PREPARING FOR THE RETURN TO SCHOOL

Using and Adapting Early Warning, On-Track, and MTSS Systems to Support Students During COVID-19

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WELCOME AND TODAY’S AGENDA

• COVID-19 Solutions Forum 3
  – Preparing for the Return to School: Using and Adapting EWS, On-Track and MTSS Students to Support Students during COVID-19
    (Robert Balfanz, Director, Everyone Graduates Center)
• Q & A
• Learnings from the Field
  – Frances Dumas-Hines, Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation, IN
  – Carla Gay, Gresham-Barlow School District, OR
  – Tara Madden and Felicia Walker, Talent Development Secondary and New Mexico ECHO EWS project
  – Amy Szymanski, Ohio Department of Education
  – Alexis Urquhart, Compass Academy Middle School, Denver, CO
• Q & A and idea & resource sharing
ORGANIZING OUR DISCUSSION

• We have a large and diverse group of people and organizations participating in today’s call
  – Middle and High School Leaders, K-12 Districts, Higher Ed, Non-Profits, State Dept. of Ed.
• So we can hear from as many as possible, we have muted everyone upon entry, please share ideas and ask questions via the chat function
  – If you are sharing a resource that can be reached via a web link, please share the link in the chat box
  – After the call, we will send out a follow-up email listing resources shared during the session
• After the presentation and discussions from the field, there will be time for Q & A
SUPPORTING STUDENTS UPON THE RETURN TO SCHOOL IN THE FALL
THREE PART PRESENTATION

✓ Impact of COVID-19 on students
✓ Role EWS, on-track, and MTSS systems can play in supporting students under COVID-19
✓ How they can be adapted to have the strongest impact possible
  o Modifying the ABC indicators and corresponding responses
  o Organizing schools to implement them
WHAT DO WE KNOW?
COVID-19 IMPACTS ON SCHOOLS WILL CONTINUE THROUGH NEXT SCHOOL YEAR AND BEYOND

• Many or even most schools will likely experience some combination of in-person, remote, and blended learning conditions, in potentially unpredictable ways

• Economic impacts will be felt by schools and families throughout the year
THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON STUDENTS WILL VARY

• For some students, it will be traumatic, as they experience one or more deaths or severe illnesses among close family and friends
• Some will suffer the pain of continued or new abuse
• Others will experience great stress driven by food insecurity, family financial struggles, or other challenging environmental conditions
• Many experience fear of the unknown and uncontrollable
• Some will be frustrated by significantly interrupted schooling, caused lack of internet access, need to watch and support younger siblings as their parents worked, or their own need to work
• Others, suddenly unattached from supportive day-to-day interactions in school, may have become entirely disconnected or disengaged from schooling
Some students may experience positive impacts

- At the same time as they live through struggles, students may have positive experiences—as they find value, feel worth, or experience agency in successfully supporting siblings and family or learning in a new way.
- Some may have experienced a greater sense of community or support at home or among peers.
- Others may have found/dedicated distant or online learning to be a better experience than their prior schooling.
- Some may have felt/feel relief from being bullied or teased at school.
- Some may have simply enjoyed the freedoms of a less regulated day.
THE LASTING IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON STUDENTS WILL DEPEND ON

• Both the nature of students’ COVID-19 circumstances, and how students experience and process them.

• Two students could face similar circumstances but experience and process them differently, resulting in different impacts.

• To learn more see Center for Developing Child: “Supportive Relationships and Active Skill-Building Strengthen the Foundations of Resilience”
THIS TELLS US

• All students will benefit from thoughtful re-start activities and experiences, rather than just starting day 1 as if it was a normal return to school after summer.

• These activities and experience should help students process and potentially re-frame the meaning of their COVID-19 experiences; connect/reconnect them to supportive adults and peers; shape schooling as a positive, moving forward experience, not recovery from loss.

• A big goal is to establish a foundation of trust, belonging, and relationships on which to build the school activities for the year, however they unfold.
BEYOND THIS, HOWEVER…

• It will be difficult to know which additional supports are needed by each student,
• Unless students’ COVID-19 circumstances and how they experienced them are well-known to adults in the school
• This will likely only be true for small to modest percent of students
• We need a means to figure out which students need what supports and when
HOW EARLY WARNING, ON-TRACK, AND MTSS SYSTEMS CAN BE USED AND ADAPTED TO SUPPORT SUCCESSFUL RETURN OF STUDENTS IN THE FALL
WHAT DO WE KNOW?
WHETHER THEY ARE CALLED EARLY WARNING, ON-TRACK, OR MTSS SYSTEMS, THEY SHARE SOME COMMON APPROACHES THAT CAN STRENGTHEN COVID-19 RESPONSES
Academic and social-emotional behaviors that are predictive of important outcomes (rather than student characteristics) are used to identify students who may be in need of additional supports.

