

So, again, this is the Student Engagement and Attendance Centers Learning Series on Addressing Engagement and Attendance Challenges with Historically Underserved Populations. This is our second session in the series, and today we're going to focus on working with Statewide Family Engagement Centers to support state and local strategies.

Next slide. We always like to thank all of the folks who make these learning series and SEAC's work possible, starting of course with our colleagues at the Department of Education, our program officers, and other Department of Ed staff that work with us. We'd like to welcome Dr. Tracey Scott, Bryan Keohane and Liz Lembo.

Thanks again for all you do to make the SEAC Center work and provide supports like our learning series to states across the country. I'm Jarle Crocker. I'm the project director for SEAC. I'm also joined this afternoon by my colleague, Sarah Frazzelle from the American Institutes for Research.

And you'll meet other SEAC staff who are going to be facilitating your breakout rooms. And a big thanks to all the staff working behind the scenes to make these Learning Series work. Next slide. So, again, we have finished session one. That was last week where we focused on Dual Capacity Building Frameworks for family school partnerships.

In this session, as I said, we're going to focus on working with Statewide Family Engagement Centers to support state and local strategies. And then in one week's time, our last session is going to look at working at the community and school level to co-create engagement strategies with historically underserved populations.

Next slide. So our overall objectives for the Learning Series are on the slide. The three that are top of mind for us are, first of all, making sure you understand the historical context and systemic barriers to engagement with school systems faced by underserved populations. We're also focused throughout our series on gaining an understanding of the and how it can be applied to enhance collaboration with underserved populations and empower families and schools.

And then third, we'll focus on developing strategies to foster authentic and equitable partnerships between families and schools within underserved communities. And we do have a follow up email to all attendees of the webinar. So you'll get resources in both from both this webinar, but we'll also make sure for folks who missed the first webinar to include resources from that first webinar, especially links to the Dual Capacity Framework, so everybody can

benefit from those resources. Next slide. Today, our specific objectives for this session are up on the screen, but they are focusing on identifying strategies to successfully and authentically engage with families, and our panelists will talk in a lot more detail about how you make that happen.

We'll also discuss how you connect practitioners with peers to discuss strategies and challenges associated with family engagement, and we'll also talk about understanding the role of Statewide Family Engagement Centers. And co-creating engagement strategies with historically underserved population.

Next slide. Up on the screen is our agenda. So we're wrapping up the introductions just on time. Then we're going to turn it over to our panelists for today. We're going to introduce in just one second. They'll talk for about 30 minutes on their work with statewide family engagement centers. Then we're going to have about 20, 15 to 20 minutes in breakout groups.

Again, this is your opportunity to learn more about what's going on in states that have joined us for this series, talk about the panelist's presentation and what you can take back from the presentation to your own state. And finally, we'll conclude with about five minutes of quick wrap ups and next steps.

So with that, I'm going to turn it over to my colleague, David Blumenthal to get us going with the series. David, take it away. Thank you very much, Jarle. My name is David Blumenthal. I'm a researcher and member of the team with SEAC. Throughout this Learning Series, we use the term historically underserved populations, and we're using that term to refer to groups of individuals that have historically not been served well by public educational systems.

It's not our intent to list and offer guidance on all such populations. The populations that you see listed here on the screen are examples. Historically understood populations often differ from one area to the next and refer to the local context. It cannot be generalized to other locales. The definition that is presented here draws from the 2021 Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal Government, Section 2B. the term underserved community referred underserved communities refers to population sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social and civic life as exemplified by the list of the preceding definition that appears in the Executive Order on equity.

There's been an extensive amount of research and data collected by the U. S. Department of Education, and I'm sure many of your state and local educational agencies that have shown persistent gaps in access to opportunities and programs, disbursement use of disciplinary and exclusionary practices, and undisturbed populations often experience lower academic achievement as well.

These systemic inequities over time contribute to disengagement from and often distrust the public educational systems. The Learning Series that you're joining today addresses various ways in which public and local educational systems can engage with and co-create strategies to improve educational outcomes for students from historically underserved populations.

When we began planning for our Learning Series on co-creating engagement strategies. One of the first things we did was reach out to the Statewide Family Engagement Centers program from the U. S. Department of Education. The program provides grants to states that establish Statewide Family Engagement Centers, or SFECs for short.

