

Introduction

Focusing on student strengths and building relationships is a powerful way to create a positive, collaborative environment with both families and students at the start of the school year. Establishing trust and open communication from the very beginning lays the groundwork for a successful and supportive school experience for every student.

There are several effective strategies to foster a welcoming school climate. In this event we are focusing on these two specific strategies:

- **Personalized Outreach:** Some districts send out postcards to welcome students and families. You might consider collaborating with your media and communications student groups, if you have groups that specifically focus in this area, to design these messages, making them both personal and meaningful. Other student groups in your local context may be great collaborators, as well.
- **Community Engagement:** Hosting events or welcome-back celebrations in community settings can provide an opportunity for families to connect with teachers, staff, and other families in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.

The **Positive Community Connections** resource offers scripts and resources that community partners can use when reaching out to students and families.

Included in this resource:

- [Considerations](#)
- [Community Partners Phone Script](#)
- [Community Partnerships Voicemail Script](#)
- [Common Questions/FAQs](#)
- [Additional Resources](#)
- [Postcard Template](#)
- [Example Note-space](#)

Considerations

Expanding Community Partnerships

Tackling the root causes of chronic absenteeism involves everyone. School districts, students, caregivers, community-based organizations, and ESDs all have a role in supporting students' holistic sense of self, belonging, and well-being.

Strategic partnerships with community leaders can bring awareness of attendance and engagement and they can happen at any time of the year. For example, you might host a Positive Connections Event to welcome students back to school, or invite community leaders to contribute their expertise, time and resources to support school climate and extracurricular activities that engage all students.

Consider inviting the following groups to partner with you and school staff to support student attendance and success.

- [Business leaders](#)
- Direct service staff and administrative staff of community agencies
 - [Health Providers](#)
 - [Housing Organizations](#)
 - [Mayors and City Leaders](#)
 - [Expanded Learning Providers](#)
 - [Philanthropy](#)
- [Faith Leaders](#)
- [Early Childhood Educators](#)
- Parent/family and teacher organizations
- School Board members
- District Equity Committee members
- School staff
- Local celebrities, such as local news anchors, radio personalities, or people or teams that might generate excitement for students and families
- Community-Based Organization staff

Maintaining Confidentiality and Student Safety (Full Resource: [Ensuring Focal Student Group Safety and Privacy Resource](#))

When planning ways to build positive connections with students and families, it's important to remember that these connections can take many forms—whether through school-wide events, efforts to welcome new students, or personalized outreach. However, while fostering these relationships, protecting student privacy and confidentiality is crucial. Safeguarding student data and respecting individual privacy must be a top priority. This ensures that our communications are not only effective and inclusive but also respectful of each student's rights. Below are key considerations and tools to help guide you in creating thoughtful and secure outreach.

- Ensure confidentiality from the beginning. District policies to protect confidential information should be disclosed up front in the engagement process. In addition, everyone in your community engagement process should understand the expectations for handling sensitive and confidential information.
- All written records can be included in public records requests; please be mindful of the content, details and privacy considerations of the student and family.
- For LGBTQ2SIA+ students, it is important to not inadvertently “out” a student’s sexual orientation or gender identity when they may otherwise not be out to their family, peers, and/or some school staff.
- Migrant students and emergent bilingual students and their families should not have their or their families immigration status, refugee status, or other information become public.
- Similar to other focal groups status and identities, the familial and housing status of any young person is sensitive information that should be handled with care and not shared without their permission.

Messaging Considerations (adapted: [Back to the Classroom Executive Summary, Ad Council](#))

- Tone and frame matters: Messaging that chastises caregivers or communicates the consequences of missing school does not work in the post-COVID era. Research has shown that messaging is more effective if given in a positive tone and focuses on the opportunities students receive by regularly attending school in person, including academic, social development, and emotional growth.
- Communication with families is strengthened by grounding in the understanding that family members view education holistically and as a balance of many elements, with academics only being a piece of their student’s growth (in addition to social and emotional development, and more).

Community Partners Script:

Community Connection with Family Script:

Hi [Caregiver/Guardian's Name], I'm [Your Name], calling from [Business or Community Organization], and we're working closely with [Your School] to support our students this year. Do you have a few minutes to chat?

IF YES:

We are excited to welcome [name of student] to school this year. This year we are working together as a community to get all kids to school each day and on time, because Every Day Matters. This includes school and business leaders, neighbors, family members, students, teachers, doctors [name other community members at the event]. We care about [name of student] and want to make sure we are working together to help them in their success.

[Engage the family member in a conversation about their student. You could consider asking one or both of the following:]

- What makes your student excited to come to school?
- How can your community support your family's efforts to support your student?

[After the family members shares] Thank you so much for sharing that with me! We're looking forward to supporting [name of student] every day. If we can connect [name of student] or your family with resources to support attendance, please let me know and I will connect you directly to the school. If you'd like to call the school directly, you can talk to [Provide contact info: (e.g., name of counselor and phone number, or school main line)]

We're looking forward to a wonderful school year together!

Community Connection with Student Script:

Hi there!

I'm [Your Name], calling from [Business or Community Organization], and we're working closely with [Your School] to support our students this year. Do you have a few minutes to chat?

We are excited to welcome you to school this year. This year we want to work together as a community – school and business leaders, family members, students, teachers, doctors, neighbors – to get all students to school – on time, because Every Day Matters. We care about you and want to make sure we are working together to help you be successful.

