ZOOM WEBINAR

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Moderator:

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Panelists:

Jaunelle Pratt-Williams, Principal Research Scientist, Education and Child Development, NORC
Carla Zummak Fredrick, Chief Product Officer, Teaching and Learning, Infinite Campus, Inc.
Paul Goren, Director, E4 Center, Northwestern University
Amy Auletto, Assistant Director, E4 Center, Northwestern University
John Sludden, Analyst III, Research Alliance for New York City Schools, NYU

[00:00:07]

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Webinar 1: Partnerships, Data Sharing, and Data Integration to Advance Middle School Math Webinar Series: Partnering for the Future: Innovative Middle School Math Solutions Facilitated by the CLIP Consortium

03.11.2025

[00:00:07]

Jennifer Hamilton:

Welcome, everyone, to our very first webinar, Partnering for the Future of Middle School Math. I'm Jennifer Hamilton, Senior Vice President here at NORC at the University of Chicago, and your Moderator today. Thank you, all, for joining us. Today, we'll hear from my colleagues at NORC, as well as other organizations in the AIMS Collaboratory, about their work to improve middle school math through data integration and the importance of building strong partnerships to be able to make that integration happen, right?

So, before we jump into that, let's start with introductions. Jaunelle, why don't you get started and then pass it on?

[00:00:49]

Jaunelle Pratt-Williams:

Sure, I can do that. Thanks, Jen. Hi, everyone. I'm Jaunelle Pratt Williams. I'm a principle research scientist at NORC. I lead the curriculum and learning improvement project, CLIP, as well as the research areas of the project. And if I'm thinking about what motivates me, much of my work focuses on post-secondary transitions and students' math experiences and opportunities in middle school.

And that often shapes their options for after high school. And so, with that in mind, I'm really excited about how CLIP and all of the other projects here are part of the

AIMS Collaboratory and how we all really think about supporting students in having better math outcomes and experiences in their middle grades. And I will pass it to Carla.

[00:01:29]

Carla Zummak-Frederick:

Thank you, Jaunelle. And thank you, Jen, for having me on the panel. I'm Carla Zummak-Frederick, Chief Product Officer of Teaching and Learning at Infinite Campus. I have been involved with the CLIP project, and my role is to make sure that the goals of the project and the goals of Infinite Campus are aligned.

I also ensure that the work is prioritized here at Campus and that we have the people ready to do the work. I have been very motivated by the potential for this project. Teachers work so hard, and the data is all there. It's just a matter of putting it together. So, working together, we should be able to present teachers and administrators with actionable information that will have a positive and direct impact for students in the classroom. With that, I'll pass it along to Paul Goren.

[00:02:12]

Paul Goren:

Hi, everybody. I'm Paul Goren. I'm the Director of the Center for Education, Efficacy, Excellence and Equity, better known as the E4 Center, at Northwestern University. And we are part of the AIMS Collaboratory. I'm a character that's lived at the intersection of research policy and practice for way too many years. And this project, the E4 project, has been a wonderful partnership, between several urban school districts, specifically Oakland Unified in California and the Chicago Public Schools and curriculum associates which produces the iReady assessment.

And we harvest the data from the iReady assessment to answer questions that our district partners have. And then, our big quest is to create useful and usable knowledge so that district partners in the classroom and central office can make decisions based on the

data that we're analyzing. And with that, I'm going to pass it on to my colleague Amy Auletto.

[00:03:10]

Amy Auletto:

Thanks, Paul. My name is Amy Auletto. I work with Paul at the E4 Center at Northwestern University as Assistant Director. In this role, I oversee all aspects of our center's data management and research. And one thing this includes is the supervision and mentorship of our early career visiting scholars. E4 hosts a cohort of several tenure-track assistant professors each year.

