

>> Okay, I think we'll get going. Welcome, everyone. I'm Emily Lehman Miller. I'm here on behalf of SchoolTalk, my organization, and happy to be presenting with Sarah Grime, Konshens The MC and Elijah Lee, all who will introduce themselves to you all shortly. We're going to be talking about intersectionality theory and student-centered secondary transition planning with a major focus on Konshens and Sarah and Elijah sharing some of the real-time programming that they've been doing with students. We are very happy to have you all here. We are happy to answer questions. At any time, feel free to drop something in the chat. We'll be looking there, and you can also feel free to unmute yourself and hop down in on us. We're a pretty relaxed group and happy to actively engage with you all as our audience. So, again, I'm here with SchoolTalk. We're a D.C.-based nonprofit organization, and our focus is really to create spaces that promote self-determination and a voice for youth with disabilities and their peers. We do this in a variety of different programming, but what we're highlighting today is our Arts to Advocacy programming, which we'll provide you with a chance to kind of dig into deeper later in the presentation. We also have ... do a tremendous amount of work around restorative justice, specifically in D.C. public schools as well as college and career readiness and college and career readiness training specifically for students with disabilities. We are also very fortunate to partner in a deep and regular way with Konshens The MC, and I will let him tell you ... introduce himself briefly and talk a little bit about Edutainment Unlimited. You with us, Konshens?

>> Good afternoon. Yes, I'm here.

>> There you go.

>> I'll go ahead and unmute myself. Good afternoon, everyone. I hope everybody is doing amazing on this rainy Friday afternoon. I'm Konshens The MC, and I have had the pleasure of partnering with SchoolTalk for several years now. The company that I have is titled Edutainment Unlimited. It is a blooming organization that focuses on inspiring the voices and minds of youth through rhythm and rhymes. The workshops that I primarily do are creative writing, illustration and audio music production, operating from the guise of what we all have in common, what should everybody have access to, specializing in meeting youth with disabilities at the intersection of creative expression, providing work-based learning and opportunities, providing safe spaces as to which each youth can share their story, building community and expressing themselves creatively. At the end of the day, I'm a huge advocate for pushing the concept of watering our flowers today so they sprout tall, and wide and bright tomorrow, and I've had the opportunity to do that with a wonderful bunch of youth. And I don't like to refer to them as having learning disabilities but rather special superheroes that I have the awesome opportunity to collaborate with. Thank you.

>> Thank you so much, Konshens. We are so fortunate to have regular and ongoing opportunities to collaborate with you. Quick agenda, we're just going to do welcomes and facilitator introductions now. We are going to quickly go over community agreements and do some values. We're going to dig in briefly to intersectionality theory and talk about the implications of intersectionality in the context of secondary transition for youths with disabilities. And then we're going to deepen the discussion and really dig into the work that Konshens and Elijah and Sarah have been doing. Very briefly, this is just a chance for us to introduce ourselves, and this is kind of some of the words that SchoolTalk as an organization lives by. There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives. We like to dig into the complexity of the work that we all do and try to do it in an authentic and deep way. Again, Emily Lehman Miller, I'm the Deputy Director of SchoolTalk. My background is in special education both in the D.C. and the Boston Public School Systems, and I am going to tee us up here, and then I am going to get out of the way so that Sarah, and Elijah and Konshens can do their thing. Elijah, do you want to introduce yourself briefly? And also, please share your own information in the chat, who you are, what your role is and what organization you're with, and then things that you hope to get out of the presentation this afternoon, and we'll be looking through that and trying to make sure that we meet your needs. So, Elijah?

>> Hi. My name is Elijah Lee. I'm a senior programming assistant at SchoolTalk. My job pretty much at SchoolTalk, I work alongside Sarah and do advocacy. I work in schools. We do a lot of art-based workshops and do a lot of videos. I work alongside Konshens and his music production program. That's pretty much all about me at SchoolTalk.

>> Thanks, Elijah. Sarah?

>> Hey, I'm Sarah Grim. I'm the manager of our Arts to Advocacy program at SchoolTalk, so have the pleasure of working with Emily, Elijah and Konshens. Yeah, we have a lot of fun. We at SchoolTalk, we're the team that serves youth directly, and we work with students with disabilities ages 14 and up. So we're in public schools. We go to charter schools, nonpublic schools, and then we also have a lot of community-based programming and work-based learning experiences, so excited to be here today.

