



2020 MD Family Engagement Summit – Session 5 Transcript

Cindy Lessner:

Good afternoon and thank you for joining us. I'm going to give everybody just a couple of minutes to hop on and get comfortable before we get started. While we're waiting if you want to put in the chat box where you're from, who you are, where you're from, what program you're with, where we all get to see who's joining us today. Thank you. See lots of people from Howard County. I miss my peeps at Howard County. Hello. Seeing people join us from other states today. That is great. Welcome and thank you for joining us. All right, I'm going to go ahead and get started. I want to welcome everybody to Maryland's 2020 Family Engagement Summit webinars series. This is our fifth and final session. We welcome everybody here. My name is Cindy Lessner. I'm the collaboration and program improvement branch chief with the Division of Early Childhood at the Maryland State Department of Education. So thank you all for joining us.

Cindy Lessner:

Like I said, this is our fifth and final session. This session I'm very excited about. This is taking everything we've learned over the past several months. We started in August. This is taking everything we've learned and taking that information, those lessons, and showing us how to move equity forward. What are all of our roles? What are our responsibilities and how do we move this work forward? So before we get started, I want to make sure that I thank, the Maryland Family Engagement Coalition for their work with this, this was a collaborative effort between MSDE, the Family Engagement Coalition and the collaborative action for family engagement with MAEC, the Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium. So I want to make sure I thank everybody for their work with his and their partnership to make this happen.

Cindy Lessner:

And just a couple of logistics before we get started. If you have any comments, please use the chat box. If you want to make any comments during the presentation and if you have any specific questions for any of our presenters at any time, please use the Q and A box. We will make sure to answer those questions or answer them live as possible. And finally, I just want to also thank our deputy state superintendent, Dr. Carol Williamson. She has been a huge supporter of our family engagement work and our equity work and all of our initiatives at the division of early childhood. And I wanted to make sure to thank her for being a part of all of this work in each and every one of our sessions during this time. So with that, I'm going to turn it over to Dr. Carol Williamson the deputy state superintendent, the office of teaching and learning. Thank you.

Dr. Carol Williamson:

Thank you, Cindy. I appreciate that very much. Good afternoon and thank you all so much for being here today. First, I want to thank Carrie Hyde and Dorothy Stoltz the Family Engagement Coalition co-chairs as Cindy did, and the entire Family Engagement Coalition. All of you have worked so hard over the past few months, putting together a very informative and thoughtful summit series. Each of them has been exemplary. And please know that we appreciate all that you do. As Cindy stated, this is the last of our Family Engagement summit series, whether you attended every session or just a couple of them, we hope that this series has been very informative for you and that all of you are able to take away new information or new skills and apply it to your work. Today's session, equity on the ground is so important. Not only will we be provided with invaluable information, but we will be given strategies to move our equity work forward.

Dr. Carol Williamson:

As educators, we all have a responsibility to have a comprehensive understanding of equity and how it affects the way in which we engage with our children and families, regardless of our positions in education, we all play a role in moving equity forward. Some of us may be in leadership position and are looking for professional development in this area. Others of us, maybe teachers or providers, and are sharing information with colleagues or families, whatever your role, we're all learning more and changing how we engage with our children and families. Always remember the smallest change can have the biggest impact. Just like we are asking all of you to commit to moving equitable solutions forward, the state is committed to this as well. Later in the session, you'll hear about some of our initiatives around this important work that will improve how we engage with our children and our families.

Dr. Carol Williamson:

So let's get started with today's keynote, Dr. Aaliyah Samuel. Dr. Samuel is a senior fellow at the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University and the executive vice president of Government Affairs and Partnerships at NWEA. Dr. Samuel is a bilingual executive leader with expertise from early childhood through higher education. Her experience includes program evaluation and evidence-based programs, data collection, and dis-aggregation, family and community engagement support strategies, and policy development and implementation at the local, state and national level. Dr. Samuel has informed state policy agendas assisted with developing cross systems approaches to develop policy solutions, to support children and families and leading systems level change. And in her current role at NWEA, she leads a team working on driving a state and federal education agenda.

Dr. Carol Williamson:

Prior to NWEA, Dr. Samuel was the director of education at the National Governor's Association. While at NGA, her work included business development, strategic planning, and supporting high ranking state officials on the development of policies that impacted health, education and workforce. Dr. Samuel has worked with diverse constituents, philanthropic and national partners. She holds an undergraduate degree from Tuskegee University, a master's from University of South Florida and a specialist and

doctorate degree from Nova Southeastern. We are delighted that she could be here with us today. Dr. Samuel, I'm turning the meeting over to you. Thank you.

Dr. Samuel:

Good afternoon, everyone. And thank you so much for that introduction. I am going to hopefully, successfully share my screen the first time here. So, let me know if you can see my presentation here. For some reason, everyone disappeared. So I can't get a thumbs up to see if I am in fact sharing. All right. We're going to play from the start. All right. I'm getting messages in the chat box that you can see it so perfect. That's success. So I really am honored to be the one closing out this series with all of you. And I really appreciate the bio. I'm going to level set and say with all of the things I've done, most important I'm a mom. I have a six year old and a 10 year old, who I have asked to please be quiet while I'm doing this presentation. But if you hear interruption of noise, it's kind of the life we're living right now.

Dr. Samuel:

I am also fundamentally at my core and educator. I was a former elementary teacher, special education teacher, assistant principal, and principal. And I really try to lead through the lens of being a mom, being an educator, being a woman of color and a leader in this space. And with that, I want to just frame that my hope in this conversation this afternoon is that, and not just this afternoon, but the culmination of all of the conversations that you all have had since August, that it really serves as a key to unlock conversations, to unlock a new way of thinking, to really begin to help us challenge the status quo and start to dig a little deeper. With these conversations around equity and race and racism, in some cases it really closes people off to conversations. And my hope is that the conversation that we will have today continues to broaden and open up the perspectives and some of the data that I'll be sharing is true national data. And then I'll also be sharing my own experiences, but really my hope is that we can broaden the conversation and really start to think differently about some really challenging issues.

Dr. Samuel:

And so I want to start with really, since COVID hit, we continue to hear we're all in this together. We're all in this together. We're all experiencing COVID together. When really the reality of it is our experiences are very different. And we have to get clear on, as we talk about equity, are we really talking about equality or are we really digging into equity? And the next slide, I'll unpack a little bit what I mean by both of those, but I want to just stop for a minute and ask you to look at this picture of these boats. And I'd like you to just in the chat box drop in what boat you think you might be in, or what boat the families that you serve and interact with might be in. And I'm just going to take a moment and read some of the comments out. Kayak, the little boat, some of the fat families are in a leaky kayak for sure, I agree. The sailboat families are in the lifeboat, rough territory, yes. The Brown boat, the smallest boat.

