

Back-to-School Comms Prep:

A checklist for educators who want attendance to start strong

The first month of school does a lot of heavy lifting. Research shows that families who receive personal outreach in the first weeks of school stay more engaged for the entire year.



For District and School Leaders

Before the Year Begins

- ☐ Set your attendance goals for the year and share them with your team
- ☐ Decide how attendance will be communicated to families district-wide
- ☐ Identify which students from last year are entering at elevated risk and flag them for early outreach
- ☐ Confirm that your communications platform is set up, tested, accessible, and available in families' home languages
- ☐ Draft your welcome-back message, including an introduction to your attendance expectations and why they matter
- ☐ Schedule welcome-back communications so they're ready to go before families are back in school-year mode
- ☐ Make sure your outreach process includes a way to ask about and document what's getting in the way of attendance, not just to record the absence

First Two Weeks of School

- ☐ Send your welcome-back communication to all families before Day 1
- ☐ Introduce key staff (principal, counselors, attendance team) to families who don't know them yet
- ☐ Communicate your attendance policy clearly and warmly, with reasons behind the expectations, not just the rules
- ☐ Set up your process for early attendance alerts so patterns don't go unnoticed

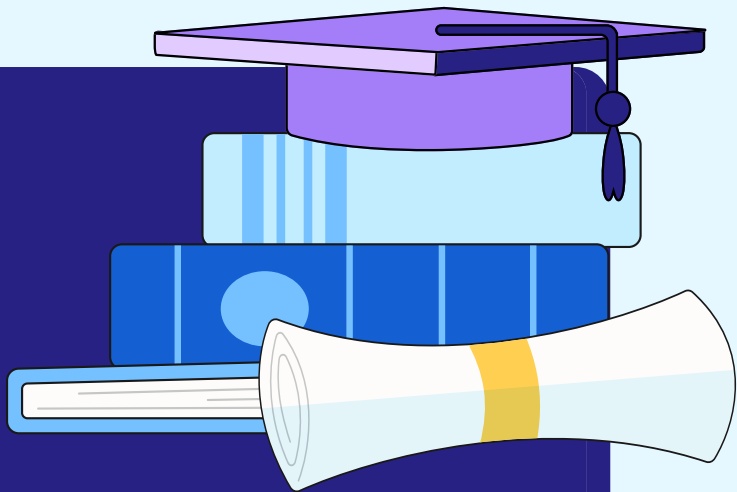
By the End of September

- ☐ Review your early attendance data and identify any students who need a check-in
- ☐ Make sure every student has at least one adult in the building who knows them and is watching out for them
- ☐ Reach out personally to families of students who have missed three or more days or class periods — don't wait until the seventh or tenth



For Classroom Teachers

Relationships start with a positive connection. Reach out at the beginning of the school year so they have your information when they need it. Keep it simple: "I'm so glad Kelley is in my class. I look forward to working with her. Don't hesitate to reach out this year!"



Before the Year Begins

- ☐ Think about which families you want to connect with early and what you want them to know about you
- ☐ Draft a personal welcome message you can send or adapt for each student's family in the first week
- ☐ Prepare a brief introduction to your communication style: how you'll be in touch, how often, and what you want families to share with you

First Two Weeks of School

- ☐ Send your welcome message to every family in your class and mention their student by name
- ☐ Make one positive contact with each family before the first month ends
- ☐ If you have students who missed the first day or first week, reach out before they fall behind and feel disconnected

By the End of September

- ☐ Note which families have been easy to reach and which have gone quiet. Both groups matter!
- ☐ By the third missed day or class period, send a quick check in: "We missed seeing Jason today. This is his third absence and I really don't want him to fall behind. Is there something I should know? How can I help?" Don't wait until the pattern is established to say something.

For Everyone

When families feel connected to their child's school, students show up. That's true at every level: in the classroom, in the building, and across the district. The work you do to build those relationships before there's a problem is some of the most important attendance work you'll do all year.

