

00:01 Well, we just want to say good morning.

00:03 Um, we appreciate this time to share

00:04 with you. My name is Lisa Williams. I'm

00:07 a family support educator with Wasan

00:09 Schools. And this is my colleague, April

00:11 Beck, who is also a family support

00:12 educator.

00:15 Um we have had two years now of an with

00:19 an action team and um we've had like I

00:22 said fantastic support with Tammy and

00:25 she came and trained us and uh so we've

00:28 really enjoyed meeting with our action

00:30 team uh last school year and this school

00:32 year and

00:35 um that this is a picture of our

00:39 um this is a picture of our action team

00:41 from this past here. Are you guys seeing

00:44 a weird toolbar at the top still? No, we

00:47 see it just as a normal slide. You just

00:48 see like our whole slide. Yep. Okay,

00:51 awesome. Okay, but we need and out.

00:54 Okay. Okay.

00:57 I'm not sure how to There you go. There

00:58 we go. Okay. Good.

01:01 Okay. So, the first year, like Lisa

01:03 said, we've been working with our action

01:04 team now for two years. And um our first
01:07 year we did focus on three goals, but we
01:10 really worked hard on our climate goal
01:11 for just the primary building. We're in
01:13 a K2 um building with also a preschool
01:16 in it. And we focused really hard on
01:18 changing some signage in our building so
01:20 that it's bilingual. Um we're packed in
01:24 our building. So that's just uh the
01:26 behavior plan that our building has
01:27 adopted. and all of our signs um in the
01:31 hallways and everywhere have now been um
01:33 translated into Spanish, which we're
01:35 super excited about. And then also
01:37 another initiative that our action team
01:39 really wanted to see um come to fruition
01:42 was the uh parking lot signs translated
01:45 into Spanish as well. So you can see an
01:47 example of the begin merge here that's
01:49 in our pull up to here sign kind of like
01:52 where kids get dropped off. So, we were
01:54 able to do that as
01:56 well. Um, this year specifically, we
01:58 focused really hard on our literacy goal
02:00 and the action team um really wanted to
02:04 come up with and um kind of get a

02:07 literacy night um established here for
02:10 families and kids and it was extremely
02:11 successful. Um so, we invited Jeff
02:15 Mazerowski as our author to um come.
02:18 He's local and his illustrator Keegan on
02:21 the left side is also um local. He's a
02:24 high school student. So the the theme of
02:27 our literacy night was utter chaos which
02:29 is the book that the two of them wrote
02:31 and illustrated. They came to school on
02:33 the day of literacy night and they did
02:35 an assembly for our whole student body
02:37 which is what you see here. They read
02:39 the book and then Keegan did some um
02:41 live illustrations for the kids to see
02:43 how he does that with his technology was
02:45 pretty cool. So, our focus of literacy
02:48 night was, like I said, utter chaos,
02:50 which was the book. It's about a bunch
02:52 of cows and they go to the fair, which
02:54 is super great because we're in this
02:55 area here with the Fulton County Fair,
02:57 you know. Um, so that was our theme for
02:59 the the literacy night. Um, you can see
03:01 on the left side, this is uh some
03:03 artwork done by our our middle school

03:05 art teacher. Um, and then on the right
03:08 side, you we have um our illustrator and
03:10 author at our literacy night. They came
03:12 and did some book signings for the kids.
03:16 So, we were excited to also incorporate
03:19 um with some of our local agencies in
03:22 the center. You see the public libraries
03:24 children librarian and she was here and
03:27 um actually gave out a lot of
03:29 information about their summer reading
03:30 program did a lot of signups for that.
03:33 And on the left we had a representative
03:35 from the Imagination Library and uh she
03:38 helped sign up any people that weren't
03:39 signed up for that. And on the far right
03:42 is our backpack program, which uh we'll
03:44 talk about here in a minute. At the
03:47 literacy night, we made sure that there
03:48 were three um fun themed activities. Um
03:52 the kids played farm animal bingo. They
03:55 were able to play with Play-Doh and cut
03:57 out farm animals with cookie cutters.
03:59 And then we had like a um site word
04:03 cakewalk, if you will.
04:06 We called it cowtail. Cowtail. Yep. on
04:09 the cowtail