These individuals have an interest in learning more about partnered research with school districts, as well as research on digital learning platforms. And so this program is a really exciting aspect of my role. It's been wonderful to support those who come from a more traditional academic background to help them expand their expertise to other settings. And, lastly, I'll also add I'm particularly motivated by E4's focus on doing work that is in direct service of school districts and the questions that they have. And with that, I will pass it on to John.

[00:04:07]

John Sludden:

Thanks so much, Amy. My name is John Sludden. I am an analyst at the Research Alliance for New York City Schools at NYU. And I am one small part of a larger team working on the New York City partnership for math equity which includes colleagues at the New York City Public School System and Amplify along with other NYU colleagues at the Metro Center. I'm really excited to share what we're learning, today, with you all.

[00:04:36]

Jennifer Hamilton:

Great. Thanks, everybody, for introducing yourselves. What an esteemed panel we have, representing three really interesting projects. I'm going to jump in with the first question. So, I am very interested in similarities and differences among these three different projects. I'm wondering if you guys could give us an overview of the—you know, what you're trying to solve and some of the challenges that you've been facing.

[00:04:59]

[SLIDE]

What are the goals of your project? What challenges in middle school math is your project attempting to solve?

[00:05:04]

Jaunelle Pratt-Williams:

I can start if that's okay, Jen?

[00:05:06] Jennifer Hamilton:

Mm-hmm.

[00:05:08]

Jaunelle Pratt-Williams:

So, CLIP's main goal was to break down data siloes, and those siloes have existed for a really long time. So education solution providers, like Infinite Campus, Curriculum Associates, Carnegie Learning, some of our—and many of our other partners in CLIP, all support schools and districts in meetings students' needs. And collecting data is definitely part of that effort, but it, historically, has been siloed. And so, what that means, often, for educators is that the burden is on them to connect the dots. So in practice, for example, a teacher may need to log into one system to see students' attendance, and then they log into another to see how they're progressing through content or assessments. And teachers and administrators, they can do this.

They can—connect the patterns, but it's pretty burdensome on them. And in reality, There are a lot of educators that just don't have time to do that really well. And so the integrated data system that CLIP piloted allows educators to connect these dots in real time and to have real-time insights.

And it also adds a bonus of research expertise through some of the present reports that we created so that educators can explore the relationships that we already know are connected. And so, it does all of this far more efficiently than in the past, giving educators the information they need to support students and really create a better math experience. That's a little bit about CLIP's goals.

[00:06:27]

Paul Goren:

How about if I pop in as well? So, the E4 center, as I said earlier, is in the quest of producing useful and usable knowledge for our colleagues who are working in classrooms and school districts around the country. And where we started off was to think about the questions and the challenges that our colleagues face. So, in mathematics, they want to know to what extent are kids on path, during the elementary grades, to qualify for algebra in ninth grade and succeed in algebra in ninth grade? As we know as we look back at the effects of the pandemic, there's a lot of questions around the extent to which mathematics learning has been stalled or students have been struggling because of the lack of instruction during the pandemic and thereafter.

So, these are questions, that are, whether that are in the second-grade classroom or in the math instructional, leadership of any school district, these are the questions that they're facing. So, in collaboration with Curriculum Associates, which produces the iReady assessment system and touches close to, I think, 15 million kids around the country now.

We worked out a really great partnership where we could effectively harvest, scoop up the data that they have from K through eight—and they have very specific domain content, the performance indicators, so that we could do the type of work that our district partners are trying to look at. In addition, our partnership has really been built on creating a learning community amongst the various players.

So, we hold a regular brown bag—virtual brown bag series. We have an in-person convening with our colleagues and friends not only from our two partner districts, but several other districts around the country. And we take the time to learn from the research team at Curriculum Associates as well. So we're creating a learning system, ecosystem on mathematics learning and English language arts that, then, we can apply to the best of our knowledge, to our friends in the school district so that they can actually make a difference in the lives of the kids that they serve.

