



## Opioid Response Network

**Shelley Mann-Lev:** Baroni?

**Michelle Baroni:** Hi, everyone. My name is Michelle Baroni and I am from Atlanta, Georgia. I'm super excited to get to speak a little bit about what we've been doing as far as the virtual world and being able to give these lessons to our youth during these difficult times. Super excited, can't wait to speak with you all a little more.

**Shelley:** Wonderful. Cedric, please, Cedric Hall.

**Cedric Hall:** Hi, my name is Cedric Hall, here in New York City representing you guys from the East Coast along with Michelle in Atlanta on the East Coast as well. I'm really excited to be here again with you guys. We had a phenomenal time last week. Excited beyond measure to go ahead and extend that learning today. We'll dive in when I'm doing my presentation. It's a pleasure seeing you guys.

**Shelley:** Wonderful. Thank you both, Michelle and Cedric. You're going to have a chance to hear from two really outstanding professionals who have a lot of experience working with youth and different communities. Briefly, I want to tell you about myself. Shelley Mann-Lev, as I said, a long-time prevention specialist, public health person, Master's in Public Health, and served 20 years with the Santa Fe public schools here in New Mexico as their prevention coordinator both responsible for in-house, the prevention work in the schools, all three tiers as well as out-of-house, out of the buildings, I'm responsible for the community work. I was the founding director and for 10 years the director of the Santa Fe Prevention Alliance.

I'm thrilled to be working as a consultant with the Opioid Response Network both serving the Southwest region as well as other school-related requests throughout the country. I'm



going to start with a brief presentation related to our first objective on what's happening with our youth, what's happening with substance use during this pandemic, and be followed by Michelle and Cedric who will be sharing that both after-school programs and in-school programs and resources and how we can work with our youth.

Question and answer will follow each of our presentations. We really encourage you as Brooke just wrote, thank you, Brooke, so much, in the chat, please, put any questions you have into the Q&A. Please use the chat for comments. Introduce yourself. We'd love to know who we're speaking with, where you're located, and what you're up to. The session will be recorded. We will, like I said, be using the chat and Q&A instead of having participants speak. We definitely care about your questions and hope we can respond to them.

Do I have control of my slides? Let's see. I just clicked on it and I do. Wonderful, it's working. Again, this session's brought to you by the Opioid Response Network funded by SAMHSA which provides technical assistance on prevention treatment and recovery of opioid use disorders and methamphetamines as well now, so a wide range of substance use issues when it comes to youth. Youth by and large are not single substance users, they are polysubstance users. The Opioid Response Network is able to respond to that.

The Opioid Response Network accepts requests and has a regional specialist. They're called TTS's, Technology Transfer Specialists. If you do have a request, you can reach out to the Opioid Response Network by going to their website. You can type it in, it's [opioidresponsenetwork.org](http://opioidresponsenetwork.org), email, or phone. Again, these requests can be from schools, community organizations, after-school programs, or, of course, treatment programs recovery, anything to help support and prevent the opioid epidemic from worsening which unfortunately is the context that we are living in.

Disclosures. You can see if there's any conflict of interest disclosures. Specifically, I want to draw your attention to CEU's. This live webinar offers up to 1.5 contact hours of



CEU's. You do need to complete the evaluation. I was asked by Rachel who gets lots of requests to tell you that it will take four to six weeks, especially, with the holidays to get your certificate of completion. You must complete the evaluation. The link will be sent to you. We really also appreciate your evaluation for feedback. In terms of accreditation for our Certified Health Education Specialist CEUs, the University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Nursing and Health Studies is sponsoring this. We are also providing CEU's for Certified Prevention Specialists. We hope all of you who are here for that will take advantage of that free opportunity. The Opioid Response Network embarked on a project related to youth and COVID-19 at the beginning of the epidemic at the end of March. Through that, we've developed a number of resources that you may find useful. These webinars, of course. We also have resources on the [opioidresponsenetwork.org](http://opioidresponsenetwork.org) website, a wide range of resources listed by category, everything from child abuse to LGBTQ youth, to prevention, curricula, to parents, to substance use, articles, latest research, guide books, specifically for youth.

If you are wanting to gain more information, it's a great place to look and you can choose-- There's a brief description of this resource. We did develop a guidance brief for middle schools, interviewed 25 people from around the country, part of how I found this fabulous presenting team, and of course, really, it was an adaptation of a toolkit that was developed for middle schools on building resilience and preventing substance use.

It's a brief, guidance brief, and it includes a really excellent bilingual checklist for checking in with families that I encourage you to take a look at. That parent/caregiver check-in bilingual resource is there. Finally, we are in the process of finishing a home safety infographic, and that's what we're going to be addressing in our third session, that family home issue which is so important around opioid use challenges, and health and well-being of our wonderful kids.

Here we are. COVID is raging, right? I'm in New Mexico. We're in a very difficult situation. All of you who work with youth and families, it's been going on since March.



Waves come and go. Right now, the waves are particularly difficult. Schools and after-school programs, everyone who works with youth has their own challenges.

Our presenters have- some of them have little kids. They have families they're working with. We have our own challenges. Maybe we've been sick, maybe we know people who have been sick, and here we are in a little box on a screen. I was just commenting that what happened to our laughter, right? Our laughter is important, for our youth as well as us, it's the tip of the iceberg. We need to do whatever we can to increase protective factors and resilience, reducing risk factors, of course, not only for substance use and mental illness, but for school failure. Doing what we can to integrate, and we'll hear some ways to really integrate and build our social-emotional learning capacities, a very important protective factor, all the while, we are aware this is in the backdrop of huge equity issues and social justice. Our relationships, our connections, both those individual ones and what we do for the systems, they really do matter.

In the next hour and 20 minutes for this live webinar, we are going to be describing the effects of the pandemic on the risk of youth opioid and other substance use, as well as adults because obviously, our students are part of communities. Cedric and Michelle are really going to be sharing with you strategies that they have used and are using that address to increase those protective factors and decrease those risk factors in this context of remote and hybrid learning.

Then they are, based on their experiences, going to be adding to your knowledge cultural considerations for remote and hybrid learning. Particularly Michelle has worked for years and has extensive experience with Hispanic and Latinx youth and families, and Cedric leads a high school for African-American young men in New York City. That urban African-American environment is- he's been in many communities that he knows well. I hope that you will take advantage of their specific cultural knowledge as well as really their broader knowledge as educators and prevention specialists.



I'm just going to take a pause. How are our youth doing? Just taking a look at this picture, thinking about your experience, how are youth doing? Actually, if you'd be willing to write in the chat, how are youth doing physically in their physical environment, their environmental conditions? When we talk about risk and protective factors, environments matter. In their physical and environmental conditions. Oops, I didn't mean to do that. What are you seeing? Strained, walking on eggshells. Yes, that's their emotional conditions, although eggshells maybe literally, if they're in cluttered houses that aren't necessarily clean or safe. How are they doing in terms of their physical- I keep doing that, I'm so sorry, physical conditions, then I'll ask you about their mental conditions. Talking about their health, yes, bored, missing their friends, not getting enough physical activity, I think that's an important one to note. Sedentary, staring at screens all day. Screen time, one of the risk factors. Missing friends and activities. Again I'm going to challenge you just for a moment to think about their setting physically. What is the setting that they're learning in and living in? What's their housing like?

