



Resources

How to **Maintain Engagement** with Schools at the End and Beginning of the Year

How to Say Goodbye at the End of the Year

- Communicate via email
 - Keep it short!
 - The body of the email should only be 1 – 2 short paragraphs
 - Bullet points are a great way to summarize key ideas
 - You can always attach documents with additional information (e.g., infographics), but keep the actual text of the email brief
 - Express gratitude and acknowledge the difficulty of the pandemic
 - Focus on what you were able to do (stay positive!)
 - For example, were you able to offer a program? To increase the youth's skills? Reduce the workload of staff?
 - Note that you'll re-connect with them next year, and give them a sense of when (e.g., in September)
 - If it is safe to do so (with COVID-19), and funds are available, consider dropping off a small thank you gift (e.g., cookies, coffee)
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Example Email

Hi Jordan,

I hope this email finds you well! Just wanted to touch base about the Healthy Relationships Program we conducted at your school this year. Thank you so much for everything you did to help us conduct this important research with your students. We know how challenging this year has been with the ongoing pandemic, and we sincerely appreciate your willingness to work with us through it.

As a result of this project:

- 82 students learned about the importance of healthy relationships
- An impressive 73% of those students felt more confident to form and maintain healthy relationships as a result of the program
- Staff also reported a difference in students, saying they observed more respectful peer relationships in the classroom

We look forward to reconnecting with you in August 2022 to continue this important work. Thank you again and have a wonderful and restful summer!

Sincerely,



How to Re-Engage at the Beginning of the Year

- Start with an email
 - Plan to send the email the second week school is in session. They won't read their email before the school year starts, and the first week is typically very hectic for them!
 - Keep it short!
 - Body of the email should only be 1 – 2 short paragraphs
 - Bullet points are a great way to summarize key ideas
 - You can always attach documents with additional information (e.g., information sheets), but keep the actual text of the email brief
- Re-introduce yourself
 - They may or may not remember you. That's ok, they have a lot of people to keep track of, so don't take it personally!
- Explain the purpose of the project
 - This will help remind them of why involvement is important
 - You can include how it will benefit their students and/or staff as well
- Explain what you will be asking of them
 - This is important so they won't be surprised by requests later in the year (in terms of time, resources, etc.)
- Offer multiple ways to connect
 - With or without the pandemic, it's a good idea to be flexible with how they want to communicate. Offer email, phone, in-person meetings, Zoom, etc.
- Keep checking in!
 - You may not hear back right away. Don't take it personally! Just keep trying to connect.
 - After the last week in August, schools will be very busy so you may have a hard time getting a response then.
 - If you're having trouble hearing back via email, it can be a good idea to try a few different modes of communication to reach your contact (phone call, dropping by the school, etc.).
 - You may also want to see if that person is still at the organization. Turnover is quite common, so you may want to connect with other at the organization to see if someone else has stepped into that role.

Example Email

Hi Jordan,

I hope you had a great summer! I'm emailing about the Healthy Relationships Program. As a reminder, my name is Liz, and I worked with you last year to offer the Healthy Relationships Program to your students. The purpose of the program was to help students learn how to form and maintain healthy relationships, and ultimately reduce the likelihood of them being involved in dating violence. The program was a success last year, and we're really looking forward to doing it again if that works for you!

This year, we're hoping to:

- Visit your school in August to tell students about the project and hand out consent forms
- Find a time to offer the program
- Visit your school in September to administer a 15-minute survey to your students
- Visit your school in May to administer one more 15-minute survey to your students

What's the best way for us to connect about this? I'm happy to meet in person, over zoom, over the phone, or anything else that works for you!

Sincerely,

Other Things to Consider

- Engagement isn't a one (or two!) time thing
 - Although you are connecting at the beginning and end of the year, engagement ideally should happen throughout the year and with multiple people (in case of turnover)
 - It's a balance between "too little" and "too much", and you may have to modify depending on the people you work with
 - It can be good to check in periodically to ask if they have questions, and/or if there are any difficulties, they're running into that you can help troubleshoot
- The more personal the better
 - There are general tips and tricks for engaging partners (keep it short, be kind, etc.) but, if possible, try to personalize how you connect with them. Simple things like remembering they had a vacation and asking how it was can go a long way for building relationships!
 - One great way to get to know them as a person is to simply listen. Do your best to be fully present during all interactions and to remember them as an individual.
 - Try to not take anything personally. Sometimes people are very easy to get a hold of and to work with, and other times they aren't. If people are not responding quickly or are short with you in person, it's very likely because of external factors (stress associated with worrying about a particular student, the pandemic, etc.). Just remembering this can make it easier to interact with them in a kind way!
- Honor the exhaustion
 - The past few years has taken a toll on everyone. People are worn down, and it's important to honour that. Sometimes we need to temper our expectations and/or be flexible with our approach. Prioritize relationships and do your best to empathize and respond appropriately.
 - If funds are available, small appreciation gifts (snacks, coffee for the break room, school supplies, masks) are very welcome by school staff!



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