

Rising to the Challenge Part 3: Summer Mash Up Opportunities

April 15, 2020

Deb Moroney ([00:01](#)):

Hello, everyone, and welcome back. I am Debra Moroney, and I'm so honored to be here with all of you. I was watching all the texts go by in the comments and getting a little bit verklempt. I miss all of you, and missing you at this time of year Kent's conversation around relationships really hit it home for me and missing all of our connections. And if we haven't met, I would have enjoyed the opportunity to do so in person, and I can't wait to do that. We're waiting for another Jennifer. Jen Sirangelo, if you're in the house and want to join us, please do so. Okay. Hi, Jen. Okay, super.

Deb Moroney ([00:47](#)):

So we're here to talk about summer and all of us, all of you know, have personally experienced to know from your practice work or know from research and policy that summertime affords a really optimal time for learning and development to promote health safety the wellbeing of children and youth. It's a ideal time to elevate the strengths and assets in a community, and it's something that we all really look forward to focusing on and planning for at this time of year. At the same time, it's a bit of a question mark for all of us. I'm a parent of teenage boys. If you know me, you've heard my stories. It's a big question mark for us and our family, and that's true throughout the country. It's a question mark for families, for school districts, for systems builders like the ones we have on this call, and certainly for youth development professionals.

Deb Moroney ([01:42](#)):

So I'm going to steal Kent's tree metaphor. I'm not going to steal it. I'm going to try it. I'm going to try it out. So I was thinking about our field as that tree and that those roots were all of us and the relationships that we've built over the many, many years, and the top of the tree was the field that that everyone else sees. And so I just want to recognize right now that we've asked [inaudible 00:02:06] field leaders, who I'm going to introduce in just a minute, to talk about something that's a question mark for many of us and appreciate their trust in us to let them have that open conversation in this open forum and without seeing all of you.

Deb Moroney ([02:23](#)):

So I have with us today, Jennifer Sirangelo with 4-H (you'll see their bio's coming up in the chat box), Jennifer Peck with the Partnership for Children and Youth, and Ross Weiner with the Aspen Institute. I'm going to ask each of them the same question. What are you thinking about as [inaudible 00:02:42] summertime right now as a national youth development organization, as a state [inaudible 00:02:47] for afterschool and expanded learning and as a convener in the K-12 space. So I'm going to ask Jennifer to kick off and respond to that question. And we're going to be trusting of all of our relationships and let us have a little bit of a conversation about this with all of you watching. Jennifer?

Jennifer Sirangelo ([03:07](#)):

Thank you so much, Deb. I'm honored to be here and so excited to see so many friends. I'm glad that there were so many people announcing themselves in the chat box so we kind of knew who was in the house, so it's great to virtually be together. And so my name is Jennifer, and I'm the CEO of 4-H, the National 4-H Council. And just so I think many of you know our work, and we are partners together on many levels of the state through afterschool networks or through local county level and city partnerships. So it's been a very interesting spring for everyone, and in 4-H we have pivoted almost instantly to offering what 4-H does in a virtual environment today. So our 4-H clubs are open, running, doing all the things you might think of with 4-H, virtual fair, virtual camp, online competitions. Just all of that has moved online. And to be honest, it's been kind of a swift kick in the pants for us to do what we probably should've been doing all along. I've been so impressed with cooperative extension and their change to this model.

Jennifer Sirangelo ([04:22](#)):

As we think about pivoting from what we're doing today is really trying to support parents and schools through what we're calling 4-H at home and providing. We have a plethora of things developed by our land grant universities and cooperative extension, whether it's interactive learning today, activity sheets, curriculum and resource guides, the 4-H virtual clubs and competitions, webinars for kids that want to do progressive learning in a certain science. Most of it's around science, a lot around gardening, nutrition, things kids need at home right now, and families. But we're pivoting to the summer because unfortunately many of our states have stay-at-home orders and have prohibited anything over 50 or 10 people together.