In one of these pictures we see, this is actually in the far left corner, a picture of a homeless student at a shelter. Yes, in the bedroom. They're in their own bedrooms. Unstable housing, chaotic houses, taking care of younger siblings. One of the things I know that they're lacking necessary resources. At school, they would have lots of resources. Do they have what they need in terms of digital access, art supplies, school supplies?

I really appreciate, Emma, you wrote quiet space. I think one of the things that has struck educators that I've been speaking with is the noise that many of our students are functioning in, very different than a school environment. They lack resources, lacking basic necessities including in many cases food. Too many people at the same time trying to use computers. Chromebook learning versus face-to-face. Yes, we see the Zoom screen. Lack of support from parents.



The physical conditions are different. They're not at school. They may not have appropriate heat. They may not have the people around them that they're used to having to support their learning. They've got a different kind of adults. Those may be very positive adults, they may be no adults, they may be all by themselves, or they may be adults who are really struggling with their own challenges, whether mental illness, violence, et cetera.

Those emotional conditions, many of you are writing about the lack of support, feeling confused, boredom, I saw "still in bed", what a great learning environment for school? Stress, grief, depression, anxiety, loneliness, boredom, fear. Just in terms of their lack of reliable internet, where are they at in their heads? What are they thinking? I think one of the things that we really do need to be tuning into is the uncertainty, when is this going to end? That kind of uncertainty really places a cognitive strain when we think about what are the conditions, the trauma that's increased, and the effect that has on learning.

The headlines related to the opioid epidemic. I don't know if you've seen any of them. We're going to dive into them a little bit more, but in particular, this one that says, "Deaths of despair; Coronavirus pandemic could push suicide drug deaths as high as 150 000." This was back in June. Actually, that was published in May. A study looking at what was happening. If you haven't heard the term "deaths of despair", I think it's an important term, that suicide, alcohol, drug-related deaths. Opioids are only one part of that, but they're an important part of that. It is something in the context that we're seeing overall. Also, I say headlines, you notice only one of these looks like it might be an official thing, an issue brief.

I do want to encourage, for those of you who want to learn more about this, the American Medical Association actually is publishing every couple weeks updates on an issue brief that's looking at what is happening with particularly opioid-related fatalities and overdoses. These headlines tell us there's lots going on including this one down here. Pandemic drives alcohol sales and raises concerns about substance use.



It is true and the CDC has confirmed that opioid-related deaths from opioid drug overdoses are increasing. Some of these early figures were hugely alarming. Just to give you a context, drug overdose deaths in the United States, in 2018, 70,000, that actually had been a decrease. We had two years of a decrease. Now we're seeing an increase again.

The increase started before COVID, but it is accelerating. These figures are particularly scary. These are comparing- that time, for example, in Syracuse in 2020, compared to Syracuse, New York, 2019. What the CDC is now saying, it's about a 10% difference. There have been very, very few actual studies of youth. There's been more look at adults, but very few studies of youth. This particular study is interesting because it's done on college students, they were comparing Fall of 2019 to March through May of 2020 on mental health and substance use issues. I want to actually walk us back to this slide in terms of the deaths from opioid use before I talk more about that second slide because this issue about deaths from opioid use is across the board. At least 40 states are actually reporting those increases in deaths, and as I said, most of the attention and the data is pretty broad. It doesn't break down youth through adults.

I did recently attend a conference with the American Public Health Association a couple of weeks ago, and Riverside County, California, a pretty large county in California, epidemiologists were saying that they are actually getting real-time surveillance data and they have seen the same increase in overdose deaths, 10% to 15% increase among young adults. I do want to highlight because some of you may not be as familiar with what the issues are around deaths and overdoses. The big driving factor is fentanyl. Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid and it is not only laced in heroin, it is also laced in methamphetamines.

We are seeing significant increases in deaths. Again, some of these risk and protective factors but also related to people including using alone, not necessarily with other people, so that Narcan, that saving drug, that life-saving medication that can bring somebody back to life who's had an opioid-related overdose, they may not have their buddy there.



That puts them at greater risk of dying. There's also changes in drug supply during this time, and we'll talk a little bit as we dive into the risk factors changes and access for our youth.

Going back to this chart, this is actually very interesting. There are only two studies, I've looked at this very closely, that have been done specifically on youth. One in Canada and it was done so early in the epidemic, it was Canadian youth. It did show, in fact, early on in March when the epidemic first came on, in this study of teens, there appeared to be an overall small increase in substance use. They asked about the three weeks before and the three weeks after. This actually, like I said, compared Fall to Spring. It's interesting because you see depression, that red, is greater but you see suicidal ideation was slightly less, anxiety was the same, and actually a decrease in substance use reported. Again, probably related to- these are college students, all of a sudden, who are locked into their dorms, without much access to peers.

Overall worsening of mental health, impairing their academics that people are reporting, but the truth is we have very little surveillance data. We are really mostly left to ask ourselves the question. I've asked lots of people this question. Absolutely. The question is, "What is happening with our youth and substance use? Which risk factors are going up, which are going down, which protective factors are going up and which protective factors are going down?"

There is an overall sense, I'm going to tell you the conclusion first, thank you for the time check, but the conclusion is that for students who are not using substances, there's a sense that there actually may be a delay in the initiation, and that's great news. Delaying initiation the longer, the worst thing that can happen is a student- a youth who starts at the age of 12, 11, 10, 9, that tends to happen in peer situations, and those kids very well may be being protected. For those who already are using substances, the sense is we're seeing increased use and potentially increased danger issues, which is where some of those, like I said, those opioid-related deaths.



What are the risk factors that are going down? Risk factors like access. That's a big one. If you're not around your peers, you have less access. There's still the risk of access at home and our kids are endlessly creative, meaning they find ways to sneak out of the house. They find a way to meet up with their friends. Our school and after-school folks can tell you that they do still find a way to be together, but there is less gathering, less parties, a little less lack of supervision. In terms of protection, there is that protection going on. In addition for many students, not all, there's more parental supervision. That varies, again, some parents are out working still, they have two, three jobs, they're not home, or they're dealing with their own mental health issues, they're dealing with taking care of siblings. However, the risk factors and protective factors that are changing that increase the risk for substance use are also important to pay attention to. You captured many of those in your comments. Thank you. We have increased risk factors such as boredom, decrease in that protective factor of meaningful activity engagement, increased risk factors related to mental health, that anxiety, depression, grief, loss, stress, whatever we can do to support our kids around their mental health and their resilience.

I think we also are going to see an increased risk factor, school failure. Cedric, I'm sure you're going to address that a little bit. That lack of school engagement, lack of school failure, while may not today be leading to substance use, six months to a year from now, something that we're really going to have to watch out for. Then there is potentially that home access, if it's those opioid painkillers, that liquor, the marijuana that the parents potentially are using, there could be increased risk at home and then screen time. Screen time is actually a risk factor for substance use.

