

Learning From the Crisis

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Updated September 2021

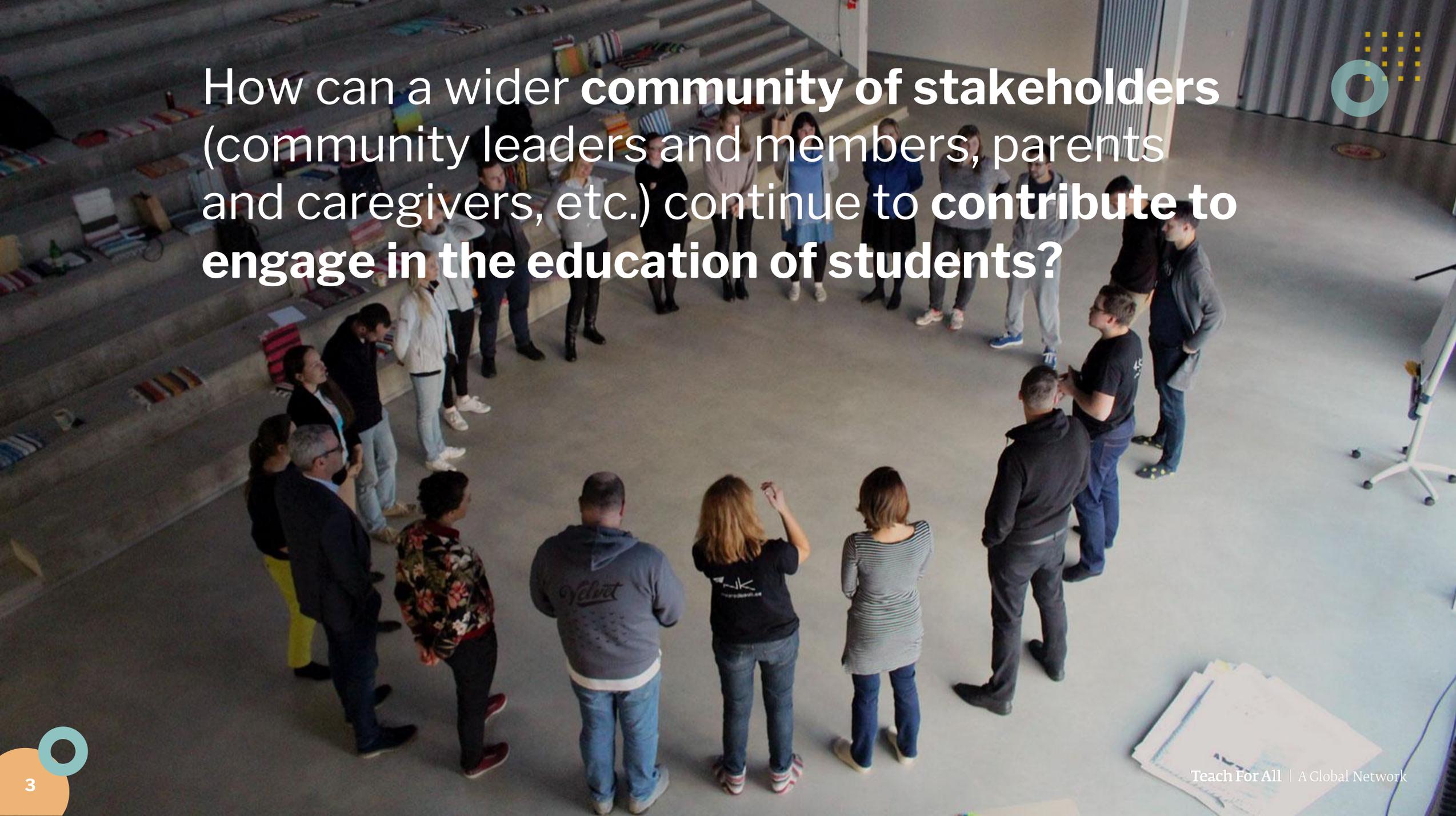


Learning From the Crisis

Insights from the Teach For All Network During the COVID-19 Pandemic

When the global pandemic began, staff, teachers, and alumni of Teach For All network partners leveraged their leadership to ensure that students were safe and could continue learning. Stories, strategies, and successes shared across the global network helped to accelerate impact and drive innovation. We also created the “Learning Through The Crisis” insights documents which were a synthesis of our learnings from these stories.

Network partners continued to redesign and implement new ways of working, teaching, and learning. Many of these discoveries are informing their work far beyond distance learning. As such, we posed this question to the network: “What are you learning from the crisis?” We listened to teachers, teacher coaches, senior leaders, and alumni across our network to understand their experiences and the lessons they’ve learned. We then synthesized them into insights and examples which are contained in this document.



How can a wider **community of stakeholders** (community leaders and members, parents and caregivers, etc.) continue to **contribute to engage in the education of students?**



INSIGHTS



With social distance separating teachers and students, the role of parents became ever more important and their collaboration with teachers needed to become more frequent and more efficient. These insights look at how the frequency of interactions increased as well as how teachers created tools with parent-student interaction in mind.