These centers carry out parent education and family engagement and education programs, and they also provide comprehensive training and technical assistance to SEAs, LEAs, schools identified by those organizations, as well as other organizations that support family school partnerships and other such programs.

This panel that we're about to convene really sits at the center of our Learning Series that began last week and will conclude next week. And we wanted to make sure that we were providing opportunity for the program grantees to really highlight their work and how they can support state education agencies, local education agencies, as well as individual schools.

Our panelists today consist of three excellent presenters that are going to talk about their work as SFEC grantees as well as how they engage educational systems to support co creating engagement strategies that address historically underrepresented populations. I'd like to introduce each of them and you're going to get a great opportunity to hear from them directly throughout our panel.

Kayla Benson as a Masters of Public Administration and Director of Impact at the EdVenture Group. Kayla began her career in the child advocacy field, leading growth efforts at two community based organizations as a development coordinator at the Monongalia County Child Advocacy Center and prior to

EdVenture as Executive Director at CASA for Kids for Monongalia and Preston counties.

Kayla applies lived experience as a non-profit leader and nearly a decade working with children, families, and team members to support professional development, advocacy, and leadership efforts that benefit education communities across West Virginia and the nation. Kayla currently serves as the Assistant Director of the West Virginia Statewide Family Engagement Center, leading efforts to enhance family engagement across the state and serving as the co-lead for the Regional Educational Laboratory Appalachia Kinship Caregivers and Grandfamilies Communities of Practice. We're going to talk more about kinship families and grandfamilies during the panel today. Barbara Boone, PhD, Dr. Boone, is the principal investigator and director of the Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center, which sits at the Center on Education and Training for Employment at The Ohio State University.

In this role, Barbara leads a team conducting family engagement initiatives, creating professional development tools and processes for families, as well as school personnel and organizations. Barbara Boone, PhD, Dr. Boone, is the principal investigator and director of the Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center, which sits at the Center on Education and Training for Employment at The Ohio State University.

She's a sought after trainer and speaker, and her past experiences include director at the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, an education consultant, program evaluator, college instructor, parent educator, as well as early childhood educator. This allows her to leverage her skills and understanding from multiple perspectives.

Her work is focused on improving partnerships between home, schools, and state and local educational agencies. Thank you. She's enjoyed helping thousands of families and educational professionals grow and including her own family of five. Finally, we're also joined on the panel today by Morgan VonHaden, who is the Deputy Director of Community and Family Services Division and also served as the Project Director of the South Dakota Statewide Family Engagement Center.

She holds a Master's of Science degree in strategic leadership, and she believes that strong families form the foundation of strong communities. Her approach to family engagement is rooted in the understanding that by empowering families, we empower entire communities to thrive. Her leadership extends beyond her

professional roles and has participated in Leadership Rapid City in 2010, as well as Leadership South Dakota in 2016.

Through Morgan's leadership, the Statewide Family Engagement Center in South Dakota, that's run by Black Hills Special Services Cooperative, has received numerous awards from local communities and has been identified as an outstanding partner from ACT board for their work nationally. So without further ado, I'd like to introduce our panelists.

After I've introduced our panelists, I'd like them to talk about the work that they do supporting historically understood populations and how they work with public educational systems within their work. I'm going to hand it off to Kayla. If you can get us started. Sure. Thanks, David. As David mentioned, my name is Kayla Benson, and I'm really thankful for the opportunity to be here with you all today and looking forward to a great discussion that builds on all of the great information that was shared last week.

A quick background and overview on our organization. We are The EdVenture Group and we were founded a little over 23 years ago by a high school math teacher from rural West Virginia who really took a leap of faith and left the classroom to reimagine what education could look like. And so our work at EdVenture has ranged from youth leadership to school culture, technology integration, professional development, entrepreneurship, education, prevention, supporting schools, families, and communities, and breaking those generational cycles of poverty and addiction and neglect that we see.

And we do a lot of work and have a major focus in family engagement. And so while we informally been doing work in family engagement for many years, we're officially in our second round of Statewide Family Engagement Center work through funding from the U S Department of Ed. And so the West Virginia Family Engagement Center was founded to use evidence based practices to really engage families, educators, and community members in the educational process to ultimately enhance student academic achievement.