>> And thank you, everyone, for introducing yourselves. I see some advocates and training specialists, mediators, et cetera. We really appreciate you sharing where you're coming from and your role. Please also share any questions or any information that you hope to get out of today's presentation. I will move on to our community agreements, and I am going to close out the chat. Sarah, if you can just keep an eye on things there because I'm having trouble seeing my screen. Thank you. So we always like to start off with some basic community agreements. Today, we're going to ask everyone to experience discomfort, accept and expect nondisclosure, or non-closure ... Not disclosure. You can see my special ed head on ... grace with yourself and grace with others, and intent versus impact. And because of the amount of information we're hoping to go over with all of you today, I'm not going to dig into what each of those means, but we did include a description of each here. And I believe that that was shared, the presentation was shared at the beginning of the chat, and we can get it shared one more time. Sorry, guys, moving too quickly. But we'd just like to set that up as an expectation as we work together. If anyone has questions about any of those items and wants to discuss them further, we're happy to do so. Please just call it out in the chat, and thank you, Alex, for including the presentation one more time so folks can reference the slides. Sarah, are you ready to do a quick values round with folks?

>> Yeah. And I think in the spirit of time because I want to leave some time for questions and answers towards the end, but if you could put in the chat what value are you bringing to our work together, and then maybe if we can get a couple of folks to raise their hands and unmute and share the value that you're bringing to the work. Spend 2 or 3 minutes. So, Elijah, can you kick us off and say what value you're bringing here as a facilitator? Put you on the spot.

>> One value I always bring as a facilitator is creativity and open-mindedness to the workshops that I'm in, just trying to incorporate everybody who's in the workshop no matter the setback they might have or what's going on in the workshop.

We're always trying to bring everyone's energy to the same level so we can get the same outcome across the board.

>> Awesome. You're aligned with some of the folks in the chat. So far in the chat, we've got some "Curiosity, creativity, commitment to change, open-mindedness, a safe space." These are really awesome. "Focus on continuous improvement." I was like, "That sounds very familiar," but that was Emily. Konshens, do you have one you want to share?

>> Yes. I bring to the table creative enlightenment.

>> I like that. We've also got "perseverance and the power of hope, empowerment to the parties and create a safe, collaborative environment." I think we've got a good crowd here. Well, we'll continue to ... If you haven't dropped your values in the chat, continue to do so because it's fun for us to see them and reflect on them as we go. But I think we'll ... Yeah, in the spirit of time we'll move forward and I think, Emily, you're turning it over to Elijah.

>> Yes. I'm going to turn it over to Elijah, and I'm also going to queue up some videos. So Elijah's just going to talk about some of our questions that we're going to talk about, but I'm also going to attempt to show our videos without screwing that up for you, Elijah. So I apologize in advance for any missteps.

>> No, it's okay, Emily. All right. So, you guys, while we're watching these videos, I want you guys to think about the questions that we had on the board. Once Emily goes back, I can read these questions out for you guys. Some of the questions I want you guys to think about when we're watching is, what comes up when you're exploring these videos? Is there anything that makes you anxious about these videos and exploring these issues? And one of the main questions is, how can we apply the intersectional lens to secondary transition programs, create more equitable and meaningful experiences for young people? So I want you guys to think about these when we're watching the video. And then after the video ... We have two of them, and then we're going to have a Q and A for you guys answering all the questions you have ahead.

>> Thank you so much, Elijah. Yeah, we're really ... I will dump those questions in the chat as the videos get going. We really want to hone in on looking at intersectionality theory and how it can inform secondary transition, so that third question. The two videos we're presenting are very brief, but they both provide an overview of intersectionality theory, one more broadly, and then actually one around how it plays out in a school context. So, again, I'm going to ask you all for a bit of patience while I attempt to share my screen and play a video with the sound on. All right.

>> What is intersectionality? Intersectionality is a way of understanding social relations by examining intersecting forms of discrimination. This means acknowledging that social systems are complicated and that many forms of oppression, like racism, sexism and ageism, might be present and active at the same time in a person's life. Everyday approaches to building equality tend to focus on one type of discrimination, for instance, sexism, and then work to address only that specific concern. But while the career of a young, white and able-bodied woman might improve with gender equality protections, an older, black disabled lesbian may continue to be hampered by racism, ageism, ableism and homophobia in the workplace. Intersectionality is about understanding and addressing all potential roadblocks to an individual or group's wellbeing, but it's not as simple as just adding up oppressions and addressing each one individually. Racism, sexism and ableism exist on their own. But when combined, they compound and transform the experience of oppression. Intersectionality acknowledges that unique oppressions exist, but it's also dedicated to understanding how they change in combination. The roots of intersectionality lie within the black feminist movement with legal scholar, Kimberlé Crenshaw, originating the term. Crenshaw felt that anti-racist and feminist movements were both overlooking the unique challenges faced by black women. She stated that legislation about race is framed to protect black men, and legislation about sexism is understood to protect white women. So simply combining racism and sexism together does not therefore protect black women. Intersectional theory is now applied across a range of social divisions and also to understandings of domination, such as those associated with whiteness, masculinity and heterosexuality. Intersectionality is not only about multiple identities, and it's not a simple answer to solving problems around equality and diversity. It is, however, an essential framework as we truly engage with issues around privilege and power and work to bring them into the open. Intersectionality means listening to others, examining our own privileges and asking questions about who may be excluded or adversely affected by our work. As importantly, it means taking measurable action to invite, include and center the voices and work of marginalized individuals.

