



In a time of disruption, schools  
must ensure every child is known

Quick Resource Guide to Start a  
Navigator Program

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## OVERVIEW

Schools are in crisis yet again. The massive, Omicron-driven surge in Covid infections has left schools scrambling to find enough teachers, bus drivers, cafeteria workers and others needed to function, while safety protocols such as testing and quarantine policies are chaotic or nonexistent. Parents are facing daily uncertainty about whether schools will be open and painful choices about whether or not to send their children. Children are internalizing the stress around them and suffering from multiple disruptions to their routines and relationships. The effects on [students' mental health](#) are acute.

One thing schools can do right now to mitigate these threats to children's wellbeing is to ensure each student is known and supported through an individual relationship with an adult who serves as their [Navigator](#). While ideally a Navigator would be part of a larger Success Planning effort — as described in materials in the resource guide below — the core element of connecting each student with a caring adult can be implemented quickly and without additional staffing.

**The simple yet powerful idea behind Navigators is for every child to have a connection with a caring adult outside their families who gets to know them well and helps them succeed.** As part of Success Planning, Navigators meet regularly with children, identify their needs for academic and non-academic supports and opportunities, and serves as a conduit for developing a plan and ensuring those needs are met. The Navigator may not be the one who implements the plan, but she or he serves as the direct connection to the child.

To act quickly during the current disruption, schools may need to develop a modified version of a Navigator system. At a minimum, this means implementing a strategy to reach out to each student regularly to see how they're doing, with an emphasis on helping kids feel connected to their school and supporting their social-emotional wellbeing. Over time, schools can build more permanent and robust Success Planning systems.

During the first phases of the pandemic, several school districts created this kind of individual support for students. The [Nashville Metro School District](#), for example, created a new Navigator system in which teachers as well as wide range of other school staff meet regularly with students to check in and identify needs. Now in its second year, the program reaches 72,000 students served by 6,000 Navigators, with a particular focus on supporting social-emotional wellbeing. Other districts rapidly developed strategies for connecting with students, and sometimes families, one-on-one through phone calls, video conferences, or in-person meetings.

The resources below are intended to help school leaders implement a Navigator program as an initial step in creating a more comprehensive Success Planning system. The materials include sample scripts for conversations between Navigators and students, more information about the role of the Navigator, and examples of schools that have put this in place. Additional information can be found on our [website](#) and by participating in our ongoing Success Planning Learning Community webinar series.

# RESOURCES

## About Navigators

### [Equipping Navigators to Support Students – and Themselves: A Resource Guide for Success Planning](#)

Training and other support materials for Navigators

### [Getting Kids Back on Track](#)

Rapid response guide to individualized Success Planning

### [Individualized Success Planning: Meeting the Unique Needs of Every Child](#)

One-pager explaining the basic elements of Success Planning & how to get started

### [Metro Nashville Public Schools Navigator Handbook](#)

Comprehensive guide to Navigators Including scripts for Navigator/student meetings

### [Salem Public Schools Universal Family Engagement 2020-2021: Family Point Person Outreach and Logistics](#)

Resource outlines and clarifies the purpose and process of the Family Point Person

### [Seizing the Moment for Transformative Change: A Framework for Personalized Student Success Planning](#)

Report examines key design elements of Success Planning and gives plenty of case examples

## Effectively Connecting with Children and Youth

### [Conversations With Kids](#)

Transcend's guide for schools on talking to kids individually or in small groups

### [Mentor](#)

Creating quality mentoring relationships for young people to [expand equity](#)

### [Simple Interactions](#)

Practice-based, strengths-focused, and community-driven approach to support helpers who serve children, youth, and families