



CONNECTION TIPS

Students Returning to School: Understanding Social Emotional Needs

What's Going On?

We do not know the extent of the impact of virtual school for students' social emotional state. Nor do we know the unique and challenging circumstances in every child's home. Systems for family input and other student assessment strategies can help staff identify students in need of additional resources, interventions and/or supports.

Tips to Consider

- Request family-parent/ grandparent or guardian input.
 - Develop 2 -3 brief, open-ended questions as a virtual family survey regarding their returning student(s). Ensure family members complete the survey for each of their children.
 - * Simply and clearly communicate that the purpose of the survey is to: update family communication preferences; learn about children's needs so that the school can plan for supports to address them; learn about parents greatest hopes and fears for their child for the year; receive any other information or circumstances that have impacted the child that the parent/ grandparent/ guardian would like the school to know. Assure families that confidentiality will be maintained.
 - * Offer the survey on paper for families who do not have easy internet access and create a process for collecting them. Call parents/caregivers directly if they do not fill out the survey.
 - * Accept that some families will not choose to respond. Work to make contact with these families anyway, and encourage participation when they feel able.
 - Enlist mental health staff to assist in developing questions. Review questions with administrators and staff prior to sending the survey.
- Don't make assumptions –
 - It is safe to assume that all families experienced some level of trauma or difficulty when schools closed, but it is important not to make assumptions about what a child's experience has been like based on their behavior during school closures. Some previously engaged students did not engage well with virtual learning. Some students did not show up at all for virtual learning while others participated actively. Some families were in close communication and others were not. Remember that you do not know the reasons behind any behavior and strive to ask questions, listen, and be open before making judgements.
 - Keep in mind that some of your students will have experienced chronic trauma and stress due to: food or housing insecurity; the digital divide; domestic, physical, or alcohol or drug abuse; illness or death; racism and racial disparities.

- Communicate to staff that even with survey results and other information, schools will not know every child's-- or staff-- circumstances over the past months. This further reinforces prioritizing the strengthening of supportive relationships, and school-wide social and emotional learning practices for all.
- ☐ Be prepared with targeted supports:
 - Use informal observations to identify critical student needs.
 - * Teachers, paraprofessionals, counselors: What tools do you have access to that help identify students in need of immediate assistance?
 - Bolster current RtI /PBIS monitoring to include assessment measures for students returning to school following a crisis.
 - Streamline communication loops. What is the best way to ensure timely communication of identified students needing support with everything else in the re-entry process happening simultaneously?
 - Identify who will do this work? Consider how to best use your mental health staff. For example, could school psychologists be deployed for crisis assessment in lieu of testing students?
 - Develop a timeline and meeting format for initial social-emotional assessment. You may choose to use your current meeting times or add in crisis team meeting times to your back to school calendar.
- ☐ Provide on-going feedback to parents/ grandparents/ guardians. Inform them of the processes in place to keep parents in the loop regarding universal (for everyone) school-wide social and emotional supports, as well as targeted supports for a child who may need additional resources. Thank adults for providing survey information, assure them that they will be kept informed of future programs or practices that affect their child, and invite them to contact the school, teacher or counselor if they have additional questions or concerns.