>> And I'm just going to quickly switch to our next video and, apparently, "A Charlie Brown Christmas," if you all could hear that. Hopefully, you couldn't. Here we go. And just to call out, this is centered more in intersectionality theory playing out in the school context.

>> Intersectionality, have you heard this word before? Even if you have, you might not know what it means. Let's take a look at it. The first part is easy enough. Intersection, a place where things come together. Intersectionality refers to the reality that we all have multiple identities that intersect to make us who we are. It also gives us a way to talk about oppressions and privileges that overlap and reinforce each other. This term dates back to the 1980s and legal scholar, Kimberlé Crenshaw. She noticed that we didn't have an effective way to talk about how the experiences of black women are different from the experiences of black men and of white women. How? Black women endure both gender discrimination and racial discrimination. Over the last 30 years, scholars, educators and activists have expanded the use of the word "intersectionality" to talk about identities beyond race and gender. Let's look at a few examples. Jerry has a disability, and his family lives below the poverty line. He is the oldest of 10, which requires him to do a lot of caregiving and sometimes keeps him out of school. No one in the school counseling office has talked to Jerry or his parents about his plans for after graduation. He has applied for several jobs, but never gets called back. Fatima is Muslim and recently came to the United States from Somalia. She finds that many people at her school make assumptions about her values and abilities before they speak to her. Many of her classmates think she shouldn't be at their school at all. Gretta comes from an affluent family. Both her parents and grandparents went to college, and her father owns a successful business. She doesn't think about her identity very often, but she does think of herself as someone who will go to college and get a good job once she graduates. Think about Gretta's situation as opposed to Fatima's or Jerry's. Fatima and Jerry are members of marginalized groups. They don't get to choose whether or not to think about their identities. Gretta, on the other hand, can ignore intersectionality if she wants to. Life isn't the same for everyone, even for people who share identity characteristics. By adopting an intersectional lens, we have a better opportunity to understand why and to change the institutions that help and harm us based on who we are. Want to learn more? Read our story, "Teaching at the Intersections," in the summer 2016 issue of "Teaching Tolerance" magazine.

>> Okay. And, Elijah, I'm going to turn it back over to you, and I will pull up those questions again.

>> Are we opening up for the people that answer, or are we putting everyone's questions into the chat box?

>> Folks can respond to questions in the chat, and we are asking if maybe a few people are willing to talk about any of the questions, but most especially how kind of applying an intersectional lens to secondary transition programs create more equitable and meaningful experiences for young people.

>> Well, do we have anyone who would like to share? You can either turn your mic on and ask your question now, or you can put your question in the chat, and I'll read it out for you.

>> We do have a hand raised from Sheryl.

>> I don't know if you guys can hear me okay.

>> Yes, we can.

>> Okay. I just wanted to say, we do a conference with various community partners here in California every year, and the intersectional issues always come up because of assumptions that are made about students' willingness to quote, "accept," unquote the help that's given to them, so without recognizing that students have after-school jobs or family commitments or that, you know, that time is a real issue economically and so on, and also without realizing, acting as if it's a completely level playing field when you do things like job fairs, and interviews and stuff, without recognizing that for some students just the act of going and putting yourself out there, it's touching not just on your disability but also on other aspects of your identity, like race and gender, that makes students feel like they aren't seen or heard in the same ways.

>> Thank you, Sheryl. Those are both such important points. I think so often and coming from a school background specifically, educators are guilty of being like, "I'm available. I'm open. I have availability for resources. I'm here," and not understanding that students don't have the time or the wherewithal or, quite frankly, the energy or the willingness to become vulnerable to access those services and resources. So that's an excellent point. Elijah, it looks like Sheryl has her hand raised, as well.