We work very closely with the core team at the West Virginia Department of Education and other key core partners like the West Virginia Healthy Grandfamilies Program, to deliver services and provide support to all 55 counties across the state of West Virginia. And in the first five years of the project, we worked with 100 schools across the state, which was great, but it just wasn't enough.

We had schools and districts that would reach out to us and say, “how can we be a part of this? We want to be involved.” And we had preset that limited list. So when we started planning and setting up the framework for this current five years, we knew that we really wanted to be able to provide services to any and every district

and school across our state. So in West Virginia, like in much of the nation, there are so many underserved families. And we know when all families are engaged, students perform and ultimately excel at higher levels. And we really consider that and how we're working with schools, families and know that co-creation is key.

Again, I know it's not unique to West Virginia, how things differ from district to district. And, even within that, what works for one part of a district is not at all accessible or helpful for a school or community, you know, five miles away and like many of your states. I'm sure when you're on those back roads in West Virginia, those winding country roads, what's five miles can feel like so much farther and it just really can create divide and difference in the needs of those communities, those families and those schools in the different parts of the districts we work with.

So with that, a critical part of all of our organization's efforts, but especially those related to family engagement, is that customization and co-creation. Before we take off with any effort, we really work to sit down with a variety of individuals and groups and hear from them what challenges exist, what the hurdles are, what's going great, and what needs they have that are specific to their family, their community, and their school, and their child's education.

And we've learned a lot from these conversations with our team at the Department of Ed. We learned so much with the educators, school leaders, community members, and organizations who are in these communities seeing what's going on firsthand. We've learned so much, and often most importantly through having these conversations with, you know, an 80 something year old grandmother who might not be able to read or write and with no notice is now caring for four of her grandchildren.

We're learning so much from these conversations and they're such a critical part of everything we do. And so we've used what we learn in these conversations to really set the foundation for everything that we do moving forward. And that looks different, as I said, even within some districts, but it's been really critical on how we work to build trust, to improve engagement and to co-create these strategies of the underserved populations across West Virginia.

So a bit of background on how we do things and who we are as an organization. And again, appreciate the opportunity to be here today. I'll turn it over to Barbara next. Thank you. It's wonderful to be with all of you here today. Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center is located at The Ohio State University in the Center on Education and Training for Employment, as David said.

And the center where we're located is a translational research center. So that means our work, in our work, we learn from research, we learn from our stakeholders, as Kayla was describing, and then we aim to make those research based practices useful and accessible in the classroom in at the kitchen table and in spaces where families and schools are working together to support student learning and well being and in 2013, I joined OSU in the College of Education and Human Ecology to lead this family engagement initiative that was beginning there and that work began with our Department of Education and Workforce and working with the department's 16 regional teams across Ohio to create a standard of support for families across the state and the support from those teams for family engagement in many areas, including in special education.

We also work with the department during those years to develop resources for families to strengthen partnerships around literacy, and family engagement through in school improvement, and in developing rubrics and guidance for school and family engagement through the positive behavioral interventions and supports process.

So that partnership with our Department of Education and Workforce and those regions and the districts expanded over the years. And it was just a great foundation. Then when we received our first Statewide Family Engagement Center grant in 2018 and then in 2023. So now we work with many offices within the Department of Education and Workforce and other state agencies, bringing technical assistance and expertise around family school engagement.

And you know, we're a part of our state's Attendance Task force and multiple literacy committees. The State Advisory Panel On Exceptional Children a large English learner project our whole state work whole child work group in our state, sort of coming alongside agencies, our Department of Education and Workforce to bring sort of families and their voices into those statewide initiatives.

But beyond our work with the state department and other agencies our data indicates that we've reached through our work with our first statewide family

engagement center grant at least 20,000 parents and caregivers through activities with their schools with our workshops through our state advisory council as well.

We provide technical assistance to any district or school on their request and meeting them sort of where they are sometimes through an initiative we are offering, but currently I'm meeting with the Lorain City Schools on district leadership team working with them as they're creating their strategies and their plan for partnering with families to improve attendance this next school year through initiatives in our first grant we work directly with 49 school districts and about 109 schools to build family engagement teams at the school building level that include parents and caregivers, student members, staff members, and those teams develop their plan. They look at their school data and develop those goal directed plans for family engagement to reach more families and support family engagement for more students.

