

54 - Education During the Pandemic

Original Air Date: 8/24/22

Purpose: The purpose of the transcripts is to provide readers and listeners with a written version of each episode of the UAGC Center for Early Childhood Education's Early Childhood Chatter Podcast so they can follow along with the audio content. www.uagc.edu/ece-center/chatter-podcast

Audience: Current Active & Enrolled Students

Episode Transcript

Host Dr. Shipley: Hello everyone and welcome to Early Childhood Chatter with Dr. Shipley and Dr. Heald. We will upload a new episode every other week on Wednesdays.

Host Dr. Heald: Twice a month, we will come to you with a 10-minute professional development that you can quickly listen to for new ideas to try.

Don't forget to subscribe to this podcast for notifications.

Today, we have with us Jessica Horne, and Jessica is a Doctor of Education Student in the teaching and learning program. Her topic is the pandemic and education.

Her lifelong work has been in the field of early childhood education, and she often has the pleasure of inspiring future teachers as well as running a preschool. Professionally, she has spent 25-plus years as an educator. Welcome, Jessica.

Thank you so much for joining us today.

Jessica Horn speaker: Thank you so much for having me.

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: Hi, Jessica.

I'm so glad that you're here because this is such a relevant topic, and even today as we speak, this pandemic is just infuriating all of us, right?

Jessica Horn Speaker: Very much so.

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: Yes.

Jessica Horn Speaker: Very much so.

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: So, we know that COVID has changed the face of education in a huge way. Why is this a passion of yours right now? What do you want to share with our listeners?

Jessica Horn Speaker: So, we learned early on that there's definitely a compelling need to explore how we can continue learning in times of crisis. So right now, we look at COVID as our primary trigger, but for a long, long time, there's always been big triggers in society.

I mean, some examples, we have Hurricane Katrina. It's not uncommon that we'll have huge tornadoes that go through parts of the United States. We've had earthquakes, and a lot of the times, these big disasters will shut down our ability to resume our normal functions.

So that's why I figured if we look deeper at how we can continue education in these times of crisis, we could find some answers on ways that we could get up ahead of the curve and keep education moving when these types of things happen.

Dr. Stephanie Heald Speaker: That's so important because like you said, we can kind of trip ourselves up stumbling on the fact that it is here, and we're not finding ways to get around it or over it. And it's really important that we do that for our morale, for teacher morale.

So obviously, teacher morale has truly been effective in these times of just uncertainty. And when trauma surrounds our teachers, we really want to make sure that we are supporting them. So, do you have any ideas on how we might offer that?

Jessica Horn speaker: So, I do.

And I actually, it's sad, today, as we know, the cases with COVID have continued to excel. And I had a colleague call me this morning and tell me that in her district, they had 186 cases. And as a result, they had to shut down, just today.

And this is a smaller district with only seven elementary schools. And she was really discouraged because her support system didn't tell her what their plan should be. So that's the first thing that we need to look at.

What do teachers need to do in advance before these things happen, like major shutdowns in the district, in your pod, in your classroom, in your building? How do we help them so when these things happen, they feel prepared, and they don't feel number one, afraid. They don't feel like they're doing crisis teaching. And they feel that they can best serve their families and their students.

And that's basically what I wanted to touch on today. How to continue with teaching and learning when we potentially can't be in person. And how do we support staff to get to that?

Dr. Tisha Shipley speaker: I think that is really great to look at.

So, I was going to ask about families, but let's talk about because we do have administrators listening to this. How do staff and faculty and teachers and how can we support them? What do we need to get them ready for?

Jessica Horn speaker: So essentially, some of the things that I talked with this colleague today, so her district has been very, very proactive. And I've heard that a lot of Head Starts, state preschools are as well in terms of providing families hotspots, other types of technology that they would need to stay active because a lot of these families potentially can't afford the internet.

And that was one of our big triggers during the time of COVID when everything shut down. How can I access these families if they do not have the internet? So, the first thing that I always tell people that we want to do, especially like a classroom teacher, so you can send out a survey to your families early on.

Do you have technology? Is it a phone? What type of phone do you have? Do you have an iPad? Do you have an extra computer? What happens if you're not working? Are you using that computer? Or potentially there were families where they had three, four children that were expected to share one device and four different classrooms going at the same time.

So, we know now things like that don't work, but by sending surveys and knowing the types of families that you're serving, then you can better meet their needs.

