

Peer Interview

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[Audio file](#)

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Interview Transcript

Speaker 1 0:00

So, welcome to summer summer number two for us. The question that we chose is what were your experiences doing education during COVID. And from there, we made a couple of questions for our group. Our group is, of course, Manny. Melissa. I. The first question I'm going to jump into is COVID has impacted education in a myriad of ways, what strategies or aspects of virtual on virtual learning have you observed that have taken root in classrooms now?

Speaker 2 0:31

I think there's more of a push in using Google Classrooms. Regardless of the fact that as teachers, we have to create lesson plans and have everything ready. They want us to post on Google Classroom, day by day, what we're doing in the classroom per subject. So I'm seeing that even in summer school, not just September through June even in summer school, they're asking teachers to make sure to have your Google Classroom up, make sure all students are logged in into the Google Classroom and make sure that we're posting on a daily basis.

Speaker 1 1:09

I noticed an extra layer of work as a teacher, but do you see some of the benefits to having your classroom working, operational and up to date?

Speaker 2 1:19

Oh, absolutely. I feel that, for example, it helps you know, a parent communication because parents can also see the student missing the assignment. I've noticed some parents called or emailed me saying I noticed my son, my son didn't finish this assignment. Is there any way he could get extra time? Or is there any extra credit for this assignment? And it helps even parents be more involved because they get to see a day to day, day to day in the classroom through Google Classroom.

Speaker 1 1:50

That's good, because you know I am very big on parent engagement in person. Considering the political validity of student and teacher attendance due to the corporate spread, or outbreaks that

can happen, what can teachers and districts do to consistently support the continuity of instruction during those times that that happened, and will continue to happen?

Speaker 2 2:14

I think providing teachers more opportunities to learn the new digital programs that are being put into the classroom with more professional development. So that because it's an opportunity to be master, we've seen these new programs in order to then make sure for example, classroom, let's say we have a first year teacher, and she's needed to use a Google Classroom, we continue providing professional development workshops, she's going to start feeling more confident in using it. And that will result in students having access anytime, anywhere to the content. Sometimes parents worry that, for example, even speaking to a teacher, they will have to miss work than when it comes to having that access to the Google classroom at any time. It just provides the opportunity for communication to keep flowing between parents, teachers and students.

Speaker 1 3:18

So you're saying that professional development is one aspect in order to increase, I guess, the knowledge base of the teacher to get more platforms for parents?

Speaker 2 3:30

Yes.

Speaker 1 3:30

And then the other aspect of it is, again, you went back to the Google Classroom, and just made sure that the Google Classroom is up to date, so that even if there's absence on either side, parent, or student or teacher, that there's still there.

Speaker 2 3:44

Yes, because even so today, there's like Google Classroom is saying, Well, we have this new feature, and we still have to, like, be up to date with that too

Speaker 1 3:58

Question number three, most districts were allocated federal funds to address safety protocols and technology. What barrier is continuing to impede student achievement, in these circumstances?

Speaker 2 4:12

I personally feel that the funds aren't equally distributed, or at least there is no transparency as to where it is going? I've seen that a lot of bilinguals, for example, in new classrooms are overcrowded, because they can't find certified teachers. However, sports teams are going away to

other states for field trips. So I think we're not really prioritizing what's most important and I feel is getting the certified teachers in the classrooms, making sure that there is a one teacher teaching extra subjects for example, in my case, because we can find a bilingual teacher to fill in the spot. So I think maybe even getting to where should these funds go to or who? What's the specific need? Instead of just saying, Okay, let's just order a bunch of gloves and masks like where is it truly, because I see, sometimes boxes of gloves just pile up and teachers aren't even using it. So let's really put the money where it's needed.

Speaker 1 5:23

So interesting enough looking from my standpoint, as an administrator, sometimes the money specifically earmarked for that; safety protocols, periods, or that could be the gloves to just that. And the other. And then there probably is money hammered for technology specifically. But within that umbrella of Technology I do I think that what I'm also hearing you saying is that I mean, a needs assessment needs to be done, which is bringing me back to what we're doing right now with Ziegler with Dr. Zieger, in all of those different protocols if you have a problem. So one of the problems that you're seeing right now, is that the money being spent in unnecessary underwriting? Absolutely. So okay, it makes sense. What can teachers, schools and districts do to simply increase communication in all things?