[00:08:38]

John Sludden:

I can pick up after Paul given-given some similarities with the origins of where our partnership stems from. So the overarching goal of New York City's partnerships for math equity is to determine whether and how Amplify Desmos' supplemental digital platform can foster equitable access to grade level math work. Also, foster collaboration and discourse among students and belonging in the classroom. And this is particularly focused on Black and Latinx students and students experiencing poverty in the middle grades, so grades six through eight, primarily.

The reason for this focus and the main challenge we're attempting to solve is math and equity based on students' background characteristics. So, as Paul mentioned this issue is particularly urgent given the learning loss primarily faced by Black, Latinx and students experiencing poverty. The pandemic accelerated feelings of isolation and disengagement and Amplify Desmos math is one effort, in New York City Public Schools, that's attempting to address this.

[00:09:47]

Carla Zummak-Frederick:

I have a follow-up comment if that's all right. Jaunelle had mentioned breaking down data siloes. And I think when it comes to ed tech, there are organizations that are building standards to help connect the dots between different organizations or different data paradigms. We were not able to, with the CLIP project, utilize as many of those tools as we had, hoped to. But where we could, it really did allow us to speak the same language and get things connected.

[00:10:15]

Jennifer Hamilton:

Thank you. Was there anybody else wanted to add anything?

[00:10:18]

Paul Goren:

I was just going add in, on Carla's point, the speaking the same language is actually a really key thing because we all work in these gigantic data sets. We work with different people who have different interpretations. So, facilitating the communication channels so that we're not talking past each other, whether that's in data analytics or just in rolling up our sleeves and trying to problem solve, is actually a really important feature of these partnerships.

[00:10:45]

Jennifer Hamilton:

And then that actually leads on very, very nicely to our next question. So, one point that is coming through, loud and clear, across everybody, is that we're all trying to

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get together to support our educators and our district partners, meeting them where they are, answering the questions that they need. But to be able to do that, we need to be able to collaborate and communicate effectively. So, can you please tell me more about how you built and managed these relationships and these communication mechanisms, especially with the school districts?

[00:11:15]

[SLIDE]

Building & Managing Collaborative Relationships

[00:11:22]

Jaunelle Pratt-Williams:

This was a tricky one, but one that I also think is so critical. Partnerships were and continue to be the key to CLIP. I suspect our colleagues here will say something similar about their projects. If we're going to break down siloes, we have to partner, and we have to collaborate. And, sometimes, that means collaborating with unlikely partners.

For CLIP, a key piece of the design and facilitation was acknowledging that organizations who normally might be competitors—like, for example, two different curriculum providers—are going to collaborate with the same organizations and, at times, even with each other. The district partners were also essential, especially because we aim to create a solution that serves them. So, we need them to be a part of the process.

Our district partner was there from the beginning, all the way at the beginning of development, including them in our developing of the research agenda that shaped the work. We were sure to include them and make sure that they knew that they mattered and that their priorities were also our priorities, in addition to other members of CLIP. And everyone who's a part of the consortium had a seat at the table and was given space to be heard. This also meant that things took longer, and they were not linear. But it helped to maintain each organization's engagement and partnership. So, that's what I would say about that.

[00:12:41]

Carla Zummak-Frederick:

I'll chime in here. I am fortunate to have very passionate teammates here at Infinite Campus. We believe in the potential for this effort, and we have from the beginning and have been willing to work at it to get results. As is typical, the original plan did not go—it didn't pan out, technically, like we were expecting it to.

So we had engineers from both sides. Both organizations had to work together to really troubleshoot and problem solve around how we were going to get around this. But once we had a solution determined, it was a matter of coordination to get it done. I'll also say that, Natalie Lapakko, who is our analyst on the project used to be a teacher.

She works so well with teachers and administrators. She understands where they're coming from, and she enjoys helping them and teaching them about our different features and doing demos. So, she's a natural collaborator, natural teacher. When Jaunelle connected her to the right people, I knew I was in good hands.