Dr. Stephanie Heald Speaker: Jessica, you bring up such a great point. We do need to create that community classroom with our families.

Have you had any feedback from families yet, of how it feels or teachers yet, of how it feels to be in this position with support?

Jessica Horn speaker: With support, it's a game changer. And it allows them to reach out to their families. Just today I heard, yes, my students have computers, but here's my challenge.

As the school year has gone on since we've started in August, some of my students have now lost their charger. So yes, they have a device, but now they're missing part of the device to connect them when they most need it right now. So, it's little things like that.

We just need to stay abreast and have communication channels open for the families. So, if things like this happen, we have a backup plan ready to go so that way we can still continue to assist them.

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: So, Jessica, with all of your research and everything that you've done and talked to teachers and been out in the field, how has the face of teaching changed? Period.

Jessica Horn speaker: I want to stay positive, but at the same time, I have to share collectively, so many people have chosen to retire. We have this huge shortage of subs everywhere in every single classroom and district. I have yet to hear one school district that said, yeah, we're doing wonderful.

We have a plethora of subs. There's no challenges. So right now, I think it's just teachers need to focus on what they can bring to the table.

And right now, not only having a positive attitude, but also practicing self-wellness. And a lot of people think, well, what does that matter? In times like this, we're really facing high levels of burnout because we don't have subs to come and cover for us. So, when you tell your teachers, I'm going to respect that you need this day off.

But at the same time, you know, it's like you have to make sure that you can take care of yourself and maybe not take on so many things that before we could take on, if that makes sense.

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: One hundred percent.

Jessica Horn speaker: No, I can't right now because I don't have a sub, and I don't want to work in after school program every day because I do have other commitments.

So that's an important thing.

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: And even in different states, colleges are actually closing down education programs because they can't get people to enroll. And it's just it's so sad.

So, what do we need to do now? What are you finding?

Jessica Horn speaker: So, I must say the first thing is the research has it's exploded. I don't want to even use the word expand. It has exploded.

I started my program about 14 months ago when I first typed in the pandemic and education. I found less than five articles and I thought, oh, my gosh, this topic may not be viable because we were right in the middle of the pandemic, but nobody had begun to research it.

So now I can share that the research is so plentiful, like on most given days from week to week, we'll have an addition of 10,000 more scholarly journals like the reading is so plentiful, I can't even begin to keep up.

But I know that there are many researchers and we're all taking a little bit different look at this. So, some people are researching how the pandemic has affected college students. Personally, I'm looking at how the pandemic is affecting the instructors behind the scene who are trying to keep education moving forward.

Dr. Stephanie Heald Speaker: That's so important because, you know, our littlest are going to benefit and we just need to make sure that we're all we're ourselves, we're in a positive mindset and just like you said, an optimistic mindset. Reality is we do have challenges, and we do have adversities. But just like you said, we need to continue to move forward.

So, do you have some takeaways for our readers?

Jessica Horn speaker: So I think the most important thing we can do right now as educators, aspiring educators, is really to build a classroom community early on, get to know your families, get to know who they are, be cautious of your own beliefs, because right now, especially we're at a time where we want better things for our families and children, but they may not be able to provide that, especially during a pandemic when unemployment is big. We've had huge shortages on food. So, I want to tell our educators to to keep in mind, like our basic needs, Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

If a child isn't getting fed, they're going to have a hard time concentrating at school.

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: You're so right. And we have to go back to that and keep thinking about it.

What is one challenge that you want to leave the listeners with?

Jessica Horn speaker: For the most part, I just would love, if educators could be mindful of ways to continue to access families. Some people don't have access to the technology, and I want to urge those people to go ahead and be mindful, of providing a way that students and families can continue to be engaged, even if that's with paper, with making ditto copies.

And today, my colleague, I recommended, you know, to just have an extra sample lesson plan ready to go that can work for online or it could work for in-person instruction.

That way you're not feeling stressed out about, I don't know what's happening next. And even if it's a remedial lesson that your students have already done, at least you're prepared and no one's feeling like this is crisis-based teaching. You're teaching because you have purpose.

Dr. Tisha Shipley Speaker: That is great to leave them with. So, thank you so much, Jessica, for being here today. We appreciate all of your research and knowledge.

Jessica Horn speaker: Thank you so much. Thank you, ladies. Have a wonderful day.