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C0MMUNITY AS THE CAMPUS^{TM} LEVERAGES THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC TO REDESIGN OUTDATED EDUCATION MODELS
Engaging Community Partners To Affect Change

CHICAGO. July 8, 2020 – School and community members have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reinvent where and how learning happens. Time is critical and education experts urge leaders to begin immediately to create learning environments that are safe, inclusive and responsive to current opportunities.

Speaking as part of a panel discussion organized by TIES, Cleveland Metropolitan School District CEO Eric Gordon said, "We can't go back to school as normal, even if we wanted to… This is our opportunity to create new tools and to abandon the tools that have kept us trapped in an inequitable and unjust system for so long."

Gordon, Hugh Vasquez of the National Equity Project, Kristin Lewis-Warner of Harvard's Pear Institute, Calvin Mackie of STEM NOLA and Marc Siciliano of TIES all discussed the unique opportunity to reinvent school. Their comments were made during a webinar offered in late June to members of the STEM Learning Ecosystems Community of Practice and others, including families, educators and community leaders.

 "I want you to think about all of the places and ways in a community that kids can learn. It could be place-based learning like museums or art galleries or music venues or science centers or parks. It could be workplace learning opportunities like job shadowing, internships, apprenticeships and learn and earn programs," Gordon said.

Gordon explained that students and families need opportunities for authentic demonstrations of their learning to community members through such possibilities as juried exhibits, the production of artifacts and awarding of credentials.

Calvin Mackie, a community engagement expert who leads the STEM Learning Ecosystem in New Orleans, STEM NOLA, said school and community leaders have lost sight of what really matters. "We're not talking about a lost generation. You're talking about a generation that's been left behind. We got so engrossed in the buildings and the policy of education, we left the community behind," Mackie said. "We talk to each other, but we don't talk to the community because we believe we know what's best for the community."

Vasquez offered similar comments, explaining that schools were designed to be inequitable. "We have to see that the system was designed to produce what it's producing. And that is going to lead us to the question...How then do we design it for equity to be a result instead?"

Vasquez' question and others like it prompted TIES and its partners to develop Community as Campus, a sustainable design initiative to catalyze the future of education. Siciliano explained that with Community as Campus, which can be launched in any community or school district, TIES acts as collaborative designers to reimagine school by listening to all stakeholders to accelerate transformative change.

Part of the transformative change will be to embed systems and processes for dealing with the emotional and psychological needs of students, educators and families. Kristin Lewis-Warner of Harvard's PEAR Institute said, "We don't know what students are going to be bringing to the table. Each will have unique experiences including possible depression, anxiety, loss within families, traumas that have happened. And we need to be at the forefront of addressing those components."

Siciliano explained that schools must be re-designed to embed social-emotional learning needs as part of all aspects of learning.

"Let's acknowledge that the system has failed us. Let's start to reclaim language and talk about leading with learning and talking about how learning happens everywhere and put together from research, from other examples that exist, mastery systems, competency-based systems where learning gets valued and acknowledged. These are not new ideas," said Siciliano.

Siciliano explained the process starts from "a space of listening and learning from communities." "This is where STEM really comes into play. This is all about design. This is all about looking at constraints, and then prototyping," said Siciliano.

To learn more about Community as Campus and TIES' ability to partner with schools, districts and communities, visit www.tiesteach.org.

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