And I'll tell you more about that later. But through our work, we have provided professional learning to over 12,000 educators and community agency professionals on various family engagement topics, including attendance. We've created resources, those professional learning opportunities, but when I talk about those educators, I mean school board members, teachers, principals, school counselors, social workers, family liaisons.

All of the folks that are making up those professionals that are working with families in our schools. We now are also providing professional learning to all of the 21st Century Community Learning Center grantees in Ohio. That's a program we designed with our Department of Education and Workforce and grantees go through three years of family engagement professional learning with us that they are applying in their centers.

We've developed some regular informational newsletters for Ohio educators and one for families and have focused on attendance in those as well as other topics and we have thousands of readers in Ohio for those different newsletters that we have. We've also focused on have created a virtual family engagement leadership summit we'll have our fifth one this September 20th and where we highlight students, family members, educators and resources from researchers from Ohio and other states, all focusing on improving those partnerships between families and schools.

Our website was something we have created and continue to build on. It really serves as a library, a collection of high quality resources for families, for



educators, and community members. It's searchable by topic, it's searchable by your area of interest, age, levels of children and if you were to go to our website and search attendance, I'll put the, I'll put that link in the chat.

You and search the word attendance, you'll see all of the resources we've created, but then also we've brought those in from Attendance Works and from Proving Ground at Harvard and others bringing together resources that we think schools will find useful and families will find accessible and useful.

And finally, our team develops new resources as well. So we've developed resources to support family financial literacy, family engagement in the middle school years, how to advance student voice in their family engagement, and family engagement to support student mental health, and many others. So I hope I sort of giving you a sense of the breadth of our work sort of at the state and local and other ways with families.

So I'm going to stop now and pass it off to Morgan. Well, thank you so much, Barbara and Kayla. I am just so excited to be on this panel with these ladies. You can tell through all of our work, we do very similar things, but also very unique and different depending on where this let's say we're in and whatever the needs are of our communities.

Well, good morning and good afternoon. Everyone. My name is Morgan VonHaden. And I'm the director of our South Dakota Statewide Family Engagement Center, and I am part of Black Hill Special Services Cooperative. We are an educational cooperative based out of Sturgeon, South Dakota. So if you've never been to Sturgeon, South Dakota, most people know us for the big bike rally.

So we start with 3,000 people and you can go up to a quarter million. It's a lot of fun. And our state is not unique, but it's unique for us. When we talk about rural, we're about 77,000 square miles around the state. We average about eight people per square mile. So it's pretty exciting. And we have lots of different pockets of communities.

So we do have our tribal nations, which I will get to visit about, but we also have a very large immigrant population that's come to South Dakota. We have our farming communities. We have numerous colonies.

I know Morgan was experiencing some technical difficulty today. It looks like we lost it for just a second. Morgan, are you back? I am back. Okay, great. I think you were talking about the kind of communities that you support in South

Dakota. Wonderful. Well, you gotta love rural South Dakota and our Internet connection.

So that's just.

Oh, dear. Okay, great. You're back rolling. We have a few shout outs from Montana about the the fun with Internet because it's in our connection. Look out. Oh, man. Well, I will definitely call in and we will get that fixed because. I want to share and share about everything that we're doing. So I will call in and I'll just pause there.

We'll get to the panel. Great. Thank you so much, Morgan. We'll hear from you very soon. I want to ask our first question to all of our panelists. And this is the second session in our learning series. Our first was with Karen Mapp and Shadae Thomas Harris, where they presented on the Dual Capacity Framework, the dual capacity building framework for the family school partnership.

When all three of us were talking, you know, this came up pretty frequently. It's not the only model for supporting family engagement that's out there, but it is one that we found was pretty common as we were discussing these issues with you. And so I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about how the Dual Capacity Framework is guiding, to the degree that it is, the work that you do and how it applies to local educational agencies

are all started last week was great. I think that was such a helpful breakdown and great ways where we can use examples of ways that we can use that framework in the work that we're all doing. Through the West Virginia Family Engagement Center, the Dual Capacity Framework has really helped provide a roadmap for how we break down step-by-step what we can be doing as a family engagement center and how we can use the research to best support educators, schools, families.

So, it's really helped us in first saying that, asking the question of, "is there a foundation of family engagement? Is there an awareness or discussion about family engagement even happening?" When we think about the framework and the challenges in the first column of the framework, when you look at it, we really look at what is known about family engagement and what's currently being done.