Dr. Samuel:

What I appreciate about some of these comments is that the recognition that depending on the resources that you have, depending on your level of education, your access to wealth, money,

resources, your experiences with COVID could be very different. I see pretty much everyone's emphasizing on the boats, but if you can see it, there is an image of a plane right at the top. And there's some people who aren't even experiencing the waves of COVID, they're just flying right above it because they have all of those resources. And so all the while as we think about the experiences that our families are having with COVID, we have to understand that this also applies to experiences when it comes to race and racism. It is really a very different experience depending on what boat or what purview you have. And so with that, as we navigate this conversation, I just like to ask that you really think about not only what boat you might be in, but what boat or experiences that those who you interact and engage with might have as well.

Dr. Samuel:

So I mentioned equality versus equity, and there's been a lot of conversations, the terminology around equity race... Oh, went to far. Race, racism continue to change. And sometimes I find myself struggling to keep up with the terminology and really one of the things I want to do and focus on for this particular conversation is really unpacking equity. So equality is really just thinking holistically to make sure that everyone has the same access to the same opportunities. But if we focus on equality, we really don't pay attention to the historical and structural factors that have created some of the inequities that we're dealing with, which then puts certain groups at a disadvantage from the starting point, which is why it's really important that as we talk about equity, we understand that this really means providing very specific support based off of different levels of an individual or group's needs in order to achieve that equality that we hope to have.

Dr. Samuel:

And we have to understand that in order to achieve equity, we have to talk about and understand some of the systems and barriers that have created these unequal start points, and how to really correct the imbalances. And I do think one of the opportunities we have now with COVID more than ever is to really address some of the challenges and the structural pieces that have been in place, whether it's been through policy, the way systems have been designed to really start to correct those imbalances. And as we talk about unpacking the historical nature of some of these imbalances and what really creates the different start points for so many individuals is a really complicated and difficult, ball. And essentially what we're trying to do is piece by piece unravel some of the historical pieces that are in place to really get to a place of understanding and creating that balance.

Dr. Samuel:

So I do want to acknowledge just how difficult and how complicated this is particularly, also as leaders who were trying, as you try to leave for change, recognizing that there are so many different perspectives and there's policies and there's funding, and it creates this really complicated web of inequity. And we have to now try to figure out how to disentangle those pieces and really start moving towards more equitable outcomes for our kids and our families. One of the things that COVID has really done is illuminated or crystallize the disparities across systems. Oftentimes when I have these types of conversations, I really want to be intentional with the data because for some people, there is not an

acknowledgement that race, racism bias exists because it is not their life experiences because they have not had those interactions or exposures, there's almost a denial that this is happening.

Dr. Samuel:

And one of the things that we have seen really since COVID began in March, is that across systems, whether it is healthcare, transportation, housing, education, criminal justice, the inequities are the same. People of color are more likely to not only contract COVID, but die from COVID. People of color are suffering the most from evictions. As we see, families still accessing particularly public transportation right now, it's primarily people of color. As we look at the students who are being impacted by school closures, it is predominantly children of color and are low income children. And so the inequities that we once could turn a blind eye to, we can no longer as a nation continue to take the perspective that these inequities are not as deep, as rampant and as critical to the outcomes of the next generation.

Dr. Samuel:

I want to start with just maternal mortality. We know, as we work with the young children, that their relationship with their family, with their parents is critical to their educational success, their health success. But one of the things we're finding is that women of color are most likely to die within that first year of childbirth. And so if you lose your mother, think about the long-term impacts that that has. I just want to give an example, in Chicago, Hispanic women and women living in communities with high, low social economic are more likely to not only have maternal health challenges, but also more likely to die, want to give another well a set of data facts. One, we know that there are 2.7 million Black children, and this is as of 2018, but 11.4 of Black infants die out of 1000 births compared to 5% for White infants.

Dr. Samuel:

When we look at infants who were born prematurely, 16.3% of Black infants are born preterm versus 10% of White infants, 13% of Black infants are born at a low birth weight compared to 7% of White infants. 66% of Black children are living in low income households. And that average is, and this is pre COVID. Over 25% of Black children are living in high poverty neighborhoods, which is over half a million kids. We then have 75% of Black children experiencing low to medium childcare, which means they're not accessing the high quality early learning environments that we know are so critical to success. 50% of preschool suspensions beginning at 18 months are children of color. 62% of three to six year old Black children are not able to recognize all their letters and alphabets, and that can be correlated with their early learning environments. There's an over 20 point gap in fourth grade children reading compared to their Black and White children.

Dr. Samuel:

So when we start to really look at what the data is telling us from health outcomes, from opportunity and access to high quality early learning environments to even how they're performing in elementary school, and we can go beyond the disparities are there. So I've talked about health. I have a combination of early learning and education. I want to go to the criminal justice system. And one of the things that have also happened as we've experienced this pandemic of COVID is we really have experienced the

pandemic of racism as well. The murder of George Floyd and the murder of Brianna Taylor really erupted our country and really the world, these race conversations, because we could no longer say that these instances of police brutality were not happening because we had video to look at it.

Dr. Samuel:

The reason why I have Michael Brown's death here is because when we talk about community context and understanding the impact to communities of color, when Michael Brown was shot by the police, his body laid in the street, uncovered and unattended to for four hours. And when you talk to community members and you hear their stories, they said that they felt like it was a signal from the police of not only can we do this to him, but we can do this to you. And so we have to really grapple with as a nation, yes, the challenges with criminal justice, but really the challenges with race and racism. Oops, sorry. And for those who think, well, those were just isolated incidents. Those don't really occur that frequently. These are the names of individuals, Black individuals that since Eric Garner's death in 2014 have died at either hands of police or while in police custody. So these are not just isolated incidences, there's enough consistency and patterns and trends that we have to just pop that hood up and really take a deep look as to what is going on across our systems.