Jennifer Sirangelo ([05:09](#)):

So we are pivoting to what a virtual summer experience looks like in 4-H. To me, what we're offering, how I could best explain it is to think about we've taken that 4-H, our theory of change, and the three parts of that research that guide what we do, which are the things that all of us know. We all have our theory of change based on the research, but ours is meaningful adult relationships with young people, skill building activities and meaningful leadership roles for young people. So we are taking all of that into that online experience, not just content going out, but interactive and community building and belonging as well. And we're looking at it in two ways. We're being flexible because it's going to be a different summer, and there's kind of a create-your-own experience where families can choose from the schedule.

Jennifer Sirangelo ([06:05](#)):

So there's, for instance, we've seen a complete breakdown of any walls that were state-based. So almost all 4-H today that might have been done in Maryland or Virginia is today available to all young people, whether they're in 4-H or not. So all those barriers to entry are gone, and we are using a number of different kinds of virtual platforms to do that. But things like we have Mindfulness Mondays. We have Watercolor Wednesday. Tuesday and Thursday is learning from the living room where you can make, for instance, a robot hand through our junk drawer robotics and watch a leader walk you through that or a teenager. To field trip Fridays where you can go and virtually experience something virtually. So that's kind of a build-your-own a camp experience.

Jennifer Sirangelo ([06:58](#)):

And then we're seeing virtual camps. The two I'm most familiar with are Texas 4-H has opened their virtual space camp for free to all youth and families where there'll be different experiences all summer.

And also 4-H water camp where kids can do water experiments and learn about environmental education kind of in their own time, but it's more of a guided experience. So those are some of the ways we have really changed to 4H at home. We're working right now to build a more of a national consumer friendly portal where parents and colleagues like you can find those things to add. We invite everyone to use these 4-H resources for your camps, for your summer learning. They are available. We look forward to those collaborations.

Deb Moroney ([07:50](#)):

Well, thank you Jennifer and thank you for your leadership in sharing the choose-your-own-adventure sort of model, and we all look forward to those resources. The space camp sounds super fun. And I'm going to just pivot a little bit to Jennifer Peck, who leads a statewide intermediary, the Partnership for Children and Youth, in California, to talk to us about their approach to summer on the policy front.

Jennifer Peck ([08:21](#)):

Thanks, Deb. So just for a little bit of context, the Partnership for Children and Youth ran a statewide campaign to increase access to summer learning opportunities for about seven years here in California, and our work was very focused on building summer programming that was run very collaboratively between school districts and community-based providers and a lot of other partners. And when it became clear here in our state several weeks ago that school was going to be remote for the remainder of the year, we began to immediately think about how really intense the needs of young people were going to be this summer and also really understanding that our school systems are so overwhelmed with getting distance learning up and running. And I see this very much from an organizational standpoint in watching what's happening across the state with getting distance learning up and running but also very much as a parent and watching the daily struggles of my own school district in getting distance learning up and running and recognizing that it's going to be really hard for our school systems to be thinking about summer in any kind of a coherent way in this context in time to do anything really valuable for kids.

Jennifer Peck ([09:37](#)):

And we also started hearing rumblings of some districts saying that they just weren't going to do summer programming because of facility concerns or financing concerns or collective bargaining concerns, and this was really alarming to us because we believe that we collectively have a moral obligation to be doing everything we can over the summer to reach kids, and not just with learning supports, but with the social and emotional supports that so many kids are going to need given how disconnected kids already are. And this is just going to get worse as the months go on, so we decided to approach our school administrators association in California, whose membership are district and school leaders, to say that we know how overwhelmed they are and that they are also thinking about summer, and let us help you. We have a ton of resources, relationships and we have this very big community of afterschool and summer program providers across their state that are really big assets in figuring this out.

Jennifer Peck ([10:40](#)):

So we have launched a collaboration with them to put together some messaging tools and resources for districts, for county offices of education with a very strong message that this has to be looked at as scenario planning given that we don't know what summer is going to look like as far as facilities, social distancing rules, et cetera. So we're going to be providing some examples of what plan A, plan B, plan C

might look like and try to be as ready as possible for various scenarios. For example, we might be virtual for a portion of the summer, but what if we have two weeks with kids, or what if we have four weeks with kids? How are we going to really maximize that time? So we're also coordinating with equity groups here and other state leaders around this message of urgency around summer programming and that it can't just be focused on learning loss.

