



YOUNG PEOPLE'S CAUCUS



Introductions

Young Peoples Caucus:

Name, pronouns, school & grade/age

What else do you want people to know about you?

State Leaders, Staff from DOE, DHHS & Children's Cabinet :

Name, pronouns, title





Breakout Group Discussion

**What topic or challenge
feels important to talk about
in this moment?**



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Breakout Group Share Out:

What is a challenge you are experiencing in this moment that helps us understand you or your work?

Challenge of taking on a new role around communication during this time. Especially challenging to figure out how to reach out to teachers, youth and parents

Staying motivated and getting work done (Shifted due to school just went to pass or fail)

Struggle with staying focused on school work (and managing dual enrollment

Seniors trying to navigate being ready for a college semester

Wanting to see friends in person

Lack of a support system

Absence of events to raise awareness and money and attention

Funds needed to support youth as they transition out of juvenile justice system

Lack of rites of passage - graduation, prom, celebrations, and beyond



Discussion

Youth Leaders in the Young People's Caucus will lead a discussion based on personal experiences, questions and recommendations.

Themes:

Mental health, Resources for Disengaged Students, Supports in the long-term, Home environments, School to Prison Pipeline and more.

Notes:

Mental Health support system - guidance, social workers and resources.

Recommend that resources are available to all students and that students know about the resources

- Concerns about isolation and mental health and violence
- Current environment forces students to let people know that they need help with depression, anxiety or whatever they are navigating

Recommendation: Teachers/counselors actively reach out and continue to address the stigma of mental health. Make mental health okay and normalized.

- Teachers/counselors also need support
- Mental health counselors are also overwhelmed and may not be able to meet the need that has arisen in this moment.
- Fear of students to approach mental health counselors (especially during technology and COVID)
- Teachers aren't always trained or ready to know how to respond to the needs of students - would love for teachers to know how to address and help students.
- One of the things DOE has been focusing on with Counselor, Clinicians and even Teachers is discussing how different confidentiality is in a tele-education world. Knowing that someone could be right on the other side of some ones camera and being aware of how we are talking to students is different then in our offices or classrooms. Making sure not to accidentally out an LGBTQ student while they are at home or making sure that parents are listening into mental health support sessions
- This moment changes the ability for folks to access mental health

Engagement of Students

Recommendation: What can we do to ease the workload and find ways to re-engage those students that have gotten disconnected?

Q: Virtual spaces has allowed for some youth to feel more comfortable? Have there been support groups and conversations for youth outside of school?

- My school has a morning group that where we have time to connect
- Portland Empowered and Youth Engagement Partners meets every thursday to connect and check in on each other and continue to find ways to support all students and find ways to increase youth voice

Discussion

Notes:

Q: What resources are available with regards to students who may be in difficult home situations?

- We (DOE) is trying to work closely with each school to navigate this, but there's a range of options - small groups supports for students to nothing
- DOE is working to support schools to develop ways to
- DOE hosting webinars for clinicians and educators to figure out how to connect with students that are disengaged and in difficult situations

Homelife as an online student

- Challenging to get work done at home and my online school hasn't supported that

Some colleges are waiving SAT's but the first SAT your Junior year is free for all students- Will the class of 2021 have SAT price waived?

- A suggestion I have heard, for current times, is that if possible, have a phone chat/conversation/appointment WHILE OUTSIDE WALKING. less opportunity for "eavesdropping"/listening in. OF COURSE need to observe physical distancing, wear masks and other careful health behaviors
- Bear and I will check with the Commissioner of Education about waiving SAT \$ going forward. and let Claire know answer





Youth questions for adults:

- How do we provide even half the supports students normally get in school?
- What are we doing for those students who are disengaged? How are we keeping track of whose engaged or disengaged?
- What are some of the long term plans for support? What information and resources are you going to provide to schools so every child in Maine is going to be supported and succeed?
- Why is there a school to prison pipeline? What are we learning in this moment when no kids are being suspended about how we could disrupt this pipeline?
- How do we want our world to look moving forward? What policies should stay in place post-Covid?
(Think about expulsion/suspension and school to prison pipeline).





Adult questions for Young People's Caucus:

- **What is the right message for State Leaders (including DOE & DHHS among others) to be sending to students (K-12) right now?**
 - Let us know this is temporary - and that getting everyone back to school is a priority! (So many of the current messages are full of uncertainty)
 - Reassurance that we'll get through this, and there will be a time we'll be outside together again.
 - We still have a future! (Lots of people have given up in different ways).

- **What do you want to hear from State Leaders, State Agencies (including DOE & DHHS among others)? What do you need from these leaders and their agencies?**
 - I'd like to hear that there's a plan ahead for the next school year
 - School is bigger than education - all these systems are colliding in our education system - food, access, mental health and help to ensure these services are available to help student to connect.



Adult questions for Young People's Caucus:

- **What are students hearing and what are they NOT hearing but they'd like to be? Who is the right messenger?**
 - The uncertainty of what's going to happen
 - Getting information from districts directly to youth so youth can then share with other youth
 - Students are dependent on adults for the "right" messages and information. It also helps for students to know the "why" about the information.

How are you getting your information about what's happening now and what happens next? What "channels" do you use (internet, social media, talking to friends, etc)?

- School apps
- Social media - Unfortunately there's a lot of fake news as well
- Twitter, FB and the news



Adult questions for Young People's Caucus:

What IS/ARE your best and most trusted information sources?

- Multiple different TV channels - CNN, NYTimes
- Superintendents & School administrators are trusted sources and being able to talk to them and ask them questions
- Other youth and adults
- If teachers could help synthesize information and share small pieces - 5 facts, not flooding us with information and emails.



Adult questions for Young People's Caucus:

- **What are students hearing and what are they NOT hearing but they'd like to be? Who is the right messenger?**
 - There's a lot of misinformation and we're dependent on the adults around us to share and convey what information is helpful
 - We've had conversations with the district and with the school - so conversations between students and the leadership - this has included resources and updated information. I then share that information with other young people.



Reflections: What have you heard? What resonated?

Shared Reality: What action(s) do you want to take?

Closing & Reflection



Reflections: What have you heard? What resonated?

- Overwhelmed by uncertainty
- Concerns about mental health
- The importance of conveying there is and will be a future
- Thank you for all your sharing
- Need for clarity and messages that speak directly to youth
- We're giving information in a way that is understandable & can be heard
- Have youth take over the messaging - both as leaders and on social media

Closing & Reflection



Shared Reality: What action(s) do you want to take?

- Taking messages about uncertainty back to the Governor
- Include students in webinars or taskforces or workgroups or other groups happening - Bear Shea
- Thinking about confidentiality and how to ensure students can have the support they need?
- Reach out to teachers and counselors about plans for the future
- Talking to peers and adults about how important youth voice is
- Continuing to find ways for youth and adults to work together

Closing & Reflection