[00:13:37]

Amy Auletto:

I'd like to echo both what Jaunelle and Carla have just shared. Our approach to forming and maintaining collaborative relationships has been very iterative in nature and certainly not a linear process. We have, throughout our project, maintained a constant line of communication with our partners.

In particular, in the early stages of our center, we co-constructed our research agenda with our district and provider partners. And, in doing so, we had to come back to the group, many times, to revisit specific decisions around language and framing to really make sure we had everyone's buy-in before jumping straight into the work. I'll also add, as Paul described earlier, our center has a robust set of learning community activities.

So, in that process, we're meeting monthly with our district partners to check in with them and the issues that they're facing. We host a series of virtual brown bag sessions, and we also have an in-person convening, annually. And so, collectively, these

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activities really bring everyone together and build those relationships. And on top of those more formal activities, we also, are constantly communicating, one-on-one, with key district personnel who are in research and data roles to help move our work forward. The key here has really been keeping an open line of communication so that everyone feels comfortable raising issues as they arise.

[00:15:00]

Paul Goren:

I wonder if I can provide a few common themes that we all hear. You know, if we were in a real estate webinar, we would talk about location, location, location. Here, we talk about communication, communication, communication. And again, there's some really interesting idiosyncrasies because analysts' and school district folks, and providers, we all care about the same thing.

We want to make a difference in the lives of kids, but we do it different ways. We do it with different languages, and it's actually really important to be able to find the time to meet at those tables, that take time to be able to work through issues. In that communication piece, it's really important to practice the time-honored stance of no surprises. And I think that comes up over and over and over again, again, whether you're an analyst or whether you're curriculum provider in a school-school district.

The final thing that just runs through, as I listen to my colleagues, is time becomes a really interesting factor here because the time that it takes to analyze something is different than the time that it takes to be able to communicate and get something done tomorrow in a classroom, in a school district, which is different than the time it takes for the provider to provide the data.

So, dealing with the different aspects of time and, yet, respecting the folks that we're working with, especially on the frontline, they need to have something, before the end of the day, to be able to work with their students or their colleagues. And they need something by the next morning. And sort of juggling those needs with the needs to do the work well and to do the analytics well is a really important piece of understanding each other and understanding each other's perspective on time.

[00:16:51]

Jennifer Hamilton:

Well, thank you, Paul. You're kind of doing my job for me a little bit, so I appreciate that. But I also wanted to just think about the time it takes to build the relationships at the beginning, like Amy was talking about, the co-creation of the agenda and, you know, not just extracting stuff from the district. It's really like we're providing. We're working together. And that takes time to build that relationship and then, moving on to the time it takes to turn things around, which has to be very quick, right? So that's the point that you were making there.

The next question is, you know, data, at the heart of all three of these projects and providing data, so, you know, teachers and districts can make good decisions. But data sharing is, like, it's easier said than done, right? It can be challenging, sometimes. I'm hoping you guys can tell me a little bit more about some of the challenges that you've faced with data sharing and how you got past those challenges.

[00:17:49] [SLIDE] Data Sharing Challenges & Solutions

[00:17:54]

Paul Goren:

If you don't mind, why don't I jump in since I did my spiel on time?

[00:17:59]

Jennifer Hamilton:

Yes, please.

[00:18:00]

Paul Goren:

- so much time. So the data use agreements that we've had—we've had them, between the university and the school districts, between the university and the provider a lot of this is important because we're protecting privacy.

We're paying attention to the rules around FERPA and the use of data and information. It's an extraordinary challenge to be able to work—and I say this respectfully—with the legal counsels of the various entities 'cause they have to do their work to protect the interest of the institution. And then they have to actually negotiate with the others.

And so I—we've had data use agreements in our center that Amy and I work in that have taken two or three months. And that's actually really fast. And we have one that took almost three years. And that was—under the circumstances, that was also fast 'cause it was negotiating change back, forth and back and forth. So. there's a piece of understanding that process. And, in diving into create these relationships and these opportunities, there's a certain amount of professional patience that one has to have while simultaneously working on trying to build trust.