>> Hi, another Sheryl. I feel like it's a double day. At any rate, I think something that's really, really important is taking the time to listen and knowing that our students are starting at very, very different places, where one student might know exactly how to dress and what to wear to an interview. Another would not. So taking the time to understand where that individual is and the needs of that unique person is, I think, the priority.

>> Yeah. Again, and it's hard for me not to speak from my lens as a special educator, but I think so often we individualize services tailored to a student's disability, but recognizing that all services need to be individualized for who that person is in and of themselves, and that they and their families are actually the experts on who they are and the needs that they apply. And I think that's coming up here, as well, just that need to really individualize and focus services. Thank you.

>> The next person we have is Amanda Peters. She has her hand raised.

>> Thank you. I think what really stood out to me when the video was like, "And they've made no" ... Like, it was like there's no transition plan or anything for Jerry. And the first thing I said out loud was, "Why? Why? Why hasn't anybody been talking to Jerry about what his transition plan is?" Has anybody even asked him what do you want to do with your life? Do you need some help with your applications? Do you need ... How are things at home? Did anybody even talk to the guy? And it just really sat with me. I was like, "Why?" Why hasn't anybody ... Because we talk about transition planning with youth all the time, as young as 14. What are you thinking? Where are you going? What are we looking at? Are you involved in your own IEP? You can go to your own meetings. You need to ... How do we do that? And it just sat with me like, why didn't anybody ask him? It kind of made me mad. It also really bothered me that the girl, that she could just put her headphones on and her glasses and, "Peace out, baby," like, "I don't have to worry about anything because I've got white privilege." And that just, that burns me.

>> That's a very legitimate response to the video, Amanda. And I would put it back on all of you, and folks can feel free to respond in the chat or call out, but why do you think Jerry was not offered services? What are some of the reasons why students aren't offered opportunities for secondary transition support? And there are some ... Just really encourage everyone to be looking at the chat. There's some great things about, looking at things through an intersectional lens can create confidence and security for those that would not otherwise feel comfortable in seeking employment, and going to college and exploring trades. So creating welcoming spaces where all students are seen, and honored and heard is just a vital piece to this. That's great. Elijah, do we have anymore hands raised?

>> Yes, we do. We have Doreen Burt, if I pronounced that right.

> >Yes. You asking why did not anybody make plans with Jerry. Obviously ... Well, not obviously, it seems to me they're probably making a lot of assumptions that if he was having to work and look for jobs and help support his family, that he probably wasn't thinking about postsecondary education and wasn't having high ambitions for himself. And so they didn't even bother to try to nurture that or, and we say is, even question whether or not that was something that he might be interested in and talk to him about how that might be possible for him in spite of the circumstance that he's in currently. But it's about assumptions, probably. And the other thing, too, is we don't know what his ethnicity is. If his family is coming from a background where there may be some issues with regard to having the right documents and such as that, that may be another reason why they maybe think, "Well, he can't access these programs here," or, "He can't do this because that's not going to be available to him." Don't know the details on that one, but that's another thing that sometimes comes into play.

>> Yeah, a feeling, I think it goes back to those assumptions, right? And I think Sheryl raised it to beginning, assuming, "Oh, we're offering the resources, and he's not stepping up and engaging with them" for whatever reason, so we're assuming that he's not interested in accessing them or leveraging them, and/or feelings of "We don't have resources for him because he might be not documented" and so what are the implications of that, so just kind of not addressing it at all. That's great, thank you.

>> I think we do have one question in the chat. Oh, no. That was Sheryl. But it says Suzanne McDonald, "Applying an intersectional lens can create a confidence and securance for those that would not otherwise feel comfortable in seeking employment and going to college and exploring their trade." I think that was a statement she said. And then I think we do have a question from Anastasia Stacey that says, "Can I see how my experience as former EEOC investigator and mediator that applies to the special ed area?" so I think that's a question that [Indistinct].

>> And it looks like we do have one more hand raised, Elijah. And I think we have time for one more hand from Missy, and then we're going to move to make sure that we have ... And, again, open up as we move on, folks are welcome to hop in with questions and raise your hand and interject. But, yeah, Missy.

>> The only thing I was going to say is the videos were awesome. I feel like intersectionality with kids has to involve the parents, and some experiences that I had when I was in alternative education is, we had to do a lot of family work as far as abandonment as, for example, if a child leaves the home to go do higher education or technical work, the parents felt very abandoned like, "You're smarter than me, and you can't be smarter than me. I'm older than you." And so sometimes, you have to really find out what those family and maybe even cultural dynamics are to make that effective because you don't want to be in a position where the kid is like, "Well, I want to do this because that's what my counselor or my teachers at school say, but this is what my family says at home and those two aren't listening to me." And they may go back and forth based on who they're talking to, as well. So I feel like the family really has to be on board and on the same part of that team. So but great videos.

