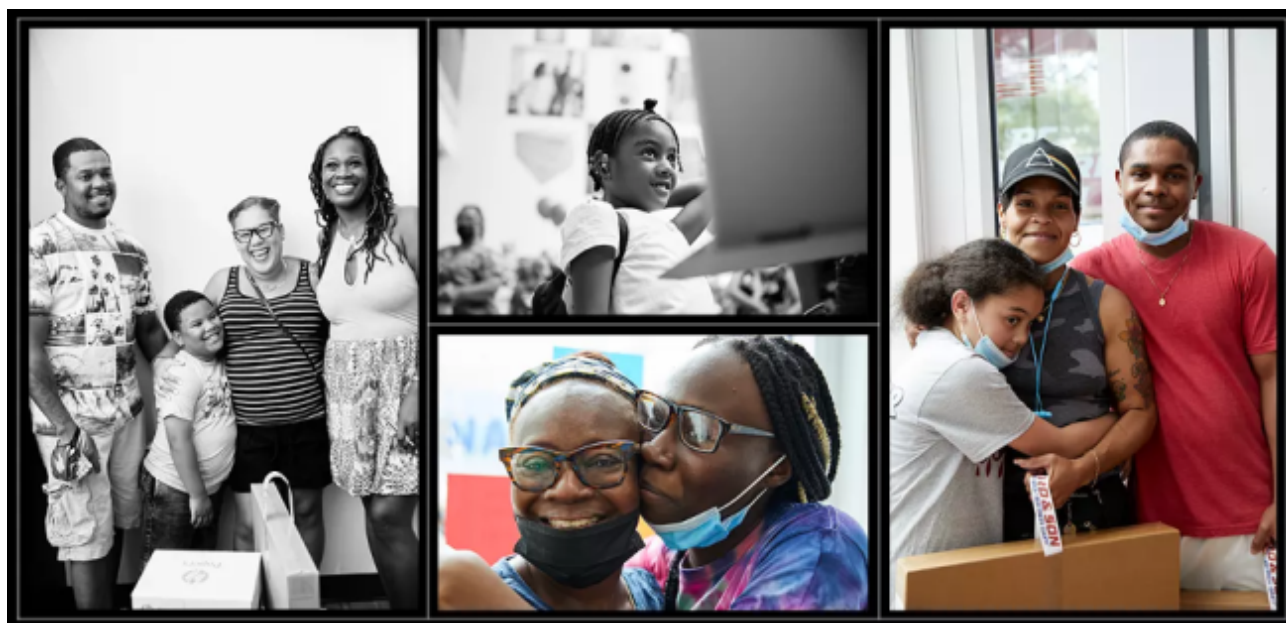


The New York Parent Bringing Laptops and Other Resources Directly to Students

Community organizer Tanesha Grant connects students and their families with the technology and tools they need to learn and the resources they need to thrive.

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Left: Tanesha Grant with Noel Dorsett, 8, and his parents, Carl Dorsett and Melissa Ramirez. Top middle: Chanel Demorn, 6, waits for a laptop. Bottom middle: Kelly Rolan Ankoue (right), 17, with her mother, Diane Zagore. Right: Rosa Acevedo, 10, with her mother and brother, Wendy and Noah Gomez.

By Sarah Murry and Bellamy Richardson

If there's one thought that keeps Harlem-based community organizer Tanesha Grant running at full speed, it's that nearly two years into the pandemic not only do students in New York City's public school system need help — their parents do too.

"We have to fight for years and years to change all the inequities in our education system, but with a pandemic going on our children need resources right now," Grant, a mother of three, says. In New York City, which has the country's largest school district serving more than 1.1 million students in 1,800 schools, this was felt especially acutely. "As

a person with little family to turn to, I know how hard it is to be a parent trying to raise their kids and deal with the education system with no support.”

She started nonprofit alliance **Parents Supporting Parents NYC (PSP)**, and made it her mission to help as many parents as she could emotionally and financially. Sometimes this means paying electricity bills and past-due rent. Other times it means forging partnerships, like one with HP, that will help students get the technology they need to keep from being left behind academically.

PSP recently teamed with the **newly launched HP Partnership and Technology for Humanity initiative (PATH)**, part of the company’s goal to accelerate digital equity for 150 million people by 2030, to host laptop giveaways and fundraising events in the communities that need them most. So far, HP has donated more than 400 laptops and printers, computer supplies, and skill-building materials to students in grade school up through college.

At a PSP event last summer at P.C. Richard & Sons in Harlem, the tears were flowing — both from grateful and relieved parents and overwhelmed kids. Ishmila, 13, a 9th grader at **A. Philip Randolph** received a laptop, printer, and paper. “It’s going to help me do homework because I don’t really have electronics to do my homework on, and if I need to print anything, I can, with paper,” she said. “My sister told me that it’s good to have your own computer.”

Similar partnerships have made a difference in cities across the country. In Washington, DC, where more than **20,000 children** are without internet access, **Digital Equity in DC Education** coalition is pushing for computers for every student and teacher, reliable internet connectivity in schools and homes, and digital literacy education integrated into the curriculum.

“It’s empowering to know there are people who have never met you but think of you enough to give you a new laptop,” Grant says. “Most of the laptop recipients have never had their own. It tells them they are good enough to receive the best when the system that provides their education, at every turn, tells them they aren’t”

While the number of one-to-one schools where every student has access to a device is steadily growing, many students also lack access to a dedicated computer at home to do their schoolwork on. Some have to share a single device with their family, or must use a smartphone to access the internet. That’s if they have access to the internet at all: **Fewer than half of US school districts meet bandwidth goals** established by the FCC and **an estimated two million K-12 students** still aren’t adequately connected to learn from home.

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— Tanesha Grant, founder of nonprofit alliance Parents Supporting Parents NYC

Millions of schoolchildren in New York City have returned to the classroom for in-person instruction, but the need to support underserved students — and their parents — will persist.

Mariah and Marquis Wigfall, 17, seniors at New York City’s **iSchool** who were previously sharing a device at home, say the donated laptops will ensure they will continue to learn independently. “This will help us for a long time throughout high school and college,” Maria Wigfall explains.

Grant says she plans to continue to expand PSP’s parent base and raise awareness on behalf of those families that need help advocating for their children’s education. “If organizations like mine can support the community on a full-time basis, there’s no limit to what we could achieve for the next generation,” she says.

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