04:12 cakewalk. One of the other things that
04:14 we heard from our families was they
04:16 didn't want to come to literacy night
04:17 and just sit and read with their kids.
04:19 They've done that enough and they wanted
04:20 something informational. So, in the
04:23 classrooms in each wing, we had teachers
04:26 um teaching our families a strategy that
04:28 they could do at home with their kids to
04:30 help literacy. And you can see this is a
04:32 second grade classroom full of families
04:34 and kids with some teachers. um they
04:37 taught a strategy in the classroom and
04:39 then the the families and the kids
04:41 together practiced that with the
04:43 teachers helping them do
04:46 that. And then we um were able with uh
04:49 grant grant dollars from NNPS, we were
04:51 able to give every student in our
04:53 building a free book from uh Jeff
04:56 Mazerowski and Keegan Clap the utter
04:59 chaos book. And this is one of the
05:00 classes um holding their books and being
05:03 they were so excited. It was so fun to
05:04 give them books. Um this is Sterina, the
05:07 big cow that travels around Fulton

05:09 County. She was parked in our um yard at
05:12 our school for two weeks, one week prior
05:14 to the literacy week and then she was
05:16 parked there for extra time. The kids
05:18 thought that was great because they see
05:19 her at the fair and all around. One of
05:22 the things we didn't mention is that we
05:23 kind of went back to well for us like an
05:25 old-fashioned literacy night and our
05:28 principal put some um goals out there
05:30 for the kids. Um he said if if we could
05:33 bring 200 people to the literacy night
05:36 and if he could receive 500 pictures of
05:39 kids doing the reading challenges at
05:41 home that he would c that he would kiss
05:44 a cow. And um so we actually pulled that
05:48 off and um our one of our tech guys here
05:51 has a thousand pound cow he brought to
05:54 our parking lot and the kids got to
05:56 watch Mr. Young kiss the cow. So that
05:60 was that was pretty cool. The kids were
06:01 very excited about that. We've been
06:04 really excited about literacy night and
06:05 it's taken a lot of work, but our action
06:07 team really um spearheaded it. It was
06:09 really fun to watch the parents and the

06:11 teachers together kind of plan this and
06:13 and pull it off. Um we're going to
06:16 switch gears and talk about our backpack
06:17 program, but does anyone have questions
06:19 about literacy night or our action team
06:22 before we move on to
06:25 that? Or Tammy, anything we're missing
06:28 from things there?
06:34 I just I wanted to say I had the
06:37 privilege of attending for a few minutes
06:40 um on literacy night and the energy in
06:42 the building was just amazing. I mean,
06:44 the the families and the kids and the
06:46 kids were excited to show their families
06:48 and um I and I really do appreciate how
06:51 you've incorporated Spanish language
06:54 into your campus, into your building um
06:57 to help so many of your um families who
07:00 are learning English to feel so welcome.
07:02 So, yeah, it was great.
07:07 Okay, we'll move into um another
07:08 initiative that we've been working
07:10 really hard on, our backpack program.
07:13 So basically um April and I well we wear
07:17 a number of hats but um our day job we
07:19 like to say is we are family support

07:21 educators with Wasan schools but we also
07:24 uh founded and we're directing a
07:27 nonprofit called It All Matters. Um and
07:29 our whole focus is pretty much earlier
07:32 is better. Let's get information to
07:34 families earlier because we can make a
07:36 difference. But um we were super lucky
07:38 to partner with um again the Wasan
07:40 Public Library and a former physician
07:43 named Dr. Galani um and his wife donated
07:47 to um the library and to it all matters
07:51 and to the school. So we were able to
07:53 fund um the backpack
07:55 program and um we were able to put 300
07:59 backpacks together.

08:02 So, um, this is a picture of some of our
08:05 little Indians. Um, and again, our focus
08:09 with them is earlier is better. We've
08:12 been asking the question, why spend why
08:14 wait until they're five to kind of catch
08:16 some of the things? Um, why are we not
08:19 going out and meeting our little Indians
08:20 when they're babies? And, you know,
08:23 maybe catching speech issues or anything
08:26 we can. Um, and just be proactive.

08:29 Um, we also focus on the relationship uh

08:32 with the families and think that if in a
08:34 few years these kids will be in our
08:36 building, why not get to know the
08:37 families now and develop a relationship
08:40 with them sooner and become a resource
08:42 for them until their child is in our
08:44 building and further on. So, how does
08:46 this work? Um, we're still kind of
08:48 fine-tuning the backpack program to be
08:50 honest. We just got this off the ground
08:52 in October. Um, but it works this way.
08:54 It's very simple. parents that um
08:56 anticipate enrolling their child in our
08:58 school ha can find a rack card or hear
09:01 information somewhere and we have rack
09:03 cards out in the community everywhere,
09:05 but they scan this QR code. Um the code
09:08 connects them to a simple Google form
09:10 where they just give their name, their
09:12 email, uh phone number and address. And
09:14 then one of us gives them a phone call
09:16 and just talks to them for a little
09:17 while. Um asks them if it'd be okay if
09:20 we come out and do a quick visit. Our
09:22 visits last from 15 minutes to anywhere
09:25 to an hour. Um, so we just call and we

