

# Inclusion Outreach District Partner Zoom Meeting Notes June 17, 2020

Organized pursuant to John O'Brien's Five Quality of Life Outcomes:

## 1. **Presence** is the sharing of the ordinary places that define community life.

### Successes:

- One case manager told the story of a student who is learning to use motorized mobility in a small community that is not very accessible. The student was assisted to write a letter to the regional district that has resulted in a representative going on a "community walk" with the student to identify barriers.
- Messages from familiar voices/faces such as teachers and students. Student has been responding to the human connection
- Check-ins by EAs
- Yard visits by 1 or 2 team members (EA, Teacher, SLP)
- Conversations through Microsoft "Teams"; zoom with good friends
- Group visits to talk on platforms like Google hang out just to catch up
- Whole school community support, e.g., when a student returned to school, the bus driver came in to say hello.
- Opened up the opportunity to visit other parts of the community (like local parks) with the IO student
- Students with strong auditory skills did well with virtual learning activities
- Technology has been great for remote school districts. Collaboration among staff and schools is better.
- Reduction in stress and exhaustion for itinerants as they could actually just pop into a meeting online rather than travelling for hours. They are hopeful that perhaps this form of service might be more flexible in the future because it's being shown to be effective for some parts of their job.

### Barriers:

- Child care for the student with significant needs or other children in the family has limited school attendance.
- Lack of access to technology
- Technology gap for families who are unfamiliar with utilizing technology
- Internet not available in some communities
- Health and safety protocol barriers
- In-home support was completely removed so parents were conflicted between sending kids back to school (health needs) but also burn out
- At high school level regular classes are not happening, each grade comes for 1 day and sees their teachers (and the focus is very academic/tutorial), which means students have less opportunity for movement throughout the school, limiting social engagement
- How to keep schedule consistent at home/school. What can IEP look like at home to target objectives, but relies on capacity and availability of families to support their child with home learning

- Some nursing staff redeployed and unavailable to support students at school. Different guidelines for OT/PT to be on school sites to support return to school needs
- Lots of plans were made for virtual support, but there was difficulty implementing them because of multiple layers of complexity including cognitive level, seizures, vision, sleep, and family stressors
- Parents and EAs not knowing how to use technology
- Time and prioritization of children (in multi-child households) \*this was compounded in blended families where in one example there were 3 children, 3 schools, all with complex needs, all with various people from school-based teams trying to get in touch...just too many people! Really cool solution I put in Strategies...
- Students not wanting to be “on” at the time that was offered
- Language barriers
- Literacy barriers
- Students, staff, and parents having to learn multiple platforms
- Prep time (lack thereof) and how to deliver something meaningful
- Fear about virus and immune compromised individuals. Family has said that the student will not return to school until there is a vaccine due to student’s health vulnerabilities.
- Impossible to provide “tactile” experiences virtually

#### Strategies/Recommendations/Ideas:

- Student attending class/team meetings online
- District supporting to get technology into the home
- Building ‘resource’ rooms where several students can be together during the interim period
- Collaborating virtually with entire school-based team to build continuity of learning plans
- Neighbourhood and nature walks, incorporating learning activities
- Inclusion Outreach sends out technology package prior to virtual student visit e.g iPad with apps for local team to trial and become a little familiar with (may need a zoom with LRT or EA to talk through the apps)
- Understanding for some the alternatives will work, and for others they won’t. Being okay with families saying “this doesn’t work for us, we’ll see you later” was needed for some. For others, finding a way for a student to return to school was really important (for the family and the student) and so working through the problems they were facing to get back to school meant a lot. Put another way, I guess knowing when to push to support and when to hold back a bit was a delicate but necessary act.
- Rather than demanding that people be on at a certain time, some teams went the route of recording lessons, etc. and then the family/student could access when it was a good time for them.
- Recording other students reading or sending video messages
- Creativity in using music, singing, puppets, and other props for engagement and connection

- Strategy for too many people for multi-student homes: They engaged the District Aboriginal Principal who in turn connected the family with one Aboriginal Teacher who worked to support the students so that the family only had one person to try and connect with. They said it wasn't perfect, especially since the person supporting didn't know the family/students as well, but at least there was a stress reduction felt by the family :)
- One teacher pre-recorded about 12 stories being read by different classmates and sent those home to the family. The IO student could then listen to one or two on the iPad at any time. The exciting thing about it was when the parent reported back, that the IO student recognized the voices of the classmates who were reading.
- Including the district SLP, or OT or PT on zoom meetings with the IO student and family (not just EA and/or teachers)

