Speaker 1:

What does justice mean for you? What does justice look like in action? And how can we engage with you in this work to design systems that are equitable, that'll improve outcomes for you, your family, and for generations to come?

Speaker 2:

NASN 2021 Virtual Conference is right around the corner. Come and learn about the latest topics and trends that are impacting school nurses around the world. Earn up to 20 plus contact hours of continuing nursing education, CNE credits, highlighting our theme, Transforming Student Health: School Nurses Leading the Way. Come and hear from our national and international speakers, including Dr. Mark Brackett, Carson Tate, Baldwin Cunningham, Dr. Byron McClure and others, to learn how you can continue to lead the way in transforming student health. Save your virtual seat today. Register via www.nasn.org.

Donna Mazyck:

Welcome to the NASN School Nurse Chat podcast. This is Donna Mazyck, Executive Director for the National Association of School Nurses. The focus of today's podcast is Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: Understanding the Social-Emotional Learning Experience of Students. And this will be a session at the NASN 2021 Virtual Conference.

Donna Mazyck:

Our closing keynote speaker is our guest on this podcast today. He's Dr. Byron McClure. Dr. Byron McClure is a school psychologist who is part of the team redesigning a high school in Southeast DC. His work centers on influencing systemic change, and ensuring students from high poverty communities have access to quality education.

Donna Mazyck:

Dr. McClure has done considerable work designing and implementing culturally affirming school-wide initiatives. Initiatives, such as social-emotional learning, restorative practices, multi-tiered systems of support, and trauma responsive practices. As a result of these initiatives, this school recently won the 2019 to 2020 Whole Child Awards.

Donna Mazyck:

Today, we welcome Dr. McClure. It's a pleasure to speak with you today on School Nurse Chat podcast.

Dr. McClure:

And I am thrilled to be here. Thank you all so much for inviting me and being able to speak with you all at the upcoming conference. I'm thrilled to be here and to talk with you all on your podcast. That's a big thing.

Donna Mazyck:

It is a big thing. And I know you've given me permission to call you Doc throughout this podcast, and so that's how I'll refer to you. But there's some special relationship with school nurses that you have, Doc. Can you share that with our audience?

Dr. McClure:

Look, if you all could see my face, I'm beaming with excitement and joy, because the connection runs deep. In fact, it's so deep, I wouldn't even be here, and I say that not to be dramatic, but because my mom is a school nurse. And when I think of school nurses, it's just that association between nurses and my mom. So I love my mom. I love the profession of school nurses. So when I received the invitation to speak with you all as a keynote, it felt like home. And the first person I called was my mom, who was almost in tears with excitement. And so we just talked and laughed and she cried. We all were excited. But my mom has been a school nurse for some decades now, and she is approaching retirement. So shout out to all the school nurses. Shout out to my mom, Bernice McClure. Love her dearly.

Donna Mazyck:

Oh, thank you for sharing that Doc. I am beaming. And I'm giving another shout out to your mom and thanking her for her role over the career of helping students be healthy, safe, and ready to learn. So thank you for sharing that special connection.

Dr. McClure:

Yes, absolutely.

Donna Mazyck:

Well, what I'd like to turn now is talk about you, the one your mother raised, and wanted to know what aspect of being a school psychologist attracted you to that role? And along with that, let us know what one of your biggest challenges as a school psychologist has been?

Dr. McClure:

Believe it or not, I actually clumsily fell into the field of school psychology. It actually was an accident, but it was a divine accident. And I say that because I actually started out going to graduate school to become a clinical psychologist. And there was a project we had to do. We had to research all the different backgrounds of psychology from clinical psychology, to industrial psychology, and all these different fields. And during that project we also had to look at the demographics. I identify as a Black male, and I wanted to work with Black individuals, people of color, especially those from high poverty communities. And through this project I found some stats that really reflected my community, and those who I wanted to work with at that time, rarely sought out, voluntarily, therapeutic supports and services. And so I was in a dilemma.

