

TOOLKIT 2: FRESH START

Catch the Pattern Early | Early Attendance Intervention

Purpose: Fresh Start is an early, supportive follow-up for students showing concerning or chronic attendance patterns, especially at the beginning of the school year. It is designed to reconnect, understand the pattern, identify barriers, and put a short-cycle support plan in place **before** a formal Success Meeting/SART is needed.

FIRST FACES	FRESH START	SUCCESS / SART	INTENSIVE SUPPORT	SARB
Universal welcome + early noticing	Early pattern follow-up Reconnect + 30-day support	Formal targeted family problem-solving	Fidelity review + intensified intervention	Formal multi-agency attendance response

WHEN TO USE FRESH START

Use when an early attendance pattern needs more than a routine First Faces response but does not yet require a formal SART/Success Meeting. Examples include repeated early-year absences or tardies, a student beginning the year already chronically absent, a known barrier reappearing, or a student returning after an extended disruption.

RESOURCE	WHAT IT DOES
1. Fresh Start Attendance Snapshot	Makes the pattern visible: absences, tardies, days of week, periods, recent changes, strengths.
2. Student Voice Check-In	Gets the student's view of what helps, what gets in the way, and who they trust.
3. Barrier Discovery Screener	Organizes possible barriers without turning the conversation into an interrogation.
4. Fresh Start Meeting Guide	Provides a 15-20 minute supportive conversation structure.
5. 30-Day Fresh Start Plan	Assigns one or two targeted supports, an owner, goal, and review dates.
6. 2-Week / 4-Week Progress Check	Checks whether the intervention was actually implemented and whether attendance changed.
7. Fresh Start Fidelity Check	Helps leadership see whether early intervention is happening consistently.

RESOURCE 1 - FRESH START ATTENDANCE SNAPSHOT

See the Pattern Before Solving the Problem

Student: _____	Grade: _____	Date: _____
Staff reviewing: _____	Window reviewed: _____	Current attendance %: _____

LOOK AT	EVIDENCE / NOTES
Frequency How often is the student absent/tardy?	_____
Timing Days of week, periods, mornings/afternoons, before/after weekends?	_____
Duration Single days, consecutive days, partial days?	_____
Change Is this new, recurring, improving, or worsening?	_____
Context Known family, transportation, academic, belonging, health/wellness, or basic-needs factors?	_____
Strengths When does attendance go well? What helps the student get here?	_____

PATTERN STATEMENT: Instead of “poor attendance,” describe what the evidence shows:

ATTEND to the barrier | OBSERVE the behavior | DISCOVER the why

RESOURCE 2 - STUDENT VOICE CHECK-IN

Short Conversation | Not an Interrogation

1. What has been going well for you at school lately?

2. What makes it easier for you to get to school and be here on time?

3. What sometimes gets in the way of coming to school?

4. Are there certain days, classes, times, or situations that are harder?

5. Who at school do you feel comfortable going to if you need help?

6. What is one thing we could do that would make getting here or staying here easier?

7. What is one goal you would like to work toward over the next few weeks?

RESOURCE 3 - BARRIER DISCOVERY SCREENER

■ Transportation / reliable ride	■ Morning routine / sleep / getting ready
■ Family responsibilities / childcare / work	■ Housing / food / clothing / utilities / basic needs
■ Academic struggle / missing work / course concerns	■ Peer conflict / bullying / safety concern
■ School belonging / avoidance / anxiety about returning	■ Health / appointments / wellness needs
■ Discipline / classroom relationship / school climate	■ Technology / independent-study access
■ Motivation / relevance / future goals	■ Other: _____

Important: The screener is a conversation aid. Check only what is supported by student/family information or observable evidence; do not guess.

