

Leadership ISD TCBSBM MASBAhablemos COVID-19 Conversation

May 11, 2020

Johno Oberly, Leadership ISD, Moderator

Leadership ISD, the Mexican American School Boards Association (MASBA), and the Texas Caucus of Black School Board Members (TCBSBM) co-hosted a statewide conversation regarding the COVID-19 pandemic on Monday, May 11, 2020, beginning at 12:00 p.m. CDT.

The 78 attendees, in order by school district, then by company, included:

- Alief ISD Trustee Natasha Butler
- Austin ISD Trustee Jayme Mathias
- Austin ISD HR Tamey Williams-Hill
- Ben Bolt-Palito Blanco ISD Trustee Zelda Saenz
- Buenva Vista ISD Superintendent Mark Dominguez
- Clear Creek ISD Trustee Laura DuPont
- Dallas ISD Trustee Karla Guadalupe Garcia
- Dallas ISD Teacher Amy Koch
- Dallas ISD Student Alexis Martinez
- Dallas ISD Student Marria Hernandez
- Denton ISD Trustee Charles Stafford
- Dilley ISD Trustee J.D. Rodriguez, III
- Fort Worth ISD Trustee Anne Darr
- Fort Worth ISD Supervisor Juan Daniel Garcia
- Fort Worth ISD Chief of Staff Karen Molinar
- Fort Worth ISD Trustee Jacinto Ramos, Jr.
- Frisco ISD Trustee Debbie Gillespie
- Garland ISD Trustee Linda Griffin
- Garland ISD Student Serenity Drake
- Garland ISD Student Will Burnett
- Grapevine-Colleyville ISD Trustee Jesse Rodriguez
- Greenville ISD Trustee John Kelso
- Hays CISD Trustee Willie Tenorio, Jr.
- Houston ISD Trustee Judith Cruz
- Houston ISD Trustee Holly Maria Flynn Vilaseca
- Houston ISD Trustee Anne Sung
- Hutto ISD Superintendent Celina Thomas
- Katy ISD Trustee Bill Lacy
- Manor ISD Trustee Ana Cortez
- Palacios ISD Trustee Fabian Marroquin
- Ricardo ISD Superintendent Maria Canales
- San Elizario ISD Trustee Sandra Licon
- San Felipe-Del Rio CISD Trustee Raymond Meza
- Sequim School District Trustee Larry Jeffryes
- Southwest ISD Trustee Florinda Bernal
- Southwest ISD Trustee Sylvester Vasquez
- Spring ISD Trustee Winford Adams
- Spring ISD Trustee Deborah Jensen
- Stafford MSD Trustee Xavier Herrera
- Valley View ISD Trustee Corinne French
- Washington State Board of Education Member Mary Fertakis
- 1GPA – Jill Boyle
- A.L. Berry Consulting – Almitra Berry
- American University – Amaarah DeCuir
- Amplify – Paul Griffin
- Cityscape Schools – Elda Rojas
- Claycomb Architects – Bo Ledoux
- Claycomb Architects – Francis Zordilla
- IDRA – Ana Ramon
- IDRA – Chloe Sikes
- J.L. Powers & Associates – Jeffrey Richard
- Johnson Controls – Cheryl Aquadro
- Leadership ISD – Arvanitis, Patricia
- Leadership ISD – Linda Galvan
- Leadership ISD – Tamara Harrington
- Leadership ISD – Cara Jones
- Leadership ISD – Shawn Lassiter
- Leadership ISD – Johno Oberly
- Life Long Legacies – Cynthia Rocha
- MASBA – Vincent Tovar
- MIND Research – J. Ivan Alfaro
- Mpowerment Works – Marisa Rivera
- NALEO – Karina Hernandez
- O’Connell Robertson – Danny Cornejo
- Page Southerland Page Architects – Jim Brady
- Progressive Roofing – JJ Eusay
- Raise Your Hand Texas – Matthew Hall

- SBOE Candidate Brenda Davis
- TASB – Kay Douglas
- TASB – Phil Gore
- TASB – Erica Stevens
- TALAS – Stan Paz
- University of Texas at Austin – Olivia Johnson
- University of Texas at San Antonio – Enrique Aleman
- Westwind Education Policy – Circe Stumbo
- Arredondo, Ellis
- Croda, George
- Graciela Gonzales
- Zach Thompson

### Welcome

MASBA President Jacinto Ramos, Jr. welcomed attendees, introduced them to the features of GoToWebinar, and introduced moderator John Oberly of Leadership ISD.

