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*****PRESS RELEASE*****

Creating Lifelines

As she was preparing for a school year like no other in the summer of 2020, the school counselor at Sayre School (KY) knew she needed to draw upon others' wisdom and strength. Nicole Garrett longed to talk with school counseling personnel at other NAIS schools but could not find an established platform for doing so. So, Garrett decided to build one from the ground up on her own.

Garrett began by posting a request to connect on a couple of NAIS Connect communities. She hoped to reach a handful of other school counselors who would be willing to join her in a virtual meeting. What surprised Garrett was the overwhelming response she received. NAIS members replied to her post, contacted her directly by email, and shared her post with their friends and colleagues across the nation. Person after person told Garrett how much they needed to connect with others sharing the uniquely challenging and rewarding work during the pandemic. As the responses grew, Garrett established a mailing list and a spreadsheet of resources for everyone to share. The first meeting was held on July 29, and more than 70 members joined. During the meeting, participants echoed how thankful they were to see and talk with one another and how relieving it was to know they were not alone in their hopes and fears.

Since that first meeting, Garrett has continued to facilitate school counselors and related personnel coming together virtually. To help with hosting the meetings, Garrett recruited fellow counselors Rebecca Biggar with the Hathaway Brown School (OH) and Brad Bernstein with The St. Paul's Schools (MD). Together, they have hosted two or three meetings a month with a plan to continue for the foreseeable future. Garrett continues to receive requests to be added to the email notification list.

Garrett said, "We all need to find our tribe, and that can be difficult for school counselors as there are often only one or two at a school. Originally, my goal was to find others who would understand my concerns about the 2020-2021 school year and from whom I could get ideas. But as I came to understand that school counselors across the US were feeling isolated like me, that goal evolved into creating lifelines to link as many people as possible. Not only did I find a way to access my tribe, but I helped others do so. That has been a tremendous reward."

Our Mission:

Sayre School provides an innovative and inclusive learning environment that empowers students to achieve academic excellence, embrace challenge, and cultivate integrity in order to lead purposeful lives in an ever-changing world.