Then, "Let's talk about": (modify questions based upon individual student)

- **Your Goals:** What are your goals for this school year?
- **Your Connections:** Is there any way you can think of that your community can support your future goals?

[After the student shares] Thank you so much for sharing that with me! We want you to know that you're really important to us, and we're here to support you. If you ever have any trouble getting to school, reach out to your school counselor to let them know how they can help!

IF NO, PLEASE READ:

That's okay! Welcome/(welcome back) to [NAME OF SCHOOL]. We want you to know that you matter, and we are here to support you every day. If you experience difficulties in attending school, please reach out to us to let us know how we can provide support. I'm excited that you are a part of your school's learning community. Good luck this school year!

Voicemail Script:

Hi, we are excited to welcome [name of student] (back) to school this year!

I'm [Your Name], calling from [Local Organization], and we're working closely with [Your School] to support our students this year.

This year we are working together as a community to get all kids to school each day and on time, because Every Day Matters. This includes school and business leaders, neighbors, family members, students, teachers, doctors. We care about [name of student] and want to make sure we are working together to help them in their success.

If [name of student] or your family need help connecting with resources to support attendance, please call the school at [redacted]. We want to know how we can support you and your student!

Thank you and have a good evening!

Common Questions/FAQ

Why are you calling me if you are not a staff member?

- In (name of city or district), we believe that it takes everyone in the community to support students. I'm calling this evening to support the school in letting you know that your student matters and we all want to support your student's success.

My student is going to be out for an extended period of time next month. Can you let the school know?

- In this case, we would ask that you reach out to the school directly to work with the school on how to support your student while they are out.

Sometimes my student isn't feeling well, and it's hard to know when to send them to school.

- It's understandable to be unsure about when to send your student to school, especially when their health can change throughout the day. The Oregon Health Authority and the Oregon Department of Education offer a helpful guide to assist parents in making these decisions with their student's health and learning in mind. You can find this resource by searching "When to Go to School" on the ODE website.

Someone is bullying/harassing my student, and they sometimes doesn't want to go.

- I'm so sorry your student is going through this. No student should ever feel unsafe or unwelcome at school. It's important to reach out to the school counselor or principal right away so they can help address the situation. Even if you've already spoken to them, they need to know about each instance so they can continue to step in and provide the necessary support and interventions. Most importantly, we want to make sure your student feels valued, safe, and supported. School staff are here to help your student navigate these challenges and ensure their school experience is positive.

My student really doesn't like the food that they are serving in the cafeteria.

- It's important for students to feel good about the meals they eat at school, and I'm sorry to hear your student isn't enjoying the food. It might be helpful to talk with your student about what they're not liking and share that feedback with the school's nutrition services. Schools often welcome input to improve meal options and make sure students are getting food they enjoy and feel energized by. You might also explore if there are

other choices available that your student hasn't tried yet. Their comfort and well-being are priorities, and we want them to feel happy and ready to learn!

[Additional Resources:](#)

[When to Go to School - Health Guidance](#)

[Why Attendance Matters](#)

[Community Partner Handouts](#)

Postcard Template

Introduce yourself. Then, choose a statement from each category below (next page).

Example:

Hi *[student/family's name]*, I'm *[Name]* and I am *[insert profession]* at *[organization's name]*.
 EVERY DAY MATTERS. Your community is your biggest fan! Stay Awesome, *[Your name]*

Attendance Statement	Community Statement	Closing Statement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● EVERY DAY MATTERS. ● Your attendance is your commitment to your future. ● Attendance is the foundation to your success and EVERY DAY counts. ● Showing up today, means you are investing in tomorrow. ● Consistency is key! Show up every day to stay engaged. ● Your presence matters. ● Your education is your superpower. Every day you attend it gets stronger! ● Each day matters and we are excited to see you succeed. Keep showing up. ● Your school day is like a puzzle piece, and we can't complete the picture without you. ● Keep showing up and doing your best. Welcome back to school! ● We're excited that you're here! ● Have fun learning this year! ● Think about joining a club here at school if you have not already! ● Your friends are excited to see you when you are here! ● I hope you're having a fantastic October and enjoying all the new things you're learning! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● At <i>[Insert Organization Name]</i>, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We are excited to see you succeed. Keep showing up! ○ We believe in you! ○ We can't wait to see you succeed! ● Our community is here to support you! ● Your community is here to support your dreams! ● The community is cheering for you! ● We're cheering for you every step of the way! ● Keep showing up, we've got your back! ● When you're in school, our community thrives! ● You make us proud! ● Your community is behind you 100%! ● Superstar - your community is your biggest fan! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Best wishes, ● Take care, ● Keep shining! ● Stay awesome! ● You've got this! ● Keep up the great work! ● Keep showing up! ● Your friend, <i>[Name]</i>

Note-space

Note: If you take notes during positive connections, have a **clear purpose** for any information that you collect. All written records **can be included in public records requests**; please be mindful of the content, details and privacy considerations of the student and family.

Information that may be useful to the student’s learning team could include info shared by the student or family member that is helpful for staff to know (learning style, what they’re excited to learn about, any barriers or anxieties about school), as well as who will follow up with them and by when.

Consider the following:

Caller Name: _____

Student Name: _____

Important topics:

Any follow up questions or connections?

Follow up with whom? _____

By when? _____