing students in quarantine teachers and quarantine remote learning by tapping students virtually into their classroom when they have to be at home. And really combination of both remote and brick and mortar. We had special education teachers that worked hard to protect their direct intensive instruction with their students with disability. I know of teachers that did specially design instruction in the evening when parents could be home to help their students with technology that required and they got very creative with how to progress monitor and how to implement with fidelity.

Several building administrators have expressed currently that they've been pleasantly surprised with the growth of students, Thom mentioned that some of our special education students outperformed some of the general education students is certainly there're pockets of concerns that we are addressing. The district also started a virtual school last fall, we had not had that in years prior. And we gave families choice, the virtual school administration and staff are constantly searching ways to improve their service performance and provision and keep students engaged.

They're now looking toward next fall with a more of a hybrid program. So, students may come into the brick and mortar setting for part of their day or certain instructional time. And then also continuing those online components as well. We do realize that we were really blessed to be able to be in schools, and we needed it as educators and our kids needed it. But we also needed to have the opportunity for parents to have choice, and so we were able to do that as well.

Ruth Ryder: Thank you Jill. Really great to hear about the options that families were able to have during this time and the flexibility that you offered. Missouri colleagues, would you like to add anything on this reopening efforts? What have they looked like over the course of the year?

Dr. Joseph Davis: Yeah, I have a few things here, and Dr. Jamison may want too as well. We didn't go back until March of this year, we got out March of 2020 and

stayed out. Our board considered it coming back in July, then again in October, and again in January. We've had a difficult time for many reasons. And I think a lot of it has to do with the way COVID has hit the black community. Our district is largely black, our students come from homes like mine, where I grew up in North Carolina. And so, it's been a challenge. We've had COVID hit our community really hard. We've had some of our employees to pass away from COVID. We had two bus drivers that died within a couple of days of each other as we were delivering meals and supporting families throughout this entire time. I think the piece that I think we did pretty decent on is again, connecting with our families and given our families the kind of support that they need in order to be able to navigate the terrain that we were in.

What we did and have done, and I think continue to do is take a look at the IEP goals of our students. And one of the things that's really important to me is making sure as Dr. Jamison said that our students are getting content, right? Getting quality, often and Thom said this a minute ago is that our students with disabilities need to be getting the same kind of education, if not better than as students in general education. And so, when we took a look at some of those goals and saw that some of the goals weren't written to the standards, then we had to pivot there, and I think that's been really important is to make sure our students are getting the kind of quality they need, but also giving families the tools they need to support them.

We've asked principals to go to homes, and certainly with COVID we've done mitigation efforts, and we put hotspots on the porch and, or whatever they needed on the porch so they could get what they need and then instructions on how to connect. I remember connecting myself with a grandma, I won't call her name, but I feel like she's my grandma. Because she was able to navigate getting on Zoom and getting the support that she needed for her grandchild.

So just really humanizing this effort of educating children period. And I'm excited about that part. I think that in two words, customer service, right? It's important to provide the kind of customer service that families need. And we pride ourselves on getting back to folks in a timely way, 24 hours as best we can, returning emails and returning phone calls, and just being available for our family so that they can feel like they matter. And I think that that's important, especially when students have challenges or disabilities, that they know that someone cares about them. And that again, we've humanize this education effort. And then they get a quality education, I don't know that we can do anything different than make sure

that every child, whomever they are, whatever the call they are, they get that kind of quality.

Ruth Ryder: Thank you so much. It is great to hear you talk about getting information to families, and really recognizing that this was a challenging time for them as well. And it sounds like you also learn something about IEPs and the quality of the goals and objectives that you'll be carrying into the new year. So, thank you so much for that. David, I'm going to direct the next question to you. Both of our state stories today spoke about the challenges of personnel, both preparation and intervention. And I wonder if there are additional OSEP resources that states and districts can access to support their work with their personnel?

Dr. David Cantrell: Yeah, thank you Ruth. The question of having a sufficient number of teachers and qualified trained teachers, not only in special education, but in general education. It was a challenge pre-pandemic, right? Now, where we find ourselves in a post-pandemic, we're really expecting this to be a more of a greater significant challenge, right? So, this has been a priority in our office over the last couple of years. OSEP culminated last fall with this summit focusing on best practices and strategies for states and districts to not only recruit or retain special education personnel. And then this past January, we also released some additional resources that could be used by states and districts to help them just not only recruit, but to entice teachers to stay in the special education field.