Dr. Samuel:

So now to just level set, what can we do as educators? And as I mentioned, I come to you as a former K-12 educator. And really I made the transition into early childhood after I left my principalship and had my own son. And it was during that time period, I had to really think about, what do I want to do next? What am I being called to do? And early childhood is really my home where my heart and my passion is. And as I've had an opportunity to engage nationally and even internationally, I did a keynote on Wednesday yesterday, with the Bright Start Conference and we had 43 countries represented. And whether you were international or here in the U.S., the top five concerns that we're hearing around particularly education childcare right now is overall lack of information as to where kids are, where are they academically? Where are they physically? What is going on? We have a large group of students who we are calling missing.

Dr. Samuel:

The other is thinking about opportunity and access and making sure that kids are getting that opportunity and access that they need now more than ever. The third is recognizing that with COVID so much has changed and really trying to understand what are the right training and resources for staff, whether it's the changing CDC guidelines, thinking about these hybrid learning models and just the real reality that our world has changed so dramatically. Then also thinking about the social emotional supports, not only for kids, but families and educators, practitioners, childhood care providers, just holistically, how are we taking care of our people? And then of course, the health and safety concerns, not just in the short run, as in meaning between now and when a vaccine happens, which is happening, but also post pandemic, recognizing that we will still have educators who don't want to be vaccinated. We will still have children whose parents don't want them to be vaccinated.

Dr. Samuel:

And also the reality is that there's not even a vaccine right now for kids under the age of 12. So what does that mean for the long run as we try to reopen our society and our world? So as we talk about race racism, and then the realities of what is happening right now with COVID, one of the things we know is that there are physiological impacts that are detrimental when we talk about racism. This slide, I have to credit a dear friend and colleague of mine, Dr. Ioma Aruga who is at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, we recently had a meeting with the folks at Harvard and she presented this. And I asked her if I could use this slide, because I think it really illuminates just some of the key pieces that we know. Number one, we know that just basic resources prenatally, whether we talk about nutrition, the psychosocial, just the overall healthcare components, how women are treated when they are expecting, has powerful and long-term outcomes.

Dr. Samuel:

And we really need to think about what are those resources that can limit the stress that families, while women were either expecting or shortly thereafter are experiencing to help reduce some of those challenges, because if you're born preterm, and if you're born at a low birth rate, we know that that puts you at a greater risk of having academic challenges or cognitive challenges down the line and other health issues. What we also know is that racism, whether it institutional or interpersonal, meaning it's something that an individual feels that they have experienced absolutely influences both the wellbeing of the adult who's experiencing that and processing it, but also to that child. And if we have time, I'll share a story a little later of a situation that I encountered with my oldest son, who is 10, but I want to make sure we get through the content first.

Dr. Samuel:

So as a reformed K-12 educator, one of the fundamental mistakes I believe I made as an elementary assistant principal and principal was not looking holistically across the education continuum, really thinking about those young children that were in family friend and neighbor care, early learning environments that were feeding into my school. And so I like to challenge our K-12 folks to really think about the experiences and supports that the children who are young and coming to you need, because it will really make your life easier, but actions that you can take as we talk about really supporting learning and really improving equitable outcomes is just get involved with your school board. Local politics and advocacy at the local level is where you are more likely to see changes than at the state and even federal level.

Dr. Samuel:

Talk to your neighbors, develop a coalition. So many communities now have neighborhood Facebook groups or Facebook groups by zip code that are talking about the challenges in their community, and really trying to create that pipeline into their local city, council men and women, to their school board to advocate for change also to think about what are those additional resources that can really help cement and solidify that relationship for prenatal to grade three and really beyond. I released a podcast about a month and a half ago called Testing America's Freedom that really unpacks some of these longer term

systemic barriers, and that also provide solutions and ideas as we go through this period of time. And even though our presidential election is over, there will still be opportunities in the next year or two for those local elections. So just encourage you to vote, I believe in everyone exercising their own individual right. So I would never tell you who to vote for, but just make sure that you do it.

Dr. Samuel:

Also as a parent educator or a community member, we are all leaders in our own way. Whether it is as a mom, I am very much the leader at my home, but I can also take the lead in community conversations. Really small changes can lead to big results, right after the murder of George Floyd there were just a lot of questions about how do you talk to kids about race? How do you talk to peers about race? How do you start race conversations? And I decided to start doing just informal conversations in my community, and we called it parenting through a pandemic. And it was an opportunity for those of us to just have the conversation or create a space to have those conversation. The other thing is really starting early. We know, and as many of you know, children and families need that support early. And I would even challenge us to start talking about race and racism at an early age. All of the research is showing us that by the age of three, kids can start to see differences based off race.

Dr. Samuel:

So it is up to us to really start teaching children and having those conversations rather than waiting for these experiences to happen because experiences around race will happen. And having that be their first introduction to the conversation around race. As leaders, whether you are a community leader, whether you are a site-based leader, whether you're a leader in your home, I want you to really think about what this storm of COVID, of racism means to the children and families that you engage with. For those of you who are leading organizations to really think about what were the types of strategic plans that you had prior to, how it can impact your community and what the data is saying, and try to maintain integrity to those components of your plan that you can. And then also, as we think about for the policy makers in those state leaders on this call, what are the policies that will provide the health care support that the overall welfare, I'm not talking about child welfare, but the welfare overall and developmental supports that we know our youngest learners need. And also recognizing that they need those supports now more than ever, particularly our more fragile families.

Dr. Samuel:

Also, we get need to get really clear on what does the data mean. We can't just throw out data points and expect them to stick, but really connecting that data point to ongoing problems or really connecting it to the bigger picture. Then we need to really explain what that problem is, and even better how a potential solution can alleviate that problem. I think we're all just looking for avenues to make things better. Also, as you're having conversations around some of the systemic challenges and barriers that are really impacting the outcomes to our students, our kiddos, to use real examples, so that as we're engaging with people who might not have taken this journey towards having conversations around equity or race, it will help give them a different perspective and hopefully something that will stick.

Dr. Samuel:

Also, I think it's important to make racism really the factor more than just race and in what I mean by that is that we really need to look at the systemic outcomes across systems to then look at the data, to be able to say, this is the picture. And these are the pieces of the puzzle that are creating some of the outcomes that we're trying to mitigate. Also, we really have to understand and I do believe that the silver lining of COVID is that we're seeing now how much we crave human interaction and that interconnection. And it really is a strength. It is not a liability now more than ever, not only do we need whole children, we need whole families and we need whole communities. And the way we get to whole communities is by having that interconnection and really being willing to be a bridge.

