

Sample Attendance Conversations

These conversations should be in your style, and as natural as possible. Below are some examples of phone or in-person conversations you can customize to suit your needs. This should be a short, positive conversation or voicemail, not a long conversation in a lecture style. Many parents shut down when we discuss poor attendance, so we want to focus on the school missing the student; that we would like to see them at school more often because we care about them; and at least one positive example of something that they've contributed to the learning environment.

Other information to know and share that may be of use during the conversation:

- Absences are a problem whether they are excused or unexcused.
- Sporadic and consecutive absences both negatively impact learning.
- Attendance patterns matter in all grades, including Kindergarten.
- Children often find it difficult to catch up on missed work.
- Parents "signing off on" or excusing school absences does not minimize the impact on their learning.
- Parents generally underestimate their child's absences by 50%.
- Regular, continued attendance is critical for school success.

General Attendance Conversation *(if majority of absences are unexcused)*

Hi, this is <teacher name>, do you have five minutes to talk? I'm calling to check in. We miss <student name>. Last time we saw them, they <specific positive example of performance or behaviour in classroom/school>. They missed some school recently, and we have really noticed them not being here. So far, <student name> has missed <total days> days and I am worried about what this means for their learning and the rest of the year. Do you think there is a particular reason <student name> is not coming to school right now? Is there anything we can do to help to get <student name> to school more? Thanks for your time, please let us know if there is anything else we can do. I know we both want <student name> to be successful and I hope she/he comes back soon.

Health Attendance Conversation *(if majority of absences are illness or medical appointments)*

Hi, this is <teacher name>, do you have five minutes to talk? I'm calling because we miss <student name>. Last time we saw them, they <specific positive example of performance or behaviour in classroom/school>. They missed some school recently because of illness, and we have really noticed them not being here. So far, <student name> has missed <total days> days and I am worried about what this means for their learning and the rest of the year. Is there anything we can do to support <student name> or you in getting them to school more?

Vacation Attendance Conversation/Religious or Family Related Absence Conversation *(if majority of absences are vacation or extracurricular; or the family goes away for extended periods due to religious reasons)*

Hi, this is <teacher name>, do you have five minutes to talk? I'm calling because we miss <student name>. I know that the absences may have been due to <reason for missing school>. It is so great that <student> is able to take part in <extracurricular/vacation/family related absence>; however, I wonder if you are also aware that we notice that when students miss a certain number of days of school per year, it can start to impact their academic success. <Student> is getting close to the number that would raise a bit of a flag for us. Is there any way this might be considered in the future so that we do not need to worry about <student> falling too far behind. You know your kid best, but I want to make sure you know that a missed day, is a missed day.

Late/Leaving Early Attendance Conversation *(if majority are lates or leaving early)*

Hi, this is <teacher name>, do you have five minutes to talk? I'm just calling to check in. We miss <student name> at the beginning of class, which is often where we give the bulk of the instruction prior to students getting down to work. The class really enjoys <specific positive example of performance or behaviour in classroom/school>. They have been late to class recently, and I've noticed that they seem a bit lost. So far, <student name> has been late <total times> times. Do you think there is a particular reason <student name> is late coming to school right now? Is there anything we can do to help? Thanks for your time, please let us know if there is anything else we can do.

Student Transition back to school from Special Programming *(student is moving from an Outreach Program or from some other external program such as Children's Hospital).*

Hi, this is <teacher name>, do you have a minute to talk? I'm just calling to check in. We miss <student name>. How are they doing? We're looking forward to having them back. Let us know if there is anything that we can do to make the transition back to school run smoothly. I know <student's> peers are excited to have them back.

~Adapted with permission from Rocky View School Division