**2. Choice is the experience of autonomy both in small, everyday matters and in large, life-defining matters. Personal choice defines and expresses individual identity.**

#### Successes:

- Student has been fast forwarded into technology, communicating with people, reaching out to more people [of her choosing].
- More choices for families in how they participate

#### Barriers:

- Students rely on others to support their participation with remote activities, if families are not offering them the opportunity to participate they have less autonomy
- Choices for everyone are limited in a pandemic but more so for our students
- DL students also had limited access to typical learning reducing their choices of activities and learning opportunities and found this stressful
- Sometimes choices were limited for students because of the multiple complexities as mentioned above

#### Strategies/Recommendations/Ideas:

- EA made and sent video messages and stories for student to choose to watch
- Students chose a peer they want to be paired with virtually to connect with (e.g. on an AAC device, switch spinner or Decide Now! app)
- Choice of classes upon return to in person school to incorporate student's interests and increase engagement (e.g. art)
- Join a Google classroom which is less formal or a small group facilitated by OT or SLP
- Boardmaker for interactive Calendar meetings
- PT/SLP/OT be offered remotely for these families so they can feel they have some choices for receiving services. Perhaps SLP could zoom with the family at home on a regular basis with goals for them to choose to work on in-between
- Build in more small choices making opportunities with everyday activities

- Involve classroom teacher in offering choices in person or remotely through core competencies and functional goals

### **3. Competence is the opportunity to perform functional and meaningful activities with whatever level of support is required**

#### Successes:

- Students have been fast forwarded into technology, communicating with people, reaching out to more people
- Student is doing better virtually than he did in the class due to distractibility
- District Partner said not having students in school was freeing up her time to do coaching with parents and with school-based teams
- EAs helping with academic instruction
- People stepping up to support, e.g. dropped off craft supplies.
- Student with strong auditory skills did well with virtual learning activities
- Student has been more attentive to peers and has started mimicking them in play (this was unclear in the discussion if it was in person, online, or both..., but they wanted to celebrate it!)
- Families are voicing that they want to use some of the technologies used at schools at home more now (they're "seeing the point")
- Some students have been hospitalized/homebound before so families and school teams have experience to draw upon
- With all students using technology to communicate with, it was actually more inclusive for some students who use AAC
- Many families were prioritizing physical health and fitness goals which in turn improved mental health for all

#### Barriers:

- Student has become more prompt dependent on Mom
- It's being left to the parents to figure out how to adapt the school work for their child
- Inequities between supports in inner city schools as compared to schools with a higher SES demographic. Higher SES schools had more access to technology (some parent supplied) and more skills to use it. Families from the other demographic didn't have internet access and had not responded to messages from the school.
- Difficult to maintain same quality of education when all learning takes place at a distance
- Screen based learning can be overwhelming/overstimulating for student; challenging to find things to do that would support the students' attention and processing needs when building remote learning
- Families unaware of how to use powerlink, spinner, switches in home and require additional coaching
- Lack of prep time for teachers with instruction to create/plan creative resources that are transferable online with only 1 turn around day - inservice on this topic would be helpful for educators

- Considerations of how privilege impacts competence of home learners (e.g. access to food, access/availability and knowledge of technology and family members to support student learning activities)
- Regression in skills, because family couldn't keep them up
- Lots of parents said how tough it is. Fatiguing for parents. Totally supportive and engaged but found it overwhelming. Outside agencies were cancelling appointments, e.g., AFO fittings resulting in huge delays
- Lack of access to technology. Some parents are not comfortable communicating with technology.
- Concern that the team was asking too much of parents, e.g., asking them to incorporate an object calendar in their home daily routine.
- Blended teaching is a lot of work for staff. Very tiring.
- Meetings are longer. IEPs take 30% more time.
- Sometimes the needed mobility, positioning or communication equipment is not available in the home

#### Strategies/Recommendations/Ideas:

- District supports (including itinerant staff like SLP/OT/PT) participate in zoom calls with EA/teacher/student initially to help model skills and activities
- District supports build resources to share out with teams that would work for distance learning
- Student creates a custom Pictello app story (e.g. My Covid Story) and student shares with peers and teacher virtually or in person
- Gradually build up tolerance of virtual sessions, such as by starting with 1 to 1 sessions, gradually increasing the amount of time of sessions, then adding in a 1 familiar peer with adult virtually during a short session
- Be aware of background noises of other students' computers that are distracting and overwhelming for some learners; mute them if possible.
- Arrange virtual coaching sessions with families to teach them to support their child to continue using assistive technology in home, e.g. AAC, apps, switches, spinner, powerlink. Has resulted in families deepening their understanding of their child's educational goals and competence.
- Educational Continuity Plan - partnerships with families, focus on IEP goals that are manageable at home, e.g. facetime with grandma meets socialization objective, as it is happening already. Build objectives into regular day/routines.
- School staff provide materials to families of familiar, successful activities from school, such as gardening or art materials
- Breaking longer or more complicated lessons up into small pieces for the family/student to work on at home
- Removing "edu-speak" from lessons or conversations to enable more accessibility
- Keeping routines consistent (or as close to consistent) as possible at home or upon return to school to ease anxieties: even just some familiarity within the day
- Parents in team meetings
- Consistency of staff is important
- Regular communication with parents