### Panelists

John spoke of the importance of authentic conversation and shared a handout on honest & open sharing between adults and students. He introduced the panelists:

- Garland ISD Trustee Linda Griffin
- Dallas ISD Trustee Karla Guadalupe Garcia
- Garland ISD Student Serenity Drake
- Garland ISD Student Will Burnett
- Dallas ISD Student Alexis Martinez
- Dallas ISD Student Marria Hernandez

Conversation followed. The questions are noted in bold font.

#### **Linda: What was the impact of school closures on your academics?**

Serenity: I'm a senior, so the pandemic had an emotional impact on me, not being able to do those things that seniors do.

Alexis: It ruined our end-of-year experience as seniors, and we were unsure how we'd finish the year.

Will: Before the pandemic, we had teachers drop out and permanent substitutes replace them. There were glitches with our online learning, where I got zeroes for work I had submitted. It affected my grades a lot.

Marria: I have to be in a classroom to learn, so online learning is difficult, especially for AP classes.

#### **Karla: How does at-home learning compare to the classroom experience, and how will it affect you going forward?**

Will: In class, you can raise your hand & get help. At home, you can email teachers, but then you're waiting all day for a response. By the time they get back to you, you don't feel like doing the work anymore.

Alexis: At-home learning is a double-edged sword: There's flexibility of deadlines, but there are several responsibilities and distractions at home.

Serenity: At school, I was on top of my work. Communicating with teachers is different now.

Marria: We weren't assigned work for our AP classes; now I just want them to end.

#### **John: Tell us more about your motivation to do work.**

Serenity: In class, teachers push us to work. At home, we don't have people constantly getting on us, so it's our responsibility to get things done on time.

Will: We get six assignments in one day, and we know they won't be due for several days, so we procrastinate. In class, we do work with other students at a different pace.

Alexis: We already had senioritis, and now we don't have teachers pushing us to do assignments. Some assignments are not about learning, but just getting a grade.

Marria: Some teachers pushed us to do better; now we don't even get text messages from teachers.

Will: We get long lists of things we need to do, and we don't understand, so how can we do it? That leads to a lack of motivation. When we don't understand, we can't lean over and ask a friend. It's frustrating.

**Linda: Why are the timelines and rules changing with how we respond to COVID-19?**

Alexis: Everyone was reacting. We don't have enough information on COVID. We thought it was just going to be one week.

Serenity: Timelines & rules kept changing because they didn't want things to hurt us all.

**Karla: What effect has COVID had on your plans after high school?**

Serenity: It gives me more time to figure out where I'll go to college. We no longer have one-to-one contact with our college counselors, who help us fill out applications.

Will: I needed more letters of recommendation for colleges, which are now hard to get. I was going to be in a summer program for college hours. Now I can't do that.

Alexis: The week after spring break, I was going to hear about a TCU scholarship, which was different when it's not in person. I'm worried classes won't begin on August 23. I'm not sure about starting my first semester of college at home.

Marria: I want to study criminal justice, and I just got an email from my college advisor that we probably won't be back on campus, so there are a lot of emotions.

**Linda: Tell us where you are now in terms of finishing high school. Is all well with that?**

Alexis: This is my last week as a senior, so it's my final push. My last assignments and AP exams are this week. I picked up my cap and gown today. I'm ready to end.

Will: I'm in the final stretch, trying to knock out final assignments.

Serenity: I'm missing a few assignments. It's starting to hit me that my senior year is about to end.

Marria: All I'm thinking about now is finishing and making the next decisions.

**Karla: How has COVID affecting your family & community? What has changed?**

Serenity: We're spending more time together. Now we have to wear masks and gloves when we go out.

Will: I'm spending more time with my mom, who's a teacher, and we get on one another's nerves. My grandmother is older, so she doesn't come out. She won't come to my graduation, which will be a drive-by celebration.

Alexis: My father is working overtime, so we still have food on the table and a roof over our heads. I'm helping my mom around the house. The highways are free during rush hour. It's different seeing people in face masks; you know things aren't normal.

Marria: I'm valuing time with my siblings and quality time with my parents. No one's outside anymore. People are scared.

**Linda: How would you react if the county and some schools opened next week, or by the end of May?**

Serenity: I'd be surprised and thinking they're opening it up too quickly. There are too many unknowns. Schools would be so different, so there's no point. There's enough stress without opening schools. We'd think that things are back to normal, but it wouldn't be safe.

