



THE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATION

*Thank you for attending today's webinar!  
We will be starting soon. If you have any questions,  
please ask them in the zoom chat.  
Enjoy!*

**WHAT WORKS:  
ADDRESSING  
ISSUES OF  
EQUITY IN  
SMALL AND  
RURAL  
COMMUNITIES**

*JUNE 3, 2020  
3 PM EST –  
4 PM EST*

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Forward from  
Valerie Truesdale, Ph.D.




Valerie Joined **AASA** early in 2019 as an assistant executive director responsible for guiding leadership development services and programs. With years of experience in the superintendency and roles in instructional technology, she knows that [AASA's Leadership Network](#) can be a substantial resource for school leaders trying to keep pace with the rapidly changing delivery of K-12 education.

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Dr. Mary L. Young    Mr. Terry Nebelsick    Dr. Trey Holladay






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Panelist/Presenter:  
Dr. Pamela R. Moran, Superintendent, Executive Director of VaSCL



Dr. Pamela R. Moran serves as the Executive Director of the Virginia School Consortium for Learning (VaSCL). A statewide education organization, VaSCL includes a membership of more than 70 school divisions across the state. Its mission is to improve the quality of K-12 education in the state by providing high-quality professional learning to educators and by facilitating the sharing of best practices among school divisions. Pam retired as Superintendents of Albemarle County Schools in Virginia in 2018.

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Panelist/Presenter:  
Dr. Mary L. Young, Superintendent, Warren County Schools



Dr. Mary L. Young is the Superintendent of Warren County in Warrenton, NC.  
Dr. Young has enjoyed a successful career in public education for more than 20 years.  
Dr. Young's steadfast goal has always been to provide all students, regardless of their learning needs, race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, with options and choices upon graduation.  
Through her experience and education, Dr. Young has developed a keen sense of effective leadership practices. She has had the opportunity to participate in the Harvard University's School Turnaround Leaders Institute, Harvard University's Urban School Leadership, Center for Creative Leadership Institute, and the New Leaders: D.C. School Leaders Network. In addition, she is a Principal Assessor for the National Association of Secondary Principals and certified Gallup StrengthsFinder coach. Most recently, she graduated from the esteemed AASA Urban Superintendent Academy.  
Dr. Young holds a Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies from the University of South Carolina, Masters of Education in Reading from Howard University and a Doctorate in Educational Administration and Policy from Howard University.

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### Warren County Schools Profile

- Warren County is a diverse, close-knit community with both a deep historical tradition and a progressive outlook for the future. Warren County was home to:
  - Nathaniel Macon, served as both a U.S. senator and as Speaker of The U.S. House of Representatives
  - John Hyman, a former enslaved person who was the 1st African American elected to Congress.
  - Eva Clayton, 1st African American to represent NC in the House since Reconstruction
- Birthplace of the environmental justice movement.
- 1,800 student enrollment
  - Race: African-American, Caucasian, Hispanic, and American Indian
- Rural, 450 sq mile radius, nestled between the northern border with Virginia, Kerr Lake, & Lake Gaston
- 100% free lunch
- Seven schools (2 ES, 1 K-8, 1 MS and 3 HS)

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Panelist/Presenter:  
Mr. Terry Nebelsick, Superintendent, Huron School District



Mr. Terry D. Nebelsick is the Superintendent of the Huron School District in Huron, SD. Terry has been in public education for forty-one years, including twenty-five as high school principal and the last nine as superintendent of schools.

Mr. Nebelsick is completing his term as President of the SDSSA, and leads the most diverse school district in South Dakota, with 52% of its 2,816 students representing minorities from nine different countries and ten different languages. He has been instrumental in the legislative process that created ESL funding tied to the state's workforce development initiative. He has served that last two governors as chairman of the "School Finance Accountability Board" which oversees compliance of all districts to direct revenues to improving teacher salaries. He gave the "State of the Schools" report to the SD Legislature Education Committees at the start of the session in January.

Mr. Nebelsick holds a Bachelor of Arts in Communication/Theatre from Dakota Wesleyan University, a Masters in Secondary School Administration from the University of South Dakota, and an Education Specialist Degree in School District Administration, also from USD.

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District Profile

While the average racial and ethnic diversity in South Dakota school districts is typically near 5%, the Huron School District is proud of unique demographics:

- We have 2,816 students in grades Pre-K thru 12.
- We are 52% minorities from 11 countries and have at least 9 languages.
- We experience nearly 70% qualifying for free or reduced lunches.
- We proudly "feed the world" with a workforce that centers on agriculture production and meat packing.
- Our teaching and learning is focused on growth - creating an atmosphere that "closes the gap" on achievement.

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Panelist/Presenter:  
Dr. Trey Holladay, Superintendent, Athens City Schools

Trey Holladay is a veteran public school educator with nearly three decades spent in educational leadership. He served as superintendent of the Athens City Schools system since 2013.



Trey has been a frequent speaker on best practices in continuous school improvement and special education on both the national and state levels. He has served as a mentor for new principals and assistant principals throughout the state. In the past, he served as the president of the state principals' association and was selected as the Alabama Secondary Principal of the Year.