These resources are available at our OSEP Ideas That Work website. And I think they'll post that into the chat in just a moment. So, in addition to our centers, the OSEP we fund grants to recruit a master's level and doctoral level teachers in special education. This year, we will be putting out new grant opportunities within the next month. So please be on the lookout for those. But additionally, in FY22, we're looking at how we can bump up our grant award activities so that states can recruit even more teachers into the teaching profession. We don't have a silver bullet unfortunately, but this is on our radar. We're continuing to work very closely with states to ensure that we're providing them appropriate supports and services to recruit teachers into the field. Thank you.

Ruth Ryder: Thanks David, I appreciate all the work that OSEP is doing around supporting high quality personnel. Let's move to the next question. How has your district expanded schoolwide well-being this year and also in you're thinking about reopening? And could our colleagues from Missouri start with that one?

Dr. Bonita Jamison: Absolutely, thank you. And thank you David for sharing the additional resources. In Ferguson-Florissant School District we recognize the importance of having teachers to be adequately prepared so that students can experience success. We approach the district wide aim of expanding well-being of our students and staff in varying ways. More specifically, we lean deeply into our partnership with the University of Missouri, Columbia which is connected to the National Center of PBIS. And so that partnership is critical because they serve as a top runner and also help us to examine the systems that we have in place, and then explore other ways that we can support our teachers and our students.

In addition, they provide a great deal of technical support for the district and include a lot of the conversation around how do we support all students, specifically students with disabilities. I've discussed previously the work of our district leadership team for multi-tiered systems of support and how our maker team creates the professional development and our coaching team supports our buildings and their teams.

And so, we provide intensive professional development to our new hires around our ineffective practices and go deeply into social emotional learning. And we think that that's critical as Dr. Davis mentioned before, the idea of developing relationships between students and teachers so that accessing content can be and continue to occur.

In addition to that, I want to lift up our district wide approach to our expectations. And this was a shift that we made this year. More specifically, as we realize that we were transitioning into virtual learning, and that each building while our expectations were the same district wide, the matrices were different in each of the buildings. And so, our committee actually created virtual matrices as well as teaching plans, PK-12, so that each grade span school PK-2 three to five, six and then seven through 12 would have the same expectations and the same matrices. And part of that was to, A, remove some of the trauma that students could experience but also ensuring that students had the ability to access learning and not be in a position where they are excluded from school.

The other piece I want to highlight is how we took a more restorative approach to supporting students who needed to be supported during the class time so that a teacher is available to support them in that manner as well with some mindfulness as we seek to support students in a different manner. Again, the district increase our social emotional learning lessons. And so, we have district wide curriculum to support students PK-12. And with that, the professional development that goes along with it, but ensuring that we're looking at data as we go along. So,

we do establish goals, we look at what engagement looks like at each of the buildings, and then we launch support for those buildings.

Professional development was also provided in the area of restorative practices, specifically around community building and circles being implemented Pre-K-12. And so, again, we knew that our students have been out for quite a bit that relationships were very important, and that we could use those community building circles to address some of the trauma that students had experienced, as well as to discuss and build relationships even when students transition back into the buildings in March. So that was a key piece.

And I want to lift up our efforts around student and parent voice. And so, we engage across the school year in parent voice activities, focus groups, surveys, to guide the work for our Parent University as we think about how do we continue to engage our parents across the year and the offerings that they receive. So, our school social workers, our counselors create opportunities to engage with families and staff to ensure that they're mentally prepared to enter into whether it's their virtual classroom or brick and mortar classroom. So those were some critical points that we examined as we sought to support students from a social emotional realm.

And then the last point of our work this year really was around ensuring that the district was not further contributing to the trauma of our students through the work with our student expectation code or what others may refer to as the code of conduct. And so, we examine policy and look deeply so we have several policy changes that will be recommended, as well as looking at any exclusionary practices that were included in our student expectation code. More specifically around dress code, the use of hats or the wearing of hats, hoodies, and things of that nature, but then really looking at our student expectation codes to be one of support for teachers. And so, the new code that we're bringing forward includes resources, links for them to access so that they're better equipped to prepare themselves to welcome and support our learners.

And the last piece that I want to share and end with as we think about reentering for the 21/22 school year is the focus on relationship building and furthering the work that we're doing with restorative practices, and then really being intentional around our equity work. As Dr. Davis shared, we have equity standards that will be adopted, and we had student and parent voice as well as staff who contributed to the development of those standards, and that will be used to guide our work. And then the last piece is around the continued professional development and how we

capture data around the efforts that we engage in around social emotional learning. And so, as Dr. Davis mentioned, we develop goals and this year we will be examining or the upcoming year we will be examining our work and the impact on emotional regulation and self-management.