On the flip side, in terms of protective factors, decreases in school connectedness, that decrease in peer connectedness, positive peer connectedness, that's going to have a long-term impact on our kids. Whatever we can do now to build up supports, build up connection, to decrease those risk factors around mental health is going to make it much better for our students in terms of substance use in the future.



I'm going to pause, have the opportunity-- I see one question in the opioid deaths, "Would you have an N number rather than percent increase?" Yes. If we are looking in 2019, to have gone up to 75,000 drug-related deaths and you add 10% to that, I mean, we're talking about an increase in deaths of somewhere, and again, if the estimates are maybe 10,000 additional deaths due to drug-related overdoses and 8,000 to 10,000 from opioids, that's a lot.

[silence]

I don't see another question. At this point, I'm going to have the pleasure of introducing Michelle Baroni. I think Michelle, you're going to get-- I see one more question, "Is it true that near 24% overdoses are actually suicides?" When we report on drug-related overdoses, suicides are actually reported separately. These are unintentional drug overdoses. When we say 75,000 people have died, we're talking about unintentional that are expected to be unintentional. Thank you for your question. Michelle Baroni, can we give her access?

**Michelle:** We do. Hi, everyone. I am so, so excited to be here. Let me just introduce you to me a little bit more. Again, my name is Michelle Baroni and I am the director of the Prevention Clubhouse in Atlanta named Club Mixtura. I have worked in the prevention field for 14 years. I'm excited to give you all some information about what we have been doing with our youth in the age of COVID, what effective strategies we are using to meet the needs of the folks in my neck of the woods, and who knows? Maybe you and I are going through the exact same issues and we can speak about what we've been going through, maybe it's the same, maybe it's different. I would love to learn from you all as well about what's happening in your neck of the woods.

Before we start, this is what we already know. There's nothing new about what's happening with opioid use prior to the COVID hitting. We know that there have been 450,000 deaths since '99, that's roughly 130 deaths a day. Then we have our own youth



reporting to the CDC, letting them know that they themselves are misusing prescription drugs. It's not like it's a secret.

Now that the COVID has hit, some of these numbers have obviously changed. Do we know the full truth? Probably not because kids aren't in school to report it, and that's where usually they do the reporting. It's interesting and it's something that needs to be stopped. Are we the end-all-be-all solution for everything? Probably not, but we can make our little mark to lessen those numbers. When I was asked to make this presentation for the ORN, I actually enlisted in my youth to ask them what do they think. First of all, they didn't even know what a risk or protective factor was. I had to explain that to them to make sure that they knew what these terms meant, and what they thought. The list that I've compiled is a list of what the youth and I have come up together. The things that they came up with, and we're going to start first with the risk factors, they came up with cultural disparities, discrimination, the COVID in itself, the different cancellations, and mental illnesses that they themselves or their parents have been going through. This is straight from the horse's mouth from my babies because I call them my babies.

Cultural disparities, we tend to work primarily with the Hispanic community, and some of our families so happen to be undocumented. They have not been able to collect any benefits when it comes to government handouts such as the unemployment that was like \$600 a week thing. Many of our families dealt with poverty. Work is not- they don't have work. For them, it's been very difficult to have that financial burden on them to not be able to provide for their families, and that is a huge contribution to- possibly a contributing factor for substance abuse.

That was one of the things that they have themselves had mentioned to the group as far as what is hurting them. We also spoke about discrimination. It's no lie, and it's no a myth that we have been dealing with years and years of racism and discrimination amongst minorities. I can speak on behalf of the Latino community because that's the community that I belong to. We can only tell from what we've seen on on television, on the news, on



social media what the African-American population has been going through, and I believe Cedric is going to talk about that more into detail. When I'm speaking about the Hispanic population, it's something that I have to deal with with my youth, and seeing how their mental health is being affected due to the racism and the discrimination they have to deal with. That's a very toxic recipe for substance abuse and is another risk factor for them.

COVID-19 and cancellations, I'm going to put that together. That in itself is a crazy contributing factor. Our kids are bored. My kids are so bored. They are Zoomed out. They don't want to do this anymore. They're done with it. They're in school all day in Zoom, and then they have to log onto the after-school program with me, and continue to Zoom. This craving of social interaction is a necessity for them, and not having that element is detrimental to their mental health, but those are the risk factors. It's always easy to find the why. Why is this happening? What's wrong with the world? That's a very easy thing to do. I like to focus on the protective factors. What do we have that are good things in our lives that can help these youths?

Instead of focusing so much on the negative, my mantra in life is to focus on more of the positive things in life and the why not. What are our strengths that we should all focus on that can and will solve or prevent further cases? Peer-to-peer support. We all said that the kids are Zoomed out. They don't want to do this anymore. However, I believe and this is what we've done, and we've implemented with our youth is instead of talking about education, which is very important, set aside some time for youth to be- give youth time to vent. We don't have to always be talking education. There's a time and a place for it, but then also give children and youth a time to vent and discuss how they're feeling that day. Nothing more powerful than being heard and listened to as a way for someone to just, "Ugh, I don't like how my day went. I was bored. This doesn't feel right. Can we do something different?" Get their intake, and that's super important for us to take into account. Also the adult mentors, that's one of the things that we really do focus on is making sure that our mentors who are educated folks, who speak the language, are able to



give valid advice to our youth. That's super important and I want to make sure that you guys are the adults that your youth trust. They have already developed relationships with you all because of your expertise in the field and giving you that liberty to speak competently in you is very powerful and life-changing.

The community is a great protective factor for these youth and for the families. I can speak in Atlanta, I'm sure that there are certain things, and if you have anything going on in your neck of the woods, please let me know about that. I know that in Atlanta we've had different food drives. We've had back-to-school bashes where people are getting class materials for the upcoming school year. Right now we're working on a Christmas drive called Christmas Child, being able to provide different gifts for children in need. That is something that we really do need to make sure that if your community does not know about those resources, getting them in touch with those different resources for you to be able to help them out.

Sense of community. It's a strong protective factor that not many people take advantage of. Not saying because they don't want to, it's simply because they just don't know. That's what we're here for. We're here to provide that access, mend that gap, be that little bridge to any needs that they may have. Then family support. Family support, regardless if it's like Shelly had said before, many parents are working, they probably don't have much time to meet with their parents, but there's also a lot of parents who- and I saw in one of the comments that said parents are not teachers. You're right. They aren't teachers and it's very difficult and they're dealing with their own problems as well dealing with having to become the all-encompassing parents/teachers/homemaker. It's hard for them too.

Knowing that the family unit has to be strengthened so that everyone can be involved is a new normal for everyone. We're all trying to get into this together and they're not alone. Having that family unit strengthened where communication and love is there, is made a priority, it needs to be made a priority, has the potential to end this opioid epidemic, I



believe so. When youth have that love and support, it's the catalyst to be able to move on from being absent from drug abuse.

These are one of the main things I've done with my families even before the pandemic hit. It's taking into consideration the cultures in which- the clients that you work for. When meeting with the new members, I like to have a conversation with my parents, with the families. I want mom, I want dad. If he's in the picture, if mom's in the picture, if they're a foster family, I want to know everyone involved, and we want to make sure to get to know the families, what their expectations are from us. We want to know what are their needs, what are the things that they're going to need from us, and also to take into consideration what the local and national laws are, with knowing what their needs are. Also, how these laws affect their families and the clients.