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**District Profile: Athens City Schools**



Athens City Schools is a K-12 public school district serving Athens, Alabama since 1909. Our mission is to be a progressive, high-quality school system that connects students and their families to a caring, traditional community. The Athens City School System offers students the best of two worlds - a world of deep tradition and heritage and one of progress and preparing for the future.

**ATHENS CITY SCHOOLS BY THE NUMBERS**

**8** SCHOOLS

**4,495** STUDENT ENROLLMENT

**STUDENT DIVERSITY**

- 65% White
- 19% African American
- 8% American Indian
- 7% Multiracial
- 1% Asian
- 16% of students identify ethnically as Hispanic or Latino.

**STUDENT:TEACHER RATIO**

**19:1** Elementary    **25:1** Secondary

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**Focus Question One:**

*What were the initial challenges that presented themselves in the COVID-19 situation?*

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**Initial Challenges**

- Initial announcement of school closing to prepare for distant learning.
- Limited transportation to ensure
  - a. Food distribution
  - b. Instructional packets distribution
- Differentiating support to families
  - Phone calls (voice, Duo, FaceTime)
  - Google, Zoom (individual, small group and whole group instruction)
  - Resources
    - Educational websites, videos and television channels

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### Initial Challenges

Huron was the first "hot spot" in South Dakota, with 21 cases in a period of just a few days, and involved the deaths of a beloved state legislator and a third grade teacher at our private Christian school. This was followed one week later by the death of a 24 year veteran teacher and coach at Huron High School as the result of a heart attack. Reaching out with compassion to a hurting community was crucial

We had to learn quickly, and identify challenges and solutions.

The superintendent has been part of the county planning and response teams from early March.

We identified that distance learning, distribution of meals, childcare for emergency workers children, and contingency plans for facilities to assist the hospital may all be necessary.

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### Initial Challenges



- Food Distribution
- Access to WiFi for All Students
- Transitioning to eLearning (Re-working Our Initial Plan which was not Sustainable)
  - Students & Families:
    - Preparing & Distributing ACS Devices
      - K-6 (Do not take devices home)
      - Students Without WiFi
    - Frequently communicating with and surveying students and parents
    - Adapting our Plan According to Data Collected
  - Educators:
    - Balancing Families & Working from Home
    - Transitioning fully to eLearning ([ACS Essential Agreements](#))
    - Balancing the Social Emotional and Academic Needs of Students
    - Continuing RtI / Student Learning Plans

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### Focus Question Two:

What is a problem that you solved with remote learning since the initial implementation stages that was a success? Why was this a priority and how did you solve it?

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## Overcoming Early Problems & Resolutions

- District plan that included structures and systems.
  - Communication with stakeholders
    - Warren County COVID-19 Task Force (cross-functional county departments)
    - Engaged Superintendent Advisory Councils (Teacher, Student, Parent, Faith-Based, and Business, Gov't and Media)
    - Local radio stations and newspaper
    - Q&A for employees / Q&A for parents
    - Social media
    - Student simulation using CDC Guidelines (moving forward)
- Sense of community – "Wrap around service"
  - Board of Education, County Commissioners, County Manager, Social workers, Community organizations/businesses, and churches
  - Started with a survey to determine the needs of our families
  - Delivering meals daily and instructional packets to homes with no to limited transportation

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## Overcoming Early Problems.

- \* Grades 6-12 were ready for one-to-one digital learning. The challenge was connectivity - something we are still dealing with. Local cable provider part of the solution for students.
- \* As a COVID-19 Hotspot, we needed to a safety plan for the dissemination and collection of packets in grades K-5. We created areas where materials could be placed and not touched for 48 hours.

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## Initial Problems (Solved)

- **Food Distribution:**
  - Approximately 60,000 meals distributed through partnerships with neighboring district and community partners
- **Access to WiFi for All Students**
  - Secured 150 Verizon MiFi Hotspots for Distribution to Families in Need
- **Transitioning to eLearning**
  - **Students & Families: (eLearning Website for Families)**
    - Preparing & Distributing ACS Devices
      - Multiple Opportunities for Families to Obtain ACS Devices for Home Use
    - Frequently Communicating with and Surveying students and parents
      - Weekly Survey for Parents & Students to Provide Feedback & Ask Questions
    - Adapting our Plan According to Data Collected
      - Weekly Zoom Leadership Meetings for Data Analysis & Adapting Plans
  - **Educators: (eLearning Website for Educators)**
    - Balancing Family & Working from Home
      - Adapting Time and Expectations for eLearning
      - Support for Teachers of Core Subjects
    - Balancing the Social Emotional and Academic Needs of Students
      - Regular Zoom Meetings with Teachers
      - Engaging Students: Field Days, Spirit Weeks, Game Days
    - Continuing RtI / Student Learning Plans
      - Home Visits
      - Small Group Zoom Lessons
      - Parent Zoom Meetings (IEPs, EL Plans, RtI, etc.)

