

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UPDATE

## COLUMBUS CITY SCHOOLS DEPARTMENT OF ENGAGEMENT

Update for February 22, 2021

Email the CCS Department of Engagement at [engage@columbus.k12.oh.us](mailto:engage@columbus.k12.oh.us)

### **AUTHENTIC FAMILY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES SUPPORTED BY NATIONAL EXPERTS, LOCAL PARTNERS, FAMILY AMBASSADORS:**

We know parents are busy these days. During this pandemic-impacted year, keeping families engaged with their children's schools has been very different and sometimes very difficult.

Columbus City Schools is now part of a national effort to improve how schools invite families to be more engaged and part of their children's learning success.

During last week's Virtual Family Engagement Super Session, Superintendent Dr. Talisa Dixon welcomed our expert partners from the National Network of Partnership Schools (based out of Johns Hopkins University) and The Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center at The Ohio State University.

You can watch Thursday's Virtual Family Engagement Super Session on Family Engagement Strategies at [www.ccsok.us/Page/8212](http://www.ccsok.us/Page/8212).

### **JOINING THE NATIONAL NETWORK OF PARTNERSHIP SCHOOLS:**

Established at Johns Hopkins University in 1996, the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) to bring together education leaders across the country and provide training and support to help schools develop research-based programs to better engage families and community partners.

Research shows that school, family, and community partnerships must be well-implemented, goal-oriented programs, which can increase student learning and development. Worth noting is that it takes time, organization, and effort to develop excellent engagement programs.

The "NNPS Model" of engagement is an internationally known process for schools to improve the ways they partner with families. When schools, families, and communities collaborate and share responsibility for students' education, more students succeed in school.

Columbus City Schools is proud to be a relatively new member of this National Network of Partnership Schools and we are partnering with The Ohio State University and the Ohio Department of Education on this work.

Columbus City Schools is piloting this effort with three schools during the 2020-2021 school year: Eakin Elementary, Wedgewood Middle School, and West High School. Each school has an engagement action team working on this effort.

**COLLABORATING WITH NATIONAL EXPERT DR. JOYCE EPSTEIN:**

Dr. Joyce Epstein literally wrote the book on family engagement (several books actually) and serves as the Director of the Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships and a Professor of Education at Johns Hopkins University.

More than two decades ago, she launched the National Network of Partnership Schools to bring together education leaders across the country and provide training and support to help schools develop research-based programs to better engage families and community partners.

Dr. Epstein has more than one hundred fifty publications on Family and School Engagement, including a “Handbook for Action” used by our Engagement Team and our Partnership schools.

She notes the importance of how schools view children and families as a cornerstone for engagement:

“The way schools care about children is reflected in the way schools care about the children’s families. If educators view children simply as students, they are likely to see the family as separate from the school. That is, the family is expected to do its job and leave the education of children to the schools. If educators view students as children, they are likely to see both the family and the community as partners with the school in children’s education and development.”

You can learn more about the National Network of Partnership Schools and its nationally-recognized Director Dr. Joyce Epstein at <https://nnps.jhucsos.com>.

**PARTNERING WITH OHIO STATE’S ENGAGEMENT EXPERTS:**

The Columbus City Schools Engagement team works closely with the Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center at The Ohio State University.

The center’s staff are leaders in the field of family, school, and community engagement. They work as part of the Center on Education and Training for Employment, a translational research center within the College of Education and Human Ecology.

The Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center is a partner with the Ohio Department of Education, supporting the improvement of family engagement in education by equipping, empowering, and inspiring families, schools, and communities to work together in support of the education and wellbeing of Ohio’s children and youth.

Ohio’s Statewide Family Engagement Center selected the NNPS model to implement in 96 Ohio schools between 2020-2023, with training and technical assistance provided by Ohio’s 16 regional State Support Teams. The goal is to bring research to action by providing schools, families, and community partners with the tools they need to work together so all children have success in learning and life.

The Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center is online at [www.ohiofamiliesengage.osu.edu](http://www.ohiofamiliesengage.osu.edu).



### **CONNECTING WITH CCS FAMILY AMBASSADORS:**

A key part of Columbus City Schools' engagement strategy is our corps of Family Ambassadors who serve in more than 60 of our school buildings as a liaison between school and home, facilitating a partnership in support of student academic achievements.

These Family Ambassadors are often related to a student in the school or a dedicated community member who maintains open communication with families regarding important school information. Ambassadors also mentor families on how to be engaged members of the academic team and connects them to community-based services or school counselors when assistance or resources are needed.

Our goal is to have at least one Family Ambassador in every school. If you're interested in becoming a Family Ambassador, check out [www.ccsos.us/Page/8182](http://www.ccsos.us/Page/8182).

### **THE RIGHT STUFF - AUTHENTIC ENGAGEMENT IS ROCKET SCIENCE:**

We know that children succeed when families, schools, and communities work together... so here's a great analogy to think about when it comes to authentic family engagement in our schools.

Helping our kids succeed is like working at NASA's mission control. Just like a space launch needs astronauts, scientists, and mathematicians to work together, we need schools, families, and communities work together to help student learning take off.