I know that for us, we had an issue where they were setting up checkpoints. ICE was setting up checkpoints right outside of the elementary schools, elementary and middle schools. Parents would drop off their kids, and as they were leaving to go to work or home, ICE would have these checkpoints right outside of schools to see if they had their license. Many, many, many parents were deported or sent to ICE prisons because of this. What are we going to do to help solve that problem for our clients so they don't have to worry about, "Is my mom or dad are going to go to jail? Or they're going to be deported back to their home country?" We have to work hand in hand so that we will be able to make sure that they are taken care of. Towards the left, I'm going to describe a little bit about- just a face like an image of an example of what is a risk factor for our youth. I'm not going to say that the police are a risk factor because they're there to protect us. However, in the mentality of a minority who is dealing with certain issues that not everyone understands, this is for them a risk factor, for them. It's not to say that police are bad people, or that they're the cause for all drama or family issues, but in the mind of a child whose parents have been deported because of this, for them, it's an issue.



What am I doing? What can I do as a prevention educator? As a director, how do I protect my youth? Because I still want them to receive that prevention education. It's important that they get this information, but if they can't get to me, how do I make sure that they're safe? Transportation was the biggest, biggest issue for my youth. My parents could not drive their youth to the clubhouse. We actually have an elementary school right around the corner where they were doing checkpoints at least once a month. When the parents found out that we moved to this location, they said, "I'm sorry, my kid can't come. I can't pick them up." I said, "No, we're not going to do this. We're going to buy this bus, and it doesn't matter the spending because we can't provide services. We don't have a program unless we have your kids. How am I going to take care of your kids? I'm going to provide this bus."

For parents' meetings, we provide transportation. We make sure that they have everything that's necessary, so they don't have to be in fear of receiving education. Since the COVID hit, obviously, there's no transporting them to my office. How do we fix that problem? We develop deliveries, a delivery system. In its deliveries, we will hand out parents if they need food, if they need [unintelligible 00:37:23] I know some parents needed laundry detergent, they weren't working, the breadwinner from the house was not working. How do they get their things that they can't go to the store? They can't drive. We'll deliver it to you. That's what our budget is for. Our budget is to take care of you. You're part of Club Mixtura. We want to make sure that you are part of the family and then we're going to take care of you.

We delivered all these packages. In order to also meet our deliverables, we have to continue with our classes. We have to continue with our healthy alternative activities. How do we do that if they don't have the materials? This bus has been a godsend to us for us to be able to make sure that all of our parents and all of our youth have the materials they need to be able to follow along through Zoom. Regardless of Zoom, we want to make sure that it's interactive and it's fun. Education can be fun. It doesn't have to be so strict, but let's give them.



In the next slide I actually did- a part of our grant, we had to do healthy alternative activities. We had to give nutritional classes, we have to do our therapy. I was like, "How am I going to do this? How can I give a healthy alternative class without being there, present with them?" My solution, oh, man, it brought me anxiety, trying to figure out what I was going to do with my kids. I felt like YouTube was my savior.

On YouTube, we were actually able to go- we were able to make exercise videos, follow along. There's nothing more powerful than seeing the people that you see every day. Remember, you are their mentors. We're adult mentors and they want to see our faces because they have developed these relationships. One thing I didn't care for much when I saw in other videos was they were just grabbing links of other folks and passing it to the kids saying, "Do this this day."

I didn't like it very much. What I decided to do is I don't care if I look like a fool, I'm going to make sure that when I turn in this video, you're going to see me doing the exercises with you, and let's do it together. You can see that we're in this together. You're not alone. We also did on the right side, you see me and my nephews, we did a tie dye activity. I literally went to each one of the houses, each participant's home with a T-shirt, with the colors of their choice to dye their shirts with, gloves, rubber bands, everything, then we made this video for them to follow along. We watched the video, and then we did a Zoom demonstration about how to do this. Other ideas that you guys can do, we did a frappuccino. These kids like their little frappuccinos, but it's expensive. You realize that we're spending \$4 or \$5 on a three-quarters cup of ice with a little bit of cream and some sugar. We decided, "Hey, how do we save some money? How do we get to taste a delicious frappuccino? Let's do this together." There's so many different ideas, just be creative. I really, really love doing these things with them because it's something that's interesting to them, and they're able to follow along. They're like, "Huh, I'm never gonna spend \$5 at Starbucks ever again in my life because there's no point in doing it."



I'm so excited that we are able to, as crazy as it sounds, that COVID is like an oxymoron in the fact that it's still a good thing. We're given time to relax, to sit down, to reflect, and to be together, and to appreciate the good stuff when we have it. As horrible as it sounds, yes, we focus a lot on the numbers and how horrible it is and how horrible we've been dealing with this pandemic, but when everything is said and done, and God willing there's a cure, and we're able to figure out what's happening and we can figure everything out, once we get back, we'll now be able to appreciate what we really did have, and those close relationships that we have with each other are going to be so much more meaningful.

It's going to be a great day when we can come back together and we can be friends again. Not in this Doom world, which we've been doing pretty well. Instead of thinking about the negative, how horrible we've been doing, it's great to think about how great we have been taking care of ourselves, taking care of our loved ones, and then coming back. Thank you guys so much. Do you have any questions? I have some questions from-- Oh, I can't find them.

**Shelley:** Did you see that Michelle? What is the average age of your youth group?

**Michelle:** I work with youth ages 12 to 17 during the school year. Now, during the summer, and this was horrible in the summer, I actually work with youth ages from 6 to 17. I usually divide them into three groups. I have Group A, Group B, and Group C. Group A is 6 to 8. Group B is 9 to 11. Group C is 12 to 14. We divide it so that they can be able to receive their prevention curriculum according to their age. Super duper, duper interesting, and it was really heartbreaking not to be able to do the summer camp last year because that's the one thing that kids just look for. I'm sure that they appreciate more my summer camp now that they couldn't come last year.

**Shelley:** Yes. Somebody commented Michelle on the gratitude attitude, and looking really throughout your presentation, like what can we do? How can we look towards the



future, building that future, positive teacher orientation? Can you share a little bit about language, dealing with language barriers during this time, and some ways that in a virtual setting how that- [crosstalk]

**Michelle:** Well, language barrier has never been an issue for us because from the get-go, when I'm hiring my staff, I want to make sure that they're fully bilingual. I know that I work with a whole all Latino staff, so my staff needs to be able to communicate in both English and Spanish. A lot of my folks use us as a resource to be able to communicate. I have no problem doing that, it's within our contract. Case management, absolutely. You're there to help your client and I'm there with every love and care in the world to be able to say, "Whatever you need. If you need me to translate for you, I will be there for you because that's my job and that's what I'm supposed to do."

Luckily, if you have a need, if you see that you have a large population group of your clients who are of a certain group or cultural group, then there needs to be a representation with your staff.

That for me in my case is bilingual speaking Spanish and English. We've also started-- The Portuguese population, Brazilian population is starting to grow in Gwinnett County. We're looking into hiring a Portuguese-speaking person so that we can make sure that everyone is covered and no one is left out.