So what training has happened, what training can happen around family engagement in schools that will really help increase the understanding of the importance and get that buy in from more than just one key person at the school,

as they were talking about last week. Another part of the framework that's been especially helpful for our family engagement center is that column on the essential conditions.

And we use those in our roadmap in how we navigate our work. And one of the biggest focuses in thinking about process conditions in the framework is that relational trust piece, that mutual trust. So we see a lot of generational lack of trust in our state, as I'm sure many of your states do, and often a student's grandfather maybe had a bad experience at the school, so the father doesn't trust the school. And now the students walking into the school building with generations of built up distrust and caregivers who don't at all feel comfortable even starting to communicate or have a conversation with someone from the school. So we use that part of the framework and looking.

With schools and how we can help schools to step back and examine where things stand and really make those intentional efforts to build, and often rebuild, trust because we know that's where we can set that foundation to start growing that full, equal, genuine partnership. Also in that essential conditions category are the organizational conditions and working with districts and with schools to invest in and give their schools the ability to devote that time and that effort to family engagement so that it becomes embedded in everything that's happening.

Last week, Dr. Mapp and Dr. Harris discussed how critical it is for the entire school or district to embrace family engagement and for this to not just fall under one person's role, right? One family engagement specialist is in charge of everything. And so, with that in mind, as we look at the framework, we used it to really help us design a lot of our work, but in specific a program that we have called LIFE.

It's Leaders Investing In Family Engagement. And this program is where teams of three school leaders, and not just administrator leaders, but anyone at this school who's stepping up as a leader and family engagement, can really collaborate with other teams across the state of West Virginia, virtually, to learn about leadership, family engagement, and some practices, even in business that, that work in the corporate world that can be turned into family engagement best strategies.

And through this, it's really provided an opportunity to, for schools to, to embed this at an organizational level into everything that's happening in their school. It becomes a part of the conversation. A part of the planning for the school and it's been really helpful. So those are just a few of the ways that we really take the Dual Capacity Framework and apply it to the work we're doing.

And again, it really helps us in thinking about a roadmap of how we're doing everything that we're doing as a family engagement center. So turn it over to Barbara next. Thank you Kayla. So, a primary way our work exemplifies the Dual Capacity Framework would be in that dual nature, I think before I was talking about you know how we are working with educators and then how we are also reaching out and supporting families so there's that dual nature throughout the work that we do.

But also, developing, establishing, when you think about the process conditions, trust, linking family engagement to learning, taking an asset-based approach, being culturally respectful and collaborative and interactive. And I'm going to highlight just two initiatives for you that I think sort of exemplify that.

The first is that importance of trust and efficacy for working together, which, you know, at the mention of it could seem kind of fluffy, intangible, but it's really a critical aspect of partnerships that we need to understand and we need to know practical steps toward how do you build it. So we explore the research around trust and the development of individual and collective efficacy.

And we learned really that, you know, when trust is strong between homes and schools student achievement and reading improves, and in math improves. Trust is now really an ongoing standard topic that we cover in our professional development with educators and after school providers. We also worked with an Ohio middle school that, to, to see, can we really sort of impact trust here? And so we did some workshops with their teachers. And then we using text messaging, really tried to share with families through the school ways that families are as much engaged in middle school as they are in elementary school, but it looks very different.

And so we were giving families the sort of coaching, these ideas of how to interact with their child at home, and what we saw benefits to students and to families. And to teachers through that very small intervention. And so that's something that we have made accessible that material to schools on our website is just it's freely available.

And I'll post an article about the results that we had from that. And so we also saw that there's really no current measure for educator efficacy for working with families. And so we partnered with NAFSCE, our National Family School Community Engagement work with teachers across the country in Ohio, and one of our staff, Dr. Hadley Bachman, she led the development of valid, reliable scale for measuring teacher efficacy for engaging with families, and now we offer that on our website.

We're supporting several Ohio districts. I'm in districts from other states even that are using that scale with their staff and we're preventing, providing them with a report that helps them to see where they can grow in those ways and currently active also in with Columbus City Schools and working with all of their family ambassadors in that same also measuring their efficacy and how do we help support and build that.

And then also in that Dual Capacity Framework there's the systemic supports for family engagement. And so the framework sort of indicates we need to have systems in place for district wide, school wide, equitable, accessible family engagement, not rigid, not isolated not practices that vary widely from classroom to classroom and grade to grade.

