

Trauma-Informed Leadership

Rising to the Challenge: Staying Connected with All of Our Students

Appendix A — Guidelines:

For Administrators in Support of Their Teachers and Staff: How to Engage Students: Series of Questions to Consider When Reaching Out to Students

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**NORTH AMERICAN CENTER™
FOR THREAT ASSESSMENT
AND TRAUMA RESPONSE**

APPENDIX A: GUIDELINES

For Administrators in Support of Their Teachers and Staff: How to Engage Students: Series of Questions to Consider When Reaching Out to Students

General Considerations For All Students:

- 1) **Consider the student you are calling: what challenges are unique to their situation? Who is the best person to contact this student and/or family? Is there a staff who is more connected? What is the family configuration? What is the best time to call given what you know about the family?**
- 2) **Who has been the primary contact for this student in the home? Consider that this may have changed given that many people are not working at this time.**
- 3) **Consider your role in contacting the student/parent, what resources you can offer, as well as your limitations.**
 - a) Administrator - reaching out to students and parents with high needs or unique situations, may be the only person who is in communication with the student or family, or may share this role with other staff. Consider the role of the other support staff, including but not limited to, Learning Resource Teachers and other Board supports. Be aware of the duty to report to Child Welfare, if you have reason to suspect neglect or abuse.
 - b) Teacher - provide academic support for ongoing learning, and relationship may be the only contact with the student or family, but if in conversation there is concern about a student or family, will notify the administrator. Be aware of the duty to report to Child Welfare, if you have reason to suspect neglect or abuse.
 - c) Other Supports - School Counselors, Registered Psychologists, Social Workers, Child and Youth Workers - provide social emotional support to students and parents by phone, connect to community and crisis resources. Communicate with the administrator to inform of contact with students and families to ensure consistency of approach. Be aware of the duty to report to Child Welfare, if you have reason to suspect neglect or abuse.
- 4) **Offer calm to parents and to students. Be open and honest about the pandemic and how it has changed the way we do business for now. Let them know you are glad to be assigned as the school designate for their child and that you are aware you are entering their space (home) and want to be respectful of the changed dynamic. Underscore the reasons for your contact: How to continue the student's learning and to ensure academic success.**

- 5) **Listen to concerns.** While you may not be able to offer solutions to things that are presented, you can be a supportive listening ear and offer to seek information or resources as appropriate.
- 6) **Align with parents and caregivers in a healthy way, as to how we will approach the new learning expectations and challenges that come with it.** Avoid participating in unhelpful conversations about the changes that the health crisis has brought about in education as well as in general, and instead focus on what we can control and what we can offer.
- 7) **Give updated and factual information.** Be informed about the most recent communications from government as well as governing boards. Have resources available that you can provide regarding reliable links to current information. Avoid speculating about the future plans if they are not known, this may only raise anxiety.

This Is A Script For Initial Or Introductory Contact During The Pandemic.

The age, emotional maturity, family circumstance and your relationship with the student will determine the direction of your conversation. Their responses to you will determine if there is a need for follow-up from another professional or support for the student or their family. Some students will want to know when they can come back to school so it's important for staff to only communicate what their district/divisional leadership has communicated publicly.

Introduction

- 1) **Q. I am glad we are able to connect over the phone or virtually and wondering how you and/or your family are doing?**

Note: Some students will immediately talk about themselves, but others will talk about their family. This may denote what their priority is right now. If the answer is a generic "ok", let them know you have missed them and look forward to being back together at school.

- 2) **Q. Who is living at home or visiting your home now?**

Note: This is to understand who may be able to be supportive of the students learning and who may be elevating family anxiety.

- 3) **Q. So what have you been doing the most since I have seen (talked to) you last?**

- 4) **Q. Have you been able to find a place to do some schoolwork?**

- 5) **Q. So what do you think about this COVID-19 stuff?**

Note: Model Openness.

Note: This is an opportunity to hear if they are becoming fixated on the news and fearing for their own safety or, if family members are, as some may say “I think it is……. but my Mom says it’s…….

Note: Use the opportunity to normalize and say: “I know, I have heard some people saying……. But as we learn in school the facts are ……… and the best place to look is (whatever information source you are using in your region).

6) Q. What are your friends saying about this COVID-19 stuff?

Note: An opportunity to understand, particularly for adolescents, if they are isolated or how much peer support or influence there is in the current situation.

7) Q. What do you miss about school?

8) Q. What have you been doing to help you get through these difficult times?

Note: This question focuses on coping and resilience, and what things students are doing to naturally manage stress.

Note: Students sometimes have important objects that regulate them that are at school. For example, a backpack, a picture they made, or if they are missing a person - a quick phone call from that person to just hear their voice may make a big difference.

9) Q. What’s the most fun you have had since school has been out?

Questions to ask students: (To be asked if prompted to explore further due to student responses during regular contacts)

- When is the most relaxing time of the day for you?
- When is the most stressful or anxious time of the day for you?

How to End a Conversation.

Try to end on a positive and let them know when you will be in contact again. Consider saying, “**I know some people are saying this is our new normal, but this is only temporary. We will get back to normal but until then I’m glad I had this time to teach you.**”