Everybody has a part to play if we want to have a successful launch. The most successful launches for our students come when we coordinate and communicate well. That means listening to each other, trusting each other, and learning from each other. And when there are issues and things don't go as planned, we prioritize working together to get it right.

### **REMINDER: NEW P-EBT CARDS FOR FAMILIES TO BUY FOOD**

Families in Columbus City Schools have received the new round of Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer Cards (P-EBT Cards) which provide additional money to buy food.

Our partners at the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) remind us that the families of all students enrolled in Columbus City Schools in October and November received this round of the P-EBT (Pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> Grade).

P-EBT cards were mailed to the addresses listed in our Infinite Campus/ Parent Portal (which is why it's important that families keep that information updated). Families are encouraged to keep these cards for future added benefits.

Families that believe they should have received cards but did not should call the state's P-EBT Customer Service line at 1-866-244-0071 (press option 1). More information can be found online at [www.ohiopebt.org](http://www.ohiopebt.org).



## **VOLUNTEER WITH US FOR WE CARE WEDNESDAY:**

Volunteers will once again make “Check & Connect” calls to hear directly from our Columbus City Schools families, offering a kind ear and support if needed, as part of our latest We Care Wednesday.

Our first event back in December was well received by the more than 13,000 homes contacted. Most families were appreciative to hear a live voice ask how they were doing during this unusual school year impacted by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Building upon the engagement work being done by teachers and staff at many of our schools, these volunteer calls offer an added opportunity to check on the well-being of our students’ families, answer their questions, and connect them to community resources and supports.

Once again, we will be partnering with Lutheran Social Services and the 2-1-1 information line to identify helpful resources.

We Care Wednesday will be February 24, with calls being made between 4:00 - 7:00 p.m. Sign up to volunteer at <https://forms.gle/Bcaq2MvXKgCrRRWv7>.

## **SPOTLIGHT: TAKE A TRIP WITH PIVOT, GET \$25**

Launched by our partners at Smart Columbus, Pivot is the first app developed specifically to help residents navigate greater Columbus.

Locally designed for our region’s unique mix of transit options, the Pivot app gives you door-to-door directions to any location using COTA bus, ride-hailing, carpool, bikes, scooters, taxis and even your own car. The actual route recommended, whether with one or multiple modes of transit, is based on preferences that a user can set, such as prioritizing speed, cost or eco-friendliness. And the different mobility providers have linked their payment options to the app, allowing for easier payment processing with every trip.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the reasons for taking public and shared transit are no doubt fewer than our previous lifestyles, but essential transit never stopped. Advancements such as the Pivot app make a big difference for those navigating our city for essential education, employment and other services.

So, no matter what you are using to get around Columbus, our partners at Smart Columbus suggest starting with a navigation app created for you, the residents of Columbus.

App users are eligible for \$25 gift card when they create an account and book a trip. After completing the trip, the app will prompt you to take a quick survey. A \$25 virtual gift card will be delivered via email following completion of the survey.

To learn more about the Pivot app, please visit [www.pivotcolumbus.com](http://www.pivotcolumbus.com). The app is also available in the iTunes and Google Play stores.

## **SPOTLIGHT: UNITED WAY LEADERS UNITED FORUM**

Our partners at the United Way of Central Ohio will feature a Columbus City Schools graduate, who's also become a nationally-recognized orator, as part of it's "Black History: Beyond the Textbooks" community conversation.

Playon Patrick, spoken word artist and 2020 graduate of our Fort Hayes Arts and Academics High School will moderate a panel of academics in a virtual conversation to explore Black history details you likely never learned in the classroom or read in textbooks.

The Leaders United Black History Month Community Conversation is this Tuesday from Noon to 1:00 p.m. You can learn more about this event at <https://liveunitedcentralohio.org/>.

Playon is a double major at Ohio State in criminal justice and English. He won the Martin Luther King Jr. Youth Oratorical contest and spoke at Columbus' MLK Breakfast for four consecutive years, was president of Fort Hayes' Slam Poetry team and a National Honor Society member, and won a multitude of poetry competitions throughout high school.

As a youth leader in My Brother's Keeper Alliance, Playon introduced former President Barack Obama in June 2020 at a national town hall to discuss racial equity. After Playon performed a powerful piece, Mr. Obama declared him "a hard act to follow."

## **MARK YOUR CALENDAR:**

Make sure your school calendar is up to date. Below are a few upcoming days to keep in mind:

- Thursday and Friday, Feb. 25-26: Remote Learning Day for All Students
- Monday and Tuesday, Mar. 1-2: Remote Learning Day for All Students
- Wednesday, Mar 24: Records Day (No Classes or Distance Learning)

## **SHARE YOUR PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION UPDATES:**

**Please share this Engagement Update with the families and stakeholders you serve.** During this historic school year, it's important we communicate as much as possible to as many people as possible - in as many languages as possible - about the steps being taken in Columbus City Schools to support our students and engage our families.

**Please share your updates with us at [Engage@columbus.k12.oh.us](mailto:Engage@columbus.k12.oh.us).**