Jennifer Peck ([11:38](#)):

We're hearing that from some districts, that they're planning some remote summer school, but we're only hearing about academic intervention. So we're really trying to get coordinated on this message that that summer programming has to lead with reengaging kids with relationships and recognizing the trauma that so many kids are going to be experiencing and coming into this space with. There's so many details to be worked out about all of this, but I agree with what others have said, that this is also a very big opportunity for us to shape summer in a way that's going to be really critical. So that's what we're focusing on here in California.

Deb Moroney ([12:16](#)):

Thank you. I know we have many network leads and system leaders listening in and will really appreciate that that model is they approach supporting their stakeholders in their locale. And just listening to both of you, both of the Jennifers, just the stepping up is what stands out to me, not only on behalf of our usual suspect stakeholders and programs, but on behalf of the children and families across the country and in California, so thank you for doing that. And now I'm going to turn it over to Ross and, Ross, really ask you, I know you have your eye on, on all of this, but we invited you here today in particular to talk to us about what you're seeing and hearing from the K-12 perspective as they endeavor to make really important decisions on what all happens [inaudible 00:13:13] summertime.

Ross Weiner ([13:15](#)):

Yeah, so really appreciate the opportunity to be here with all of the panelists and with so many old friends and longtime colleagues, so hello to everybody who's out there virtually. In my work at the Aspen Institute I convene a network of urban school district leaders, superintendents, chief academic officers, chiefs of schools, and have been doing weekly calls with the superintendents for the last month. Had one last night. So I'm trying to bring some perspective from what they're going through and what might be most constructive in partnering with school systems of this summer. But want to recognize there's just a huge range of approaches and needs and leadership styles, and so these are some sort of framing remarks and everything needs to then be put in context in a community.

Ross Weiner ([14:04](#)):

One other thing just as context, I think so many of the people who are part of this community who are on this webinar today start with developmental relationships, start with some of the groundings in youth development that was the start of this call, and I think that just creates a real strength and assets that you can bring into relationships with schools of this summer in particular. Just for what Jennifer Peck said, there is such a huge need given the dislocation given the stress and trauma young people and families are experiencing right now to really focus on those developmental relationships this summer.

Ross Weiner ([14:40](#)):

So just three thoughts from sort of a K-12 system perspective and then a couple of quick pieces of advice. One, many, maybe most, school system leaders are still in crisis response. The delivering a food,

which was a huge operation, is under tremendous strain. Getting technology devices and connectivity to every student and family is taking a lot of attention. Just they are feeling intense pressure still to contact all of the students. There are some that they still are struggling to connect with, and then to get distance learning up and going. So I would say summer is either just coming into focus or, frankly, is still on our horizon and that right now most school system leaders and principals have just limited attention for anything other than immediate response still right now too.

Ross Weiner ([15:30](#)):

Two, they are feeling immense pressure to reconnect with students and to engage with them, and I think are learning about the need that Jennifer Peck was mentioning about the relationships. The engagement has to come first. We know that from the neuroscience. We know that from the research. That's now being lived in real time, and so they are, again, just feeling a tremendous amount of pressure to get students engaged in relationships with each other and with teachers and to get them on the pathway to learning, but they're seeing the need for relationships right now, as wellbeing, as mitigating stress, as all of it.

Ross Weiner ([16:09](#)):

Third is just the reality is they're not going to have the capacity in a number of different dimensions to meet the full summer needs of students this summer even if they want to have full summer school totally focused on academic learning. Just the strain on the system, the finances, the staff availability, the logistics, they're going to be figuring out what they can do, but there's a huge opportunity for partnership, for coordination, for collaboration.