>> That's an excellent and exceptional call-out, Missy.

That's absolutely true, understanding the diverse family dynamics and how they play out throughout the secondary transition process from when it started at 14 through school exit, as in a crucial aspect of this work. We also have some call-outs in my opinion of how this system reinforces itself in an oppressive way. The first one is about taking students off the diploma track without actually exploring the full range of options. And I know that I've seen that in my work in both D.C. and Boston all too often. Also, taking students off the diploma track without they and their families understanding the long-term implications of that related to work and future opportunities. And then a call-out from Sarah in Idaho about the state legislature voted against teaching critical race theory and how that actually plays out beyond the classroom into how we all interact with each other in school spaces and things that can ... and systems and things that can be done to honor each and every student that are actually being prevented from happening from above, so those are just some callouts on that. But I do, again, just to honor the time, want to move on to a positive shift, so I really want us to focus on the work that Konshens and Sarah and Elijah are doing with SchoolTalk's Art to Advocacy team. SchoolTalk is an organization that is also trying to tackle this work in multiple different ways including our professional development and technical assistance that we provide to D.C. educators that are doing this work, as well as we are starting ... We're currently working on a career club guide that's actually grounded in intersectionality theory and peer run where it creates spaces for students, youth, to come together and talk about jobs and career development through the lens of intersectionality theory and their own identities and how they can bring their full self into the workplace and what the implications of that are both for their long-term health and wellbeing but also in terms of their rights and their capacity to access what they need in the workspace. But I'm going to turn it over to Sarah now so that we can start talking about their programming and, again, questions open in the chat and to just raise your hand.



>> Thanks, Emily. So Konshens and Elijah and I are going to share about two different programs that we do at SchoolTalk, both of them centered around supporting D.C. youth with disabilities and preparing for creative careers. And we chose these two examples because we are really intentional about how we center youth voice and meet youth where they are, celebrate youth, connect youth, and so we'll get to some of the things that you guys have mentioned around collaboration, around parent engagement. We do parent engagement through the youth, which is a different way of doing it but works really well. We find that parents get on board when a lot of it comes from the place of the youth voice, and so, yeah, Emily, I think we're ready to hop in. So our approach and strategy, our program is aligned with the Creative Youth Development National Partnership framework, which has a big intersectionality component to it. But we really put youth at the center and engage them where they are in any given moment, and we really approach this from an art is about the process, not about the product because, as you can imagine, we work with youth who've had no experience and exposure and access to art programs all the way to students who are in schools for art, so we meet them where they are and engage them in that way, and then we have a three-pronged approach: awareness, achievement and advocacy. So we use art to support youth in self-expression and exploring their strengths, challenges and needs and then moving beyond that to explore and create alongside teaching artists to build skills in some of these career areas. And then we ... A huge component of our programming is to provide youth with opportunities to apply those skills through work-based learning and advocacy experiences. So I'm going to turn it over to Konshens for the most of this. This is just our music production and career development program, is provided through a contract with the Kennedy Center for Performing Arts. This past year was its fifth year, I believe, Konshens. But Konshens does this in partnership with SchoolTalk, so I'm going to turn it over to him.

