



# TODAY+ MATTERS

BE SEEN.  
BE HEARD.  
BE PRESENT.

## SOUTH WARD CALL TO ACTION



*Even before the pandemic and the striking acts of police brutality and indifference toward black Americans, nearly 8 million students—16 percent of the nation's public-school population—were missing 10 percent or more of the school year. With the disruption of the school calendar, the possibility that classes will continue online in the fall, and the trauma that the recent killings have surely inflicted on many students of color, schools face new and difficult challenges in trying to keep students engaged.<sup>1</sup>*

**The South Ward Promise Neighborhood and The Newark Trust for Education** are reaching out to ask that you join us in a commitment to:

### **Bridge the digital divide:**

We commit to working together with community partners, philanthropic organizations and educational institutions to prioritize getting all families access to adequate support in order to be counted for attendance and Be Present during virtual instruction.

### **Mobilize the community:**

We commit to engaging families and conducting targeted outreach to those in need so that families and students can Be Heard.

### **Engage and Inspire Students:**

We commit to creating systems to determine how many and which students are struggling to show up. And developing responsive interventions and incentives to ensure students can Be Seen.



We ask that you sign on to this effort by adopting one or more of the following recommended strategies, being used by your fellow principals in Newark and across the country. These methods are in place to guarantee students engage each day under these new virtual conditions whether **physically (signed-in), mentally (ready to learn), or socially (willing to participate with the teachers and the other students in their class).**

### **Eliminate Barriers to Virtual Attendance (Bridge the digital divide):**

1. Adopt an internal technology support system or partner with community providers who can support families experiencing technical difficulties.
2. Provide training to families on using virtual platforms and understanding the basic procedures for on-line learning.
3. Proactively communicate with each custodial/non-custodial parent and/or identify other households that the child might be in during the week to support virtual learning in multiple settings.

### **Engage and Deliver effective messaging (Mobilize the community):**

4. Host town hall meetings with families in your school community to hear directly from families about barriers to virtual attendance and concerns about in-person schooling.
5. Encourage families to inform the school of changes in the child's home/home environment throughout the week that will limit access to live, online instruction.
6. Create and deliver positive messaging materials (e.g, weekly/bi-weekly newsletters, welcome videos).
7. Create a positive climate and culture by implementing virtual community building activities and proactively checking in with families (morning circles, weekly family check-ins).

### **Develop systems to support early and frequent outreach (Engage and Inspire Students):**

8. Adopt rewards systems or activities that encourage presence and motivate students (e.g. Social media competitions).
9. Adopt a system for direct outreach to students on a daily basis who are missing live instruction and/or not turning in packets (e.g. calls, home visits).
10. Identify internal capacity or partner with organizations that can provide mentors to reach students who are not logging on or turning in work (e.g. Success Mentors).

We believe that this effort will support you in addressing the demands in the vital area of attendance. If you sign on to this campaign, **we can offer the following supports:**

- Provide access to computers, hotspots, PPE or other equipment for families
- Provide support in accessing virtual or in-person tech support to troubleshoot issues with laptops, virtual learning platforms and educational applications
- Provide support in accessing a safe, supervised environment with licensed childcare providers and high quality technology where children can attend virtual classes when parents need to work (learning pods).
- Connect you school with a designated Success Mentor.
- Provide funding for rewards for attendance competitions.
- Organize and facilitate a virtual town hall meeting for the families in your school.
- Give you access to a cutting-edge online survey tool (ThoughtExchange) that you can use to gather information from your students and families to assist you in your improvement efforts.
- Provide sample materials, resources, templates and tools for your school to work with for each strategy.

Please let us know if your school is interested in joining this collaborative effort either by contacting Stephanie Parry at [sparry@newarktrust.org](mailto:sparry@newarktrust.org) or by joining our informational meeting on **October 15, 2020 at 8:00 am** via Zoom.

Meeting ID: 863 5907 9892 • Password: TrustZoom2

We will provide information on how to access the supports listed above in order to implement strategies. We would welcome a representative from your school to the table.