

# Building Relationships Through Informal Chats

As you explore new ways to integrate emotional well-being into your school's community, consider CASEL's *Five Minute Chats with the Principal* as a way of showing care and empathy to staff members. These structured, yet informal chats serve as an effective approach for administrators to connect and develop relationships with their staff. Use the information below as a guide.

## Initiate

If you already have a relationship with this person, open the conversation as you would normally. Otherwise, consider initiating the conversation with the following:

- *Do you have some time to chat?*
- *I'm trying to connect with everyone on staff to get a better sense of how everyone is feeling and how I can be more supportive.*

## Open

Start with a question that is a little bit more specific asking, "how are you?" Most people have become accustomed to responding to that question dishonestly, or with very little detail.

Try one of the following:

- *What has been on your mind lately?*
- *What would you like to see happen this school year?*
- *What are some of your biggest priorities right now, both inside and outside of school?*

## Personalize

Let them know that learning about them as a person is a top priority for you by bringing it up early in the chat. Try asking some of the following questions:

- *What is your biggest stressor right now?*
- *How are you feeling about your work/life balance?*
- *How are you taking care of yourself?*
- *What are some things that have changed for you since last school year?*

## Invite Feedback

Show them that their perspective is valuable and you are willing to work on making changes based on their feedback. Consider the following questions when encouraging feedback:

- *What is something we're doing well so far, and how can we build on that?*
- *What do you think we should be doing differently?*
- *What do you and your colleagues need most right now?*

## Close

End the conversation optimistically, and with some forward thinking. Try asking one or more of these questions to close out your chat:

- *What's keeping you going or putting a smile on your face?*
- *Is there a staff member or colleague that has inspired you lately?*
- *What's the best thing you've seen today?*