Dr. McClure:

And after class I remember just sitting down in the hallway in deep thought. And in that moment, this lady just ascended from nowhere and just struck up a conversation with me. And come to find out she was the director of the school psychology program. And she just basically explained to me that if I wanted to make a difference in the lives of people, especially the demographic who I wanted to work with, then being a school psychologist was it. She explained that there are schools all across the country. And she shifted my perspective in that moment.

Dr. McClure:

And one thing that she said still sticks with me to this day. She said that if you want to make a difference, you should start early. Early prevention. And I was like, whoa. It took me back. She said this quote by Frederick Douglas. "It's easier to build stronger children than it is to repair a broken man." And that's kind of been my mindset and my motto of how I practice. If we can prevent problems before they occur, if we can prevent issues, if we can provide support to intervene early, then we can set our students, our young people up for a life, not just where they're successful, but where they're thriving.

Dr. McClure:

And so to answer that question, that's been the most attractive thing. Being able to intervene early with young people. Being able to set them up on a path towards, not only success, but where they'll be able to thrive in life.

Dr. McClure:

But with that also comes challenges. And some of the challenges that I've seen is, what do you do when you're operating within systems that have historically operated in certain ways, and under certain practices and beliefs and policies that, while you want to do good and you want to make a difference, those systems and practices and policies are deeply embedded in how we move and try to do good, which leaves people burnt out, feeling frustrated and upset and that they can't do good, or becoming part of that very system. And so I'm constantly trying to fight against these systems that are leading to dis-proportionality and oppression and negative outcomes for our young people, which is why I want to disrupt certain things. And I'm sure we'll talk about that in a little bit, but I won't give too much away.

Donna Mazyck:

We look forward to hearing more. We know that your expertise is in social-emotional learning, restorative practices, multi-tiered systems of support, or MTSS, and a strength-based positive psychology research mindset that influences your work. How have you influenced the incorporation of these approaches and practices and learning for students in those school communities, and the way school staff and school nurses and others connect with students? What are you doing in your role as disruptor?

Dr. McClure:

In my role as a disruptor, it begins with being able to understand the unique needs of our community. And that goes not just for understanding the needs of students, but also of our school staff as well. And I believe with this strength-based approach of tapping into our strengths. And one of my top five strengths is a maximizer, and that means maximizing what I believe is the unlimited potential of people. And as part of that, I believe that we must be able to collaborate. And as we're collaborating as teams, we're maximizing the potential of each other, and building these systems that are just well-oiled machines that are more equitable systems, not the same oppressive systems, but lead to positive outcomes for our students. And at the core of that is utilizing your strengths in a collaborative manner. And I think a very powerful way that I've been able to do that and influence these things is through collaborating with a comprehensive team that includes not just teachers or educators or school leadership like administrators or principals, but also school nurses.

Dr. McClure:

And we have a mental health team at our school. And part of that mental health team are the school nurses. There's this thing called the Whole Child. And a lot of people talk about the Whole Child. And I think because historically people have focused on just the academics and they're leaving all the other stuff out, but there's this school of thought that said, if you focus on the entire child, everything from A to Z, then those academics will come up as well. And part of that focus is adjusting some of those needs that might be going unmet, such as the physical, the social, emotional, the developmental. And when you can address those things, you can see outcomes start to move. And again, a great way, a powerful way of doing that is being collaborative in that approach. And I'm going to, as often as I can, stress the importance of leaning into the expertise of school nurses to do so. Which is why I'm so proud and excited to have collaborated with our school nurses.

Dr. McClure:

And I'm sure we'll talk about some of my redesign work in a little bit, but one of my really good colleagues who's helping me with the pilot that I'm currently running as part of this redesign is a school nurse. And she's helping me. She helped me get a major partnership to test some things out for our students. And this would not have happened without having school nurses at the table. And so whether it's social-emotional learning, restorative practices, looking at integrating an intervention model across schools, school nurses have to be front and center in that conversation.

Speaker 2:

Dr. Byron McClure launched his own streaming service called SELTV this past May 1st, 2021. SELTV is a new streaming platform for all things SEL, social-emotional learning videos. SELTV is the Netflix of SEL. SELTV is a streaming service with a massive library of original premium video content, available exclusively on SELTV. New content added weekly. Go to https://seltv.io to start your seven day free trial today.