These indicators are paired with a multi-tiered response system that combines whole school/grade preventive activities, targeted small group supports, and customized one-to-one or one-to-a-few actions.

The goal is strategic response: acting at the level where, greatest number are positively impacted.
COMBINE REAL-TIME (OR NEAR REAL-TIME) DATA WITH HUMAN INSIGHTS

• To be responsive, adults who interact with students need ready and easy access to as near real-time data on as possible
• Data, however, is only a signal
  – To know what, if anything, to do with that signal, educators need human insights, from the adults, peers, or parents who have positive relationships with the identified student(s), as well as the students themselves
HOW CAN THESE SYSTEMS BE ADAPTED TO SUPPORT STUDENTS DURING COVID-19?
LEAN IN ON PROACTIVE SCHOOL-WIDE RESPONSES THAT EVOLVE

• Develop starting strong plans that address key challenges, and modify and adapt as conditions evolve and student needs shift
• In EWS, on-track, and MTSS lingo, COVID-19 requires strong Tier 1 responses
• Progress monitor students who are not benefitting from school-wide strategies or who need more or different supports
For good and bad, COVID-19 was experienced by all students. Further, it’s not over; student needs and experiences will evolve as the year progresses.

Under these conditions, EWS, on-track, and MTSS systems cannot be operated by a lone counselor or even a small student support team.

Schools must establish ways to enable these systems to be used by significant numbers of adults in the building.

The work must be done from a mindset of proactive and responsive actions that build on strengths.

ESTABLISH DATA AND HUMAN SYSTEMS THAT ENABLE CONTINUAL PROGRESS MONITORING OF ALL STUDENTS AND ADAPTIVE ASSET-BASED RESPONSES.
ADAPTING AND EXPANDING THE ABC PREDICTIVE INDICATORS AND RESPONSES UNDER COVID-19
THE ABC INDICATORS AND THEIR RESPONSES

- Attendance (A), Behavior and Social Emotional (B), and Course Performance (C) are very effective predictors of student success.
- Nearly all early warning, on-track, or MTSS system uses some version of them.
- A number of evidence-based and practice-validated strategies have been developed to improve the ABCs.
ABC’S UNDER COVID-19

• The ABC indicators can be modified and extended to provide effective signals of which students may need what supports and when, during COVID-19—whether school is in-person, remote, or some of each.

• Effective strategies to improve them under COVID-19 can be identified.
ATTENDANCE -- FOCUS ON PARTICIPATION

• First work to establish and monitor the most basic level of school interaction – Do students have access to learning opportunities?
  – Are students coming to school, establishing online connection, and obtaining remote learning materials?
• Here the most important data is identifying those students who have minimal or no school interaction
• Leverage social networks to find missing students, use re-start to build connections, and establish means of contact for students who were not found in the spring
Because COVID-19 shifts more of the organization of the learning experience to individual/family effort, the most important metric is participation in learning activities.

This means assignment or school work completion may be the most important Attendance metric during COVID-19.
ATTENDANCE UNDER COVID-19 (CONT.)

- Key levels of participation can be established
  - **Minimal** - student missing multiple assignments from multiple teachers or subjects
  - **Moderate** - student is missing some assignments, from some teachers or subjects
  - **Full** - student is completing all or nearly all assignments

- Typically, this information is compartmentalized in teachers’ gradebooks

- Electronic gradebooks may have the potential to automate this data collection, so outcomes for students across all their classes can be readily seen

- Otherwise, online data collection tools (i.e. google docs, etc.) may have to be used, with weekly input
RESOURCES FOR ATTENDANCE UNDER COVID-19

• Attendance Works
  – Addressing Absenteeism and Learning Participation during COVID

• NYC Community Schools
  – Using Success Mentors to Support Participation in Remote Learning
BEHAVIOR/SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL 1: FOCUS ON WELL-BEING

• A key extension of typical early warning, on-track, and MTSS systems under COVID-19: a schoolwide focus on well-being

• A fundamental pre-condition for productive school behaviors: a sense of safety and an environment supportive of managing the stress brought on by COVID-19 and its economic and social impacts

• Since communities and school populations will have different COVID-19 circumstances and experience and process them differently, schoolwide survey data on well-being will be important

• Search for “Student Well-Being Surveys” to find multiple options
FOCUS ON WELL-BEING (CONT.)

- Advice from the field: Students’ sense of safety supported by communication, consistency, and control
- Advice from National Child Traumatic Stress Network on supporting students dealing with economic impacts of COVID-19
  - Coping in Hard Times (high school and college age)
  - Coping in Hard Times (faculty and staff)
In addition to addressing safety and stress, a strong sense of school connection or belonging is essential to student success under COVID-19 (and in general).

