



# KEEPING SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS CONNECTED TO SCHOOL WHEN SCHOOLING IS REMOTE

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# **WHAT IS SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?**

Especially for adolescents?

# SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS IS...

- **Believing** you are welcomed, wanted, cared about, and needed in your school
- **Knowing** that you are known, able to find peers with similar interests, outlooks and experiences, able to help others, and feel that school policies are fair, supportive, and just
- **When school is a place you want to be**



# FEELING CONNECTED TO SCHOOL IS VITAL TO ADOLESCENT HEALTH, WELL-BEING, AND EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

- It improves mental health
- It reduces drug and alcohol use, as well as teenage pregnancy
- It increases middle and high school grades, high school graduation, and college enrollment rates



# **WHAT MAKES A STUDENT FEEL CONNECTED TO SCHOOL?**

# STUDENTS WHO FEEL CONNECTED TO SCHOOL...

- Have an adult in school, who they believe knows about them and cares about them as an individual
- Have a group of peers they interact with and feel affinity with as a group
  - i.e. sports teams, theater crews, clubs, identity groups, circle of friends



# STUDENTS WHO FEEL CONNECTED TO SCHOOL...

- Engage in activities helping others, either directly (e.g. tutoring, food banks etc.) or indirectly (e.g. environmental or social justice efforts)
- Believe school is a welcoming place to be
  - i.e. positive and supportive school climate



# **WHAT IS THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS?**



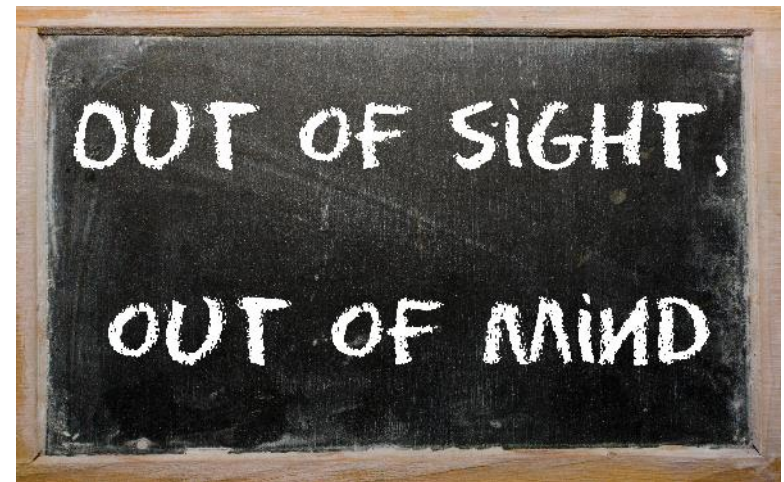
# WHEN SCHOOLING BECOMES REMOTE, ESPECIALLY SUDDENLY, SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS IS AT RISK

- Students are cut off from the face-to-face contact and the minor daily interactions that build connectedness
- Initially, adult focus will be elsewhere – on how to deliver instruction remotely



# WHEN SCHOOLING BECOMES REMOTE, ESPECIALLY SUDDENLY, SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS IS AT RISK (cont'd)

- Teachers, administrators, and counselors will need to teach their students and support their families. This may reduce the energy, focus, and time available to support school connectedness
- It could become an out of sight, out of mind problem



**WHAT CAN SCHOOL  
STAFF, PARENTS, AND  
COMMUNITIES DO TO  
BUILD SCHOOL  
CONNECTEDNESS  
WHEN SCHOOLING IS  
REMOTE DURING  
COVID-19?**

# Getting the Logistics In Place to Maintain Connections

- Is the phone number on record for each student up to date?
- Can students be provided school e-mail addresses?
- How can students be contacted, phone, text, email, social media, computer?
- If it is not known how to contact a student, is there a friend who would know?

