

## **Knowledge is Power - Equity considerations in the Age of COVID**

**Topic:** Disproportionality in the Age of COVID-19: Proactively understanding the community we serve

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Our 2:30 session of our 15 minutes of Knowledge is Power. Every time I say that it makes me smile because of as a kid and baby I remember the Saturday cartoons of the Knowledge is Power. I do believe that, that we have to lean into research and to theory and to what's being published right now in order to be really smart and hold some knowledge about what we're going to do next. This is an attempt to give you some bite size pieces of that in order to think through what are some things and how can I proactively do intentional healthy things as a I continue to lead through pandemics and through civil rights movements, both which are heavy to hold. I did begin this morning by being very clear with the audience members, the attendees that this particular topic is very heavy for me. I thought about actually leaning out from it and one of the participants pushed me in really nice way and say no this is exactly why we should lean in. This is an attempt to lean into the discomfort of the data that is current in our community. I'm going to go ahead and start sharing my screen.

We talk about disproportionality in the age of COVID-19. Now, one of the things that we've been really paying attention is just how different communities are experiencing the impact of COVID-19. We're talking about the whole thing, from getting diagnosed to being an employee and losing your job to the level of healthcare that you're receiving. Quickly, one of the very first headlines that we saw. I really want to kind of center us in this belief system that we hold with this beautiful Martin Luther King Jr. quote about how we are really a network that is tied in a single garment of destiny. So, whatever is affecting one directly is affecting us all indirectly. As we stand here as leaders at school site systems and educators, we definitely hold a responsibility for all children, for all the members of the community that we serve. Kind of holding us into the collective.

Pretty much right in the beginning of the pandemic one of the very first headlines that was published was the first headline that you see up here, titled the Black Plague. Now, immediately the racialized why that the press was reporting out some of the news was something that caught our equity department's eye. We started to hold a curated list by community. We literally have a link of all of these publications that talks about disproportional ways this is hitting African American communities, Hispanic communities, Native American communities, people with disabilities and so on and so forth. If you're curious to see list and it is something that we keep updating, it is on the link here for the PowerPoint. I'm not going to click on it because I will tell you that at first it was something we were wanting to make sure to be a part of and to be very current on and after you get to about the sixth,

seventh, eighth page it gets to be really hard, especially when I'm represented in these headlines. So, myself is represented, my nieces, my nephews, my son and so it becomes it very hard to receive this information. As you can see the headlines speak for themselves. This is actually certain populations in a very disproportionate way.

One of the words that we've been hearing a lot is how the pandemic has caused the exasperation of equity gaps. Another word that the American Psychologist Association is using is magnification. I lean more onto that word just because it really comes out to say these are the inequalities that have always existed and there's a magnifying glass to them right now, especially with the diagnosis, again the economic shutdown and the widening economic and health disparities that exist. Now, I know when I was principal, I went visit the free health clinic when my kids would go. I know that the level of care, bless their hearts, the people are working very hard, but it wasn't the same level of care that I could take my own family to. There's a lot of disparities that exist and again what are some of the resources that the community has that we're serving.

Again, I mentioned, this is going to have a lot of information like this. People with disabilities are also very much disproportionately represented in communities of color. There's a lot of long-standing inequalities and unemployment and under employment is also hitting them very, very hard. If you serve a large population that has people with disabilities, then the way you are leaning is going to be slightly different as well. This goes into the way that it's affecting our economic system. The superintendent from San Marcos and a couple of board members from Vista told us that they are actually seeing not a magnification of COVID cases, but a magnification of unemployment rates and so the way that they have to support their families and communities are very different. I do want to say that if you haven't paid attention to the zip code information that is on our local San Diego County website, that will give you very clear indication as to who is getting really battered by the pandemic.

We've got some really horrible news about the way that our indigenous youth and our indigenous population is getting hit by COVID. I know that when I read the headline that doctors without borders was released internally in the United States that is not an organization that does that. They go out to third world countries to help, but that is actually the dire situation that our indigenous population is in as well. The disproportionate ways that we are experiencing COVID is very different. If we take this consideration with other considerations when we see pictures of people strolling at Balboa Park without a mask and then we get these figures and numbers about how other people are experiencing this very differently, we have to pay attention to those inequalities of experience.

I really like the American Psychological Association website. I've linked it here for you, so when you have the PowerPoint, you'll be able to see. They have a lot of equity related research and information. They're actually kind of keeping up to date with pandemic times and then really thinking about brain research and then how this shows up in our behavior. It's been really fascinating. They do have some great articles here. I took a snapshot to show you. If you have time to go back and read at your leisure, then I highly recommend it. This is actually a lot of the information we're receiving because we make sure that not only are we talking about equity, but we're very certain as to what the research is saying about human developmental growth, trauma and what we can do about our brain.