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Focus Question Three:

Can you share a challenge that you were not able to solve with remote learning during initial implementation? How are you going to tackle this if there is a second implementation?

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Challenges Moving Forward

- Challenges: Technology
  - Limited towers are installed in the county
  - Many of our families will not have access to the internet. Hotspots will not work due to connectivity.
  - Limited/no transportation for many of our families to have access to our "Park & Access" of school wifi
- Resolution: Seeking alternatives
  - Technology Committee (composed of stakeholders)
    - Partnership with the county to access their wifi
    - Wifi rangers and hot spots
    - Researching other school districts with similar challenges

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Challenges Moving Forward

We are working to be ready with a "flexible plan" when we return on August 24th. Still in planning stage.

- \* K-12 one-to-one digital initiative.
- \* Isolation of quarantine students on a "per classroom" basis with uninterrupted learning.
- \* Digital teaching opportunity when teacher is quarantined to teach the class from home while class is supervised by paraeducator in the school during the quarantine time period.
- \* Developing safety protocols for meals, materials, and interaction.

We are currently surveying our staff for successes and challenges. This will lead to committees focused on specific issues.

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Unsolved Problems & Planned Strategies	
Problems	Planned Strategies
<p><b>A. Human Connection:</b> Survey data showed "feeling connected to school community" as an area of need from both families and educators.</p> <p><b>A. Modern-Day Skills:</b> Planning opportunities for students to demonstrate 21st Century Skills has proven more difficult via eLearning.</p> <p><b>A. Assessment for Mastery:</b> Our teachers are seeking additional knowledge of how to assess mastery of priority standards in multiple ways in an eLearning environment.</p>	<p><b>Continued focus on Social &amp; Emotional Learning:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Daily Teacher Connections with Students &amp; Families</li> <li>• Continued Collaborative Teacher Planning Teams</li> <li>• Instructional Coaching Support</li> <li>• Provide Multiple Opportunities for Students to Engage both Socially &amp; Academically in eLearning environment</li> </ul> <p><b>Intentional Focus- <i>Portrait of a Graduate Skills:</i></b> Support teachers as they design units incorporating the focus skills of our Portrait of a Graduate: Collaboration, Communication, Critical Thinking, Creativity, Citizenship, &amp; Character</p> <p><b>Continued Professional Learning:</b> Digital Platforms, Prioritizing Standards, Engagement and Assessment Practices</p>

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### Focus Question Four: In the Lens of Equity

What are you doing to ensure all learners are receiving quality learning experiences? How are you building the capacity of teachers to actively engage kids, connect with families, etc. What are some of the helpful things that you have done to alleviate inequities?

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### Barriers to Equity & Strategies

- Barrier
  - COVID-19 has increased the current inequities that exist. *"Widened the Gap"*
    - In 1997, in *Leandro v. State*, the North Carolina Supreme Court
      - An education that does not serve the purpose of preparing students to participate and compete in the society in which they live and work is devoid of substance and is constitutionally inadequate."
    - For rural school districts, the state funding fails to provide adequate resources for "the opportunity for a sound basic education."
- Strategies
  - Innovative instructional practices and school choice options
  - Unwavering commitment to ensure high-quality instruction in each classroom
  - Advocate for rural school districts
  - Have a voice in the Legislation (lobby with Congressmen, Senators, NC DPI)
  - Seek grants and donations

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**Barriers to Equity.**

We will work on all of the following:

- \* Internet Connectivity.
- \* ESL Challenges.
- \* Reclaiming “at-risk” youth.

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<u>Providing Quality Education</u>	<u>Preparing Teachers</u>	<u>Alleviating Inequities</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue Equity Initiatives for Learning (PBL, AVID)</li> <li>• Connect Daily with Students (video messages, audio and written feedback, Zoom sessions)</li> <li>• Provide Student Choice Boards for Engagement &amp; Differentiation</li> <li>• Prioritize Standards</li> <li>• Continue Seeking Parent &amp; Student Feedback</li> <li>• Provide Options for face-to-face and/or virtual learning in '20-'21</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote daily use of Learning Management Systems (LMS)</li> <li>• Provide Opportunities for Collaborative Unit Design</li> <li>• Provide professional learning &amp; instructional coaching supports</li> <li>• Provide time and support for using survey data for planning</li> <li>• Continue to update the eLearning website for teachers; merging with current OER site to provide models, supports, &amp; resources during the ever-changing situation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1:1 Apple District</li> <li>• Continue the availability of Verizon hotspots for families in need</li> <li>• Continue food distribution through community partnerships</li> <li>• Continue to refine information shared via eLearning parent website</li> <li>• Continue to provide access to paid programs to support teachers &amp; students (Examples: LMS, Translation app, Zoom, etc.)</li> </ul>

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**Questions or Comments?**

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**THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING TODAY'S WEBINAR!**

WE URGE YOU TO CONNECT WITH ONE ANOTHER VIA LINKEDIN, TWITTER, EMAIL, PHONE- INVESTING IN RELATIONSHIPS PAYS HUGE DIVIDENDS.

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