

THINKMD™

OPEN MIC 2023 – KEY TAKEAWAYS

August 2023





Global Health Open Mic Event Overview

Key takeaways from the speakers

**Schools as
the first
step in
healthcare**

THINKMD hosted a Global Health Open Mic event on 2 August 2023 for stakeholders in global health to share their thoughts on the value of schools as the first step in healthcare, what success looks like and what the challenges are, how digital tools play a role and what is needed to make the solutions stick.





2023 Open Mic Speakers

A range of stakeholders from across the globe joined us to share their insights and experiences.

LEVERAGING THE EDUCATION- HEALTH CONNECTION

How Educators, Physicians, and Public Health Professionals Can Improve Education and Health Outcomes throughout Life

DAVID A. BIRCH



Open Mic Moderator

Prof. David Birch

Alabama

Professor Emeritus, Department of Health Science, The University of Alabama
Author of Leveraging the Education-Health Connection





Key Takeaways

The key notes and discussion points from each Open Mic speaker



Sarah Tembo

Regional Program Manager,
Healthy Learners

Zambia



**HEALTHY
LEARNERS**

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Key Takeaways: Sarah Tembo



- The goal of the School Health Program is to increase healthcare accessibility by delivering services to children while they are at school. This increases comfortability because care and screening are administered by known and trusted teachers.
- Teachers in the School Health Program are trained to provide health services in tandem with nearby health facilities for support. Facility leaders perform mentorship visits with regularity to ensure teachers have the necessary skills and resources to perform their role properly.
- The program relies on THINKMD's innovative technology software platform to empower teachers and improve students' health. This software has been instrumental in providing leadership with information critical to decision-making and resulting quality care.
- The data gathered in these schools via the platform is shared with program partners in the government and community, providing essential insights into disease trends.
- If a disease trend is found in the school or the community, facilitators are then able to work with local health facilities to isolate contagious diseases and identify and implement effective interventions. These instances provide data on how effective the program has been and where it can be improved.
- With the THINKMD tablet, the School Health Program can provide children and parents with screenings and basic aid, surpassing common barriers to care such as long queues at far-away health clinics.
- In eliminating these barriers to care, the School Health Program has not only resulted in improved health outcomes but has also significantly reduced learner absences.



Alick Banda

School teacher at New Chunga School,
Healthy Learners

Zambia



**HEALTHY
LEARNERS**



Key Takeaways: Alick Banda



- As a school health teacher (SHT), I utilize the THINKMD software extensively. When screening learners for health risks and disease, the platform records every action taken by teachers.
- The software aids non-providers in identifying diagnoses, guiding SHT's through a series of questions used to evaluate the health of a learner.
- Based on the answers to these questions, the THINKMD software then provides the teacher with a suspected assessment of the severity of the learner's health issue, either mild, moderate, or severe.
- The SHT then uses this insight to either distribute medication or make a referral to a clinical provider or health facility.
- Some of the demonstrated advantages from utilizing the THINKMD software in our schools include increased early detection and preventative health services, the empowerment of school health teachers, and increased learner and teacher engagement.



Gina Andrea Muñoz

Colombia Country Director,
Catch Foundation

Colombia / USA





Key Takeaways:

Gina Andrea Muñoz



- The CATCH Global Foundation is a non-profit organization based in the US that promotes programs that benefit students' mental and physical health. While the global foundation addresses diverse subject areas, this presentation focused on improving the physical health of public schools across Colombia.
- Public health professionals identified a disproportionate prevalence of obesity and sedentarism in the public schools of Bogota. Some of the observations made include: 81% of children from 6-12 years old do not engage in the appropriate amount of physical activity, 21% of children from 6-12 years old are considered overweight, and 80% of schools lack a full-time PE teacher.
- To address this concern, an initiative was created to implement the CATCH Physical Activity program in 20 public schools in Bogota. The intention was to increase moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA) throughout the school day, promoting healthy lifestyles and training teachers in effective strategies to incorporate physical activity in their lessons.
- This initiative was expanded upon with the implementation of the CATCH P.E. Program, an evidence-based model supported by social learning theory. It was designed to give homeroom teachers strategies to incorporate physical activity into their curriculum and has been shown to increase MVPA during school time.
- CATCH met its goal of training over 500 public school teachers in the promotion of healthy lifestyles across the country, including in rural areas of Colombia, where schools generally lack access to resources.
- The program results are measured using SOFIT, a data analysis tool for observing fitness instruction time. Observations are made before and after P.E. training sessions are conducted to measure the impact on students' MVPA.
- Overall, the program yielded a combined increase of MVPA in these schools by 12%, across areas including fitness activities, skills practice, game play, management, and knowledge building.