Ross Weiner ([16:37](#)):

So let me just give four really quick pieces of advice that occurred to me. One is just to invite people to be creative but very practical, to come with ideas and suggestions with their school district partners. What can you do this summer? Two, to think about that in the context of new ways of integrating that with connectedness to school. How can you forge relationships with school system leaders, with principals, with teachers or leverage the ones that you have to make sure that your programming this summer is also an on ramp, not an alternative to being connected to school. Three, go with who you know. If you have connections with the school principal, with the school system here, with somebody in the city who's connected to schools, start there. And four, I would just recommend, and this really is creating off a conversation I had with Karen Pittman just last week, create a virtual space now with some other out of school time providers, some school system leaders, some others, so you can all talk about what are your plans, where are your concerns going into this summer, what capacity do you have to bring, and to just start making concrete plans because the needs are just going to be immense. And it does feel like there's this opportunity to create new partnerships if it feels to school systems like this is additive and complimentary rather than a competition or an alternative.

Deb Moroney ([18:01](#)):

Thank you. Those are really practical suggestions, Ross. I appreciate that. And I think if you can see me going back and forth and I'm getting distracted. You're all getting so many questions, and so we do just have a couple minutes left. But there were several questions, and I think Jennifer Sirangelo, this first one is for you, but certainly I welcome Jennifer and Ross to weigh in if you have other strategies as well. Folks are interested in how you support families in rural areas with limited access to internet. The

question was around your virtual camps in particular, but I think we're all thinking about this as young people have gone to a virtual environment for learning and development. Jennifer?

Jennifer Sirangelo ([18:48](#)):

Right, thank you. And we're finding that, not only certainly it's a major issue in rural America, but our research shows about 7 million of the 55 million kids out of school right now do not have access to broadband internet. And there's only about two or three million of them that live in rural. So it is an urban and a rural issue, and we're finding our 4-H in urban areas has the same issue. So we're doing some analog things. I'll be honest, while we want to advocate for the broadband today, tomorrow, next week, these kids need learning now. So we are seeing 4-H linking up in rural areas with how they're distributing food. So 4-H activities, 4-H program in a box going alongside on the rural route school buses that are taking food to common areas, and 4-H is going on the school bus and going with the food. I'm sure a lot of organizations are doing that.

Jennifer Sirangelo ([19:50](#)):

We also are fortunate that we have a physical infrastructure in rural America, so we have actual offices and buildings that have good WiFi. So we're making that available so families know when they can go. The WiFi is available if they need to sit in their car and the kids download to their phones the things they need from school or for camp or for the virtual activities. We're boosting that and making that available. And then we're also doing contactless delivery and pickup of 4-H activities and projects. So a 4-H offices in rural areas are putting out brown bags in the morning with activities and the materials, and families are coming to pick that up in a contactless environment. And usually they're all gone by about noon. So those are just a few examples of how we're trying to help with this massive issue that has only been exacerbated by the current crisis.

Deb Moroney ([20:45](#)):

Thank you for that. And there's quite few others chiming in on the chat box on what they're doing on that issue as well. So a lot of creative ideas. I welcome any final comments on that question from the other panelists, and then, unfortunately, I think we have to wrap up

Ross Weiner ([21:01](#)):

Just super quickly I think that what I'm hearing from superintendents is that they feel more confident they're going to be able to close the gaps on technology and WiFi access and that then the harder part is really connecting with the most vulnerable students who were the least connected previously and, frankly, helping their staffs get a level of confidence and some development themselves on how to be supportive in developmentally appropriate ways right now, how to respond when students share what they're really going through. You can't then just switch straight to, "Okay, well, glad everybody shared. Now we're going into the assignment." So just offering that so as folks think about what guidance and resources they might offer on how to develop and maintain healthy relationships online. There's just a huge need for that kind of thought partnership and development in the field as well.

Deb Moroney ([21:56](#)):

Thank you. Well, I'd like to thank my little panel here for championing summer as a really important time for all of us. We're all looking to you for exactly this kind of guidance. And I did see out of the corner of my eye Karen Pittman committed to us answering all of the questions that are coming in the chat box. So certainly this panel was very fruitful, and having folks think of questions and comments,

and I think that's really terrific. So I'm going to thank all of you, wish you all a great day. And now we're going to transition to the policy roundup. So those of us on the stage will bid you adieu.