Dr. Samuel:

Also, we have to understand that the responsibility is really on all of us. It is not for certain groups, and it's not at the sacrifice of certain groups, but it's fundamentally going to take all of us working together to ensure that we're able to get to the point where we have whole communities, whole states, and I'd even say a whole nation. And also to really try to connect with a common experiences. It is not an us versus them. It is not their, this, but really we all share common experiences or at least common desires. So my take home points would be to don't look away and don't walk away. These conversations I recognized a really, really difficult, but as educators and as leaders, we can make sure that we are having those responsive and enriching interactions, conversations, and even developing those environments that matter for all children. We need to understand and really understand the impacts of the legacy of racism and the systemic inequities and what that does to children's development.

Dr. Samuel:

The fact that when you start to remove the income piece, even middle-class and upper middle class children of color are still more likely to perform lower on standardized assessments, still more likely to have less income and wealth at a certain age. So there are really some institutional pieces that we have to talk about. I want to make sure I stay on time. Also understand, I mean that there is bias there. So we're not talking about just the structural racism, but bias is there. And that's one of the things that we're doing at the center, is really starting to understand what are the gaps in research and science and how do we start to address and really understand what the impacts of racism is on health and particularly young children. We also need to start talking about our children and families of all races and cultures from an asset based perspective and making sure that we are paying attention to anti-racism the same way that we do and have to antipoverty.

Dr. Samuel:

With all of this I will say I myself as an individual, but I think, we are at a crossroads as a nation. We are seeing families struggling with COVID and the impacts, we are seeing families struggle with conversations around race and racism. We're seeing it at this school and community level as schools and communities try to determine what is their role around addressing systemic racism around addressing the inequities that are happening within their communities. I think as a nation, we're trying to also heal from so much of what we are experiencing again with COVID, but also the realities of the murder of

George Floyd and Brianna Taylor, and what that has done to us as a nation. But then also as the world, we are just at this inflection point where we know we can't go back but we're not sure what the future holds.

Dr. Samuel:

And with that, I will say, I myself with trying to grapple and really lead through some of these very difficult conversations around an equity, there's often a sense of fear, also confusion, doubt, like, what is my role? How much do I say, how much should I not say? But I have to believe that we can build back better. It's such a cliché term, and I'm hearing it all the time and I'm finding myself saying it, but at the end of the day, COVID has disrupted the way we have operated. And it is up to us to be able to really determine what that pathway is.

Dr. Samuel:

And so I do, I stay hopeful that we can build a better education system, health system, all the systems, not only for my children, but also the other kids who are growing up with them. And with that, I want to just say, I hope that as you leave this conversation, you not only leave with a sense of wonder of these conversations, rather all the webinars that you leave with a sense of wonder of what you can do and what the world could be, but also leave hopeful and feeling like there is a small part that you can play and changing the outcomes for so many.

Dr. Samuel:

So with that, I hope that, as you conclude this webinars series, as you conclude this journey and even this year, and think about the year to come, that you are able to unlock conversations within your homes, within your communities, within your childcare sites or your office buildings, whether it's virtual or not, to be able to have conversations about not just race and racism, but really improving outcomes for those who really need it the most. So I have shared with our webinar coordinators, a couple of links, one is to my podcast and then two other really great videos that I think do a good job of kind of highlighting what institutional and structural racism is and means and ways that you can challenge your thinking and the thinking of others as we continue on this journey. I am on LinkedIn and Twitter, Twitter, not so much, I'm trying to get better. If you would like to connect with me, please feel free. And with that I'm going to stop sharing so that we can have questions and answers. My screen is Black. All right. So there it is. I try to stay on time

Marielle:

You were great. That was such a wonderful presentation. And I think one thing that I really took away is that there is so many entry points into this work. And you did just such a phenomenal job of providing all of those ideas, suggestions for how to get started, depending on what sort of perspective, what experiences you might have. So thank you so much for that. If you have any questions for Dr. Samuel, please go ahead and put them in the chat box. We're going to get started with the question and answer section of this webinar.

Marielle:

So the first question we have in the chat box, someone's asking, they say as a Caucasian educator, often conversations about racism for me, fall on deaf ears. As many people still don't believe racism is prominent as it is today, you get some wonderful ideas to start the conversation, but can you share what the correct term we should use in terms of referring to a person of color? Do we say African-American, Brown-Black, Black-Brown, many people of color do not support all these terms. So I know many of us get anxious about using the appropriate terminology when we have conversations about racism. Do you have any thoughts on this?

Dr. Samuel:

So I'm going to be 100% transparent. I'm struggling with this because the most recent is I'm hearing BIPOC. And I was like, what is that and that's Black Indigenous People Of Color. And I was like, who made up that term? And then it was Latinx next. And I was like, who uses that? And so the terms are changing. And I will say how I have been approaching it as a woman of color who is also a Latina. My family is from Panama, I'm first-generation American and also bilingual. People make a lot of assumptions about who I am and what I am, because I speak English without an accent. I very much present myself as a Black woman but I think it's important to just ask the question.

Dr. Samuel:

I still use Black, Brown, if I'm speaking about native American, I say native American. And so I really do think this is one of those opportunities to really just ask the question of preference, because like, as a Latino woman, I don't like to be called Latinx. I don't even know, that just started a year ago. I've been a Latino my whole life, 40 plus years, what did this happen. And so I think ultimately with these conversations really, presenting it in a way where it is out of curiosity, not curiosity, but out of respect that people are really very open to say, well, this is my preference.

Marielle:

Yes. And I don't know if you'd heard of the most recent version of the Latinx term, [Latiness 00:43:00].

Dr. Samuel:

Oh my gosh.

Marielle:

There's just so many different terms to keep up with. I think your point is a good one.

Dr. Samuel:

Yeah. Well, and you know, I would love to get to the point, and this is where my husband is like, you're so Pollyanna, Shelia is that when we see each other, yes, we acknowledge that there are differences in

race, but that we are human, at the end of the day, we're human. And so let's stop making up more names and ways to categorize people and really start just addressing people as humans.

Marielle:

So the next question we have here in the chat box is how do you respond when someone asks, why do we need to keep talking about race?

Dr. Samuel:

That is where I lead to with the outcomes and the data, the reason why we need to continue these conversations about race is because things are not changing. We have done a better job masking things, but outcomes are not changing. And how is it possible that you could travel state to state, country to country? And the darkest color hue of individuals are the ones that are more likely to live in poverty, more likely to be less educated. There are fundamentally some problems with the system and this mentality. And so we have to address race because it's that unspoken thing that is changing life outcomes. And so once the data starts to change and we start to see more equitable outcomes, then we don't need to talk about race, but it's so upfront and in your face, especially now, because of COVID that we can't not talk about it.