Available metrics: students have high odds of strong connection to school when:
- There are two or more adults who they believe know them and care about them as a person
- They are affiliated with a peer group supportive of their identity
- They are engaged in pro-social activities, e.g. helping others directly or indirectly
- They believe their school is a welcoming place

For more information on how to build school connection when schooling is remote.
A Gallup student poll defines hope as “The ideas and energy students have for the future. Hopeful students are positive about the future, goal-oriented and can overcome obstacles in the learning process, enabling them to navigate a pathway to achieve their goals.”

- Hopeful students are nearly 3 times as likely to succeed at school as discouraged ones.
- Schools’ early warning, on-track, and MTSS systems mindset in 2020-21 needs to be one of working positively towards a better future, building on strengths, rather than recovery from loss.
- This hope is built through trusting, supportive relationships with adults and the belief that there is a pathway to a better future and outcomes.

Gallup’s questions and national responses
COURSE PERFORMANCE: FOCUS ON BUILDING SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS (IN-PERSON, REMOTE, AND BLENDED)

From our friends at Turnaround for Children – The Importance of Relationships, Routines, and Resilience

- **Relationships**: the “active ingredient” in any situation, classrooms included; they “boost oxytocin – the love/trust hormone – and activate the learning centers of the brain... trust is the antidote to stress and relationships are the medium through which we experience trust.”

- **Routines**: “Our brains are prediction machines that like order and knowing what is coming next. When our environments are orderly the brain is calmer and able to learn”

- **Resilience**: positive adaptation during or following exposure to adversities. “Building resilience is likely the most important task we have, for ourselves and our kids” (Pam Cantor and Kate Felson)
COURSE PERFORMANCE: FOCUS ON BUILDING SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS (IN-PERSON, REMOTE, AND BLENDED) (CONT.)

• Tips on how to build **Relationships, Routines, and Resiliency** can be found at
  
  – **Helping Children Thrive During the Pandemic and Beyond**
  – **The Three R’s: Relationships, Routines, Resilience**
From our friends at the PERTS Engagement

- **Teacher Caring.** Students engage more deeply in their work when they feel like their teacher likes them and cares about them as a person.

- **Feedback for Growth.** Students learn more effectively when their teacher recognizes and encourages their progress, and offers supportive feedback to help them improve.

- **Meaningful Work.** Students are more motivated to learn when they can see how their classroom experiences relate to their lives outside of school.
SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS UNDER COVID-19 (CONT.)

- PERTS has developed evidence based guidance on these elements of engagement and a very short set of student survey questions (5 to 10 minutes), which help teacher teams establish baseline and test improvement strategies rather learning is occurring in person, remotely, or a blend
  - The Engagement Project
  - Learning Connections that Build Engagement
Since COVID-19 shifts more responsibility for learning to students, it will be important to build student school success skills and resilient outlooks. Recent research is beginning to identify a sub-set of social-emotional skills most directly tied to course performance, which include:

- Growth mindset
- Goal setting
- Self-management/regulation
- Productive persistence/resistance to stereotype threat

Depending on student age, relatively modest shifts in school experiences or instruction can make a difference.
Course grades are the strongest predictor that students are on track to both high school graduation and postsecondary success.

- Getting decent grades in challenging classes remains a critical outcome.

- We need to think how under COVID-19 we can continue to provide our high school students with access to challenging work, whether schooling is in-person, remote, or blended and a means to demonstrate their skill and knowledge.

- There are emerging examples of how this can be done under COVID-19, via portfolios, projects, presentations, and competency-based models when traditional grading practice do not make sense.
COVID-19 AND POSTSECONDARY PATHWAYS

- COVID-19 further accelerates and magnifies a twenty year shift in the function of high schools
- High schools were once the endpoint for many, but are now called to be a launching pad towards adult success for all
- Current societal function of high schools is not just to develop and signal the attainment of a core body of knowledge and academic skills (i.e. graduation requirements for a high school diploma)
They must now provide guidance, support, experiences, and connections that enable students to identify and pursue their best options for postsecondary education or training, engaging on a combination of education and work experiences that result in a family supporting wage.

Thus, a key COVID-19 response strategy is keep hope for a better tomorrow alive by tracking and responding to emerging students needs with their postsecondary and workforce preparation activities, experiences, and milestones in grades 9 to 12.

