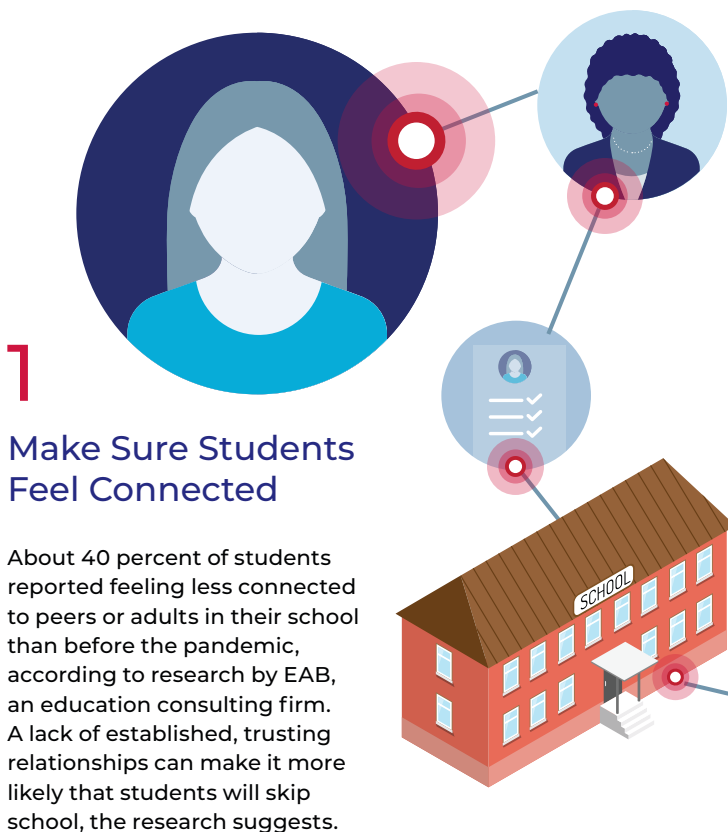


# 3 Tips to Combat Chronic Absenteeism

As schools work to catch students up following historic slides in academic achievement, they're seeing a rise in chronic absenteeism—when students miss at least 10 percent of days during the school year.



## 1 Make Sure Students Feel Connected

About 40 percent of students reported feeling less connected to peers or adults in their school than before the pandemic, according to research by EAB, an education consulting firm. A lack of established, trusting relationships can make it more likely that students will skip school, the research suggests.

A **RELATIONSHIP MAP** is one way to make sure every student has a trusted adult in the school to go to for guidance, feedback, and support. Here's how an entire school can undertake relationship mapping:

- Ask teachers to create a spreadsheet showing the quality and depth of their knowledge about each student by putting a check mark in columns with a level of information (knowing the student's name; if they give the student regular, constructive feedback; if they know two non-academic facts about the student).
- The teacher can be considered a "trusted adult" if they've created a bond with the student, or believe the student would come to them with a problem.
- An administrator should review the mapping exercise, and assign staff members to intentionally deepen connections with any student who doesn't have a trusted adult.
- School leaders should routinely check in with staff to ensure they're working on building relationships with students and repeat the mapping exercise later in the school year to check for progress.

## 2 Enlist Teachers' Help Beyond Roll Call in Targeted Ways

Teachers are often an untapped resource in the fight against student absences, but if school leaders want their help, they need to make a checklist of specific attendance-related tasks for teachers. They should also consider taking a task off teachers' plates to make time for this work.

### Daily:

- Log attendance and flag students who have missed multiple days of class that marking period.
- Personally welcome back students who return after an absence.

### Weekly:

- Call the families of students who have been absent more than two days in the marking period. Schools should give teachers ample coaching on what to say during these conversations with prompts about how to start the conversation and explain the importance of being in class.

## 3 Employ Empathy When Talking to Families

Consider parents as partners, and take the initiative to help them address barriers that could be preventing them from getting their children to school. Don't lead with threats of punishment.

- Emerging from the pandemic, some parents are relying on districts to tell them when they should keep their children home for illness. Schools should clearly and consistently communicate these guidelines, especially during cold and flu season.
- Use the district's text messaging system following an absence with a friendly message like "We missed [child's name] in school today! How can we help make it easier for them to join class again?" Then, include a list of options, like pressing "1" to discuss alternative transportation and pressing "2" to schedule time to chat with a teacher.