09:28 say, "Hey, if you have a child where you
09:30 think you might enroll them in Wasan,
09:31 we'd love to come out and meet you and
09:33 your child and bring you a backpack and
09:35 talk to you." So that's kind of how it
09:37 starts. Um, the team, the three, the two
09:41 of us plus our principal, Mr. Young, um,
09:43 are the team that goes out and does the
09:45 visits. We're the ones that are, um,
09:47 driving this backpack program. Um, so
09:50 it's the three of us
09:52 mostly. We always go out in teams of
09:55 two. Um, so two of us will go out to the
09:58 house. We'll, uh, come in. We'll, one of
09:60 usually plays with the kids and gets to
10:02 know them, and the other one is usually
10:04 talking with the parents about the
10:05 things in the backpack. Um, we talk
10:08 about a number of topics. We usually
10:10 start with, you know, how are you? What,
10:12 you know, do you have any questions for
10:14 us? Um, and a lot of them are super
10:16 relieved just to have a relationship
10:17 with the school at such a, you know,
10:19 early age. Um, there's a photo release
10:22 form that we have the family sign so

10:23 that we can use any of the kids in our
10:25 social media or in presentations like
10:28 this. So, just quickly, if you're
10:30 wondering what we put in the backpacks,
10:32 uh, you can see the little we we thought
10:34 it'd be really fun to have a little mini
10:36 backpack so the kids feel like it's, you
10:38 know, their school backpack. We've even
10:40 had some kids pack it ready for school
10:42 while we're there. Um, but we have the
10:45 little backpack that says Little Indian
10:46 on it. We have a um a book for the
10:49 parents. You can see their kids um kids
10:51 are worth it. Uh was written by a friend
10:53 of mine who was a former kindergarten
10:55 teacher and it's just short little
10:56 chapters with just basically real life
10:59 parenting tips. Um we have a a board
11:02 book there for the kids, a little
11:04 stuffed animal. We have a Fulton County
11:06 resource guide. We have a developmental
11:09 wheel from Help Me Grow. Um there's a
11:12 little onesie that says new to the tribe
11:14 and on the back it says I matter and
11:17 then a little beanie for the kids. Um we
11:20 also have the uh Wasan Public Library

11:23 all their information there. They have a
11:24 program called A Thousand Books Before
11:26 Kindergarten. She has a story time. We
11:29 also have the rat card for a program
11:31 that our nonprofit does called Bamboo
11:33 Babies. And it's just a series of
11:35 parenting um explorations that we're
11:38 very proud of.

11:42 So, as far as ongoing communication,
11:44 once we've met the family, we we keep
11:46 their information. We get their birth
11:49 their birthdays and um until their
11:51 school age, we will send them a birthday
11:53 card on their birthdays. And then, um we
11:56 let them know that we're here as a
11:58 resource should they have questions
11:60 about preschool, milestones, any of
12:02 that. Um, and then we will, depending on
12:05 their age, we will do some uh reaching
12:08 back out and just checking
12:13 in. So, just quickly, you can see um how
12:16 we got the word out. We we made these
12:17 rat cards with the QR code and we got
12:19 them to all these different places. Um,
12:22 and we've done 80 80 80 visits since
12:27 October. So, um, it's been it's been

12:30 very positive. It's been very um
12:33 rewarding for us and our principal uh he
12:36 loves it. So, it's been good. It's been
12:39 great to just um meet the families and
12:41 then have them reach back out and have
12:43 questions for us, you know, about
12:45 things. Um but also, like Lisa said
12:48 earlier, we've been catching, you know,
12:49 two and three-year-olds who aren't maybe
12:51 talking or the parents haven't thought
12:53 about preschool and they're three
12:55 getting to be four. Um, so it's been
12:57 really great to get in there early and
12:59 just help them
13:01 out. We were super excited to be
13:04 contacted by Channel 13 ABC News. They
13:07 went on a home visit with us um around
13:09 Christmas time and you can see the the
13:12 family there that we were visiting. Um,
13:14 we just had a lot of fun with the news
13:15 channel coming out. Um, we've also been
13:17 featured in a couple of local
13:19 newspapers, the Northwest Signal and
13:21 another paper recently just f uh
13:23 featured
13:24 us. And then this is just a a slide for

13:27 you of a bunch of our our future

13:29 students here. Um we'll just leave this

13:31 slide up if you have questions for us um

13:33 about the backpack program. Like I said,

13:35 we're still doing some fine-tuning with

13:37 organization and keeping track of

13:39 everything. Um but it's definitely taken

13:42 off.

