

STUDENT CHECK-IN SCRIPTS

An Empower Schools Resource

Quick Check-In

- “I’ve noticed you seem a little quieter than usual today. How are you doing?”
- “You seemed upset earlier. Do you want to talk about what’s going on?”
- “I care about how you’re doing. Is there anything you want me to know today?”

Gentle Support Check-In

- “I noticed you’ve been having a harder time concentrating lately. Sometimes that happens when something is weighing on us. Is everything okay?”
- “You matter here. If something is bothering you, I’m here to listen.”

When a Student Appears Distressed

- “I’m really glad you told me how you’re feeling.”
- “You’re not in trouble. I just want to make sure you’re okay.”
- “Let’s make sure you have the support you need.”

When Referring to a Counselor

- “I’d like to connect you with someone at school who helps students when they’re going through tough things. Would it be okay if we talked with the counselor together?”

SAY THIS / AVOID THIS

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When they:

Say this:

Avoid this:

I'm really stressed and overwhelmed.

Thank you for telling me. That sounds really difficult.

Everyone is stressed.

Do you want to share what's been feeling overwhelming lately?

You'll get over it.

Let's take a moment and figure out what support might help.

Just calm down.

I can't focus and everything feels too hard.

Sometimes when things feel overwhelming, it can affect concentration.

You just need to try harder.

Would it help to take a short break or talk with our counselor?

Stop making excuses.

You're being lazy.

Nobody understands what I'm going through.

It sounds like you're feeling really alone right now.

That's not true.

You don't have to go through this by yourself.

You're overthinking it.

Things at home are really hard.

That sounds really challenging.

That's just how families are.

There are people at school who can help support you.

You'll have to deal with it.

I feel like nobody cares about me.

You matter here, and I care about how you're doing.

You shouldn't feel that way.

Let's make sure you have the support you need.

That doesn't make sense.

I don't want to be here anymore.

When you say that, can you help me understand what you're feeling?

You don't mean that.

You deserve support. Let's talk with someone who can help.

Think about how that would hurt your family.

PARENT COMMUNICATION

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Early Concern Communication

Subject: Checking in About [Student Name]

Hello [Parent/Guardian Name],

I wanted to reach out because I've noticed a few changes in [Student Name]'s behavior recently, such as [brief observable example: difficulty concentrating, appearing withdrawn, increased frustration].

Our goal is always to support students in the best way possible. I wanted to check in to see if there is anything you would like us to know or if there is any way we can support [Student Name] at school.

If helpful, we can also connect with our school counselor who is trained to support students during challenging times.

Thank you for partnering with us to support [Student Name].

Sincerely,

[Educator Name]
[Role / School]

DOCUMENTATION PROMPTS

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Include

- Date and time
- Setting/location
- Observable behavior
- Direct student statements
- Frequency or pattern

Avoid

- “Student is depressed.”
- “Student has anxiety.”
- “Student is experiencing trauma.”

Educators document behaviors, not diagnoses.

Objective Observation

Date: March 3, 2026
Time: 10:15 AM
Location: Classroom

Student appeared tearful and kept head down during class discussion. When asked if they were okay, student stated:

“I didn’t sleep last night and everything feels overwhelming.”

Student requested to sit quietly and did not participate in group activity.

Submitted by:

Educator Name
Role / School

EDUCATOR REFERRAL LANGUAGE

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Referral Communication

Internal Referral Note (Example)

Student Name: _____. Date: _____

Reason for Referral:

I am referring this student after observing the following behaviors over the past [timeframe]:

- Student appeared withdrawn during class activities.
- Student reported feeling “overwhelmed” during check-in conversation.
- Difficulty concentrating and decreased participation.

Steps Taken Prior to Referral:

- Conducted brief student check-in.
- Provided opportunity for student to take a short break.
- Encouraged student to speak with a trusted adult.

Request:

I recommend a counselor follow-up to further assess student support needs.

Submitted by:

[Educator Name]
[Role / School]