And so there's a little contradiction there. It's sort of like, "Trust us. We're going be able to do things with you and for you, but it's just going take some more time." And so that becomes sort of a tightrope act that when we again, practicing communication over and over again is going be key. I think the final thing I would say is that we had a commitment at the E4 Center to—once we got our agreements, to try to deliver something as fast as we could. Get a product—

[00:19:41] Unknown Speaker: Mm-hmm.

[00:19:42]

Paul Goren:

- out that that had all the integrity and could stand by what E4 stands for, what Northwestern stands for, what our partners would appreciate that would be helpful. But get something out fast that would be of use and then engage around that. Create a learning community opportunity. Build some more questions and then show that we can do another one really fast because, then, what that does is buys the time for the longer type of study that's going take much more analysis. And it builds a little bit of patience on the end of folks who are really needing the information.

[00:20:17]

John Sludden:

I will add, Jennifer, if I may, a lot of the similarities, again, with what Paul's saying about trust, about communication are something—are two big areas that we've worked on in this partnership. So, as an analyst for the Research Alliance, we have a longstanding data use agreement and relationship with New York City Public Schools that dates back several decades.

While not unique, it makes us fairly distinctive. So, we have a no-surprises policy built in. We've developed trust with our colleagues and really view this as a partnership focused on learning and improving, student outcomes. So, my organization's role in this partnership really built off of this relationship with New York City Public Schools, but added a new dimension with Amplify. And what we found successful is what my colleagues on this webinar have mentioned is it is really around communication. Regular check-ins and reflection meetings. From our end, what does the data look like? How is it being collected by the platform? How does the platform need to reorient this data for researchers, like me, to make sense of it? How can we create a system to easily share this data, ensuring privacy, ensuring student protections with other researchers so more folks can learn from it? And we've really honed that over a year and a half of regular recurring meetings, surmounting some obstacles on those ends. Some of the challenges we do continue to wrestle with, however, are just basic issues of working across organizations with different missions and different cultures. So, Amplify Desmos is designed for teaching and learning. And our research, on our end, is really in service to the teaching and learning. And so we have to be flexible and adapt to the implementation how this is working on the ground.

We have to understand the implementation, how students and teachers are using it, how they're collaborating with it. How students work together in groups with this platform makes the analysis harder on our end, but it's not something we want to interrupt as teaching and learning really is central.

So, the flexibility that Amplify Desmos is designed for, we have to understand that. We have to understand how in short, this is being implemented and really use that implementation, what we're learning, through observations and survey data, to inform sort of how we analyze the platform.

[00:22:42]

Amy Auletto:

I wanted to just build, briefly, on what Paul and John both shared. One key thing that we've learned in E4 is that a partnership with a provider doesn't necessarily guarantee that our team will have access to some of the more nuanced data that we may need to do work in service of our school district partners. I think, one of the biggest takeaways, here, from all this is that digital learning platform data ultimately belongs to districts. So, for some of the research that we've been interested in doing, the focus is more on policy and geographic or other contextual factors. We've really had to work directly with districts to make sure that we have access to the more detailed data that we need to complete our work. And as has been discussed, this isn't the sort of thing that happens overnight. It really takes time and trust.

[00:23:31]

Jennifer Hamilton:

Yeah. Exactly. And it sounds like, you know, we're trying to use kind of these existing data sets and data systems in ways they're not used to being used, right? And, you know, combining and integrating data is a challenging thing to do, even at the best of times.

So, I think this is an exciting and fun question. So we've done—we've worked, for many years, on these projects. What have we learned at the end of the day? What new insights or knowledge did we get related to these data systems and policies that support data integration?