Donna Mazyck:

Well, we really appreciate that. And certainly school nurses and your concept and the practice of looking at the whole child is something we all have in common. Children are not just one aspect or just have one facet. They're multifaceted human beings who need all of their needs met. And one of the things that we understand, Doc, with the COVID-19 pandemic, there's been an increase in trauma. And that's trauma at multiple levels. And students are experiencing this nationwide, globally. And just the exposure of profound inequities that have been witnessed across the nation. You've talked about school nurses and how they're important collaborators in this work. And actually school nurses are positioned to amplify the implementation of that social-emotional learning among students. Give us some ideas of that redesign work you're doing as you look at the unique needs of students and staff, and you focus on collaboration. Tell us a little bit about your work.

Dr. McClure:

With our redesign work ... I'm based out of Southeast DC. And understanding the needs of the community is really where it has to begin. And understanding that in Southeast DC, especially in ward eight, we see the highest level of poverty of crime, of violence, in the District of Columbia. And as a result, I believe it was designed to be that way. And when you notice and reflect on systems of oppression, things such as racial discrimination, racial segregation, red lining, and all of those sorts of things, which I'll talk a lot more about during the actual presentation for the conference, but for the sake of this podcast, we see that those conditions have been created not by chance, right? And if we operate from that principle, then we have to understand that those young people inside of those communities have to go to school. And they're going to school in very similar conditions where their needs aren't being met academically, socially, emotionally.

Dr. McClure:

And we saw that in our statistics, where we were last in every statistical category, as far as in-seat attendance, as far as grades, as far as having the highest rates of suspensions and expulsions. And basically, school wasn't working for our students in this part of the district. And so the leadership in the district and the chancellor and the mayor said, we either can shut the school down, render it a failure, or we can radically redesign this school and get to travel across the country and find and research best practices and see how people are doing school and bring those methods and designs and systems and innovations back and do something different and disrupt the old way of doing things.

Dr. McClure:

And myself, I was part of a team that was just so fortunate to really lead that work. And my role in that work was looking at the social-emotional wellbeing of our students and how can we redesign this school to improve culture, to improve outcomes, to be more trauma responsive in our work, to make sure that we're disrupting those oppressive systems that continue perpetuating harm for our students and create more equitable systems and do it by design.

Dr. McClure:

So that's been some of the work that I've been engaged in, which has been powerful to be engaged in. So I'll pause right there. I get excited. I talk a lot, but it's work that I'm on fire about.

Donna Mazyck:

We hear the passion and we've heard the purpose. And just a little a tidbit about me, I am a native Washingtonian. I grew up in ward seven. So right next door to ward eight. And the work that you're doing is transformational. And we're just so grateful for your passion and your scholarship and your excellence in working and that.

Donna Mazyck:

You talked about and really addressed some of the issues around diversity, equity and inclusion and how it's implicated in improving school communities. There's a whole defining of DEI, diversity, equity and inclusion, or as some are calling it, equity, diversity and inclusion. How are these practices integrated in school communities? How are you, in this redesign work, bringing along all of the staff in terms of educating them in these different practices, the evidence-based practices that can transform a school community?

Dr. McClure:

This is such an important question now, because the reality is we're dealing with two pandemics, the pandemic that is COVID, and the pandemic that is racism that has been happening for a very long time in this country. And the way how we are dealing with it is, we have to notice and reflect on how these policies and practices and ideas are even showing up. And the previous question, I started not inside the school, but what's happening outside of the school, in the community. Looking at things such as red lining and racial segregation and how those things impact our students. Knowing that we're in a ward where there's only one grocery store, and how does that impact our students' nutrition, how they're showing up inside of school? We have to be able to notice all of those things, reflect on all of those things.

Dr. McClure:

And so the approach that we use to really make sure that we're designing equitably is this process that's called design thinking, which really centers the work on being collaborative, on making sure that we are doing things intentionally by design. And it leads with empathy, being able to put ourselves in the shoes of our key stakeholders.