Some of the themes in that long list of curated headlines is the rates that people of color have higher death rates, have higher risk of COVID-19 and that's actually a lot of factors that would lead us

into another fifteen-minute session. The unemployment, the job losses, Newsweek reported that 65% of the Latinx population is facing unemployment due to this so then that means that they lose their employer provided healthcare. Small businesses are closing. The PPE loans that are being sent out to small businesses, a lot of people of color are actually reporting that they were denied. Even the help that was sent out federally, they're not qualifying for. Again, people of color tend to be essential workers, are delivery drivers, are grocery store clerks. There are children out there that are home alone while their parents are working and so they're experience of COVID is very different and again the access to healthcare. I do want to hit on immigration status because this is actually very real. There are families that have not wanted to take home the Chromebook, to take home to do work or go and get free lunch or free breakfast, the meals that schools are giving out because they fear that this will impact their immigration status. They have applied to become citizens here, they cannot accept any help. Our lawyers have said this doesn't count. This isn't the type of help. The help they're referring to is more like welfare, food stamps and that kind of thing. Even though we say this, our immigration population's say I don't trust the federal government to all of a sudden turn around and say you took this support. There's a population, again, within the Latinx population. I'm thinking about the students that I knew I had that were from Laos or from Somalia that if they are working on their immigration status and then it becomes something very important to look at.

I'm going to ask you, I'm going to ask you to chat it. Disproportionality is a term that I want it to flow out of mouth easily because it already exists in public education. I was then going to push on us and say sometimes we've grown numb. We can play this game where you tell me the name of a school and the geographic region in San Diego and I can probably tell you their number. I can probably tell you who's getting suspended more, who has lowest achievement rates. We've kind of almost grown numb to taking look at our dashboard. I'm going to ask you if you could put on the chat what are some ways that this idea of disproportionality shows up in public education. If you could please do that. I'm going to take a look at what you're writing. Yes, and then there's people moving back to Mexico. Over qualifying black and latinx students in special education. Yes, for sure there's disproportional rates there. Enrollment in advanced AP courses. Yes, when we take a look at numbers across by demographic, it's very troubling. Rates of suspension. Suspension, expulsion of African American students beginning in preschool, yes. We definitely criminalize our African American students very early on in the first institution they face which is public education. As you can see, we can name them. Instructional engagement, yes, that too. I started to kind of think about what are some of ways that that disproportionally shows up. I know that mine will look very similar. Euro centric curriculum, yes. I have a story about that, but I only have three more minutes. I've kind of made a quick list. It matches many of the things that you've said that I wanted to engage you in this. We have academic achievement rates, special education rates. Of course, that was already named but there's also learning disability rates, language acquisition. You really start to tear apart how children are being assessed and then deemed as children with special needs. Then there's also a disparity within the actual diagnosis. The behavior referrals, A through G graduation rates, access to AP coursework, which you said, suspensions and expulsions. This list is really long. If you ever want to get into the point with your organization where you want to tackle systemic, historical oppressive structures, make this list. Then start knocking some of these things down because that's what is actually going to get you to some real equity work because we have some long standing beliefs about how school runs that are just actually hurtful to many of the populations that we serve here in San Diego and in California.

There are some implications here. If we know that there's disproportionate rate of COVID and its impacting communities. If you're serving in a community where your school is mostly Latinx or it's mostly people of color then the way that you're preparing intentionally reengagement, has to keep this in mind. There are probably going to be coming in with some sort of worry about essential workers or exposure or loss of a job or moving back to Mexico. I know someone put that in the chat box, but that's very real. There's a lot of children that are now quarantining in Tijuana because they had to move back. This is actually going to impact not only their academic growth, but their social emotional growth, their mental health and possibly their physical well-being. I am actually currently really concerned about the students that I would have served if I was still principal because it was definitely a concrete jungle full of apartment building and so any outdoor space for them would be limited. I know that that impacts the way that we develop, we need nature and we need to be outdoors.

What are things that we can do? I think we are poised to ask ourselves some of these questions. So, are you poised to help certain families upon reentering, reengagement? How are you designing proactive supports for students as they return? How will you empathetically understand and identify the level of COVID-19 related disruptions students have experienced? If you have been joining us before, we did do a session on empathy interviews to truly understand and engage the level of disruption for our families. I highly recommend even if you can't go at it. I actually got an email from a principal saying hey I have 2,000 students. That just sounds like so big to conduct 2,000 empathy interviews. That's fine. Choose your group. I'll do empathy interviews with all my English learners. I'll do all my empathy interviews with African American families. We already know that certain populations are experiencing this disproportionately. Let's figure out who are our students along the edges and how we support them.

What might we do? Again, my first bullet and we are big believers in this, we really as I want to say it's Ayanna Pressley, when she was running for office, she said the people closest to the pain should be closest to the power. Let's conduct those empathy interviews and really figure out what it is we need to do to help support them as they reengage, as we all reengage back into society. What supports does your school have, does your district have, does your county have? Even at the city. I know on our resource page if you go into equity resource page, we have some supports from the San Diego District Attorney that are very helpful. Bring awareness to the site level or to the district level. I know in my district we had from the school where I led to all the way up to La Jolla. Sometimes we have to be that head advocate and say yes, and my school is experiencing this very differently so the level of supports that I need at my school are going to look different than my colleagues. We have to have that level of advocacy. Understanding of course, the impact and experience of the community you serve. Be mindful of your own privilege and bias. We're all experiencing this COVID thing very differently. Identify process and respond to accelerate individual student learning needs based on the variability of experiences. Lastly, provide culturally responsive social-emotional support for students during this transition phase. I know I did not mention our current civil rights movement. That's a whole other layer that we also have to pay attention to of how students are experiencing this.

I made it in sixteen minutes with an interruption. I'm sorry, that was my son coming in. That concludes our short fifteen-minute Knowledge is Power session.