Speaker 2 6:15

For teachers and parents? For sure, doing parent workshops in different languages, not just English. And not just like a one time thing, not just a welcome back to school night when that happens at the beginning of the year. But maybe we're using maybe a parent workshop series, and one of Dr. Zeiger's classes. Actually, the idea was to propose to my district, a parent workshop series in Spanish, because I often see that we do workshops for parents, but most of the time, it's just in English. So when I was able to do a workshop on navigating classrooms, Google Classroom for parents, there was a good turnout. And parents are very appreciative that, you know, the workshop was available in their native language so, I think, providing workshops that will bridge the digital divide, that same Latino and low income communities is crucial. Now more than ever, and just having like a quarterly thing, it's not something that just happens at the beginning of the year, it needs to be ongoing.

Speaker 1 7:27

So let me know, push your brain a little bit. You did that during the COVID. During this whole time. All right. So do you think that it's important that districts avail these workshops? So two things? Should we record them, so that parents who can't come or attend at that moment can still see it, which I think is something that would be beneficial? We weren't recording anything prior to this? Now, I didn't know we're all recording so much more, and have it somewhere, I guess, on the district website or school website? And how were you able to do it in two? Did you do it in

two languages during the workshop itself? Or did you do a Spanish which, like, how was that. How did you do it?

Speaker 2 8:08

So first of all, the reason why to get it on Zoom was to be able to record it. And I had worked a lot with the parent liaisons, like five different school districts. And I believe they do have a website where they do post the presentation. So that is that and as far as I did it only in Spanish, because in the district that I serve, 93% are Hispanic or Latino. So we didn't we didn't experience a parent that was from another country that spoke another language other than Spanish. So the workshop was completely in Spanish.

Speaker 1 8:52

So your district is predominantly Latino?

Speaker 2 8:54

Yes.

Speaker 1 3:56

But the workshops are sometimes in English?

Speaker 2 8:59

Like most of the time they are and most of the time they are even before the pandemic they will have a lot of parent workshops and they are mostly in English. And even during our parent teacher conferences, we do have to get like secretaries running around helping these teachers translate because that's always been an issue. The fact that most of the staff can communicate with parents.

Speaker 1 9:25

So that actually brings me to my next question. What can teachers and schools and districts to the city actually, how can mobile technology be utilized to keep parents in the loop considering the language barrier is most the majority of teachers are English speaking teachers, and the majority of the students that you're servicing in your particular district, and that's probably a little bit more than half of my district slightly or marginally, but slightly more. Definitely Latino families. And of course, Spanish speaking families are English. So what kind of technology can be utilized to keep parents in the loop?

Speaker 2 10:05

I think I'm a fan of Class Dojo even before the pandemic, what I love about Class Dojo is that it was always available. And it's available in multiple languages. And it's easy for parents to access, download the app. And they can see not only how their children, their child's behavior,

but also teachers can upload videos, which I'm really big on portfolios, pictures on, on whatever the student is doing. So I think using ClassDojo, but not just saying, Okay, this is what we're using, we also have to teach the parents how to navigate Class Dojo ...

Speaker 1 10:50

So going back to PD, having professional development but for parents. So that would be one. Okay.

Speaker 2 10:54

And that's something that I actually propose that the next one perhaps, will be on using ClassDojo. A lot of times parents do log in, and there are some that wouldn't, don't feel 100 percent comfortable using it. It works. And so yeah, definitely educating parents on like, whatever program the teacher is using to communicate and besides class dojo to join in. There's another one called remind. So I know...

Speaker 1 11:21

We use your remind,

Speaker 2 11:22

Okay.

Speaker 1 11:23

Yea, I'm in High School, and we use remind. Dojo is a little bit ...

Speaker 2 11:26

More elementary...

Speaker 1 11:27

Like the avatars remind, is this the same thing, and it has multiple languages, as well. So let me make sure that we get the so you're talking about first, the PD for the parents so that they know, do we have to sign a particular consent form or anything like that? I mean, most districts use a media consent form. And technology usage.

Speaker 2 11:49

Yeah, for sure...

Speaker 1 11:51

Does it follow? Does it fall under that?

Speaker 2 11:53

Yes. And even to have permission to take videos or pictures of kids that all needs to be approved by parents first. For sure?

Speaker 1 12:00

Okay. Do you find that when you know what percentage of your class I know you're a teacher, right, so what percentage of your class utilizes your Class Dojo?