13:46 Wow. Thank you so much for sharing. I

13:49 know many of us are inspired listening

13:51 to that. And I'd like to open up to the

13:53 group if you have questions or comments,

13:55 reflections on what you heard from

13:57 April, Lisa.

14:12 It strikes me that this is

14:15 this kind of meets so many different

14:17 needs

14:19 and policy, you know, like there's a lot

14:22 wrapped into this.

14:24 So, I'm thinking about um childf find

14:29 and the idea of being proactive and

14:32 relationship building. I'm wondering if

14:34 you can just talk about some of the

14:36 unexpected benefits that have come from

14:38 this program. Sure. We have so many

14:42 stories. Um, one of them that Blake and

14:44 I, Mr. Young and I were on early. Um, we
14:47 were, you know, meeting with a family
14:49 and the the dad said, um, oh, I don't
14:52 have custody of this child. His mom has
14:56 custody and they live in Toledo. And so
14:57 we were like, whoa. Um, and he was
14:60 almost ready to register for
15:01 kindergarten. So, we were able to talk
15:03 them through like, well, it's great you
15:04 didn't come to kindergarten registration
15:06 not having custody because that would
15:08 have been an awful conversation to have
15:10 to have at the school on K regge day.
15:12 So, they were actually able to spend
15:14 some time then working through the
15:15 custody things before kindergarten
15:17 registration. Um, and they just really
15:19 didn't know that they weren't allowed to
15:20 come register him here um without having
15:22 custody. So, that was one of the things
15:24 that was like, "Okay, great. We caught
15:26 that."
15:27 Um, we've been able to refer people to
15:29 help me grow. Um, we've been able to
15:32 help kids get signed up for preschool.
15:34 Uh, we had one of our visits, um, that

15:37 Blake and I were on as well. The little
15:40 boy was very shy, but but when he came
15:42 to kindergarten, um, he wasn't coming in
15:44 the building, he was super scared, but
15:46 because that because we went to the
15:48 home, um, he knew Mr. Young and he put
15:51 his arms out and Mr. carried him in and
15:53 he was fine going through Kredge because
15:55 he already met the principal in his own
15:57 home playing with his own toys which was
15:59 super cool. So, we've also had a lot of
16:03 um the families sign up for Bamboo
16:05 Babies um and we actually meet 10 times
16:08 in Bamboo Babies and just talk about a
16:10 lot of parenting topics, but our main
16:13 goal is to build relationships with
16:14 those young families. And um for me,
16:17 like one of the moms that we met for
16:19 through this program that came through
16:21 Bamboo Babies, we always talk about on
16:23 the first night, why are you here? What
16:24 did you come expecting to receive? And
16:27 one of the moms said, you know what, I
16:29 just want to be a better mom. And I was
16:30 like, okay, that's a win. Um and because
16:34 we have that more time with them and can

16:36 build relationships, uh we're on our
16:39 eighth cohort of bamboo babies and we
16:42 started in 2020 and we still have
16:43 connection with those families. um we do
16:46 an annual reunion. Uh so it's just been
16:49 really rewarding for us to build those
16:51 relationships and to watch their kids
16:55 grow and to continue to have them reach
16:57 out and just, you know, when they have a
16:58 question, where should I send my kid for
17:00 preschool? How about daycare? Uh and
17:02 they feel comfortable because we've
17:04 built that relationship and they reach
17:05 out. So it's been, yeah, some of these
17:07 extra benefits have been like, wow,
17:09 didn't think about that, but we're so
17:11 glad that it's happened.
17:13 I think they see us as real people and
17:16 not this um scary school personnel kind
17:20 of thing. I think it's just we're just
17:21 real people, you know, we care about
17:22 you. We care about your kid. We're
17:24 genuine and um we want the best for your
17:27 kid. We want the best start. Uh that
17:30 comes before school. So, do you do in a
17:33 sense like a warm handoff to the teacher

17:35 that they'll have? Do you know what I
17:37 mean? like you guys are the face of this
17:39 program, but how do you make that
17:41 welcoming feeling translate into the
17:43 other staff in the building? That's a
17:45 great question. When we started this
17:47 backpack program, we really anticipated
17:50 um meeting babies and not meeting four
17:53 and 5year-olds that weren't in school
17:54 yet. We hadn't even thought that, oh,
17:57 people would sign up and they have a
17:58 three or four or 5year-old. So, when we
18:00 ordered all the stuff, it's all beanies
18:03 and onesies for babies. So recently
18:06 we've been talking about getting bows
18:07 and caps, baseball caps for the older
18:09 ones that are coming. But we have been
18:11 talking how do we do this handoff thing.
18:14 Um how do we communicate with the
18:15 preschool and kindergarten teachers that
18:17 this family is kind of one of our
18:19 families we met and have a relationship
18:20 with? We're not sure. Um we don't have a
18:22 good answer to that. Um but we
18:24 definitely know that we need to
18:26 communicate with those teachers um and

18:28 the families too. Yeah, it's a great

18:32 question. Yeah.