Marielle:

Thank you. And then someone in the chat box is saying, please share what you were going to say about an experience you had with your older son. So you left them on a cliffhanger moment, sort of.

Dr. Samuel:

So my son was eight at the time and working at the National Governor's Association, we always had to travel. I always had to travel to different states. So during the summertime, I would travel with my boys. Usually my aunt who would come from Panama, stay with us for the summer, and we would just travel road trip, whatever, so that they could be with me. This particular summer I was taking them to Portland, Oregon, because I had changed jobs. It was my first time in Portland. I had childhood friends in Oregon. And so we were flying and because I am a frequent flyer, I have access to the admirals club, which is the little elite bougie club, which I just was taking the kids in there to eat. Needless to say, my oldest son and I were walking in because my youngest son and my aunt were going to the bathroom and the woman stopped us at the door.

Dr. Samuel:

And she said, you can't come in here. And I was like, yes, I am admirals club member, here's my card. And she was like, well, I'm going to have to double-check this. And so she took the card, she scanned it. Of course it came up and she was like, well, I need your plane ticket to verify this is you. I'm like, what in the world is going on. And so I could feel the blood starting to just come up from my feet, all the while other people were just walking in, walking in one after another one after another. And I'm the only person of color being stopped and harassed to get into admirals club.

Dr. Samuel:

And so finally I told my son, buddy, you need to step back for a minute because mommy needs to have a conversation. And I told the woman, I said, I feel like you're racially profiling me. I've seen at least half a dozen people walk by who didn't show, not only their cards, but they didn't have to show their plane ticket. They didn't have to show their driver's license for access. And I told her, I'm calling this for what it is. And my son walked up and said to me, mommy, why is she treating us differently because of our skin color? He felt it, he knew what was going on, his way of processing it of course was fascinating, but that was his first real experience of seeing his mom so upset and what triggered a physiological response for him, because he was like, he could just observe enough to see what was going on.

Dr. Samuel:

And that was really the beginning of us having to have some really intentional conversations about race and racism and how to make sure that he is able to advocate for himself when he is in those situations where he feels or senses, or can see very blatantly in that case, that we were being treated differently. And this was at the Phoenix Airport. So I mean, Arizona is not necessarily very diverse anyway with African-American or Black folks. So it was just an interesting dynamic and there was not one person of color inside the admiral's club, other than us, once we got it.

Marielle:

Thank you for sharing that story. There's someone in the chat box and says, how did that story end?

Dr. Samuel:

So I wrote a scathing email to the corporate office and as a result, they gave me a half a dozen free passes to go, and I was able to distribute it to my other family members because I'm like as many people of color let's infiltrate this thing. So that's how it ended.

Marielle:

Thank you for sharing that. So somebody in the Q and A section says, and your experience as a teacher in school administrator, where did you, or where do you think the most vicious aspects of racism existed or still exist?

Dr. Samuel:

In the curriculum, great question. It's really in the curriculum and how we present stories. I think it perpetuates the... I'm trying to think of the right word. It perpetuates the perception of White superiority versus a true acknowledgement of what happened then. I have issues with even Columbus Day and not really recognizing that the United States wasn't just discovered, there were people living here, this land really belonged to somebody else. And the way that the stories are told even to this day is troublesome to me. I find it problematic that my now 10 year old and six year old are learning the same stories about Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, all they learn about primarily all they have in elementary school so far is how Blacks in America were slaves. And I am like, no guys, there is a whole

nother history that you're not learning about. So we are making it a point for them to understand Native Americans, they had tribal leaders, they had a system, they had colony.

Dr. Samuel:

Africans that came from the continent of Africa they were Kings, they were Queens. It is not just what is packaged in our curriculum. And so I think until we start to get diversity of curriculum developers, then we're going to continue to have some of the same challenges and thinking, because it's being taught. And as a public school educator, I fundamentally believe there is a role of educators to talk about race and racism. In my podcast series, it came up in two different episodes. One, we had a group of educational leaders talking about what is the role of race in public school. And we really unpack some of these conversations, but then also I talked to a group of high school leaders and activists, and I asked them, what do you think educators should be doing around race and racism? And these young men and women we're talking 16, 17, 18, the one consistent thing that they said is create the place and space for us to have the conversations.

Dr. Samuel:

We don't expect our teachers to know everything. We get the curriculum and the standards can't change, but just create the space for us to talk about it. And I thought these kids should be running the world. They can be running the world. And so, I do, I think it's time that we take a really hard look at the curriculum and how we're teaching and we can't throw the baby out with the bath water. So we can't just scrap all curriculum and start over. But what are the supplemental pieces that we can add on to be able to create diverse dialogue and to be able to share diverse perspectives of what was happening in a particular snapshot of time in our nation's history.

Marielle:

Thank you so much for that. Someone's wondering if you have any thoughts on the special conversation African-American parents have to have with their children about surviving in a world where racism is the norm.

Dr. Samuel:

Oh yeah. As my husband's from rural Alabama, I'm talking about one exit off the freeway rule, Alabama and his experiences with race as a Black American male versus mine as a Black Latina immigrant, it has been very different. And now we're raising two boys of color in a society where they aren't necessarily valued. And the real aha to me was, welcome to my home and my life. I'm just going to be very transparent, shortly after the murder of George Floyd my husband and I hadn't talked about it and my husband is a big Black man. He's 6'3, 50 shoulder width, 230 pounds. He's not a petite dude. And he was sitting on the sofa when evening, and I finally asked him, I said, are you okay? And he was watching some of the news and the footage. And he said, as a Black man, I'm angry, but as a father, I'm terrified. And he said, we have to start talking to the boys about race and racism in a way that we have not.

Dr. Samuel:

And I said to him, but we have to be careful because Chaz, my oldest, I was like, he's only nine years old. He said, yeah, but he's nine years old and 100 pounds and 5'11 the world is not going to see him as an innocent nine year old boy, they're going to look at him as a Black boy. And we very much so amongst each other, as parents have had that conversation, we live in a predominantly White neighborhood. I worry about my husband when he leaves at nighttime. Even if it's just to go to the gym, which is five minutes up the road, there is a fear that I have. And the reason is that at the end of the day, no matter my level of education, no matter my level of income, no matter what, it doesn't matter if I live in a White neighborhood, I am a Black female. He is a Black man. And there are some that will judge us immediately just based off that. And it goes into, this is why we have to continue to have a conversations about race, because the experiences that people of color are having, they may have gotten better to a degree, but it's still not equitable. We still aren't sharing the same life experiences.