Ruth Ryder: Thank you so much. Wow, what a lot of great information there. I think one of the things we've learned through the pandemic is the importance of relationships and connectedness, which you touched on both of those. I'm going to move as quickly to the next question. We're running up on our time here. Our friends from Wyoming, how is your district planning on addressing unfinished instruction and academic loss resulting from lost instructional time? And I think we have like three minutes? No, no rush.

Jill Gallegos: I think our special education teachers are number one approaching ESY with more intentionality and immediacy by watching the data that's coming in. Many said teachers are currently involved with specially designed instruction interventions after school already an extended day setting. So, they're really intentional and immediate about looking at data. Probably more importantly perhaps, is that we're really learning to focus our time and energy on what works for students with disability. DBI takes all the guesswork out of that for us, it empower teachers to determine a solid course of instructive instruction in an effective learning environment and then work with their peers for ongoing support and collaboration. And families are engaged with that. DBI gives us a process by which families understand the numbers, children understand the numbers. So, it really has increased the engagement going forward. And it makes it feel like a team because we're all on the same page, and it's all about the students.

The fidelity of implementation logs is another component. We really see that even the students with the most persistent significant learning needs, teachers will do a quick log and use that as a powerful reflective tool that increases their capacity as special educators as well as helps determine what may be prohibiting student growth. And sometimes we find out as teachers it's not us, maybe it's absence, maybe it's an engagement, these kinds of things. So, it really has allowed us to focus on intensive explicit instruction. We can look at what the skill deficit is, what intervention is being addressed. And then with a quick progress monitoring probe know if it's working or not, and discuss those things with students.

So sometimes, I love the work with building relationships that Missouri has talked about, because we just know we have to start there. It's Maslow's first. And our teachers have become very proficient themselves at looking at that progress monitoring probe for instance, during the week and the students will say, "I didn't do very well this week, I didn't get as high as I wanted." And the teachers will be able to enter dialogue with why that might be and have a concrete conversation about, well, a favorite pet passed away or I haven't seen grandparents, right? So, it engages that relationship in just the process of determining where students are going in their academics.

The DBI process is spreading out kind of splashing out of our most intensive needs students onto our general ED environment. We have four elementary schools piloting the program with our new TA Center, which we're thrilled about, building tier two looking at handling tier one, more comprehensive student focused programs and these buildings have stepped into this on their own volition having looked at the success of the special educators with students in the midst of pandemic and beyond, and have said yes, us also we want that information. We want to know how to grow kids. And so that's been really exciting.

So really the district is also beginning to implement a true progress monitoring tool at all elementary Gen Ed levels, we have spent quite a bit of time monitoring progress toward a standard. But that doesn't tell us what the skill deficit is that's preventing that student from making progress. So, we needed to be able to identify the skill deficit and apply the intensive direct instruction, and then progress monitor to see if it's working. And teachers in even the general ED environment are saying, "Hey, we want a piece of that too. We want to move kids like these special education students have been able to move." So, appreciate so much being able to speak. I know we could speak forever on this work because it's so darn exciting.

Ruth Ryder: Thank you so much. And thanks to all of the panelists, this is amazing information. I've been watching the chat and everyone is really excited about all of the resources. So, I'm going to turn it over to Tim now to bring us home.

Tim Duffey: Thank you Ruth. Let me extend my warm thanks to Ruth, David, Joseph, Bonita, Thom, and Jill for all that excellent information you shared today. Very exciting work you're all up to. As we close for today, we have posted a link in the chat and I'll show on the screen there we go for the feedback for today's event. So please take a minute all of you who participated

today to let us know how today's session went. And it gives us critical information to improve these kinds of sessions in the future.

Just a reminder that at our website, you'll be able to find the information that was shared today, we will pull the links, the multiple links that have been shared in the chat and put them into a document that will be shared there, as well as the slides and the recording of today's event when it's available. And a reminder to the items we were unable to get to from the questions you posted in chat will make their way to the Department of Education to inform upcoming events in the lessons from the Field series.

Finally, a sincere thank you. Those are the few links, as well from us at NCSSLE. If you have questions, our help desk link and phone number are at the top. Our website link, again in the middle. And the best practices clearinghouse of the Department of Education at the bottom. Again, we will stay live here for about five minutes longer to allow you to drop any additional questions you might have or comments in the chat but also again to complete that feedback form. So maybe we'll back up one slide and leave that feedback form link visible. And thank you so much for all you do for children and youth in this country. Hope you have a great rest of your afternoon and a wonderful holiday weekend. Thank you all.