- When the current EA was finishing up, and the student couldn't return because they were post-surgery, the incoming EA had a 'yard visit' with the current EA.
- Prioritize IEP goals and make one or two an area of focus in keeping with family goals

**4. Respect is having a valued place among a network of people and valued roles in community life.**

Successes:

- Story of the student who was assisted to write a letter to the regional district about inaccessibility got a response resulting in a "community walk" to identify barriers
- Students have been fast forwarded into technology, communicating with people, reaching out to more people.
- People stepping up to support by making sure students have the technology needed.

Barriers:

- Social distancing limits ability to interact socially with other students
- Online access may not be supportive for all students participation if they show fear or apprehension
- Students not getting access to their personal AAC or being able to sustain this through technology, e.g. mirroring their screen with the technology
- Families coping with just meeting basic needs

Strategies/Recommendations/Ideas:

- Participate and listen to peer conversations/banter that is open-ended and child lead to support connection
- Practice using technology with 1:1 zoom or looking at photos of their teacher or peers on recorded zoom
- Open up zoom meetings early for IO student so they can talk to their teacher quietly ahead of main group

**5. Inclusion is the experience of being part of a growing network of personal relationships that includes close friends.**

Successes:

- One district was good about communicating protocols with the staff. Consistent communication and clarity around protocols was reassuring. The student in this district returned to school right away. This student's teacher had quick access to parents.
- Student has been fast forwarded into technology, communicating with people, reaching out to more people. People stepping up to support.
- Increased home-school communication made for more well-rounded educational program

- Community inclusion increased with neighborhood bike rides and walks

#### Barriers:

- Transportation, if relying on parents (possible solution = explore accessible taxi arrangements)
- Families disengaging from remote learning
- Families are exhausted and overwhelmed with losing respite and/or nursing
- Technology: being familiar and comfortable with use of and how to troubleshoot on the go
- COVID safety plans for students requiring personal care – PPE – visors, gloves, etc.
- Confusion from week to week about what would happen next? masks, not? Trying to figure out the protocols, needing to figure it out as they went along
- Some resistance from classroom teacher to include student in videoconferencing due to perceived disruption to other students
- IO students who need to transfer to new schools in the fall (elementary to middle) have missed the opportunity for several transition visits.

#### Strategies/Recommendations/Ideas:

- Lots of prep and collaborative time before student returned to school, to ensure a smooth transition back
- Teams collaboratively working to build continuity of learning plans for students
- Ability to do slow start so staff could be prepared and build time at school incrementally
- Returning to regular school routines when back in the building (staff collaboration to ensure these routines were able to continue)
- Small music groups - singalongs, play instruments
- Transition picnics physically distanced outside with new middle school or high cohort (1 grade ahead) to connect with peers
- Transition small group, physically distanced tour of new middle/high school
- Cooking activities in school - share food with others with proper hand hygiene in place
- Connecting with familiar faces (staff and peers) within district: adults dressing up in costume making surprise visits in parking lots and virtually
- Support for families to understand how and why remote learning is important for their student
- Take time to connect with families on personal level to re-engage with education
- Talk with local school district about tech support for families
- Give families an opportunity to share with other families to gain support
- Look at functional goals for literacy. This could be a time for IO students to focus more on community literacy and their engagement with this
- Create current videos of the IO student for any new staff members to see
- To help with transition issues for IO students, the local team could make a video of the new school. The student's current EA could take us on a tour of the rooms that the IO student would be going to, with an introduction to the new teachers,

EAs and district staff such as the SLP, OT and PT who will be seeing the IO student in the new school.

**6. Other Considerations**

- Different protocols for staff from school to school in a district.
- SLPs under strict college guidelines.
- COVID safety plans that need to be signed off by parents and school personnel before the student can attend school. Varies from school to school. At some schools district staff need to make an appointment with the principal and follow their safety guidelines to come into the school. Other districts have fewer restrictions.