Marielle:

There's a question in the chat box that wants you to go a little bit back to the curriculum question. They ask, so who is it incumbent upon to change the narrative? Book publishers? School boards? Teachers cannot do it alone.

Dr. Samuel:

Amen. So I think fundamentally we have to, there's so many layers of it. So I'll outline some of the layers and then I don't want to just leave it there. I think there are some actionable things that we can do, but I think it starts with diversifying those who are studying curriculum. I mean, what's the student makeup and these degree programs around curriculum development, do we have that level of diversity then thinking about these curriculum providers, publishers, what is the diversity amongst their teams, the writers? Do they have a way to check for bias in their texts? Do they have a committee? Do they have a review board? And if so, who does that review board committee consist of? I also think fundamentally incumbent on the state board leaders, I think it's important on our local school board leaders to be able to demand and create the space for these supplemental texts and differences and conversations.

Dr. Samuel:

And that's where I drive it back down to, you're right, teachers should not have to carry this burden. This is where we as parents and individuals during these school board elections start asking the questions, how are you going to make sure that what's being taught, reflects the entire student body. As of the 2016, 17 school year, the majority of kids in public education are children of color. Yet we haven't really diversified the workforce. We need to address that. We haven't diversified the curriculum. We need to start thinking holistically how what we're doing is matching the student population. And also I want to underscore this is not just a benefit to children of color. What we know is, and what the research is telling us that both children of color and White children benefit from having a teacher who is of a different nationality or race. So holistically, it will create a better environment for all kids and not just children of color.

Marielle:

Thank you. And then as a followup, one person is saying that additive approach to curriculum hasn't worked, don't you believe it must be restructured and not simply reformed.

Dr. Samuel:

I'm sorry. Can you say that again?

Marielle:

Yes. They're saying the additive approach to curriculum hasn't worked, don't you believe it must be restructured and not simply reformed?

Dr. Samuel:

Yes, I do. I actually use an analogy when I think about so many components of education. And when we talk about reform that it's like playing that game of Jenga, where we have built the structure and over the years we say, this piece isn't working and we pull it out and we put it on top. Oh, you know what? This piece right here is really not working. We need to pull it out, take it out. We put it on top. And what we've essentially done is weakened the system. And not only that, we haven't put anything in place that has really worked. So I do think it's high time to take a step back and say, you know what, brick by brick, we need to pull us apart and figure out a way to restructure, which is why I think this period of policy reform that's happening because of COVID is a real opportunity.

Dr. Samuel:

I give an example. So many people, if you would have asked them a year ago, can we flip to a virtual learning model within two weeks, they would have said, Oh, absolutely no way. This isn't possible. COVID hit and the entire school system across the nation and world went virtual, was it perfect? Absolutely not. As a mom of two kids in public school, we had our fair share of hiccups, but change was possible. And so now we need to think about what are the changes we need to make, and then how do we continue to improve as we make these changes.

Marielle:

Thank you. And then to wrap up the conversation, if you could share one project or one area that you're working on that you're really excited about and excited about tackling in the next few months.

Dr. Samuel:

Yeah. So I have two because I have this role with the Center of the Developing Child at Harvard University that we're doing some really neat work, where we are really starting to look at the impacts of racism on young children's development and health outcomes. We just recently, a month ago released an infographic, that showcased some of the data and some of the facts that we're seeing. And I plan on releasing a blog to really kind of elevate that the conversation work that we're doing. So that's one piece of work I'm really, really excited about.

Dr. Samuel:

And then the other is NWA recently released our second report about the learning loss and what we're seeing with kids that are in grades three through eight right now. And one of the things that we saw is there's about, out of our initial data set of 5 million, there's about 350,000 kids that are missing. They have not logged on one day of school. They have not taken one assessment. They have not talked to their teacher. And so I really want to start to dig in, into the missing, the kids that are missing. Why are they missing, what are the supports that they need and how do we help public schools identify and support the kids who are missing? And so those are the two things that I'm really, really excited about.

Marielle:

Thank you so much for sharing those. And thank you so much for sharing time with us today and really giving us so many strategies for how we can have equitable approaches to education. So thank you so much for joining us, Dr. Samuel.

Dr. Samuel:

Thank you. Thank you for the time. I appreciate it.

Marielle:

So now I will transition it over to Cindy Lessner, who will talk to us about some of the state initiatives around equity.

Cindy Lessner:

Thank you, Marielle. And thank you, Dr. Samuel, that was an amazing presentation and amazing conversation afterwards. And I am actually very grateful for today's conversation, as well as the conversations throughout the series. I think it's these types of conversations that help us all to continue learning just to do better. So thank you both. As Dr. Williamson said in her opening remarks, we also wanted to show the state's commitment to moving our equity work forward. And one of the things that we're doing, we wanted to definitely share this work about Family Engagement with this group is we've been in the process of merging our two frameworks. As you know, we have the Maryland Early Childhood Family Engagement Framework, and we have the Maryland's pre-K to Family Engagement Framework, and there were two pieces to this. We wanted to merge the document to be a birth to grade 12 family engagement framework, to be representative of our education system, which is birth to grade 12.

Cindy Lessner:

So we wanted to merge the two documents, and then we wanted to revise them to make sure that we were wrapping our goals and our strategies in equity and inclusiveness and cultural linguistic responsiveness. So if you look at the graph in the middle, we took this from the state's systems framework and we saw this graphic and that just spoke to us. We wanted to make sure, like I said, that our goals and strategies are wrapped in equity and cultural linguistic responsiveness. So that is our goal.

And in the new year, our plan is to take this document, make sure to have it reviewed by all of our stakeholders and make sure we get comments and feedback to make sure that this is a document that speaks to everyone. So that is one of our next steps with family engagement.

Cindy Lessner:

And one of the things too that we are also doing, and this started from our family engagement work. And I wanted to make sure to talk about this year is our work around equity started with family engagement when we were creating tools and resources to support providers and teachers with different resources to improve their family engagement practices. One of our major goals is to improve our relationships with families. And to do that, we have to understand our implicit biases. We have to understand cultural responsiveness and equity. So we did an informal inventory of the types of supports that we have in this area and felt that Maryland could do better in this area, but we also took a step back and we decided to start with ourselves first. We felt that to be able to really infuse equity into everything that we do and provide the technical assistance to our local jurisdictions that we wanted to do, we needed to make sure that our division understood equity.