Speaker 2 12:10

I will say, about 87%?

Speaker 1 12:16

And do you see a difference in students' performance overall, with the parents that are in the know, versus the parents that are not?

Speaker 2 12:24

Yes, because I personally, and I think it also depends too on the teacher. If the teacher also uses it actively and is always posting you see that the parents want to check, check it one. So I, I'm always finding ways to celebrate the students when they finish a class project, when they're working together, or independently, I'm always recording them and taking pictures and you see parents, even after dismissal, they're like, oh, you know, thank you for sharing that. That was so cool. You know, is there anything else my son has to bring for that project you guys are doing. So I feel the more I use it, the more parents are using it as well.

Speaker 1 13:04

And pre pandemic independency on the need of the bearing helping the student did that change from pre pandemic post to during the pandemic post pandemic, do you find that is a higher dependency on the parent piece based on pre, during and post,

Speaker 2 13:22

I mean, I was always very fine. I was always a fan of making sure that I build relationships with parents, I know that their education also happens at home. So I always prioritize that. However, I see that that's a big push. Now, overall education, like making sure there's that parent involvement because of what happened and the virtual learning experience and how we really get parents to be on board and helping us as well. Definitely. So I think that parent engagement is a huge topic. And that's why I also feel that there's this big push in making sure that we use platforms like Google Classroom even though we're back in the classroom making sure that parents have access to what their child is doing on a daily basis.

Speaker 1 14:13

Absolutely. Last question, what is more around recent data. You and I did a project actually with Dr. Shamburg. That you're right. You and I just did a project in December with Dr. Shamburg that speaks more about the fragility of students and even staff, parents, everyone's mindset since the pandemic, right? How can educators leverage some type of self awareness tool app or something to help students with the SEL component ? We spoke about accelerated learning, we spoke about eliminating some of the barriers, and technology, but the SEL piece is not just a piece. It's really It's woven into what's happening. Right now, in education, especially because the COVID, you know, just had another mass shooting, it's just so much going on with schools and kids and students being afraid of what's happening. What's something like how we can leverage tech? Just to do checks on students periodically, even families and parents? You know, I don't know if Class Dojo has this, I don't think remind has that piece. What can we do? What should I do?

Speaker 2 15:26

I mean, I do know that Class Dojo has videos on mindfulness, and it gives students opportunities to have conversations on life, for example, what does it mean, to be courageous or to take risks. So having those types of conversations, I also see BrainPOP. It's one that I use a lot. And they have a whole SEL component. And I actually wrote to them and commended them that they also started uploading more in Spanish on SEL. And that was a huge relief, because that's usually the biggest issue as a bilingual teacher, that there's not enough resources in that language. But now BrainPOP has a whole section in English and in Spanish on, for example, we just lost our parent liaison during the pandemic. And students knew they love researcher dad, and I was able to find a video BrainPOP on refits. And it really helped me answer those questions, you know, and they're already going through it, we're all going through it. Trama, you know, so it was definitely something that I was grateful for. Another thing that I experienced was during dismissal. Recently, I heard a parent telling one of my colleagues, you know, you guys keep doing these fire drills, my, my, my daughter keeps coming home very scared because of what's happening. You know, you know what she's watching the news and what happened in Texas, like, can you guys kind of minimize that? And I remember the teacher saying, you know, it's not something that we can actually do, you know, we have to make sure safety's always number one, but it's just to show that these kids are very much going through a very traumatized and even a fire drill. It's just like, really affecting them.

Speaker 1 15:52

Interestingly enough, something that I began to do this year is, I want to, we have emergency drills with a plan that we've communicated to our parents and communicated to the students today we're going to have a non fire evacuation, but we're going to have a bomb threat, because the reality of the world now is that things are happening, and we need to be prepared. But you are right. I think of the idea of the surprise drill and no one knows it's a surprise when the reality

is negative, terrible things are happening. I think that that's true. So just speaks of the importance of the SEL component.

Speaker 2 17:54

And think about it like this to imagine a newcomer straight from the country. A lot of times, I have to tell you the newcomers like this are just because they don't know how we do it in this country like the protocols. So a lot of times you see this newcomer like, why are you hiding under the desks and that's also very traumatizing for a newcomer as well.

Speaker 1 18:17

I think we're done. Thanks. Thank you, Melissa.