

STRATEGIES TO ENGAGE UNREACHED FAMILIES

A REAL Family Engagement Resource

OVERVIEW

As schools have pivoted into remote learning modalities during the COVID-19 pandemic, a key priority of school communities has been ensuring that all families are reached. This outreach ensures that every family has access to the resources needed to support their child's learning and that they have the supports to sustain their household's wellness - physically, emotionally, mentally, and economically - during this difficult time. Below are a set of strategies to engage any families that have not been reached through previous outreach efforts.

STEP 1: STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

- » **Capture:** Have a mechanism (i.e. a communication log or tracker) to monitor the frequency and content of communication with families.
- » **Coordinate:** Share updates on which students have been unreached with all staff, so that if another team member has heard from or followed up with a family, that can be noted.
- » **Collaborate:** Note of any family details that can support effective communication, such as: 2+ children within school community, diverse language needs, communication barriers/ preferences as you move forward.

STEP 2: VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT

- » **Attendance Logs:** Note and track participation on all remote platforms including social settings such as morning meetings, student grade level meetings, parent town halls, etc.
- » **Social Media:** Utilize all social media platforms to engage families and students, especially for secondary learners. This includes direct messages via Facebook or Instagram, developing high interest content via the school's social media that elicits two-way communication (i.e. TikTok Challenges, end of year celebrations, etc.) and connection with family members and students, as appropriate.

STRATEGIES TO ENGAGE UNREACHED FAMILIES

A REAL Family Engagement Resource

STEP 2: VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT (CONTINUED)

- » **Special Mailing:** Send families and students a personalized note via mail with contact info to follow up with the team. Note that certified mail ensures that it is delivered and received at the listed address. If there is concern about overall wellness, the mailing could include gift certificate or another resource.
- » **Make It Personal:** Text or email the family and student(s) a personalized video from an advisor or another trusted adult from the school community to share that they are missed and ask when and how to reach back to confirm their wellness.

STEP 3: GOING DEEPER

- » **Emergency Contacts:** With support across school staff, review and attempt contact with all individuals (via phone and email) listed on a student's emergency contact list. This can include numbers listed on previous forms and field trip permission slips.
- » **Leverage Partners:** Share your list of unreached families with partner organizations that may have additional touchpoints with families. For example, before/afterschool programming partner, meal/grocery pickup partner, etc.
- » **Peer Relationships:** Engage peers or other families that may have relationships to reach out to their peers and ask them to connect with a member of the school staff. It could be tied to some incentive, if deemed appropriate.
- » **Engage Trusted Adult(s):** Ensure that school communities are connecting with all adults that have built relationships with students and families. This includes, but is not limited to, athletic coaches, literacy support, afterschool club sponsors, volunteers, teaching residents, operations staff, and so on.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Undoubtedly, [REAL Family Engagement](#) looks different for schools and partnership with families is more critical than ever. During unprecedented times, educators and families must be true allies in education so that all students succeed, and all families feel supported.