18:37 So, if another school is thinking about

18:39 starting a program modeled after what

18:42 you've done, what would be some of your

18:43 biggest recommendations?

18:46 Go ahead. I mean, honestly, that's one

18:47 of our dreams. We've talked about could

18:49 this become our next job in the future?

18:52 Um, could we just become, you know, the

18:54 the team that sets up your backpack

18:56 program for you and your building in

18:58 your district? Um, and we're we're

19:01 getting close to prepared to to accept

19:02 schools. We would love to have a pilot

19:04 school where we could go in and begin.

19:06 So, uh, we have a couple schools

19:08 interested locally, but like I said, if

19:10 there's a school ready to pilot this, we

19:12 would love to be be able to to try to do

19:15 this in a school. We'd love that.

19:21 Oh, you're full of so many ideas. My

19:23 mind is going in the direction. Just

19:26 stay quiet. We have more ideas than we

19:27 have energy for. So yeah, we wish we

19:30 were 40 years younger at this point.

19:33 Yeah.

19:35 Tammy, were you going to say something?

19:37 I I just remember, ladies, you told me

19:39 about how your nonprofit came about. Um,

19:43 could you talk about that for just a

19:44 minute?

19:46 Yeah. Um, I was a title teacher for a

19:49 bunch of years. this I just finished

19:50 year 19 of my ed career, but I was a

19:52 title teacher and I was just seeing

19:54 kindergarten kids uh coming that their

19:58 speech was incomprehensible. Kids that

19:60 had never held any kind of a writing

20:02 utensil. Um and I just was blown away

20:06 seeing more and more kids that just

20:08 seemingly were not prepared to come to

20:10 school um or not ready to learn. And so

20:13 I started talking to my superintendent

20:15 and um I started doing research and just

20:17 reading about the brain and like we know

20:20 early childhood is important, but the

20:22 more brain research I did, it was like

20:24 no, there's some things like if we could

20:26 even get families to just talk to their

20:28 kids in the first 12 months of life, we

20:31 could make a profound difference in the

20:33 trajectory of their lives. But I'm like,
20:35 people just needed to know. Um and so we
20:39 just kind of kept after it. And um then
20:43 we we organized as a nonprofit
20:46 um and actually created with the help of
20:49 job and family services an impact video
20:52 that kind of shows some of that the
20:54 importance of that early time early
20:56 talking um and then we just kind of roll
21:00 well we've done a number of things from
21:02 there that we're like never thought we
21:03 would do but we wrote the bamboo babies
21:06 curriculum um and we we we just like we
21:09 said we explored the topics of
21:11 technology, of talking, of touching, the
21:13 importance of responding quickly, about
21:16 serve and return, um, the importance of
21:20 play. And so, um, that's kind of how
21:23 that I said it very quickly, but that's
21:25 kind of how that was born just out of
21:27 that need. And I also word I read about
21:30 the word gap research like um, just
21:33 again the profound impact on the brain
21:36 when a child is not spoken to. Um, we
21:40 had a college educated dad say to
21:43 us, "Why would I talk to my son? He

21:46 doesn't speak English yet." And we were

21:49 like, "Oh my gosh." You know, like, and

21:52 and to be able to talk about what is

21:54 happening in that brain in the first 12

21:56 months of life. We hope that those

21:58 things will make a significant

22:00 difference.

22:04 Amazing. Thank you so much for

22:07 presenting today. I am so excited to

22:10 have this information and please come

22:13 back in the fall when we meet because we

22:14 want to hear everything that's happening

22:16 throughout the school year and just stay

22:18 attuned to all the new exciting things

22:21 and if we can be a support to you too.

22:23 Please reach out. Um I'm really

22:26 enthusiastic about the work you're doing

22:27 and we would love to support you. Give a

22:30 virtual round of applause. I know you

22:32 have another presentation. Good luck

22:34 with that. Back to back.

22:38 I know it'll go well though. Thank you.

22:40 Thank you ladies. I appreciate you.

22:42 Thank you. We appreciate you.