>> Cool. I know we got to be kind of fast, so it's a lot that I want to throw in, throw at you guys in a very short amount of time. So with this music production program and creative writing, long story short, we take youth from song creation to learning about what metaphors and similes are to other literary devices used in lyric writing to the business aspect of intellectual property ownership, looking at yourself as a business entity and being an artist, entrepreneur and, thirdly, creating some really, really, really dope content, which allows them to express themselves and use their voice in a medium to build community. So the workshop is centered around this big idea to cultivate compassion in an environment where we build community, create environments, openness, acceptance, peace, positivity under an educational structure but in a workshop format, right? And so the goal is for them to tell their story, to build community and to encourage compassion. And I believe that to cultivate compassion, there are a few components that are super vital in achieving that goal. One is vulnerability, so we have a judge-free zone as we're creating, the youth being prepared for both confusion and change. Like Sarah said, a lot of these youth have never been introduced to arts and the avenue as to where they want to record and then distribute their work for others to listen to and critique. And finally, teamwork, at the end of the day, we are all binded together in some form or fashion, and that makes what we're doing really, really, really powerful. At the end of the day, I think what really needs to be highlighted is that the youth are creating these works by themselves. I'm only coaching them and not ... the direction as to where they want to go based upon where they told me they want to go. And as Sarah mentioned, as well, with the work-based learning opportunities, a lot of the youth in these workshops have opportunities to not only make money from creating works but also be seen in mediums as to where they probably would not have been seen. We've had the opportunity to collaborate with the United Nations this past summer. We've done a lot of collaboration with the Kennedy Center, as well, highlighting youth in workshops to present their own works of poetry. One of the worksheets that we used to bring a sense of community and team building is a really simple metaphor, simile workshop that focuses on your life, who you are, but centered around colors, shapes, smells, what things look like, how they feel and how they taste, basically the five senses, and if you see on the screen now is an example of that workshop, we just have your name, "My life is," a certain color, "sounds like," "smells like," "looks like," "tastes like," "feels like," and you "love your life because" ... and what we've discovered after doing these worksheets together is that community is instantly built because a lot of the youth understand and realize that, "Oh, I dealt with that same obstacle. How did they resolve it?" and then a conversation is built. I asked a question from the outset with the youth, is, what is something that everybody in this room should have access to? And what is something that no one should be denied? And that is very important when we're talking about my special superheroes that I have the opportunity to collaborate with because I don't look at what they have as disabilities. I look at what they have as something that can be used to teach somebody something. And that's what we focus on, and I am elated to be a part of it, and that's, in a nutshell, what we do.

>> Do you all want to share one of the pieces?

>> Sure.

>> Yeah, I've got one of them pulled up.

>> Great. Thanks, Sarah.

>> Yep. I'll share my screen. And I'm going to play this piece. This piece was written by one of the students in the program, so you'll hear her voice. The instrumentals behind it were produced by a different student in the program. So not only were they doing individual pieces, but Konshens had them cross-collaborating to do this.

>> To me, a community is a group of people that are connected to each other who all as one should be united as brothers because we, as people, no matter what color we are ... We fight for what's right. I have friends and family that loves me because we as one are a community. We should not steal, fight or lie because that would make me cry. There is a point as a community we should come together as one. If we win this fight, that's okay. We've just begun. Hope God looking down at me and I'm doing good, and when I'm making Him smile, I'm glad I'm not the hood.

>> All right. Thank you. I'll turn screen-sharing back over to you, Emily. But I do want to highlight that the students come to us in this program from different quadrants of the city, different high schools, so a lot of them are meeting each other for the first time and collaborating with each other without ever having met previously. Yeah.

>> I am not to be trusted with this, just to be clear. All right. Tell me when to stop, Sarah.

>> This is good. Elijah, do you want to share just an overview of our Voices of Change competition that we just did this past spring?

>> Yeah, sure. A quick overview, we had D.C. youth from a couple of different high schools, and we had them kind of challenge each other. And the theme, "The Day after Tomorrow," most of the youth wrote about what was going on in their communities and what was going on in their school life. And we had them compete in an exposition style to go against each other to see who has the best piece, and stuff like that. It was a multimedia creation. Konshens had led most of the workshops. I helped out with some of the workshops, but it was a very nice event. It pretty much sent youth from six, seven, it was eight schools over the D.C. area that we used, and we had one winner obviously, but it was a pretty nice event, though. We do have some videos and stuff that we could send out later on when you guys want to see them, about what happened throughout the event. But that's pretty much a small overview of the entire thing that we had.

>> Yeah. If you could just stop on the coaching slide. I just want to highlight here that this program is really cool ... The next one, sorry. Yeah. The coaches that we have for this program are several different teaching artists. We had Gabriel Asheru Benn of Guerilla Arts Ink. We had Konshens the MC. We had Carmen White and Lennie Smith of Linwood and Jiiko of Dramatic Solutions. We had Will Starks, who does film and videography. And then Elijah and myself did the photography and drawings, so we used the same model that we used for the music production program to coach students. But I just wanted to highlight the artist that worked on this because it was ... Youth came to us with totally different experiences, and they all connected with different artists and different moments and really celebrated their identities, and their multiple identities and experiences. So just wanted to highlight them, but yeah. We can share one of the pieces, if you want. Very similar approach but, Konshens, do you want to say anything before I share one of the pieces?

>> Oh. With regards to this particular programming, the virtual competition was one of the most difficult things we've done, but one of the most beneficial as well, of course given the parameters and the lack of, with regards to the pandemic and virtual learning. We were able to engage these youth. And for what they created, I was very, very, very pleased, and I hope you enjoy the piece we're going to show. Are you going to show them the Capital City?