**Shelley:** It's so interesting that you say that because I think one of the things the virtual environment has allowed us to connect to have staff who are able to speak different languages, reach out. One thing that really struck me is you are using every tool at your disposal, with the guiding mantra of how do I show I care? That we know in resilience that a presence of a caring adult in a committed relationship is one of the most important factors in determining the resilience of a young person, which includes whether or not they use substances.



I heard the examples of the physical ways you're reaching out. That you're actually going to their doorstep, not inside their house. You're not taking that COVID risk. I'm curious what you're finding that really is resonating with your families and your kids in terms of that connection. Is it because you're saying contact me for anything? Are you making phone calls, texts? How are you [crosstalk]--

**Michelle:** Oh, absolutely. We have developed a text group. Like I said, you guys, social media, your phones, as crazy as it may sound, is one of your biggest assets. Kids speak through their phone. They like that. They like texting. They like Snapchat. They like TikTok. Use these tools not so much as, "You shouldn't be on your phone all day" That's how they speaking. Speak their language.

I have a Snapchat group with my youth. I have a texting group with my youth. If they need to communicate with me any way possible, do it in any of the forms. I'd rather you come and speak to me. If you feel more comfortable speaking to me through Snapchat, do it. If you feel more comfortable through TikTok, do it. I want to make sure that they have any possibility to be able to speak to me at any moment.

Yes, those text groups are great. They literally even ask for homework help on the text message group. They will take some screenshot of their homework, post it on the group and two or three of the kids say, "Yes, I had a problem with that question as well." Then we can all figure out how to solve this math problem together. Your phones are a great, great little tool to be able to make sure that everyone has that little help or communication.

**Shelley:** They are incredible tools. One thing that I took away from what you were sharing is make a fool of yourself, find as many different channels in the language of our youth and our families- because obviously for our families, our adults that we're working with, it's a little different- to reach out and using that wide variety of channels which are available to us today.



Any last comment or question before we move on to Cedric?

**Michelle:** I think Tamriel had a question, her hand was raised. Can you type your question, Tamriel, please? Well, we'll have more time. Before I go, I just want to say that we're going to have another webinar in December and we're going to talk about proper storage. We're going to talk about lockboxes. This is important stuff for us to know how to take care of our kids during the time of the pandemic. It's going to be so interesting.

Shelley is going to do an amazing job. If you can, please sign up for that. Cedric and I will also be there to be able to talk a little bit more about what we're dealing with in our communities. Cedric in New York, me in Atlanta. Definitely sign up for this. I think you're going to absolutely love it. Thank you guys for being so wonderful, and I hope you enjoy the rest of the presentation.

**Shelley:** Great. Thank you, Michelle, for being so wonderful. Cedric Hall, school building leader.

**Cedric:** For me it's afternoon. For some of you I know it's still maybe morning, but good afternoon, good morning wherever you may be. Again, I always got to say, I have a younger sibling who actually lives in Spain. We've always got a broad guest and folks like that so good evening for those of you who may be with us as well.

My name is Cedric Hall. I'm here representing Carlton Hall Consulting, LLC. Really exciting time to be joining with Shelly and her team and the ORN Network to really talk about what it looks like for youth in this time. I'm going to connect it back to the curriculum we started with last week because I'm an educator. That's what we do. We talk about it in the day setting. We know that by laws, most of youth are in the day setting on a school structure and system.

My presentation is going to be very much anchored in some norming, some definitions, and as well as some lesson plan work and some content work. But I'm really, really



excited to interweave a lot of what these cultural considerations are, a lot of what these risks and these protective factors are. Specifically, kind of playing to Michelle and her connection culturally with the Latino community and the Latinx community, I'm going to be representing and speaking very much from a core perspective of the African American and Black community.

With that, strap in because we're about to have fun for about 30 minutes or so.

This is what I need you to do first. As Shelley had mentioned before, I'm currently a principal of a school all-boys, specifically 99.2% Black, the remaining being Latin young men in Queens, New York, but I've also been in Newark, New Jersey, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. When we talk about Philadelphia, we're talking North Philly, we're talking Germantown. When we're talking about New York, we're talking about Brownsville, Brooklyn, Harlem, New York, East Flatbush, Brooklyn, we're talking about Jamaica, Queens.

We're talking about these urban demographics where opioids and substance abuse are already so naturally ingrained into so much of the fabric of the culture, that there's a societal acceptance that's a little different than in many other regions of the country; and with that, quarantine, COVID, the risk factors? Oh, man, y'all are about to tell me what they are.

When we talk about the mountainous amount that is risk factors in these communities, and we talk about needing of escapism and things that help us endure 2020, we're going to find that there has to be a very, very clear intention, as Michelle brought in her presentation, to doing this work beyond our traditional walls of operation. Doing this work beyond our traditional walls of operation.

For me, that's a school building. For Michelle, it may have been offices or a center. For Shelley, it may have been her offices and it may have been a core place. For some of us, our walls are the airplane and hotel rooms, but we don't do that anymore. How do we still



connect with youth, get them in action and connected at a school-based level beyond our four walls of comfort?

With that, I'm going to go through an activity first. I told y'all to strap in so I'll try to be as-- No, I won't. We're going to do this. We're in a crisis, right? We're going to actually approach this thing like a crisis. This is what I need for everyone to do for me if you're comfortable in participating. I need for you to find the asterisk button on your keyboard. Make sure you know where it is, make sure you have it. Find the asterisk button on your keyboard.

I just opened up the chatbox. This is what I need you to do. If the following statement applies to you-- And you've probably done something very familiar to this before, but we're going to set the frame. Mindset is at the forefront of this presentation. We're going to actually frame what our mind, where we should be- our expectations for our mindset.

With this, put an asterisk in the chatbox if English is your first language. Put an asterisk in the chatbox if English is your first language. Cool. Still coming. Somebody was just like, "No." [laughs] Asterisks in the chatbox if the statement applies to you, okay? Put an asterisk in the chatbox if one or both of your parents graduated from college. That's a lot of asterisks.

Put an asterisk in the chatbox if there have ever been times in your life when you had to skip a meal because you did not have food in your home. Put an asterisk in the chatbox if you grew up in an urban setting. Somebody put two asterisks like my setting was super urban. I hear you. I get it. Put an asterisk in the chatbox if you studied the culture or the history of your ancestors in elementary school. Put an asterisk in the chatbox if you grew up in a house where family had health insurance. Put an asterisk in the chatbox if you were encouraged by someone in your home to go to college.

I'm going to stop there because I could go on for a long time. I want folks to quickly skim the chat if you can. Quickly skim it. You're going to see that there is a very large



discrepancy between the asterisk participation of some questions, versus the asterisk participation in others. Now, list what you believe to be risk factors in the African American or Black community when it comes to youth and adolescents and their possible connections to substance abuse.

[silence]

Excellent. Poverty, money, access, lack of healthcare, employment, generational. I'm going to go back to that one in a little bit. Norms. We see norms as a typical positive statement, but sometimes norms are, again, generationally or comprehensively negative. Again, poverty, et cetera. Educational opportunities, trauma. [exclaims] Trauma. That's a great transportation deficit. Same with Michelle and her community, absolutely. Lack of accurate representation.