- 1** Creating inclusive virtual spaces to discuss and share progress and challenges through virtual engagements (video meetings, text, email or voice notes) with caregivers and community members can enable strong collaboration between parents, community members, and schools, and overcome barriers to in-person meetings—allowing increased frequency of collaboration.
- 2** Developing tools and content to build caregivers' skills in facilitating learning and developing socio-emotional skills while also building ways for them to support each other can support parents' ability to facilitate learning at home.
- 3** Inviting community members to give real-life examples in the classroom virtually or in person can help expand students' connection to material while also leveraging the expertise of the community and further investing them in the school.

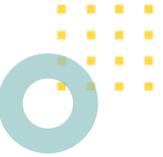
01 | INSIGHT

Creating **inclusive virtual spaces** to discuss and share progress and challenges through virtual engagements (video meetings, text, email or voice notes) with caregivers and community members can **enable strong collaboration between parents, community members, and schools**, and overcome barriers to in-person meetings—allowing increased frequency of collaboration.



Although many teachers and parents collaborated deeply before the pandemic, most of those interactions still relied heavily on face-to-face meetings—which although important, were less convenient for families and thus less frequent. Additionally, since most instruction was happening away from home, families had less insight into how their children learned or what their strengths and challenges were. With the shift to learning at home, parents became much more aware of their children’s needs and more able to collaborate with teachers—and the frequency of those collaborations increased dramatically via phone calls, video calls, texts and emails. As students return to school, it will be important to ensure families remain informed of progress with greater ease and frequency and are understanding their children’s unique needs

01 Simple Education Foundation – Connecting during the pandemic



The Simple Education Foundation, led by Teach For India alumni Rahul Bhanot and Mainak Roy, worked to keep parents and schools connected during the pandemic by creating content teachers could use virtually with students as well as teaching teachers how to create their own virtual content for students and parents.

They worked to make sure they built the capacity of teachers to maximize virtual engagements with families and worked with schools to bring families together virtually to collaborate on how to further build a thriving community.

01 Reach Children's Hub – Strengthening alliances

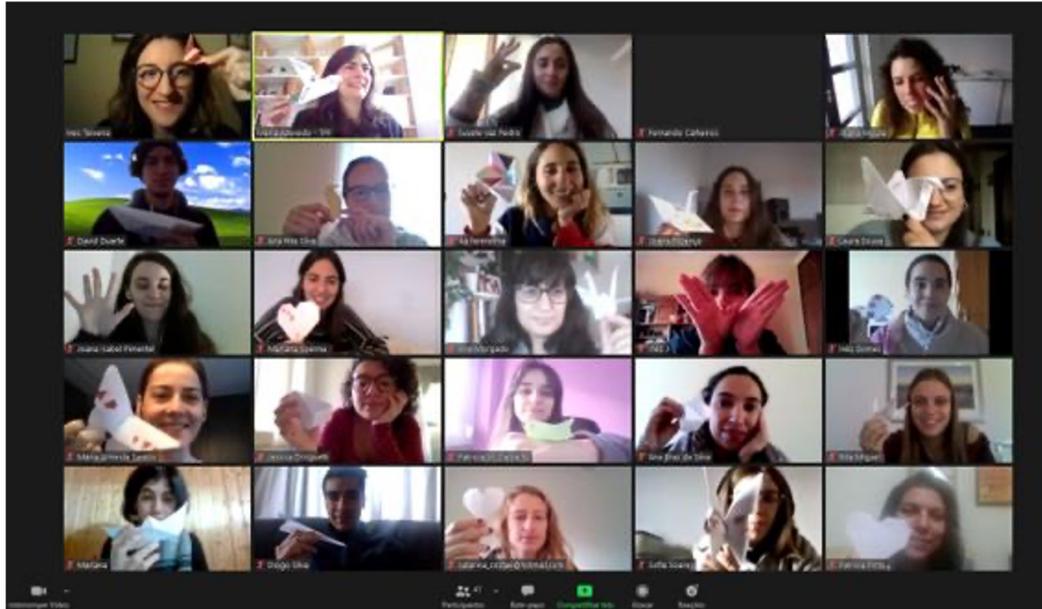
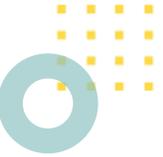


Source: Reach Children's Hub Twitter account

Teach First alumna Mei Lim from Reach Children's Hub worked quickly during the crisis to listen to community members in the network of organizations Reach works with, as well as surveying parents to understand families' needs. In doing so, A sense of community and collaboration was established that did not exist before—food banks worked together to build a collaborative way to meet the needs of the community, schools worked together to create plans for how they would re-open, community members took ownership of many interventions—and fundamentally their approach became more informed and owned by community members.

Mei Lim's [reflections](#) on the shift show how many of the virtual connections allowed the community to organize quickly and build a sense of shared ownership that they intend to keep as a foundation of all they do.