We also need to insure that the COVID-19 disruptions of 2020-21, do not leave rising seniors without a postsecondary placement or employment—thus each seniors progress towards this needs to be closely tracked, and plans made to provide supports.
PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER:

ORGANIZING ADEQUATE RESOURCES TO PROVIDE SCHOOL-WIDE SUPPORTS, PROGRESS-MONITOR ALL STUDENTS ON ADAPTED ABC INDICATORS, AND BE RESPONSIVE AND ADAPTIVE AS NEEDS EVOLVE
ORGANIZE TEAMS OF ADULTS WITH SUB-SETS OF STUDENTS THEY KNOW

• Since COVID-19 impacts all students in one way or another, the response cannot be the responsibility of only a few people

• Organize groups of adults who know sets of students in common into COVID-19 response teams (most likely by grade level, but other organizations are possible)

• Draw on all staff/adults who interact with these students -- teachers, coaches, counselors, non-profit partners -- as the extended support team

• Provide time in the schedule for them to meet regularly to discuss their students
ESTABLISH MEANS TO ANALYZE IMPACT OF SUPPORTS PROVIDED AND MAKE ADJUSTMENTS AS NEEDED

- No playbook exists on how to meet the diverse set of ever-evolving student needs that each school will face as the result of COVID-19
- Thus one step often overlooked in traditional uses of EWS, on-track, and MTSS systems is more crucial than ever
- Recording responses/interventions used to support students, checking in on their efficacy, and making adjustments as needed is crucial
- This enables schools to build their local knowledge base of what works, for which students, under which conditions
STUDENTS AS CO-DESIGNERS

• One of the best guides to students’ experiences of COVID-19 and how they process them is students themselves
• Student voice must be at the center of COVID-19 response efforts
• First, build trust through supportive relationships focused on student and family well-being
• Then, build engagement by establishing participatory structures; at high school level, students should be included in COVID-19 response teams
• Regularly survey students both on the evolving impacts of COVID-19 on their lives, and the helpfulness of the school’s responses
UPDATE AND ADAPT RESOURCE MAPS

• EWS, on-track, and MTSS systems typically develop resource maps, which show available whole-school, targeted group, and one-on-one or one-on-few responses; these are available at the school and sometimes district level.

• They need to be update and adapted for COVID-19 response, based on evidence-based ideas shared here and in other venues as well as student, teacher, and community input.

• They should show, for each indicator and area of focus, what is available for each tier of COVID-19 response; and then made available to the COVID-19 response teams.
STRATEGIC USE OF COMMUNITY PARTNERS

• Effective COVID-19 response is a tall order; it will be hard, especially in the most impacted communities, for schools alone to drive and implement responses
• Work with existing community partners to leverage assets to support the school COVID-19 response plan
• Integrate their resources and connections to students into the multi-tiered response system
• Proactively ask partners how their supports can continue if schooling becomes remote again
• If needed, increase community partners who can
  1. provide, physical and mental health supports, and/or
  2. form supportive relationships with students
CULTURALLY AND SITUATIONALLY RESPONSIVE

• Students’ and their families’ experiences of COVID-19 may differ from those of some or most school staff.

• Structural inequities in access to healthcare, wi-fi, food and medicine, comfortable shelter, or even just a quiet place to work, and the ability to shelter vs. the need to keep working, will impact many students and families.

• Prior work on responding to students’ and families’ needs shows the importance of responder mindsets, including empathy, absence of blame, seeking to listen and understand, a sense of shared humanity, and practical support without pity.

• NYC Community Schools resource on Talking with Students about COVID-19.
### WORKING DRAFT OF MODIFIED ABC INDICATORS FOR RESPONDING TO COVID-19

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<tr>
<th>ABC Indicators Adapted for Responding to COVID-19: Working Draft</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
<th>Behavior/Social-Emotional</th>
<th>Course Performance</th>
<th>Postsecondary Pathways (High Schools)</th>
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<td><strong>Whole School Tier 1</strong></td>
<td>Student Presence in Formal Schooling Whether In-Person, Remote or Combo</td>
<td>Well-Being: Survey - Safety, Stress, Hope, and Heath</td>
<td>Classroom environments whether in person, remote, or combo, build relationships, routines, and resilience (Turnaround for Children 3R’s)</td>
<td>Student’s Perceive High School Actions are Linked to Building their Future</td>
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<td><strong>Progress Monitor and Respond with Targeted Group and Individual Supports Tiers 2 and 3</strong></td>
<td>Completion of Assignments - Minimal, Moderate and Full</td>
<td>Four Components of School Connectedness</td>
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INSIGHTS FROM THE FIELD
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New Mexico ECHO EWS project
Amy Szymanski
Ohio Department of Education
Q & A AND BROADER INSIGHTS FROM THE FIELD
IN CONCLUSION

• Send your follow-up ideas and thoughts to rbalfanz@jhu.edu

• We will send out:
  — a recording of the session
  — a copy of the slides
  — a list of references and materials shared today

• If you would like an attendee list, please email info@pathwaystoadultsuccess.org

• Be well, thank you, and onwards