>> Yeah. I'm going to show you one of the schools. We started out with eight. It was kind of like "The Voice" singing show on TV, where we had a knockout round and we narrowed all the way down to two. This is one of the final two teams. This features two students from one of our charter schools who had not done art before. One of them was super into business, and one of them is going to school for communications, but they were interested and they came to us and said, "Oh, we don't have any art experience," and then they directed the teaching artists. So they took the seat of directors and created this with the support of the teaching artist.

>> Hey, Willie.

>> Hey, Miles. What's on your mind?

>> In this land of free, who can we trust? Searching for the truth but blindsided by lies, we're struck. Support is key. Unlocking infinite potential of school programs that benefit a select few are cruel. Striving for excellence, that motto is mandatory to raise us to a higher glory. Feels like to a rush to the finish line, deadlines coming fast, more intent in attention than to our needs in the past.

>> True. But now we're securing our legacy in the fabric of black lives. Because of our contribution, everyone survives. Protesting to relieve stress, visions of being our best, the hands of time we manage with firm grips to handle it. Craving social interactions in excess causes distraction. Be focused. Be strong. Be vigilant. It won't be long.

>> Trouble arises, but lessons learned make us mature.

>> Focusing on the positive and ways we can be more.

>> Uplifting each other and showing support.

>> Procrastination, hate and racism, we abort.

>> We work hard so we can succeed and become our dream. No one stand alone.

>> No one's standing alone.

>> We.

>> Must.

>> Work.

>> As.

>> A.

>> Team.

>> So we have a few more slides in there if you guys are interested in kind of seeing the brackets, and there's some links in there to some ... The actual competition itself. But what I wanted to highlight is in addition to the students who produced pieces, Konshens and Elijah and the videographer also recruited a youth production team. So if you watch the actual competition on YouTube, it was produced by youth. So they were mentoring youth. Konshens was mentoring a youth to M.C. Elijah was running some of the video, and then a colleague of ours, Will, was working with several youth to do sound and do the audio for the actual live competition, which is ... So there were youth behind the scenes in addition to the youth artist, as well. So I think in the spirit of time, unless there's something, Elijah or Konshens, you want to add about the programming, I think we can open up for questions and maybe tailor some of our comments to what the audience is interested in.

>> I would just like to thank everybody for their time and attention and your energy today, and I want to leave you all with a quote. "One's true value does not lie in their bank account, rather in other peoples' accounts of your good deeds."

>> Thank you, Konshens, and thank you, Sarah. The evaluation link has been included in the chat, and I also want to send a huge thank you to our ASL interpreters. I think we tried to slow down a little bit, but I know I'm terrible at that, and we were all talking very quickly. So thank you very much to all of you. And also, we appreciate that there are a tremendous number of resources that go into the programming. Yeah, so "How do you go about working with the youth? Could you describe a bit of the process," Bonnie's looking for, so kind of digging in outside of the ... Yeah, the individualized process I'm assuming is the question, Bonnie, of working with youth.

>> Do you want me to take ...

>> Go ahead.

>> Yeah, do you want to take that, Konshens, or?

>> Oh, describe a bit of the process? Wow. It's different for every group, honestly. Normally when it comes to the creative writing aspect, I start with a prompt with just one question. I get everybody just to free write what it is they feel, and I tell them that there are no rules with regards to expressing yourself. There's no right or wrong way to do it, and we go from there. I do have a method as to how to take their paragraph writings and breaking it down to identifying key words and rhyme words, and constructing couplets and turning those couplets into stanzas, and taking those stanzas and creating refrains, and things of that nature. But that's a whole worksheet packet that I have, but normally I start with just asking a question, a general question, one to gain, to build some type of a cohesiveness ... that's universal enough that everybody can answer it, and I go from there. But if you are interested in the worksheets or the process of how to identify key words, rhyme words and things of that nature, they can be shared with you.