So we have worked closely with Johns Hopkins University and the National Network of Partnership Schools and implementing that partnership model in 48 districts and 109 schools. And those schools are all implementing teams of parents and staff and students who together look at their data and develop plans for engaging with families for the school year that is going to be inclusive and accessible.

And what we, you know, I just in preparing for this looked at one of our schools at Boulevard Elementary up in Shaker Heights, and they, in their plan had, they were changing a lot of signage in their schools that we thought impacted attendance. They were changing the letters that they were using with families.

They were changing how they were doing meetings with families where they talked about attendance. They were creating those magnets that are so popular to give families information they can have right in the kitchen there, on the fridge, about, you know, how to contact and what to do if your child's going to be absent and other sorts of things.

So they, you know, we see in their plans these activities they are doing directly for attendance. And we also know that model has been researched. In Ohio, in years past, and even without a focus on attendance, but with a focus on strengthening family school engagement, they saw improvement in attendance in those schools. So that in the next five years, we are expanding this our work with more districts and schools and and are monitoring closely attendance and the academic achievement within those schools.

So, all right, Morgan, I'm passing it off to you.

We're going to appear to be muted.

Okay, now can you hear me? There you are. Fantastic. Alright. Wonderful. Wonderful. Well, I so appreciate the rural, we just love rural. Well, I'm actually, I wanna talk a little bit into when we, when you ask question number two with the Dual Capacity Framework. So I'm just, I'll just start us off with the next one.

How's that sound? Excellent. That'd be great.

Alright. Do you want me to ask my, I'll ask the, I'll ask the question. So the second question is how. How are we utilizing the family engagement and which ways working with our LEAs and specifically with dual capacity framework, we've done what we've called excuse me, our family friendly walkthroughs, really engaging our families, figuring out that baseline data as we go into the schools, because we all have to have family engagement.

I saw a lot of people were checking in. We have Title One, Title Four, Title Three. So on all those different titles and with our special education roles and our underserved populations, we have to have family engagement. But what is that baseline data and how do you have that family voice that you have to have in all those different areas?

And that's part of the Dual Capacity Framework also. So we started our family watches. Once again, they're not new, but what we've done through our research study is validated the tools. So we can take this tool and it doesn't matter the size of the district, the size of the community.

And we're able to use this tool across all areas. All right, I'm gonna stop there.

Excellent. Thank you so much, Morgan. I'm looking at the time and I want to make sure that we have a chance to hear a little bit more about some of the nuts and bolts, maybe the strategies that you're using within each of your states in your communities. And so I'm going to turn it back to Kayla briefly.

And can you provide a, you know, a list of perhaps highlights and best practices or particular strategies that you found helpful in engaging with historically underserved populations? Sure. I mentioned this briefly at the beginning, but we go back to it a lot of strategy that we use time and time again that we will continue using,

I'm sure far into the future, it's just simply listening. Building and opportunities to listen early and listen often listening before we make plans and take action and making what we hear part of all of our work with schools, with districts, and also encouraging schools and districts to build that listening piece into all of

their efforts to we've done things like rural voices, listening tours, where we went around the state of West Virginia and we got pizza and we set up in a pavilion at a park and opened it up to community members, mostly caregivers from who have students in the schools in that community to come and just talk to us about family engagement.

We try to do that in an asset-based way, you know, using a framework like appreciative inquiry where you go through these things and recognize and appreciate what's going really well. So you always see that part first before you build on what things can look like in the future. So listening is a strategy and a best practice that, like I said, I think we'll continue to use far in the future because it really helps us customize programming that, that impacts a lot of families, schools, communities in an effective way. Barbara.

Thanks, Kayla. You know, to Kayla's point, boy, that listening and building a culture of listening is so important. And our state advisory councils are another place where we have family members from around the state on our councils. So we have grandparents and we have parents of students at all age levels and parents from different communities.

And parents who speak many languages as a part of our councils to help inform and guide our work. But a specific approach I would share with you how we're working with schools around attendance is one that we're embarking on now, and that is around addressing students sense of hope and belonging, the forces that sort of pull students to school.

And so we are now have 24 middle schools in Ohio and 52 school counselors from those schools that are embarking on a four year process with us where we are working closely with them to build supports that for students to really have good data on how their students are perceiving schools, including their sense of hope and belonging, but then also to provide those like tiered supports for those students, But literally looking at the program and across that school for those tier one supports and family engagement being integrated within that.

