

Students' Advice to Peers

A FILM SERIES **EMERGING VOICES FROM THE PANDEMIC: STUDENTS SPEAK OUT**

Overview

This past spring, the National Urban League embarked on a journey to learn from young people about their experiences with remote learning. The result is a provocative 13-part film series. Young people share the challenges of school and home life, all the while navigating a COVID-19 nightmare. Their worlds have changed. They tell their stories in their voices. They also tell us what adults can do better! The films are packed with actionable recommendations for policymakers, administrators, youth development specialists, and adults who interact with young people. **#UnmaskedStories**

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS FROM
ACROSS THE COUNTRY, RANGING
IN AGE FROM 15-19, PARTICIPATED
IN THE FILM SERIES

26

young people

13

Identified as *"connected"*
students—youth who have
been consistently engaged in
their academic experience thus
far during the pandemic

7

Identified as *"reconnected"*
students—youth who have at
some point *"disconnected"* from
their academic experience thus far
during the pandemic

6

Identified as *"disconnected"*
students—youth who have not
been consistently engaged in
their academic experience thus far
during the COVID-19 pandemic



What Students Recommend to Peers

Be sure to engage in self-care, such as consistently eating healthy meals, taking walks, engaging in hobbies, and spending time with loved ones.

Create sources of motivation for yourself, like formulating career goals, planning for college education, and serving your community.

Reach out to your teachers if you need help, even if it is intimidating and contradictory to social norms.

Reach out to your friends to help answer your questions and to work together on schoolwork.

Share your ideas and needs with school officials. Speak up and advocate for yourself to propel change.

During the pandemic, things did get a more difficult because staff seemed a lot less understanding of difficult situations that people were going through, and they seemed a lot less helpful until you actively had to speak up and out, say, "Hey, I need help because what you're doing isn't working." —AAYREN



What We Need You to Advocate For

DISTRICTS should allocate resources to provide teachers with the training and supports they need to engage students during this critical time and beyond. Supports should focus on making the learning environment more engaging, for example, by requiring less synchronous screen time with students when in a virtual format and engaging students through project-based and experiential learning activities.

ADMINISTRATORS & TEACHERS should work to make schools more supportive of the variety of needs that youth have, such as health counseling and college admissions, which begins with focusing on developing trusting and caring relationships with students to ensure they know that they matter and have the support of adults in the school.

COMMUNITIES should also step up to help support students' thriving, which requires being able to recognize the types of responses and supports that would help to build on their youth's assets, as well as to be versed in knowing how to address their needs as they continue to experience challenges and take on new opportunities over the coming years.

It was just very hard since none of the classmates would participate; no cameras on, they don't even speak. They just go in the comments. They can turn on their mic. They just don't want to. So, it's hard learning that way and feeling like you're a part of the class." —JADE

ACCORDING TO THE US DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

1 in 5 children & adolescents experience a mental health problem during the school year

- Examples include stress, anxiety, bullying, family problems, depression, learning disabilities, and alcohol and substance abuse.
- On the rise, are more serious mental health problems such as self-injurious behaviors and suicide.
- Many of these youth do not receive the help they need, and disparities in access to care exist among low-income communities and minoritized youth.¹



ACCORDING TO THE SUBSTANCE ABUSE & MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

Nearly **60%** of the 3.8 million adolescents aged 12-17 who reported a major depressive episode in the past year did not receive any treatment.

Of those who did get help, nearly **2/3rds** did so only from school.²

ACCORDING TO STUDIES @ THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

Up to **80%** of students who exhibit behavioral health issues do not receive evaluations & care.

When it comes to students with substance abuse problems, even fewer are likely to obtain treatment, which is estimated at less than **10%**.

Overall, the majority of students who seek and receive care do so in schools.³



^{1,2} National Association of School Psychologists. (2021). Comprehensive School-Based Mental and Behavioral Health Services and School Psychologists [handout]. Author.

³ School-centered approaches to improve community health: lessons from school-based health centers Olga Acosta Price. July 13, 2016.



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