



ACTOR AND COMEDIAN JAY PHAROAH STEPS IN AS PRINCIPAL FOR THE DAY AS GET SCHOOLED RECOGNIZES GILBERT STUART MIDDLE SCHOOL FIRST PLACE FINISH IN ITS NATIONAL ATTENDANCE CHALLENGE

Two-thirds of the 158 middle and high schools engaged in the Challenge posted an average five percent increase in attendance, with more than 1,000 more students coming to school each day

NEW YORK, NY – April 28, 2017 – Comedian and Actor Jay Pharoah became Gilbert Stuart Middle School’s Celebrity Principal for the day as part of a daylong celebration to recognize Gilbert Stuart Middle School as the national champion in the [Get Schooled 2016 Fall Attendance Challenge](#). At an all school assembly, Get Schooled presented the school and student leadership a \$5,000 check in recognition of their accomplishment.

The school activated every student in the school to compete in the Challenge – a higher engagement rate than any of the other 158 middle and high schools around the country that participated in the competition – and improved its attendance rate three percent. Gilbert Stuart is the third Providence Public School to claim the title Get Schooled national champion since 2013. Providence now has more Get Schooled attendance champions than any other school district in the nation.

Jay Pharoah, a Saturday Night Live alum, is the star of Showtime’s upcoming series *White Famous*. He’s held splashy roles in blockbuster films like *Ride Along* and *Sing*. He also championed education with former First Lady Michelle Obama in the [“Go to College Music Video”](#) that has been viewed more than 4.8 million times. At Gilbert Stuart he entertained the students and shared some important words of advice.

“I have been on some of the world’s greatest stages, but despite that success, I know the most important thing I have ever done in my life is get an education,” Pharoah told the crowd of nearly 1,000 middle school students. “No matter what happens, no one can ever take your education away from you.”

This year’s Attendance Challenge – the sixth annual Get Schooled Attendance Challenge – spanned 10 weeks and reached more than 123,000 students from 14 states. Led by over [300 Student Ambassadors](#), participating schools used the momentum of the Challenge to raise attendance and motivate students to come into school every day. Two-thirds of active schools increased their attendance, with average attendance increases of 5% – meaning more than 1,000 more students came to school each day this fall than last.

“The Gilbert Stuart Middle School community used the Challenge to unite the school around a common goal: improved attendance. Incredibly, they engaged every teacher and student in the Challenge and demonstrated to Providence and the country what is possible when schools and partners work together,” said Marie Groark, Executive Director of Get Schooled. “We are excited to recognize their hard work and success.”

Beginning in 2012, Get Schooled has worked with Providence Public Schools in its successful effort to combat chronic absenteeism in the district. In 2013, Get Schooled and Kendrick Lamar recognized Mount Pleasant High School for its significant gains in attendance rates. In 2015, Daddy Yankee recognized Providence Career and Technical Academy for its 4% boost.

“At Gilbert Stuart Middle School, we are passionate about improving attendance,” said Scott Sutherland, Principal. “We came together as a school to bring a focus on attendance improvement this year, and Get Schooled was a great tool that motivated our students to come to school every day and to get the education they need to succeed.”

Superintendent Christopher Maher added, “The more days students are attending school, the more they are learning. Get Schooled has been a great partner with the Providence Public School District because the organization has helped us address student absenteeism in a way that engages our kids and helps them become part of the solution.”

Attendance is a critical metric in school and student performance because it is one of the best predictors of high school graduation rates and college readiness rates. Despite its importance, a 2012 Johns Hopkins study estimated that 7.5 million students in the United States miss a month or more of school, putting them at risk for failing to learn key skills and potentially dropping out of high school.

About Get Schooled

Get Schooled is a non-profit organization that directly engages and motivates students to graduate from high school and succeed in college. Get Schooled is the premiere education brand for young people – linking students with high quality, cutting edge resources and tools they need to succeed. Get Schooled has developed a track record of success because it engages with young Americans using the media, technology and popular culture that is an integral part of their lives. Get Schooled's work is boosted by partners like Viacom, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Comcast. For more details on Get Schooled, visit www.getschooled.com.

###

Media Contacts

For Get Schooled:

Marie Groark

(917) 280-2692

marie.groark@getschooled.com