# FIND WAYS TO BUILD/MAINTAIN THE FOUR DRIVERS OF SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS

- Students **feel known** and **cared** about as a person by a school staff member or person who works in the school
- Students **interact with other students** with shared interests and/or affiliations
- Students **engage** in activities they believe helps other people
- Students **believe** their school, even when virtual and remote, is a **welcoming place**



# STUDENTS FEEL THAT SOMEONE FROM THE SCHOOL KNOWS AND CARES ABOUT THEM AS A PERSON

- **Maintain existing ties**
  - keep club and sports team structures intact, even as just a means for coaches and club leaders to check in on students
- **Ask teachers to reach out** to students with whom they have existing connections, provide time in a teacher's workday for them to do this



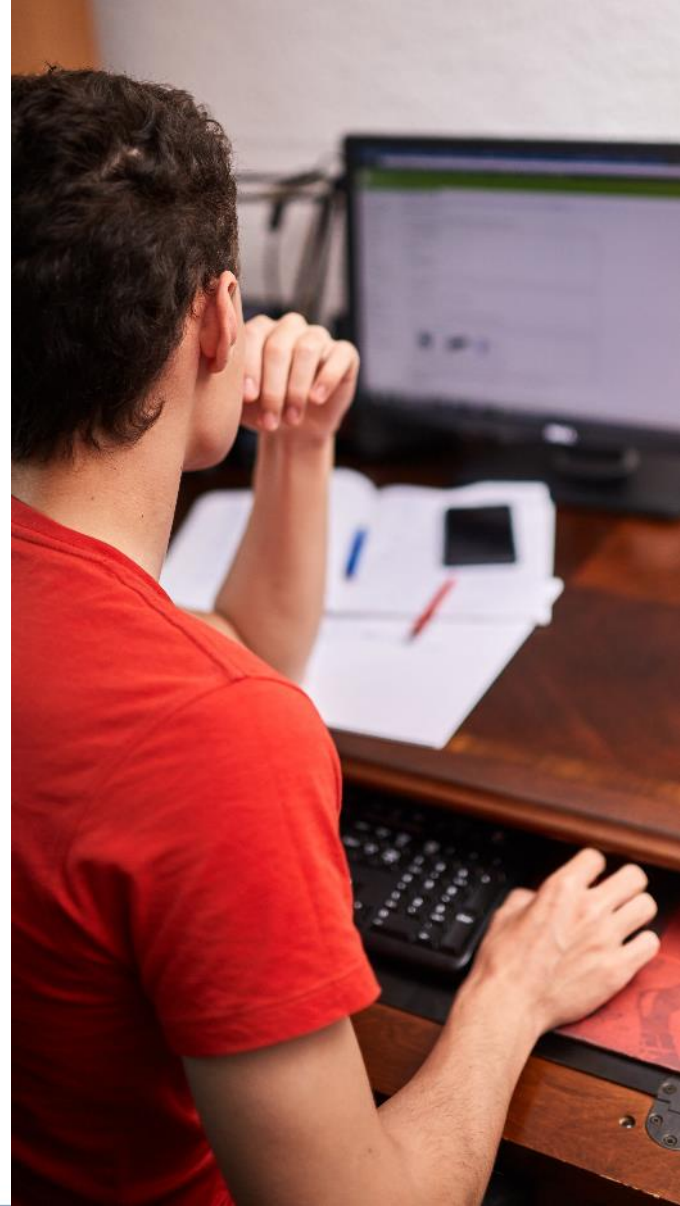
# STUDENTS FEEL THAT SOMEONE FROM THE SCHOOL KNOWS AND CARES ABOUT THEM AS A PERSON (cont'd)

- **Establish New Ties**-Use google docs and/or other digital tools, to have teachers in each grade identify students who may not have a strong connection to an adult in the school, and then identify an adult to reach out to the student
- **To create new possibilities** for connections, have both students and teachers, share hobbies or interests, that they are engaging in from their homes
  - Connect students and teachers with similar hobbies and interests



