
Students and Families Not Returning to School? Organize and Mobilize Outreach From Those Who Have

Reports from some school districts indicate that only about 35% of elementary school children are returning to campuses as they reopen. Among middle schoolers, the number of expected returns drops to 25%, and among high school students it plummets to 16%.

What school staff know is that the fear about returning is real; there also is anger, frustration, and suspicion (some of this has roots in prepandemic experiences). And there is concern about whether in-school learning will be any better than it is online.

Given the nature and scope of the problem, it will not be easy to overcome.

School staff will continue to implement a variety of outreach strategies.* In doing so, they know there is no magic bullet intervention.

However, there is an important resource that must not be overlooked – *the students and families who have returned*.

These students and families have seen the value in returning to school. Now is the time to organize and mobilize them as an outreach network to their reluctant neighbors. They can also help mobilize trusted community leaders to make ongoing outreach efforts.

A flow of informal messages from students, families, youth and religious leaders, and others in the neighborhood can take place through direct contacts, through social media, and through conversations in places where locals regularly gather.

Like it or not, social marketing of in-school learning is critical at this time, and it is clear that neighbors have a potent influence on each other.

*See *Parent/Home Involvement and Engagement in Schools* smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/homework.htm

Please share this information with those who may find it helpful.