>> And how, a question on how we were able to get youth to engage at the beginning, I've got a multipronged answer to that. We've been around a long time, Konshens and Elijah and I, so part of it is just that we're a known quantity in D.C. Another part is that we use art, which is a really easy way to engage youth, and I think maybe one of the biggest reasons of our success and engaging them is that we, like Konshens mentioned, create a nonjudgmental space and we, from our very first workshop with youth, asked them the questions. We don't deliver a lot of content to them. We create a space where we're asking them, "What are you interested? What's going on in your community? How did COVID impact you?" And we had an artist that did storyboarding with them at the very beginning, and I just remember a lot of the students being like ... Not answering the questions at first. It was kind of that awkward teenage silence where you're like, "Did any of them hear what we said?" But one of them finally started talking. Was like, "Nobody's ever asked us how COVID has impacted us before. No one's ever asked me what I was interested in before." So I think one of the ways that we engage youth is that we ask them to come, and then we're genuinely interested in what they have to say and we don't censor it. One of Elijah, Konshens' and I, our big thing is whatever your experience is your experience. And if you're willing to write about it and perform it, then here it is for the community to receive.

>> And thank you, all. I can't even begin to talk about the amazing work and the impact of the work that the three folks and the rest of the team are doing. One of the things that we do and Sarah is very strategic about with the program is starting at a younger age, going in and doing school-based workshops, getting to know students in bigger groups. And then there's more and more scaffolded opportunities for youth that are interested to continue engage in programming over time, including doing music production with Konshens and doing the Voices of Change competition, et cetera. So there's multiple ways for students to kind of get in and then stay engaged over time. I would also call out that from an organizational standpoint and SchoolTalk, SchoolTalk was founded as a conflict resolution agency or organization within the District of Columbia to respond to the extremely high rates of due process hearings. And we identified secondary transition as one of the most challenging areas, and then we subsequently identified the lack of youth voice and the lack of spaces for students to explore and express the individual parts of themselves as a deeper issue related to that. And so that's the origins of this program, and Sarah and Konshens and Elijah have just really brought it to life. And this is a result of years, and years and years of work. But in addition to being with you all here today, we're happy to further and continue the conversation after today, either with you, other members of your organizations or other organizations in your community that might be interested in engaging this work. And one last callout, there's an advocacy piece of this where they're also talking about, how can you leverage the conversations and the work you're doing here at home with your families, in your community, at school, at your IEP meetings, advocating with your teachers for what your support needs are, et cetera? So there's that kind of bridge that's made between the work that's happening here and to some other things. And we have about 5 minutes left, so if there are any questions, and folks want to put it in the chat or raise a hand, we have about 5 minutes. Well, thank you. Oh, we have a hand raised. Debra?

>> I really appreciate the work that you all are doing, and to me, it sounds consistent with looking for the good in students and helping them pursue something they're good at rather than focusing on disabilities. So that's my philosophy in parenting with my children, and I just really appreciate what you all are doing.

>> Thank you. I should have said at the beginning, too, that it's really important for us to work with students on what they're interested in but also what are available jobs, and in the labor market research in D.C. is, that D.C. is, I think, number one, or it was a year ago, number one in the nation for available jobs in the arts and entertainment industry, so we're also trying to make sure that we're working with youth and exposing them to careers that are available in their communities.

>> And Marianne has a question about hearing more about how schools and parents can possibly explore incorporating opportunities like this so they can be added into IEPs. I'll let Sarah jump in or Elijah, but I feel like this is one of our hardest things. I do think it's a struggle for teachers and then providers in general to understand how this work actually can be included as a service and enhances whatever the students' needs are and whatever they're working on that's outlined in their IEPs. Even though we're in the schools working directly with students that Sarah and the team have deep relationships with, I would question how many of the youth actually have these services written into their IEPs, even though they should be. And then on the flip side, I think, as we all know, it's really challenging for schools to sometimes pick their heads up and look around about what's happening in the community and community-based services, so any attempts that can be made to help school-based folks do that, pick their heads up and do a scan for what's out there, do some community mapping, et cetera, and/or bring community resources into IEP meetings and advocate and to help folks understand how this can support a specific goal that a student might be working on, but those are challenges that we're still and continually wrestling with.

>> We're slowly chipping away at it. I know that a lot of the teachers that we work with have reported that after our program, they've had youth share what they created in their IEP meetings. Our program itself being written in as a service is probably not happening as often. And then Konshens does a really nice job with his work of outlining for the educators what skill sets they're bringing and uses all of the educational terminology. Konshens, you've got stuff in there about math and booking and ...

>> Yeah.

>> ... literacy and, yeah, so trying to also use language that connects with the educators and what they need to do on their end.

>> Well, I think we're just about at time. I just ... On behalf of the team, I really want to thank all of you for engaging in a rich and deep discussion and asking fabulous questions. We always wish we had more time to kind of dig deeper into all of this and explore different things. Thank you, all. There is the survey about the session in the chat. We would definitely like to get your feedback on how this was and how it met your needs, and I hope everyone has a fabulous Friday. Thank you.