Cindy Lessner:

So we worked with the Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium and they provided a leadership series around equity that the division of early childhood in. And we finished up that series right before COVID, we were lucky enough to be able to continue those face to face trainings right before COVID. And our next step is to roll that T that type of training and that information out to local jurisdictions. But I'm going to turn it over to Carol Gant from Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium. She led that project for us, and she can give a few more details of what we did during that leadership series and what our next steps are with that work.

Carol Gant:

Hi everyone. Thank you, Cindy. And thank you, Dr. Samuel. Thank you so much for your presentation. I really enjoyed listening to it. And so Marielle, could you go to the next slide? We'll talk a little bit about that because a lot of things that you said really stood out, and so we're very fortunate in the state of Maryland to be working with the Division of Early Childhood, because they have taken the equity piece very seriously, and they're very dedicated and they're very committed to working around our issues of equity. And so our work started the summer of 2019, I think where we began working with them, doing a series of equity training, equity and diversity trainings. And so during our together, as we were doing our needs assessment with them.

Carol Gant:

So during that needs assessment, we had a lot of themes come up where we learned about a lot of issues around equity during that time, that we also did a survey with the leadership team to kind of figure out what were some of the issues that they wanted to talk about. And so we kind of looked at, how Dr. Seuss books, when we began this work with them are written on two different levels for the child and for the adult. And so we kind of approached it like that with the leadership team. What's

happening in the field, and then what's happening with you all as a team and with your work. And so we started with just really taking a real deep dive with a series of over four parts. June through December, we talked about, we really started with culture and what is culture and what does that mean? And what does equity and equality similar to what Dr. Samuel was talking about.

Carol Gant:

And then we talked about poverty, we talked about implicit bias, we really talked about the pedagogy of poverty. What does that mean? How do we teach, how do we think we teach for children? And so we took a deep dive into that cultural responsiveness, and all of those things. We took a real deep dive into real issues of poverty with the leadership team. And it was a lot of reflection during that time. The next step was, and so we did that probably by monthly and we really examine ourselves as a part of that. And then during the last part of that series. So we did probably about four workshops. Then we took three months to take a deep dive into what we called a leadership/implementation academy. And we broke each of the leadership branches up. And so they worked together and we really looked at systems and we brought our evaluation team in as well. And we took it from a theory of change approach.

Carol Gant:

And we kind of looked at how we traditionally look at systems. And then we look at how are we implementing things and then results. Then we kind of looked at, okay, what are our outcomes? And we looked at it backwards where our practices, and then how do we change our systems, looking at our data and things like that. And so we took three months to do this, so day-long workshops. So we went deep into that. At the end, each branch began working on a plan. We called it a path planning alternatives to tomorrow, with hope. And when we looked at this path, we talked about how are we going to plan, what do I need, what kind of supports do I need to really rollout equity? What is our vision? What is our purpose? What is our goal for each of our branches, in the division of early childhood.

Carol Gant:

And so they work together as teams over that time. So then neat thing about that. Well, I shouldn't say the neat thing, then COVID hit all of a sudden and boom, everything kind of stopped, but then the division came back to MAEC and said, you know what? We really want to keep this thing going. And then we really had another pandemic hit, right? We had COVID and we had this George Floyd thing, racism really, really emerged. And they acknowledged that and said, we really need to not only focus on all of these other areas of inequity, but we really want to focus on this racism piece as well. And so they brought us back and we started working on, doing technical assistance with the entire division of early childhood, and then started providing some individual technical assistance with each of the branches.

Carol Gant:

And so that's kind of where we are right now. So since COVID hit in the spring in March, we've been doing some TA work with them. So they're really invested, really committed to working around equity with us. And then the other thing that we've been doing, and this is the other piece we've been working

on developing the trainer series. And so that's, what's coming up next and we're calling it to train the trainer on equity. And so that's going to be unveiled in the spring and we're going to have a webinar to talk about it, but we're really trying to do that with intention as well. And so we're going to look really carefully at what are the characteristics of people that are going to be trainers. So we're really going to, I don't want to say that, but ask people to really think about what does it take to be a trainer? What does it take to really present this work? It's a process. What should trainers know, how do you facilitate this type of training? And so we're going to take some time to present this information to people and then train them.

Carol Gant:

And so at the end of the summer, or sometime during the summer, we're hoping that we'll be able to come back together to do this because this is hard work. And we really are hoping that we don't have to do it online that we can be in person. And so we will do two cohorts, Cindy that's right. I think that's what we talked about, two cohorts of trainers. So we will have people applying and there'll be able to apply to be a part of the cohort and, become trainers on equity. And so we will have modules that we'll put together that are turn key, that people can go out and train across the state. Any questions? I know I spoke quickly. It's a lot of information.

Cindy Lessner:

Thank you, Carol. And yes, we'll be starting that work in the new year where we're starting to recruit trainers for that project. So thank you very much. I appreciate you giving an update on that work. And the next area that we've been working on the equity is Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program. And we've been doing a lot of work with that group as well. So we have Kate Wasserman, the co-director. Oh, you just moved the title and I'm not going to be able to remember that long title. I'm sorry. So Kate Wasserman, thank you.

Kate Wasserman:

No problem. Thank you so much, Cindy. I'm just going to share my screen out as well. So I'll try to multitask and share my title at the same time. So I am the co-director of the Parent, Infant and Early Childhood Program at the School of Social Work, at the University of Maryland and we have the opportunity to partner with Cindy and the division to support both pyramid model and Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation in the state of Maryland, which is targeted to really support the social emotional needs of young kids, of course, but also do much of what was discussed, throughout the course of this webinar, which is support the workforce in addressing the needs and capacities and discussions within their classrooms. And I'm so honored to be part of this discussion and feel so emboldened I'm in this work even after this hour and a half together. So I want to thank the panelists that spoke before me, and just share that for many of the same reasons, the space that we hold at the university is to support the curriculum and then the trainers and coaches to support implementation in the pyramid model and within consultation.

