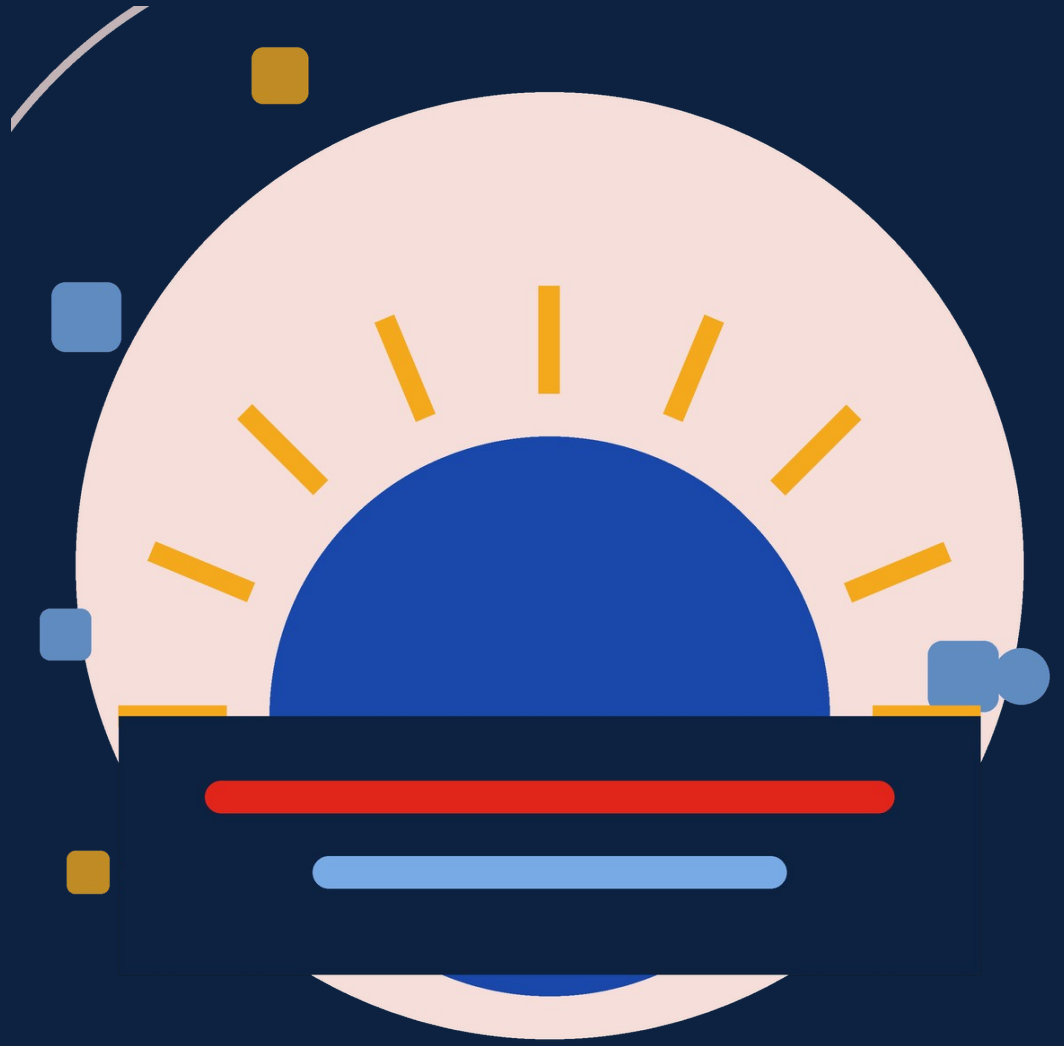
THE SEAT SERIES · FREE ATTENDANCE SCIENCE™ RESOURCE

SEAT 07

Teachers · All grades

Re-entry Done Right



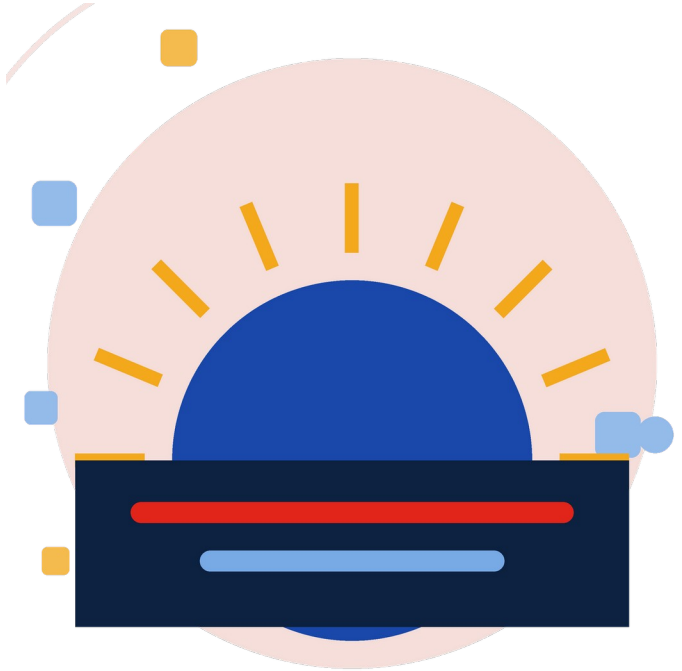
How do I welcome a student back after a long absence?

