HOW WE GO BACK TO SCHOOL

Guide to Short Chats That Will Deepen Relationships

STAGE 1:
Take the Initiative

Let students know you will be reaching out to them and arrange a time, or allow student to sign-up for a time slot. Conversations should happen on a school and parent-approved messaging platform or app.

Say things like:
- I’m working on connecting with everyone in this group to get a better sense of what everyone is feeling and thinking about, and how I can be supportive.

STAGE 2:
Foster personal connections

Show that you value this time to connect
- I’m glad we have the chance to talk.
- I’m excited to have you in my group this year. I can tell you’re going to add a lot to our community.

Ask inviting questions
Allow students to share as much or as little as they are comfortable sharing.
- Your sister is back from college now, right? How has it been having her home?
- I know things have been unusual lately; how have you been keeping busy lately?
- What is new for you since last school year?
- Who or what has been on your mind a lot lately?
- What would you say is your biggest source of stress right now?

Show interest in student’s perspective
- What would you like to see happen this school year?
- What do you need most right now from me (and your other teachers)?
- What do you think our school/class is doing well or should be doing differently?

Close conversations on an optimistic, forward-thinking note
- What’s the best thing you have seen today?
- What’s keeping you going/giving you energy/making you happy right now?

Helpful phrasing

Probe
- Tell me more about that.
- I want to make sure I understand. Can you explain a little more?

Communicate caring
- Your teachers care a lot about your success.
- Your teachers all want to make sure you’re getting your needs met.

Validate emotions
- That must be so difficult. I see you and I’m here for you.
- I can only imagine how much that impacts you.

Stay solution-oriented
- It sounds like a lot has been happening that is out of your control, and that sounds really frustrating. What are some things you do have control over—something small you can do to start to make things better?

Benefits for students
- Foster sense of safety and belonging
- Enhance resilience and coping
- Support individual academic, social needs
- Contribute to higher engagement for positive long-term outcomes