Will: I wouldn't go out right away. If I did, I'd take precautions.

Alexis: I'd feel concerned and betrayed. If school opens next week, I'll be concerned for my younger brother's safety. As a senior, it would be a hit in the gut to know school reopened when I just got out.

Marria: We're seniors; we don't want to go back.

**Karla: Who did you look to for comfort, peace and motivation when we had to drastically switch to at-home learning?**

Will: I looked to my friends; we're all going through the same thing.

Alexis: I looked into myself for reassurance, knowing there will be life after this. I knew I had to finish this year strong.

Serenity: This gave me a taste of life after school. I've had time to reflect.

Marria: My best friend has been affected more than I, and I've spoken with teachers.

**Linda: Tell us more about distance learning moving forward.**

**Johno: I have a follow-up: Schools will likely have to use some distance learning next year. What decisions would you make, or what questions should decisionmakers ask, to know how things are going?**

Alexis: We need to ask students, "Are you actually learning?" Teachers need to focus on the purpose of their classes and assignments, so that students don't feel there's simply completing "busy work."

**Johno: You're all nodding. Tell us more about "busy work."**

Serenity: You don't have classmates to help you anymore, and teachers give you assignments all due at the same time. I was focused more on getting assignments in, than learning.

Will: Teachers should create videos we can watch and take notes on.

Marria: Videos would work for me. We need help from teachers. Perhaps we should touch base with teachers once a week.

**Johno: How can you tell the difference between "busy work" and something that's worth your time?**

Alexis: If it looks way longer, the teacher has changed the workload. There's a lot more work. A little work given throughout the week is more manageable than big assignments to be completed by deadlines.

Will: We used to know how much work we'd get from teachers. Now the work they give is out of character. You know it's "busy work."

**Karla: What are adults not understanding about what you're going through?**

Serenity: Adults say they're sorry for us, for not having prom, graduation and senior activities. Adults should try to be there for us. Missing out on that means a lot. With academics, it's been stressful. There's a lot going on.

Will: By the second semester, seniors aren't motivated to do any work, but we had a routine going. Then we had to start over and do something else. This will affect us for the rest of our lives: We'll never have prom or graduation photos. Your family can't celebrate with you. There are no graduation parties. There's a big impact on our lives.

Alexis: Teachers forget that we're at home, with certain liberties, but we don't live and breathe our school work. Some of us work. Some have responsibilities at home. You don't have to fill our free time with things to do.

Marria: The last few weeks were going to be about making last memories with our friends. We don't need the work teachers are giving us. Teachers are saying, "Y'all have a lot of time"—but we don't. We just want to sit down and talk with friends. Teachers don't know what's happening inside us.

Johno gave trustees an opportunity to synthesize one thing they heard.

Linda: Adults haven't understood distance learning, how difficult it would be for students, and students' responsibilities at home.

Karla: This has been a difficult, emotional experience for students, and they need support in more ways than simple shows of support.

Johno invited trustees to share their next steps.

Karla: I want to focus on the topic of motivation, especially for younger students who are less responsible.

Linda: I want to have a conversation with my board members on evaluating all that's gone on with our students, asking us to be more understanding and visionary, looking at the effects of what we're rolling out, recognizing that we're interested in the whole child, and not just academics.

Johno invited students to talk about the protocol that was used for today's conversation.

Alexis: I felt listened to. I've shared my feelings with friends, but not with teachers or other adults.

Serenity: I feel they heard us and will do what they said they'll do.

Johno asked how this conversation was different from other conversations with adults.

Marria: Adults don't always listen. Today they were just listening to us.

Will: When we tell adults our problems, they often tell us what we need to be doing.

Johno asked how schools might be different if students were engaged through open curiosity.

Serenity: I feel they heard us and will do what they said they'll do.

Will: It would be a better learning environment for students, and they could cater more to us.

Alexis: Teachers can't see our faces or know if we're truly understanding.

Johno asked trustees about this experience of engaging students.

Linda: The structured approach required me to listen more.

Karla: I suggested we have a panel of students because we're making decisions about students without engaging them. Hearing students helps us get it right, and we hear that we're not getting it right.

TCBSBM President Ty G. Jones noted the importance of incorporating student voice into our decisions. He noted the key question: Are students learning?

MASBA President Jacinto Ramos, Jr. thanked all in attendance.

### Adjournment

The conversation concluded at 1:00 p.m.