10 slides · 2 handouts · evidence from Schools Spared, Children Punished and the Attendance Science™ research base

Education Not Cancelled

> However many days a student has missed, and across whatever distance separates them from the classroom, the door to learning stays open. Absence most often signals a mismatch between what a school offers and what a student needs. Re-engagement is real, and building the path back is our shared obligation.

Source: Gentle-Genitty, Kearney, Heyne & O'Toole (Eds.), Education Not Cancelled, Frontiers (2026)



Every story in this series is a composite or a published case. Names are invented.

What teachers are asking

How do I welcome a student back after a long absence?

1

Returning students face a pile of missed work.

2

Classmates and adults may treat them as outsiders.

3

The first day back decides whether they stay.

Shared words before shared work

C

Continuity

An unbroken thread of relationship and progress that survives interruption.

G

Gradual re-entry

Partial days, a safe person and a quiet arrival for anxious students.

S

Strengths-first

Begin with what still works for the student before naming the barrier.

The numbers behind the moment

18%

lower likelihood of chronic absence from parent messaging, the strongest low-cost lever

HEDCO Institute meta-analysis, University of Oregon (2025-2026), 49 U.S. studies

61

RCTs show parent engagement, mentoring and relationships as the most consistent approaches

King's College London meta-analysis of 61 RCTs (Sept 2026)

1.7M

U.S. students had school disrupted by climate events in 2025

UNICEF, Learning Interrupted: Global Snapshot of Climate-related School Disruptions in 2025

Classify before you consequence

Refusal

Plan a gradual re-entry with the counselor and a safe adult at arrival.

Withdrawal

Solve the logistics that caused the absence before the return.

Avoidance

Change the unsafe window or setting before day one.

Truancy

Welcome first; the relationship is the intervention.

Three moves you can make this week

01

Cost: $0

Prepare a welcome

Have a peer and an adult ready to greet the student on the first day back.

02

Cost: $0

Triage the work

Choose the essential assignments; set aside the rest.

03

Cost: $0

Two-week check-ins

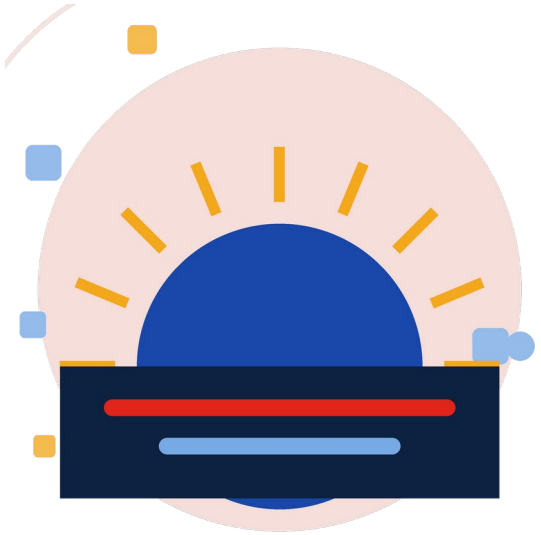
Brief daily check-ins for the first two weeks.

A PRESENCE™ prompt for your building

P	R	E	S	E	N	C	E
Problem definition	Research evidence	Environmental context	**Statistical analysis**	**Equity assessment**	Network and partnership	Compliance and legal	Evidence-based recommendations

YOUR PROMPT

Track students returning after 10 or more consecutive days. What share were absent again within a month? That is your re-entry baseline.



Common missteps, and how you will know it works

- ✕ Handing a returning student every missed assignment at once
- ✕ Public comments about how long they were gone
- ✕ Ending support after the first good week

LEADING INDICATOR · Moves first

Returning students with a re-entry plan

LAGGING INDICATOR · Confirms it worked

Repeat absence within 30 days of return

Join 1,000 Seats at the national table

Scan to take your seat: free membership in Attendance USA and the weekly Attendance Intelligence Brief, with new research, policy across the states, and tools from the field of Attendance Science™.

QUESTIONS info@attendanceusa.org

LEARN MORE attendanceusa.org

HANDOUTS Seat Card (A) and Find Your Data worksheet (B)

KEEP GOING IN THIS SERIES

Seat 01: Classify Before You Consequence
Seat 02: Early Absence Is a Logistics Signal
Seat 03: Building the Habit of Showing Up

Take Your Seat

1,000 Seats campaign

Every seat filled is one more person working to make showing up possible.