

# Conversation Guide: Talking with Students about Attendance, Grades 6-8

## Using this Guide

Attendance conversations provide a supportive space to explore student perspectives, identify barriers, and collaboratively develop practical solutions. Schools, districts, or any trusted adult can use the questions below to guide meetings with **students in grades 6-8** about attendance. The facilitator should use open-ended questions, allow time for reflection, and keep the conversation strengths-based and focused on actionable strategies.

**Example:** *What are your thoughts about how important school is?*

**Non-example:** *Did you know you are required by law to go to school?*

## STUDENT BACKGROUND

- Tell me about your favorite teacher/staff member. What do they do that makes them your favorite?
- Tell me about the school subjects and activities you enjoy most and what you enjoy about them.
- What skills or talents do you have?
- What are your hobbies?
- How do you typically spend your time when you're not at school?
- What are your goals for \_\_\_\_\_?
  - *Facilitators can personalize this question by filling in the blank with a topic that is meaningful/appropriate for the student (e.g., "this school year," "your future career," or "after graduation").*

## STUDENT SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

- How much do your friends or classmates help you get through the school day or encourage you to come to school?
- What do the adults at home do to help you get to school every day?
- How do you feel about your teachers?
- If you could change one thing about school, what would it be? How would this make your time at school better?
- What is one word you would use to describe your feelings about our school?
- What times of the school day or classes feel more difficult for you?

## ATTENDANCE CHALLENGES

- When you think about the days you've missed school, what is usually going on?

- Describe your daily routines (morning, bedtime, etc.).
- What, if anything, makes it hard to get to school in the morning? Why is that?
- Tell me about any responsibilities you have outside of school (i.e., appointments, a job, chores, etc.) that make it tricky to attend regularly.
- What do you notice about your feelings on days you attend school versus days you miss?

### **SCHOOL-BASED SUPPORTS**

- What are some ways the adults at school could help you feel more supported?
- How do you learn best (i.e., hands-on activities, reading, listening, etc.)? What do your teachers need to know so they can help with this?
- What has helped you in the past when you needed support? How did it help?
- Who at school do you feel comfortable talking to if you're having a hard day?
- Tell me about anything that makes school or learning difficult for you.

## **Building a Strengths-Based Attendance Plan**

Close this conversation by working with the student to turn the insights they shared into a practical plan for improving attendance. Keep the approach positive and solution-focused, highlighting the family's strengths and ideas while ensuring the dialogue remains constructive and supportive.

### **SUGGESTED REFLECTION PROMPTS**

- Based on our conversation, what are some steps we can take together to help you get to school?
- What goals or steps can you try right now?
- How should we check in with you to see if our ideas are working?

### **NOTES:**