Kate Wasserman:

And so, we really use the spaces that we held to facilitate conversations with both of those workforces, around this idea of equity being so significantly rooted in early childhood. A lot of the programs and evidence-based practices and strategies that we use are rooted on studies that were anti-racist work in the 60s, 70s and 80s. But then a lot of the sort of presence of that within the models got pushed back and there were always, chapters or sections of trainings that talked about cultural considerations, but it became not as present. And so we lost a lot of the intention there. So a lot of what our team did in the beginning as you said, the sort of double pandemic of COVID and racism is really sort of holding what reflective conversations for educators, for consultants, for providers to say, what can we do to really elevate the principles and language around equity for young kids and for the workforce within both of these spaces.

Kate Wasserman:

And made an effort to really coordinate those because as many folks mentioned already today, there were a lot of efforts through the sort of double acknowledgement of the impact of implicit and explicit racism within our systems on outcomes for kids and families in Black and Brown houses. So we also really wanted to make an effort and an opportunity at each of these meetings and spaces, intentionally share with folks what the divisions of early childhood and early intervention we're doing with respect to equity within MSDE and what's happening at partner agencies and local jurisdictions. And this idea of really cross-pollinating ideas that any small movement of the needle in the right direction can be seated elsewhere as well. And just an opportunity for the conversations to change from people feeling overwhelmed or unsure as many of you mentioned, how do you discuss these things? How do you hold space for this, and really changing it to be a collaborative conversation around what could be working or what was a win in a certain area.

Kate Wasserman:

Within the leadership team for the pyramid model in the state, which represents there's family members on there. And there's folks at many different jurisdictions across the state that are implementing the model. We developed an elevating equity subcommittee to really dedicate time to not just sort of attend the monthly meetings, but dedicate time in between those meetings to look at what are each of the components of this comprehensive model that we really need to increase the dial of intentionality and directness, quite frankly, around equity and anti-racism within the content. So this is the list that the committee came up with, everything from developing a document that talks about language with respect to early childhood, to review the vision and mission statements, with an equity lens and to really intentionally change that language, to review training content with respect to anti-racism equity and culture, to update coaching materials, to support equity.

Kate Wasserman:

So as folks are going out and coaching a classroom teachers on social emotional practices within early childhood, what are some real concrete coaching strategies that we've equity into every ring of that intervention, and then the list goes on. So what we've done is really have a core group of folks within the state leadership team commit to this work regularly. First voted on which to which to move on first

and have three different sub committees because structure is everything, So to look at the first three elements and create a work plan for the next several years, to really make an intentional shift within the work, and many of our state's Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation providers are part of that work because the pyramid model is a model that they use deeply in their interventions with classroom staff and families.

Kate Wasserman:

Another thing that we've done is acknowledging that we're at a time and an era where everyone seems overwhelmed by the links and two more things to read. We at the university through the pyramid model website have developed a blog series. So a video chat using just the components of the camera, or our computers from work to talk about resources and how to have these conversations with kids and families. So it ranges from, supporting and acknowledging the stress of childcare and early educating classroom providers as well as family members all within this context and really working intentionally to elevate Black and Brown social media accounts in this early childhood space. And cross-pollinate because we know we learned from this work that, the pages and sort of things that we're exposed to are filtered by our own experiences.

Kate Wasserman:

And so really trying to intentionally broaden the statewide discussion and elevation. And then we've also, because this was a time where people more than ever needed to connect and not just be talked at. We have a monthly facilitated conversation where all of the state's mental health consultants gather, and their directors to talk through really just what was the topic of today's conversation, how to have difficult conversations, how to support and address inequities that they're seeing within their work and families and children and providers that they're worried about. And so from that, we've again, identified themes to really be more concretely supportive of the workforce.

Kate Wasserman:

And lastly, and this is something that we're very excited with. So the Indigo Cultural Center is a part of the National Center of Excellence on Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation, which is a very long title but their partnership at the center of excellence is really around equity within mental health consultation. So we've been able to allocate some of the states PDG funds to contract with them for several years. Starting first with a two day, we're calling it a learning retreat with all of the statewide mental health consultants to understand the direct tie between, preschool expulsion and classroom responses to child behavior and racism and the role of a mental health consultant to really open up that space and make meaningful impact in more equitable and relationally focused classrooms.

Kate Wasserman:

So that will launch in forever of next year, which will come very shortly. And one of the things that we're doing there is the team at the Indigo Cultural Center is going to be working with about 10 or so mental health consultants who are opting into this process to train them as facilitators in that conversation to really seed the sort of growth of their ability and support to have these conversations and to support the

work. And then we'll be working with them monthly on a coaching basis to really support elevating equity efforts throughout the many different functions of a mental health consultant, which can be both family-focused classroom program focused. And then of course, child focused as well. So we look forward to sharing about that. And here is just my email address if anyone has ideas or questions, we're learning that so much has happening in the many pockets across the state in this work. And so happy to coordinate with any of those.

Cindy Lessner:

Thank you so much, Kate. And thank you, Carol, for sharing the work that you're doing with MSDE. So now I'd like to ask you to do two things. First I'd like to thank everybody for joining us for this webinars series, whether you've joined us for each of the five webinars, you're joining us today for the first time, you can definitely access all of the recordings on the Maryland Families Engage website. But I'd like to ask you to engage with us in an activity. I'm going to drop a link in the chat box for you to share with us one equity focused action step that you will take to build and strengthen partnerships with families. So give me one second to drop this into the chat box. Oh, there we go, the link is dropped it into the chat box. So if you follow that link, you'll be able to share with us one equity focused action step you're taking. And then I'd also like to ask before you leave, to make sure you take our survey.

Cindy Lessner:

So you'll notice that as you share your responses on here, we'll all get to see what the different action steps people will be taking. These are great ideas that are being shared. I just wanted to hop on and say that I see a lot of listening, better listening skills, listening to our families that is definitely listening. And just being able to understand from our family's perspective, what they're going through. And connecting families with resources, sharing about equality versus equity with students and families Informed trust and involve. I like that. And I liked this one. The best is always a dialogue that helps to build confidence and understand different points of view. It is so necessary to understand everyone's perspective, absolutely. Ensure that when policies are developed those impacted by the policies are actively engaged in the development process. Yes. Better understanding of needs of families. There's listen again.

Cindy Lessner:

Thank you all for sharing all of these great next steps, your action steps. This is very appreciated. And thank you all for joining us for this summit series, whether this was your first one, or if you participated in all five. Thank you so much. Marielle, I didn't know if you had any last comments about the survey you wanted to mention.

Marielle:

Yes. We just dropped the survey link into the chat box. So please take the survey, let us know what you appreciated about the summit. What the areas are that we can improve upon. We look forward to bringing you another series in the future. Thank you all so much.