# STUDENTS INTERACT WITH OTHER STUDENTS WITH SHARED INTERESTS OR AFFILIATIONS

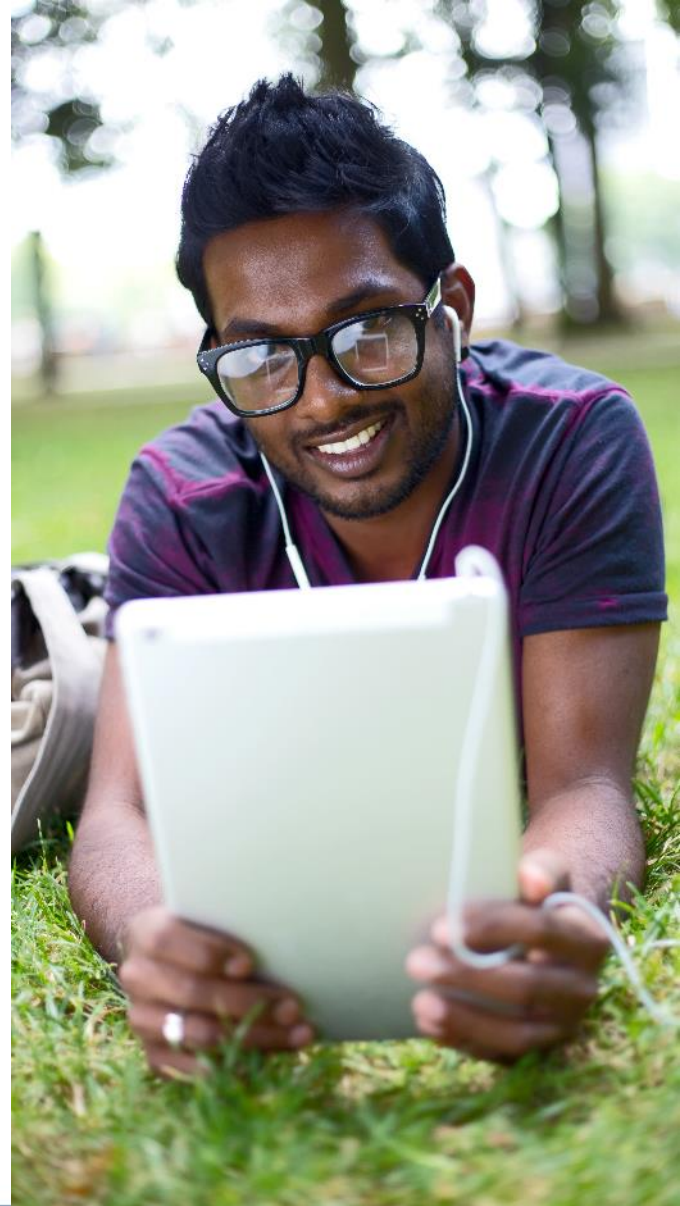
- **Maintain existing student group structures**
  - sports teams, student government, model UN, debate team, drama club, 4-H club, robotics, chess, LGBTQ groups, etc.
  - Have club advisors engage the students in figuring out how to maintain student group activities remotely
- **Create new affinity groups or student partnerships linked to activities that can be done remotely**
  - online multi-player environments, radio plays prepared via conference calls, public speaking point-counter-point video presentations, team puzzle tournaments, etc.





# STUDENTS ENGAGED IN ACTIVITIES THAT HELP OTHERS

- **Set up peer coursework and homework “hotlines”**
  - Ask students which subjects and age of children they feel comfortable helping
  - Have an adult from the school organize groups of tutors in their grade/subject
- **Ask students to think of activities that help others**, that can be accomplished with many individual efforts
- **Have students use social media platforms** to collectively promote social actions relevant to their community



# SCHOOL IS A WELCOMING PLACE

- **Try to anticipate** and then address concerns students might have about how remote schooling might impact school activities or outcomes they care about
- **Create mechanisms** for students to provide voice and feedback on how best to conduct instruction remotely
- **Find alternative ways** of conducting or experiencing important school activities



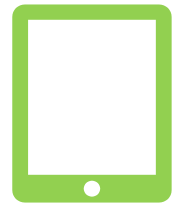
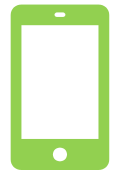
# ACT WITH EMPATHY, PRACTICE SELF-CARE, BRING ATTENTION TO IMPORTANT NEEDS, EVEN IF THEY MAY NOT SEEM LIKE IMMEDIATE CONCERNS

- Everyone is under stress, feeling isolated, and uncertain about their future
- Under conditions of stress and scarcity, humans focus on immediate needs – instruction, and can set aside acting on things that remain important to longer term success – school connectedness



# ACT WITH EMPATHY, PRACTICE SELF-CARE, BRING ATTENTION TO IMPORTANT NEEDS, EVEN IF THEY MAY NOT SEEM LIKE IMMEDIATE CONCERNS (cont'd)

- To help our students through these times, we need to make sure we maintain the energy, focus, and hope to do both
- Making sure all students, especially the most vulnerable, remain connected to school, even when school is remote, is important



# REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

- CDC School Connectedness Homepage  
[https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/protective/school\\_connectedness.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/protective/school_connectedness.htm)
- School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth  
<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/protective/pdf/connectedness.pdf>
- Why is School Connectedness So Important?  
<https://www.childinthecity.org/2018/12/19/why-is-school-connectedness-so-important/?gdpr=accept>