All right, so I'm going to reduce the chat. Now that I think we've framed the mindset of what we're going to be talking about, what some of these risk factors are, I'm going to reference many of the risk factors you gave and presented with if they're applicable. Then I'm going to talk about what that might look like in a school setting, and how you can take these risk factors and, hopefully, our own reflection of bias. What that looks like in the school setting, and how we can get youth in this time specifically, with all of those risk factors and all those biases and things that were already in place, now we have to manage it in a distance learning scenario. Let's talk about that.

I'm trying, Rachel. There we go. What I want to do first is define for you all what it looks like to have healthy youth. When I say life skills that's that curriculum we introduced last week. What it looks like to have healthy youth and life skills curriculum partnerships. Life skills partnerships is also going to be synonymous for adults. The presenters, the people facilitating this curriculum. What does it look like to have a healthy relationship and partnership between youth/life skills curriculum and the adults that are going to be delivering?



First, you have to integrate youth realistic perspectives and skills with curriculum and adult experience. If you're in front of youth and you're talking to youth, and you're telling them what they need to do and how to manage their stress, but you have no idea what their triggers are culturally, they're going to pick up on it.

I'm going to tell you this right now. I've been working with youth, specifically high school and middle school scholars, for the last 14 years. I've actually done about four years of elementary as well. I can tell you right now that even my three-year-old son out the womb knew who to go to, who not to go to, who was safe to some degree, who was not safe. It's fascinating how at infancy there's an understanding of who's safe, who's not, who's real, who's not. Kids pick up on those things.

We have to integrate realistic perspectives because when we try to do so from a secondary, but more importantly, a tertiary perspective, kids pick up on it and then it's deemed as inauthentic. You got to make sure that you offer all the parties of the youth an opportunity to make decisions. Specifically, in the Black community and specifically with Black youth and Black families, there's a feeling that their voices are not heard. That there's no value to what happens.

When we talk about the integration of a life skills curriculum, or the preventions of substance abuse, or mitigating the risk factors, or figuring out how to navigate it all in COVID; if there is no scholar voice at the table, you're going to be dead in the water with whatever perspective, whatever initiative, whatever endeavor you're trying to put forward. Because going back to last week's presentation I talked about ownership, and the difference between ownership and then passively just accepting what's being given to you.

If kids don't have a voice at the table, there is nothing to fuel that intrinsic motivation, which then fuels for them ownership, which then allows them to make positive and healthy decisions around substance abuse. Which gives them a grit and an anchoring



during COVID when I could normally just go and escape, or when it's crazy in my house, or if substance abuse for me culturally- not necessarily in the Black demographic but in certain aspects of urban Black demographic- if substance abuse is something that the data shows is prevalent within the community, at least I could go to school and escape it for eight to nine hours.

At least I could go to Michelle's after-school program, and I don't even have to be 10 feet away from it, I can be as many feet or as many miles away from it because I don't want to be tempted. I'm young. I'm 11, 12, 13 to 18. Science says do whatever people tell you not to. That's the science. It is what it is. That's the reason why the United States of America has one of the highest alcohol fatality rates in the world. This is my theory and it's proven by science.

Everywhere else in the world has a lower age to consume alcohol. The United States has one of the highest. Hence, when you say you can't do something for extended periods of time, natural rebellion kicks in, and then we don't do a good job of preparing them for an extended a long way to accessing these adult substances, so then we leave them out there on their own to fight their own nature.

We as adults struggle with that. We as adults struggle with it, and sometimes we need mini-steps to get over it, and we need all of these workshops that we got to sign up and pay tens of thousands of dollars for consultants to help us as adults to manage these things. How can we expect an 11-year-old to 18-year-old to do it as well?

In the home, linked and bonded with the trauma, it's tough, folks. It doesn't mean it's everybody. Obviously, nothing is absolute or totalitarian. Just as Michelle gave a caveat. It doesn't mean at all police presence is a risk factor, but it may mean that for certain people and certain communities attached to a certain history and certain norms established in certain neighborhoods, yes, it could be. It could be.



I promise you, Shelley, we're going to get through the slides a lot faster than this, but at the end, we have to set the foundation for these things first, right?

Scholars have to be able to understand that they can recognize the value of their contribution with each other. We got to praise them, we got to do the things. Michelle, fantastic. Put human faces and real connection in relationships in front of them to understand what you want them to do. You got to make sure that you allow youth and adults to work in full partnership. Again, going back to their voices being fully heard.

What partnership is not. I can tell you this right off the bat. I'm going to go through these a little quicker because we already talked about some of them. Tokenism is not partnership. We sometimes fall guilty to dangling children in front of initiatives because it's cool and maybe gets us more funding. [mimics] We got to do this. Hey, who's our go-to that we can speak in front of the microphone or put him in front of a funder? Go get Jonathan, go get Sarah, go get whoever because they're our go-tos. Let's dangle them in front. But then we never asked them to the table to make decisions on what it is we're dangling them to promote.

Hey, Shelley. Hey, Brooke. Hey, Michelle. Hey, Rachel. Do me a favor, put on a smile, do the things, be great at it. What are we doing? Here's your talking points. We give kids talking points, but we don't bring them to the table. They're not tokens. They are the people we serve and we work for. Make sure you give them tasks, hold them accountable in the same way that you would otherwise. I talked about ownership and we talked about what that may look like as well.

Here's a really great definition for what youth development is. Because if we don't understand development, then we don't understand the on-ramp to get on the highway for progress. Let's define and norm what youth development is for us. Youth development is the acquisition of attitudes, competencies, values, and social skills that will carry you forward into successful adulthood. That is why we're all here.



We're all here to figure out how we as a collective village-- And I'm going to use the term village because culturally that's how we speak because of our origin as people of Black and Brown descent, specifically African Americans. What does it look like for the village to come together and make sure that we're getting kids where they need to be on the highway of youth development?

We have to understand that these are our access points. Exit 1A will take you to attitude boulevard. Exit 2C will make sure you get off at competencies. We have to make sure that we understand what they are. Otherwise, we're just driving on a highway with no destination and kids go nowhere. Then we wonder why the data negatively increases.

What are the benefits of some of these things? Make sure that you've had leadership opportunities. We're building character agency and independence with them and independent thinking for them as well. What are we doing? Get them involved. Get them involved in the community. Scholars will opt out when you give them opportunity to do so, so eliminate the opt-out option. Give them options of what they want to do when you tell them where you need them to be.

At the end of the day, you will do community service. You will understand your community. [mimics] I don't want to do no community service. I don't want to get out there. How? Didn't you walk through the community to get to the doors of the school? What you mean you don't want to do anything for the community? You are the community. But now that we're doing this community work because you want to see change, therefore, you must be a part of it, these are your options on how to do so. But build that into the opportunities of your day program.

Youth gain all kinds of business etiquette and all kinds of things of that nature. As we saw with a lot of the social justice movement, a lot of what we would deem a high level of collegiate, professional traits; they were able to embody, collectively move, and we saw results happen in this country, hopefully. Adults will see the value in youth as well.