01 Teach For Portugal – Building online communities



Source: Teach For Portugal Facebook page

Catarina Ferreira, Teach For Portugal teacher, began regular online meetings with parents to break down barriers between school and home. Seeing the need for increased collaboration in her school community, she brought groups of families and community members together to talk about how they could better work together to support students—something she had already identified as an area of focus that was amplified in lockdown. Around 40 parents joined the activity, during which they learned to support their children even when they lacked prior knowledge about the subject matter. Having these meetings online allowed more people to engage and made them more convenient for families—with some joining while they were cooking or taking care of other children.

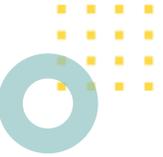
02 | INSIGHT

Developing tools and content to build caregivers' skills in **facilitating learning and developing socio-emotional skills** while also building ways for them to support each other can support parents' ability to facilitate learning at home.



While education has always been viewed as an experience that extends beyond classroom walls, the vast majority of educational materials have historically been focused on students. As the role of parents and caretakers expanded to be a key resource for the education of students, educators had to consider how to create resources that enabled families to support their children's learning. This challenge sparked the creation of resources providing guidance for parents for teaching concepts or supporting their children to learn.

02 Springboard Collaborative – Helping caregivers to care



Source: Springboard Collaborative website

Springboard Collaborative was founded to ensure that schools and teachers can better partner with less-resourced parents and family members to support student learning. During the pandemic, with an understanding of actively involved parents as a key component of education, they quickly expanded their mandate, and created open-source resources that focused less on what should be taught and more on supporting parents to teach their children.

They also hosted Facebook live sessions to model how to teach reading and opened access to their tools that give personalized tips and plans to support parents in teaching literacy skills. You can hear reflections from their CEO Alejandro [here](#).

02 Teach For All – Early Insights Community



Early years educators were particularly pushed by the pandemic to think about how to partner with families, since their children couldn't just join a Zoom class to learn. The Teach For All global **Early Insights community** came together to publish a series of articles showing how families can support the development of their students' skills while at home. In the series they explain how teaching skills through play can be important for development.

The group **shows families how to support development** through loving relationships, attentive interactions, and quality talk. They also explain how taking a Montessori approach to adult-child interactions can enhance student development. In all, they argue that making these part of an overall approach to early childhood development inside and outside of school will better support children in the long run.

03 | INSIGHT

Inviting community members to **give real-life examples** in the classroom virtually or in person can help expand students' connection to material while also **bringing in the expertise of the community** and further investing them in the school.



As schools closed across the world and lockdowns went into place, teachers recognized that they had to be creative to ensure their students continued to feel close to their communities. While some teachers seized the opportunity to virtually take their students to places they would never be able to go physically—and made those places part of their students' communities—those who were able to connect in small groups worked to integrate community members into their outreach. As schools reopen, it will be important to make sure the doors to learning remain open to those in the community as well.

03 Teach For Romania – Exploring New Worlds While Schools are Closed



Mihaela Bucsa from Teach For Romania, who had been using field trips as an essential part of her students' exposure to the world, turned her class's restriction to travel into an opportunity to explore places they could not have explored in person. She secured devices for all her students to be able to join virtual sessions with experts from around the world—and beyond. They virtually explored a black hole with the European Space Agency, met with experts at Google in California, visited a sonographer's practice, and had many more experiences. These visits exposed Mihaela's students to places they could not have visited otherwise and brought scientists and innovators from all over the world into their classroom. Nearly a year since the first virtual field trip, these interactive experiences with experts in science and technology have become a permanent activity at Mihaela's school, and she hopes it's an innovation that will be sustained in education more widely. [Watch a video](#) about the virtual field trips Mihaela and her students embarked on.

03 Teach For Uganda – Gaining Confidence in Difficult Times



Teach For Uganda introduced Community Cluster Learning Pods (CCLPs) as a measure for learning continuity during COVID-19. Its teachers held small outdoor “learning pods” in groups of 10 in the village communities. These learning sessions helped the teachers connect with their students and the students’ families in a way they hadn’t been able to before. “These parents would never come to school, but they now see us in their communities teaching their children,” fellow Denise Mirembe explained.

Parents now feel more involved, and the children also feel more in control of their own education. Denise has seen that because of the smaller groups and focused, direct interaction, her students’ self-esteem and confidence have improved. They speak up more, direct their own education, are more assertive, and ask more personal questions than they would in large school classes.

Teach For Uganda encouraged all of its teachers to implement CCLPs and afternoon home visits during COVID-19 to bring the community into their educational practices. Even after schools have reopened, Teach For Uganda would like to see teachers prioritize home visits and providing parents emotional and psychosocial support. According to Denise, the CCLPs approach “Makes [students] feel cared for and makes them like coming to school.”



THANK
YOU!

We are deeply grateful to the teachers, alumni, and educators from the Teach For All network organizations who co-created these insights and made these resources possible.

If you are a part of the Teach For All network and are interested in contributing additional stories, case studies, tools, and templates to this resource, contact us at virtual@teachforall.org.

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