[00:24:04] [SLIDE] Insights on Data Integration Processes

[00:24:11]

Carla Zummak-Frederick:

I can start with that one. I think for new insights, the first thing, for me, is that there really is a lot to coordinate. It is very important to have alignment with all of the organizations involved. It becomes difficult if the timing for the work with one organization does not align with the timing for another organization. And, also, from what I've experienced, the type of project that we're talking about is typically outside of an organization's standard prioritization process, which—makes it all the more difficult to get the timing right. Next—and this is a difficult one, but as much as possible, limiting personnel change these projects can last a long time, and change is going happen. But the more we can prepare for that and make sure things are documented, the better off we're going to be.

There's so much historical knowledge and valuable context that can get lost if we don't record it. Regarding data integrations, using standard APIs, is really the only way that we're going to be able to get something like this to be able to scale. With the CLIP project, we were able to prove that it can really have tremendous value. But as a sort of one-off custom solution, it's not sustainable.

[00:25:27]

John Sludden:

I will just add to what Carla said, seconding all of that information, but just to say that I'm not sure that what I'm about to add is new, but it is, to me, insightful. I relearn this, constantly, doing data analysis in research. But my experience on this project has really solidified the importance of triangulating data from different sources.

So, our NYU Metro Center colleagues have led the qualitative and survey components of our research project. And these have proven to be really invaluable and instrumental to understanding how the platform has been implemented in the classroom, how students and teachers are using this platform.

And that's really led to us rethinking some of the research, some of our analysis, some of our findings, questioning the collaboration that students have been observed to use, what that means for our processing on the backend. So, we've really been thinking about the importance of multiple sources of information to really understand how these platforms have been implemented in New York City. So that's just been something that's been reaffirmed on our end.

[00:26:33] Jaunelle Pratt-Williams:

Jen, if I can just add one more thing.

[00:26:36] Jennifer Hamilton: Mm-hmm.

[00:26:37]

Jaunelle Pratt-Williams:

I want to be sure to emphasize the importance of data security in all of this work and how that really ties back to the communication and the trust that we are able to have among partners. Having that be in the forefront has made a huge difference.

And then I can't underemphasize how much development and iteration are a part of this process, and that's—I don't know if it's a new insight, but it was very clear in this work. And we knew a lot of these things, but the practical pieces really became very clear as, like, critical elements. You can't take them for granted, and I think Carla did a great job of highlighting, some of those pieces. So just wanted to say that.

[00:27:15]

Jennifer Hamilton:

Wonderful. I'm just going pause to make sure everybody has a chance to add if they wanted to.

[00:27:22]

Paul Goren:

Just one more comment that goes right off of Jaunelle's. If I had to do this over again, with respect to the funders and partners, I'd have a year zero where we could actually do—and how you get to fund that is a challenge. But where you could really do the planning so that you don't have to, from day one, have to start and, be on the edge as you're proceeding in your grant and in your opportunities. So, year zero would really work well.

[00:27:48]

Jennifer Hamilton:

I could not agree more. So, I mean, I think the—some of the main take-homes is, if you're trying to embark on a data integration project that is, you know, of this kinda

scope and importance, key thing is, you know, to nail down those partnerships through communication, trust, you know, putting the time in, at the beginning, to develop the rapport and the understanding of what is needed.

Practically, on the data side, like Carla was just saying, you know, having those APIs because we don't want these things to be one-offs, right? These are just—these are pilots to show that it can be done. We want to go to scale. We want everybody to be able to benefit from these kinds of data integrations.

And as John was saying, like, the data triangulation, you know, the harmonization of data is very important as well. I'd also like to say I love having the last word. So, thank you, everybody for joining us today. And a big thank you, also, to our viewers. We hope you enjoyed today's conversation. And we hope you will reach out to us, all, with questions, if you have them. Thanks so much, everybody.

[Stop at 00:29:23] [End of Audio]

[SLIDE]

NORC at the University of Chicago Learn more at go.NORC.org/CLIP This project was funded by the Gates Foundation. The views expressed are those of the researcher(s) and should not be attributed to the funder.

[END 00:29:22]

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