RESOURCE 4 - FRESH START MEETING GUIDE

15-20 Minutes | Reconnect, Understand, Support

STEP	FACILITATOR MOVE	TIME
1. WELCOME + PURPOSE	"We wanted to meet early because we care about your success and want to understand what may be making attendance difficult."	2 min
2. START WITH STRENGTHS	Name what is going well: relationships, classes, goals, improvement, effort, interests.	2 min
3. SHARE THE PATTERN	Describe attendance evidence neutrally. Avoid labels or blame. Ask: "What are you noticing?"	3 min
4. DISCOVER THE WHY	Use student/family voice and the Barrier Discovery Screener. Listen for what is within and outside the student's control.	5 min
5. CHOOSE 1-2 SUPPORTS	Match support to the identified barrier. Avoid a long list of interventions with no owner.	4 min
6. SET A SHORT GOAL	Choose a realistic 30-day attendance/re-entry goal and identify how progress will be measured.	2 min
7. ASSIGN + FOLLOW UP	Who does what, by when? Set the 2-week and 4-week review dates before leaving.	2 min

Fresh Start is NOT: a disciplinary conference, a SART contract, a lecture about compulsory attendance, or a promise that the school can eliminate every barrier. **Fresh Start IS:** an early problem-solving conversation with a short support cycle.

RESOURCE 5 - 30-DAY FRESH START PLAN

Small Plan. Clear Ownership. Short Review Cycle.

Student: _____	Plan Start: _____	30-Day Review: _____	
Attendance pattern we are addressing: _____			
Student/family identified barrier(s): _____			
SUPPORT / ACTION	OWNER	START BY	HOW WE'LL KNOW IT HAPPENED
1. _____	_____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____	_____
30-DAY GOAL			
Attendance/re-entry goal: _____			
Student action: _____ Family action: _____			
School action: _____ Trusted adult/check-in: _____			
2-WEEK CHECK: _____		4-WEEK / 30-DAY REVIEW: _____	

RESOURCE 6 - 2-WEEK / 4-WEEK PROGRESS CHECK

Did We Do What We Said? Did It Help?

CHECK	2-WEEK REVIEW	4-WEEK / 30-DAY REVIEW
Support implemented?	☐ Yes ☐ Partly ☐ No Evidence: _____	☐ Yes ☐ Partly ☐ No Evidence: _____
Student/family accessed support?	☐ Yes ☐ Partly ☐ No Notes: _____	☐ Yes ☐ Partly ☐ No Notes: _____
Attendance pattern	☐ Improving ☐ Same ☐ Worse Evidence: _____	☐ Improving ☐ Same ☐ Worse Evidence: _____
Barrier status	☐ Reduced ☐ Same ☐ New barrier Notes: _____	☐ Reduced ☐ Same ☐ New barrier Notes: _____
Student voice	What does the student say is helping? _____	What does the student say now? _____

DECISION AT 30 DAYS

- **CONTINUE** - support is working; continue and monitor.
- **ADJUST** - barrier/support match needs to change; revise plan and set another short review.
- **MOVE TO SUCCESS / SART** - attendance remains concerning and targeted, formal family problem-solving is needed.
- **OTHER / INTENSIVE RESPONSE** - immediate circumstances require a different school/district process.

Important: Escalation should not substitute for implementation. Before moving forward, confirm that the agreed supports were actually provided.

RESOURCE 7 - FRESH START FIDELITY CHECK

Leadership Quick Review

IMPLEMENTATION LOOK-FOR	YES	PARTLY	NOT YET	EVIDENCE
Students with early concerning patterns are identified promptly.	■	■	■	_____
Attendance patterns are described with evidence, not labels.	■	■	■	_____
Student voice is included before a plan is finalized.	■	■	■	_____
Families are approached as problem-solving partners.	■	■	■	_____
Barriers are identified without guessing or over-collecting personal information.	■	■	■	_____
Plans contain only a small number of targeted supports.	■	■	■	_____
Every support has an owner and a start date.	■	■	■	_____
2-week and 4-week reviews actually occur.	■	■	■	_____
Teams check intervention implementation before judging effectiveness.	■	■	■	_____
Students move to Success/SART when targeted formal problem-solving is warranted.	■	■	■	_____

PROTECT What is working? _____	STRENGTHEN Where are we inconsistent? _____	ADJUST What system change is needed? _____
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FRESH START QUESTION: Did we catch the pattern early enough to understand the barrier, provide a targeted support, and learn whether it worked before the problem became a formal attendance case?

CONTINUUM: FIRST FACES → FRESH START → SUCCESS / SART → INTENSIVE SUPPORT → SARB