

R.E.A.L.: For Talking with Families with Older Youth

The R.E.A.L. framework can help educators explain the importance of showing up, especially given the challenges experienced during the pandemic, and reflect upon what is needed to make showing up to school worthwhile.

We've tailored the concepts below slightly to use language that works best for families with older youth. When adapting R.E.A.L., consider where people in your school community have the greatest challenges. Get to know families so you can decide which talking point(s) make most sense. For example, if families are struggling with housing or basic needs, you might want to start with offering Access to resources rather than emphasizing routines.

Use these ideas in your interactions with families, including emails, calls home, parent teacher conferences, or comments delivered at school or community events. Keep the tone positive, respectful and supportive, whether you are speaking face-to-face or in writing.

Encourage families to use these concepts when talking with their teenagers about why going to school every day matters. See the [tailored version for talking directly with youth](#).

Showing up matters for R.E.A.L. because it is an opportunity to:

- Build **R**outines
- Increase **E**ngagement
- Provide **A**ccess to resources
- Support **L**earning

Routines: Establishing a routine of daily attendance helps reduce stress at home, and supports a habit of attendance that will help your teenager get and keep a job.

Engagement: Being in school helps students to get to know each other and school staff and builds relationships that can motivate participation in learning.

Access to Resources: Schools provide access to valuable resources such as meals, health, mental health supports and fun enrichment activities such as sports, clubs, music, and other afterschool and summer programs.

Learning: Students who attend school regularly do better academically in middle school and are more likely to graduate from high school.

[Return to the toolkit, Showing Up Matters for R.E.A.L.](#)