[ACCESS GINA'S SLIDE PRESENTATION HERE.](#)



Rene Sanchez

Superintendent, Champlain Valley
School District

USA



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Key Takeaways: Rene Sanchez



- I formerly worked in a large urban school system in Houston, TX. This school has 3,200 students, 99% of which have been historically marginalized and underserved.
- Satellite clinics were established in the area where students could have annual visits, get their immunizations, obtain gynecological services, and even receive ED care.
- Despite the urban setting, not all students were insured or had the ability to make it to a doctor's office during operational hours. The school partnering with clinical providers met this need, offering more accessible and inclusive care so students received not only responsive, but also preventative care.
- "Education is the great equalizer. Students need to be in school. If we can get them to come to school, their outcomes will not only be individually important, but also generationally important."
- For Vermonters, being in school is equally important for children, but they face different challenges.
- The largely rural health system in Vermont results in services being located sporadically throughout the state. For a family with difficulties traveling, preventative care may thus be neglected, or they may face months-long wait times for these appointments.
- Health centers being based in Vermont schools during the pandemic served as a proactive way to take care of the population. Tests were conducted and distributed, and nurses worked with students to best protect the health of them and their peers.
- This pre-established structure within the education system could again be utilized to deliver early health interventions and widely address public health issues for Vermonters.
- Having access to providers and health services via the internet or phone would also aid students and their families with their health needs and should be implemented.
- Moving forward, rural health needs should be comprehensively addressed, including the need for additional personnel and training in remote areas of the state.



Dr Kim Jonas

Specialist Scientist, Health Systems Research Unit,
South African Medical Research Council

South Africa



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Key Takeaways: Dr. Kim Jonas



- As a specialist scientist at SAMRC, I conduct research in schools and the ways in which they can provide health education, screening, and referral services for children and adolescents, who experience a range of largely preventable health issues.
- The WHO launched a guide on effective school health services in 2021, focused on 8 health areas and outlining 87 possible interventions, both general and geographically specific.
- In South Africa, policies and programs to this effect exist, such as the Integrated School Health Policy (ISHP), which provides lesson plans focused on pregnancy prevention and management policy, but implementation suffers widely.
- For example, condoms have been shown to reduce HIV incidence by almost one-third if well-marketed and targeted, but sexual education remains sparse because of the strained health system and administrative rules on who can provide the education.
- The lack of preventative services has resulted in high rates of unintended pregnancy in South African schools, causing health, well-being, and learning detriments to adolescents and young people.
- The country needs to utilize schools as a venue for health services through a comprehensive program, as outlined by the WHO, that involves all sectors, including student health governing bodies, school stakeholders, and community members. The program should ensure access to quality sexual reproductive health (SRH) services for this population, including counseling, contraception, testing, STI treatment, and safe abortion care.
- Engaging all sectors, including the media, will also raise awareness of SRH, challenge gender norms, work to eliminate stigma and discrimination, and create a supportive environment for youth to access education, information, and health.



Resources



- [Leveraging the Education-Health Connection: How Educators, Physicians, and Public Health Professionals Can Improve Education and Health Outcomes throughout Life.](#) David A. Birch. 2023. John Hopkins University Press
- [Cost-benefit study of school nursing services.](#) Wang et al. 2014. JAMA Pediatrics.
- [Framework for 21st Century School Nursing Practice.](#) National Association of School Nurses. 2015.
- [School health services: Adolescent and Young Adult Health Unit.](#) WHO Resources. 2023.

! Future Open Mic Events

Would you like to join our next Open Mic event?

Join today!
An accessible
platform for
global health
dialogue

THINKMD will be hosting a **series of opportunities** to provide an accessible platform for global health dialogue, in the form of Virtual Open MIC events.

No long presentations, no text-heavy slides; this is **short, sharp and to the point with expertise and thought leadership at the forefront**. This is a forum for all voices on important and challenging global health topics, from the individual beneficiaries and frontline health workers to the content experts and leaders.

THINKMD's role? Simply to help facilitate dialogue.

If you have feedback or would like to participate in the next Open Mic, reach out to Tammy at tsutherns@thinkmd.org.