We can't keep looking at kids as subjects, or subordinates, or less than. We work for children, period. If that's not your core mindset, then you're not in the right business of working with youth. Communities will be enhanced as an end result.

There's a number of effective elements that are there. They learn to establish goals, make some decision-making, and they make a lot of commitment to high levels of advocacy and efficacy for themselves, as well as they understand their purpose. If you give them a role of responsibility in the work, they understand their purpose. If you tell them that their job right now is to be the best scholar possible, you are assigned the title of--

I, one year for my introductory set of students, gave them all a job offer letter. I gave them a job offer letter and they said why am I getting a job offer letter? I said because my father taught me something very early. I remember, I was not doing something right at school. My father was huge on school. I wasn't doing it. I said, well, I ain't got time for school. I don't want to do it anyway. You got to go to work. At least you get a paycheck for your job.

My father looked at me. He said, well, the chair you're sitting in is your paycheck, the roof you're under is your paycheck, this meal coming to the table is the paycheck. Honestly, you're more in control of your paycheck than I am because it's your grades on a report card that serves as your statement. As far as I'm concerned, you have an incomplete statement. When you frame it like that for me, I understand my job, my role, my learning target. When we do that for scholars, they have ownership and autonomy in a way that they don't typically have.

Briefly, there's a few more as well; training, participation and value, room for growth, et cetera.

Now, I want to go back and revisit some of the pieces that we were doing last week, as it pertains to the three engagements. Again, behavioral engagement, being the focusing on participation in academic, social, and co-curricular activities. Emotional engagement,



focusing really a lot more on the extent of nature and its positive and negative reaction for kids to be able to make decisions. Cognitively is really involving their participation in academic settings.

Again, I'm a school educator. We're talking about what that looks like for them in the day to set them up better for success, to receive what Michelle has to offer them in the CBO hours.

Going back to this lesson plan that we talked about before; resilience. How does it look for us to talk about resilience for kids and what it looks like for them to continue to weather 2020? Honestly, the funny thing about this presentation and the culture of things is that we talk about COVID-19 like it was the thing of the year, and it was. It was huge. Reset the whole globe.

For African Americans and Black and Brown folks, we don't see 2020 in isolation of just a global pandemic that happened. We experience four or five pandemics at its peak at the same time in the same calendar year. You want to talk about trauma? You want to talk about mental health? The last thing that kids are really trying to hear about right now, honestly, is school. Especially when we don't even know if they're going, not going in-person, not in-person, hybrid, the start day is this day, cancellation. Am I on a computer? Am I on my Google Classroom? In a Zoom?

We got to talk to them more about how to weather 2020, and not just about formulas and anecdotes. How do we get them to do that in the community, such as African Americans and digitally in this form? Google Meets, Google Forms, and the G Suite is such an amazing tool. I'm going to give you guys some more resources as well as we go along, some electronic resources, but you need to be video conferencing with children.

The thing that burns me up the quickest in this era and has been since March is when I see cameras off with teachers-- Sorry, Rachel. This is not about you right now. I know.



You're doing Ops work. Sorry, Rachel. Kids need face-to-face interaction. It is probably the greatest, most eroding factor to this whole 2020 experience. Kids lost connection.

Shelley talked about that in her introduction as well, as a huge risk factor but also a negative- or a inverse thing to the positive factor. That school connectivity, she said, that we lost. That ability for them to work together. How do I at 14, when everything in my body says run around with my friends, talk with my friends, be with my friends, when every atom in me is saying you- well, is doing that, but I can't; how am I resilient? How do I weather that? How do I not turn to-- I see my mommy or daddy. I see they calm down. They be hot, they be upset, they fight, and then they go take some of that brown liquor and they calm down. I see dad, he rolls the blunt, why don't I just go ahead when he's leaving or what- am I going to drawer and do the thing.

I see mom is stressed beyond belief in 2020. How does she handle it? She takes that pill and that thing and she calms down, so I just want to calm down because 2020 is tough. 2020 is tough being Black and African American in 2020. 2020 is tough being in quarantine. 2020 is tough seeing politicians do what they do. 2020 is tough because I can't see my friends.

My kids don't have sports. A high school, especially all-boys, we're talking-- I'm going to turn a little bit because the sun came out. I'm talking basketball, no homecomings, no varsity games. We have to understand that children are not living a child's life right now at all. It's wrong, by no fault of any of ours, but it's tough. To Shelley's point of earlier; we are- at the academic and the education space and the day programming, we are seriously fearful the next two to three- next two generations, but specifically, the next two to three graduating cohorts and class of students.

Resilience. Use the G Suite, super important. Equity Maps. If you have not heard of this program before, this is the thing that allows kids to talk to each other. It's a platform that's specifically built for Socratic seminars. If you're not familiar what a Socratic seminar is



or who Socrates was go ahead, Google it. This is a platform that allows scholars to represent themselves in a way that their most comfortable. Either anonymously or not, or in a back office where the teacher would particularly- or a facilitator- could understand whatever norms you set up for discussion.

You can track the threads of the discussion with the kids on the media. You can see who's responding to who, what statements trigger response from other kids, where to anchor a conversation. How many kids aren't participating. Who do I need to actually pull in to the conversation? This goes especially true in certain demographics culturally, especially for demographics and places of culture where there may not be a fullest acceptance, again, of a student voice, either from the adult perspective or the cultural perspective. This is such a clutch tool because it gives students another modality to express their voices.

Stress Management, how do we do that? Well, I heard earlier Michelle was saying, "Hey, we have this deficiency in our ability to report what's going on. They used to go to school, they would run to a counselor, they would say these things. Well, how can I manage my stress and my emotional regulation that hasn't yet developed, because I'm only 14 years old, how can I get these things out, especially when I don't see them all the time?"

I mentioned this program last week and I'm going to give it to you again. It's called Bridg-it. Bridg-it is a positive social media space where kids can shout each other out, give each other badges, bitmojis, there's incentives, there's points, you can do all kinds of things. If you are running a program where you want to be able to, again, run a healthy competition amongst students to be able to acquire the content and deal with some of these things around substance abuse, these things, these risk factors, these eroding preventative factors and just dealing with 2020; Bridg-it is an amazing platform and tool for that.



The thing that's built into Bridg-it that's also beautiful is that there's a full integration of a very comprehensive reporting system that you as a scholar can do Dropboxes, or you can choose other and express a concern or a need. The company a few years ago developed this function to exclusively be for bullying- for harassment, intimidation, and bullying. They since expanded it for scholars to be able to either anonymously or otherwise report things that are issues for them. Additionally, it allows their peers to either report on their behalf, or if you need to find out some more information through a caseload study, others can contribute information for you to be able to have it in a centralized location, to be able to troubleshoot remotely how to support families.

This is the thing that we have to do. We had to create more opportunities for scholar and student and youth voice. What does it look like on the other end of things? I need to figure out how to bounce back from 2020. I'll give you a quick personal anecdote of myself. I used to be, many moons ago and many pounds lighter, a dancer. I hadn't been able to dance in about 13, 14 years or so. I remember in 2019 saying 2020 is going to be the year I want to get back to dancing.