Dr. McClure:

And so a way how we did that, we took an empathy tour and we loaded up leadership, central office staff and we hopped on a bus. This was before the pandemic. And we just drove around the city, going into the community, asking people, what are the needs? What do you see as Anacostia re-imagined? What does equity look like to you? Because we can ask the scholars. We can ask the people with all the degrees what diversity and equity and all of those injustices means to us as scholars, but to the people on ground level, what does justice mean for you? What does justice look like in action? And how can we engage with you in this work to design systems that are equitable, that'll improve outcomes for you, your family, and for generations to come?

Dr. McClure:

And so really what this design work looks like, it's bringing the voices of people to the table. Designing equitably by disrupting imbalances of power. We had to see power. That's a difficult thing to do, right? As educators and professionals, we're used to having the power, the authority. We had to let that go. And when we do, we have to uplift those people who historically have not had voices. When you do that, you get to create something that's powerful, that's moving, that's telling, that's inspirational. And people start to buy into it. And that's where you see change and shift starts to happen.

Dr. McClure:

So that's some of the work that I've been engaged in. And it's been powerful just to use this design thinking approach that's human centered, it puts people at the center of every decision that we make.

Donna Mazyck:

People at the center and leading with empathy. Powerful concepts. We're really getting stoked for your presentation. I want to find out what keeps you up at night in this work?

Dr. McClure:

Knowing that there is so much work that still needs to be done. And this isn't one of those rhetorical or hypothetical questions. This is a very real thing. In fact, last night I said, I have to go to sleep. I'm just up plotting and thinking of what I can do to make sure that we are on track with this work. And I'm a fanatic with this work. And I know I have to be better, but in my mind, there's just so much work that has to be done.

Dr. McClure:

And I look at it from a different perspective now that I'm a father and I have two little ones and I have a newborn on the way coming in July. And I want to create a world, at least try to create a world that is equitable and fair, just for my children, that's a little bit better for them than it was for me. And that's lessons that I've learned from my mother and father and this work. That keeps me up. It keeps me on fire. And it gives me the energy and fuel. This is me with no coffee, no nothing. This is just raw emotion. That I'm on fire for this work.

Donna Mazyck:

We appreciate you for that and certainly want to hear more. And as you prepare for our NASN 2021 Virtual Conference, what key points would you want school nurses to walk away with in preparation for the upcoming 2021, 2022 school year?

Dr. McClure:

School nurses, this is your year. This is your time to let the world know that you all are the experts. You are the leaders. You all are the forerunners. And this is your time to show the world. We've seen during the course of the pandemic how we've had to elevate. And I hope that we're giving credit to all of the nurses across the country, really across the world. And I really want to leave school nurses that, now is the time, especially within schools, as people are honestly still trying to figure out what a return to school looks like, school nurses have to be involved in that conversation. I'll go as far to say, as leading this work, as far as protocols, as far as making the connection between social-emotional learning with physical outcomes, addressing health disparities that's happening in certain communities, and being the voice that our students need. We can't do it without school nurses. And we have to lean into the leadership, the expertise, and just the overall power that school nurses have.

Donna Mazyck:

Wow. Dr. Byron McClure. You had that last word. Thank you for being our guest for this NASN School Nurse Chat podcast. We are applauding the work you're doing and this redesign, and we want to hear more and we look forward to your presence in our conference this year. Thank you so much.

Dr. McClure:

Thank you.

Speaker 2:

Join us for the NASN 2021 Virtual Conference starting on Monday, June 21st through Friday, June 25th, 2021. This year NASN will be tackling the concept of diversity, equity and inclusion, DEI, with our closing keynote speaker, Dr. Byron McClure. He's a national certified school psychologist and an assistant director of redesign of a high school in Washington, DC. Join us and Dr. McClure for an exceptional talk on DEI in schools on Friday, June 25th from 1:50 PM to 2:50 PM Eastern standard time. Sign up today for the NASN 2021 virtual conference via www.nasn.org.