# Inclusivity and Belonging in the Classroom

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# Importance

## 01
### My Schooling
Lack of a sense of belonging for years

## 02
### City Year
Diverse class of incredible third-graders

## 03
### Honors Thesis
Research and survey of educators in the area

## 04
### Educator
Free to be authentic in the classroom

# Terms

## Inclusivity

Instructional and behavioral practices "that influence academic and social-personal outcomes" (Tennessee Department of Education, n.d., para. 2)

An approach to education, not a set of rules

Meeting student's unique needs

## Belonging

Extent that children feel "individually welcome[d], respected, included, and supported" in their school environment (Allen, 2022, para. 4)

Free to be authentically themselves

Feel valued and part of the classroom and school community

# Practices

### General

Find one trusted adult in the building

### Culture

Build on background knowledge of students, dissolve dominant narrative

### Families

Accessible and positive communication for families

### Peers

Explicit teaching of empathy, working together, and accepting new students

### Intentionality

Positive language, social-emotional learning, building trust, and creating a safe environment

### Student Input

Class rules, seeing themselves in their classroom, and dedicated time for connections

## YOUR WORDS MATTER

| | INSTEAD OF... | TRY |
|---|---|---|
| | Be quiet. | Can you use a softer voice? |
| | What a mess! | It looks like you had fun! How can we clean up? |
| | Do you need help? | I'm here to help if you need me. |
| | I explained how to do this yesterday. | Maybe I can show you another way. |
| | Do I need to separate you? | Could you use a break? |
| | Stop crying. | It's okay to cry. |
| | Do you have any questions? | What questions do you have? |
| | You're OK. | How are you feeling? |
| | It's not that hard. | You can do hard things. |
| | We don't talk like that. | Please use kind words. |

WE ARE TEACHERS

(Sayner, 2018)

# Implications

**Academic**

**Social**

**Developmental**

# Academic

- Increase in:
    - Motivation
    - Energy
    - Effort
    - Work completion
    - Academic achievement
- Stronger focus on academics than internal battles
- Classroom participation
- Investment in extracurriculars
- Willing and wanting to come to school – fewer dropout

(St-Amand, Girard, & Smith, 2017)

# Social

- Social isolation can occur for any student, but an inclusive classroom that fosters belonging increases peer interactions (Allen, 2022)
- Peer relationships and confidence (Cornell University, 2023)
- Inclusive classrooms lead to having safe and open conversations
  - Mutual respect
  - Teaching healthy conflict resolution (Tennesse Department of Education, n.d.)
  - Teach skills students are not born with

# Developmental

- Not having a sense of belonging impacts development
  - Students may feel they can never belong
  - Mental health and confidence
- Belonging is a basic need (St-Amand, Girard, & Smith, 2017)
- Encouraged to be themselves and accept their mistakes
  - Personal image (Allen, 2022)

# Conclusion

### Educational Practices

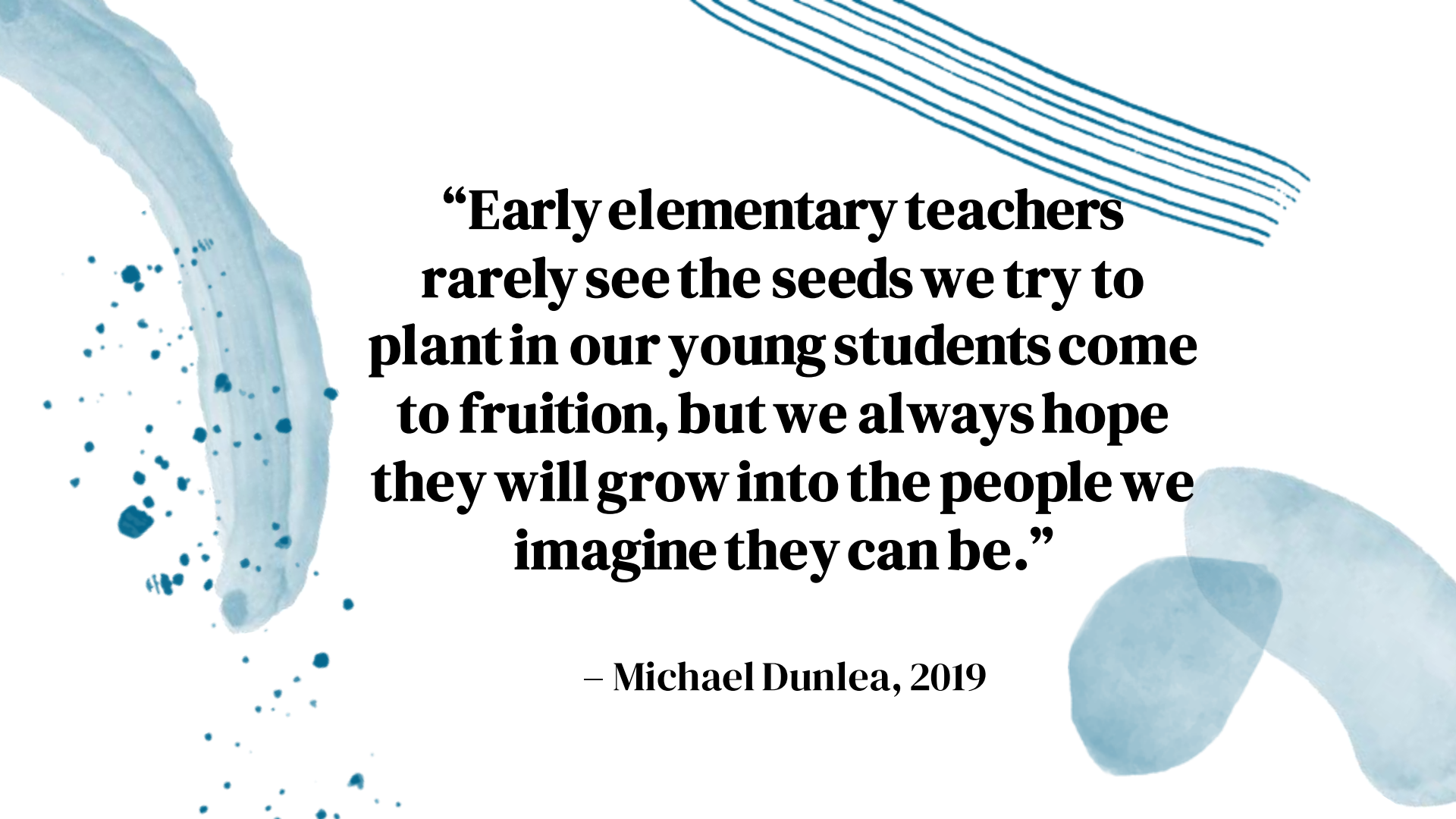Educators can implement any of these practices quickly and easily

### Sense of Belonging

Students have stronger academics, social experiences, and confidence

### Takeaways

This is the research, but the survey will discover what works

"Early elementary teachers rarely see the seeds we try to plant in our young students come to fruition, but we always hope they will grow into the people we imagine they can be."

– Michael Dunlea, 2019

Thank you!

# Resources

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