Then COVID hits. It's one thing-- If it was like a war or something going on, those are tough things, but it should not bar me from leaving my home or depending on what side of the war you're on or the conflict, and it should not bar me from, at the very minimum, going to a dance studio. Global events and things happen, but germs and bacteria have shown the world who the real boss is.

When I can't do something as simple as dance, how do I get back to things that allow me to get it out? How I'm not going to bounce back? What am I going to have as an opportunity to invest into my already developing skill of healthy decision-making? Well, put everybody together in the same place and make something entertaining happen. How do we do that? Netflix Parties. I do Netflix Parties with my guys all the time. It is super lit. If you don't know what lit is, go ahead and look it up.



My understanding is I used some vernacular last presentation that required some defining and feel free, but if you're going to work with youth, then you need to also understand them and you need to communicate with them. So, yes, Netflix Parties are lit with my scholars and with my staff.

BAND. It's a social media contract that you can all come together. We have them separated out by grades and cohorts, so that smaller communities of youth with a lot more like-minded- we have little communities on BAND, where like-minded interests or issues can come together and speak independent of me having to put together a link and a meeting for them to do so.

Then you have to make sure they celebrate. Here's the thing that is very prominent in youth culture. Not just specifically a culture of Latin, or Black or African American, or Native American, or Asian, whatever it is. Celebration is universally from the beginning of time, next to music, even before language, a human necessity. We have somehow, in our own funk as adults dealing with 2020, forgot the need to celebrate even the most micro and smallest of things.

Our funk is allowing us to not even see opportunities of celebration even though they're knocking at our door. We have to celebrate kids. They need to know that from a far, I see you. I praise you. You are deserving of someone understanding that you're still here. You're being as resilient as you can be. You're managing the stress to the best of your ability. You're already developing strategies for your bounce-back. Even if there's a slip, I understand that you're dealing with conditions that are not natural.

Thanos snapped his fingers. I get it. We are all in a crazy place right now. Even through all of that, I'm going to celebrate you. How did we do that? StreamYard. Because you can't just celebrate kids in boxes. You got to celebrate them big for the most. There's some that are kind of- interestingly, they have their social norms and issues, but for the



most part- and I will speak very much on the African American cultural scale- celebrations are big for us.

Our baby showers are 150 to 250 people. We do- we celebrate. Culturally that's what we do. No, you can't just do it on one Zoom meeting. You got to stream that celebration to Facebook Live, YouTube, and LinkedIn, all at the same time. You got to be able to have these young men plastered on digital screens like it was Times Square. You have to give them something to show them that your efforts matter.

My school partnered up with BSN Sports and Nike. Send apparel to their houses if you can. I don't have a bus budget. I'm sorry, Michelle. I got to use good old USPS. Do what you have to do, but get celebration to and in front of kids, and allow yourself to showcase them amongst their peers and the rest of the village.

I know that I've gone quite a bunch. I don't know what my question-and-answer time is left but, folks, the thing that I want you guys to really take away and then I'll take any questions is, again, they have to have a voice. We have to increase their agency. We have to give them opportunities and best practices doing it with them and doing it of a cultural relevancy.

We have to make sure that we're putting things in front of them that will allow them to again manage that stress better, make healthier decisions, combat their risk factors, and do a much better job of increasing the reverse effect of the protective factors that we know that they have. We have to do it by way of increasing cultural literature. We have to do it by way of putting content material in them that is not, just like Michelle said, that copy and paste link and do what this other person is doing. Make it theirs.

In my school I'll tell you specifically, and then we have to get all the digital curriculum for all of this. Everything about my school is completely online, or I had the capacity to do so, but you have to put literature in front of them. I think the literature menu for my kids was one thing, but showing all of this we switched it up. Now, we need to dive a



little deeper into *A Raisin in the Sun*, and what it looks like for a Black family to be in poverty, and a young man growing up with his parents that are trying to figure out what to do. If you've never seen the movie or read the book, fantastic work. But changing the literature around it, giving them anecdotes.

Last week, I gave a media clip of *The Mandalorian*; put a media clip of Sidney Poitier giving a monologue to his son, and teaching him how to be resilient through all of these things, and how to find love and family again. We have to do that and when we do it, magic happens.

Questions. [silence] Any questions? There might be some in the-- Michelle, thank you for the urban dictionary. If there are any questions let me know, Rachel.

**Shelley:** The question that's in the Q&A, there was a question about implementing evidence-based curriculum making adaptations for LGBTQ Youth. Our first session was focused on that. There's a question about studies on the psychological effect of the daily reports of COVID-19 deaths. I'll just speak to having looked at the literature on studies, period; that we are just beginning to see research- really preliminary research.

I think that listening to Cedric and Michelle; the best thing we can do is study our own youth. That we can through surveys, through the kind of-- Again, Cedric demonstrated using asterisks. The beautiful thing about polls is find out how it's impacting your youth. Get that feedback, ask them. In the ways that interaction, whether it's through small focus groups, social media, show a picture of- give me a picture, take a picture with your phone, send it. There's a thousand ways of being creative.

As we wrap up, I want to just also reinforce to celebrate each of you. Michelle and Cedric and joined by our team, I know that you are all here. I think our self-care how you manage to stay resilient as participants, but I want to just bring out that we really do honor and acknowledge and thank you for every effort you are bringing for kids.



I'm reaching over. Sometimes, we have objects. We ask young people or do a quick scavenger hunt. We're going to do that in our next December 10th presentation. One of the objects, I don't know if you can read this, on my desk says, "Nothing you do for children is ever wasted," by Garrison Keillor. It's really fun with families and with kids. Again, even in a crazy household, whatever is going on, there are objects that are meaningful for our youth that they can share. There's an intimacy that happens with that.

I cannot say thank you enough to Michelle and Cedric, and really to all of you, like I said, for participating and the energy- lots of energy. We dance parties ourselves, right? To keep that up. I was going to put the music on, but let's go ahead and show the last couple of slides to remind you about the resources. Rachel, if you can just advance on that, that would be great.

Please complete your evaluation. When you get the link in, be patient. Four to six weeks to get your certificate. Again, on December 10th-- Go back to the December 10th slide. It's a parent prevention night, which at these days as family prevention, you'll actually leave with a slide deck infographic. The slide deck will be in English and Spanish that you can use for an hour of active interaction; reaching out to youth and parents together, encouraging-- Because our parents don't always have access to digital devices. When they do it together our youth are all- almost all-- I know there're digital access issues, but almost all have some way that they connect to schooling by now. The parents can jump on that and we can really do things to strengthen that home interaction as well as the interaction with the school.

We hope you'll join us. Visit the [opioidresponsenetwork.org](http://opioidresponsenetwork.org) for more resources and for the recordings of this session, last session. We want to get that high-level energy of both our presenters. Then finally, if we go to the last slide. If you have any requests you want help with, specifically related to prevention curriculum, as I said, large range of opioid, meth substance use prevention, treatment, recovery, you can visit the Opioid Response Network. Email or call.



Thank you all so much. Really, I want to-- Maybe we can move our fingers and do a shout [unintelligible 01:26:56] that we can't see, but using our bodies, reaching up to the sky, and taking in something into your heart or your head that you want to remember from this presentation. Thank you so much.

[01:27:36] [END OF AUDIO]