So it's not just the work. In the school building during the school day, but it is really a part of bringing families together in that. And we're really hopeful that we are going to have a model there that we'll be able to share with more Ohio schools, that and we're monitoring attendance and other aspects of those schools to see any shifts that may be happening because of that. And then another would be, you know, we take a multi-tiered system approach to family engagement when we're working with schools to say there isn't a one size fits all, we can't

just do one thing for everybody. We work with a lot of educational leaders on applying this multi-tiered approach.

That means first we think about the families. We listen well to families. What are their interests? What are the needs they express? What are their strengths? Where do they, what do they want from their schools for their kiddos? And then designing the family engagement services and supports of that school to meet the families to be family centered in that we can't be cookie cutter about it.

Just like students receive. And even just because a student is receiving maybe universal supports for attendance, their family may have more questions there. They may have additional interest. And so we want to provide that. So we have tier one supports that support 80 percent of our families and understanding and supporting attendance, but then tier two around those groups, like, grandparents who are raising their grandchildren or those kindergarten families who are coming to school and don't necessarily, this is a new world around kindergarten versus preschool or being at home with a caregiver.

So tier two strategies and then tier three as well. And we see that really exemplified in our partner, Columbus City Schools that is implementing this sort of tiered approach where they have family ambassadors in their schools who are working closely with families. They have a central attendance team that has family members on it.

They have family engagement workshops and the communication campaigns, but they've tiered their supports to really be centered on the families in their district and really to meet them where they are. So I think those are two ways that we really try to hone in on the families in the schools that we're working with. And off to Morgan.

Morgan, are you connected? I'm good. This, you guys are seeing the real Morgan today. So, for in South Dakota, what we've really focused on specifically in our communities on or near our reservations is: "How do we get that family voice? How do we get them at the table when we're talking about attendance?" And we're really looking at that partnership

We started what we call our family voice project, and it's bringing families together., and we're in this part of the appreciative inquiry and having interview questions. So we have a bank of questions that we ask the districts to say, "Hey, what do you really want to get to know from your families? What is it that you want to see?"



And we do it all in a positive way, we do in a good way. And when we have our focus groups, we also do, we always have an elder that starts our conversations. We want to make it, and you've heard this from both Kayla and Barbara too, we do a lot of customization. Because what's right for one community may not be the right for the next community.

So knowing who you're working with and and we'll be sharing the bank of questions also, and going to our websites, and you can see all these different parts pieces being dropped down, but when you ask those questions, and then you use that as part of the data, and we do that for families, but we've also tried to do it at the middle school and high school, and those kids have a lot to say when it comes to attendance, and why they may or may not be coming.

And then also at the high school, and then recent graduates. We do a lot with looking at our high school dropout because we know you're not learning if you're not coming to school. So how do we get our kiddos coming to school? What does that higher ed look like? And so asking those recent graduates on what do you wish would have happened?

Andi doesn't happen overnight and I think that's the other big piece of what we're seeing is that when you're, when we're working with our communities, when we're working with our school systems, when we're working with our LEAs, none of this is a magic wand. It's that consistency. It's that building of relationships.

It's all those different parts of the dual capacity and being present and being there for those schools and those families. And now we're starting to see those different shifts on what is happening when it comes to attendance. Thank you so much, Morgan. I just, I'm really struck by the degree to which, even in different settings and working with, you know, targeting a specific organization or thinking about a particular industry population, that a lot of times the strategies that you're describing are really localized or even individualized to the families with which you're working.

I'd like to go back to Kayla real quick, cause I think we teased the idea of talking about how you work with grandfamilies and what those are. And I was wondering if you could just to conclude our panel today, talk a little bit more about that as an example of the work that you're doing in West Virginia.

Absolutely. I'm happy to. We've worked extensively across West Virginia and the entire Appalachian region with grandfamilies and school leaders on this topic of family engagement. We're actually currently, an example of how we're

doing this work is we're in the middle of a community of practice in partnership with REL Appalachia that really focuses on how school systems can best support students living with kinship caregivers and grandfamilies.

And so we meet quarterly with a really diverse group from Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. And what we thought would be mostly school administrators has really become this great group of school leaders, community and school representatives, counselors, educators, but also so many community organizations, and it really just speaks to how many people are committed to best supporting the students who are living with grandfamilies and kinship caregivers.

So through this community of practice, we really collaborate on strategies, best practices on how these schools can support students who are in this transitional time when that grandparent or the kinship caregiver is serving as the primary caregiver, and the sessions have ranged on topic and include things like inclusive language.

So how can schools ensure that the language they're using in all communication is really inclusive to all families, including these grandfamilies and kinship caregivers? So moving away again, we've talked about this. I think they talked about this last week, getting away from Muffins with Moms and from parents signature lines on all the forms that go home and being intentional and outreach to, to make sure all of these families and caregivers feeling included.

We've discussed family engagement specific to support schools and engaging grandfamilies. And then back to listening. One of the sessions was on really gaining perspective, listening to kinship, caregivers and grandfamilies. using skills like empathy interviews and using that perspective to inform action.

So that's a lot of what we've been doing through this community of practice. We talked specifically in March about attendance and how we can improve attendance in, in students who are living with these kinship caregivers and grandfamilies. And then our March session is on informal placements and formal placements.

So what laws exist and how can students school teams understand the legal side of what rights these families have, because in West Virginia and everywhere, I think we're seeing so many of these informal placements where there's no legal formality around the caregiver and around the rights that they have, but they're still very involved in this critical part of getting the student to school and the students involvement.

So that's an example, just one of the ways that we've been working with some of these grandfamilies, kinship caregivers through our team, and there are a couple of resources that I believe Sarah will drop into the chat a blog on inclusive language and an infographic that you can use in reference it and use as examples if you'd like to.

I just really appreciate the contributions that all of you provided and the resources that you've shared, and we've been able to drop a few of them in the chat box as well so I encourage all the participants to go there. We've had a lot of great discussion but one of the things we also want to do is get all of you that are attending an opportunity.

To participate in the discussion today. And so I'd like to direct everyone to the breakout discussion. How we're going to run this is you're going to be randomly assigned into small groups. So it'll give you an opportunity to connect with your peers that are participating in the session today.

We have two discussion questions to reflect on what you heard from our esteemed panelists today from Kayla, from Barbara, and from Morgan. So your breakout discussion questions are here and then you'll also have facilitators that'll help you get involved in the conversation as well. We'll get back together in about 12 minutes and then wrap up our session.

So Stephanie, if you could get us into our breakout rooms, I'd love to hear all of you connect with each other. Welcome back everybody from the breakout discussions. Thank you so much for taking the time to connect with your peers. It's one of the main things we like doing here for these learning series.

We'll have another opportunity next week when we conclude our learning series. We have a couple of announcements. I know we're right at the end of our scheduled time today, so I'm going to rush through them very briefly. We're going to get in the chat box a link to take our session feedback of form.

So please do that. We love our feedback. We love to hear it honest feedback. So please provide that so that we can continually improve our Learning Series events. So next week, same time, same place. We're going to conclude our learning series by hearing from the principal assistant principal of the Rena B. Wright Primary School and staff in the district. Rena B. Wright Primary School is in Chesapeake, Virginia. We'll hear about co-creating engagement strategies at the school levels. We're getting even more focused on individual communities and schools and even neighborhoods. Also coming up later on in

July and August, we have our next Learning Series on student and family engagement.

You can take this link on the screen, follow your phone's QR code reader in order to take the feedback survey, but there should be in the chat as well for you to follow that link. So please do take the time to do that. And get in touch with us at SEAC. We'd love to hear about working one-on-one if you want to meet with subject matter experts as well.

That's a way to contact us in addition. Finally, I'd like to ask you to think about co-creating engagement strategies with historically underserved populations. If you could think about a particular strategy that you can use to support school level efforts or strategies that are underway.

Maybe you've seen one happen, or you're thinking about one, or you'd like to discuss it. We're going to have an opportunity to continue to engage in this conversation next week. On that note, I'd like to once again thank our panelists. Kayla Benson, Barbara Boone, and Morgan VonHaden, who worked through various challenges to ensure that we could hear from all of them today on co-creating engagement strategies with the Statewide Family Engagement Center program at the U.S. Department of Education and individual grantees. Thank you all so much for your contributions to today's learning series, and I appreciate all of your time and efforts to address this important topic. Have a great rest of your day.