Inclusivity and Belonging in the

Shannon Luby

Southern New Hampshire University

## **Importance**

- 1. My Schooling Lack of a sense of belonging for years.
- 2. City Year Diverse class of incredible third-graders.
- 3. Honors Thesis Research and survey of educators in the area.
- 4. 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.

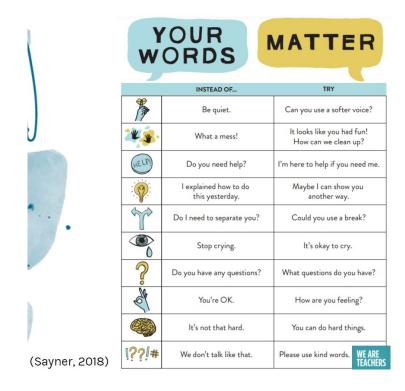
Culture - Build on background knowledge of students, dissolve dominant narrative.

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.



# **Implications**

## **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.

#### **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.

# **Quote by Michael Dunlea, 2019**

"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."

## Resources

- Allen, K. (2022 January 22). *The science of school belonging*. Psychology

  Today.https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/sense-belonging/202201/the-science-school-belonging
- Arellanes, J. and Hendricks, M. (2022). Teaching ethnic-specific coursework: Practical suggestions for promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion within the classroom. Society for the Teaching of Psychology. SAGE. DOI: 10.1177/00986283211013050 https://journals-sagepubcom.ezproxy.snhu.edu/doi/epub/10.1177/00986283211013050
- Bouchard, K. & Berg, D. (2017). Students' school belonging: Juxtaposing the perspectives of teachers and students in the late elementary school years (grades 4–8). School Community Journal. https://www.adi.org/journal/2017ss/BouchardBergSpring2017.pdf
- Bowen, J. (2021 October 21). Why is it important for students to feel a sense of belonging at school? 'students choose to be in environments that make them feel a sense of fit,' says Associate Professor DeLeon Gray. North Carolina State University.

  https://ced.ncsu.edu/news/2021/10/21/why-is-it-important-for-students-to-feel-a-sense-of-belonging-at-school-students-choose-to-be-in-environments-that-make-them-feel-a-sense-of-fit-says-associate-professor-deleon-gra/
- Cornell University Diversity and Inclusion. (2023). *Sense of belonging*. Cornell University. https://diversity.cornell.edu/belonging/sense-belonging
- Dunlea, M. (2019 September 4). Every student matters: Cultivating belonging in the classroom.

  Edutopia. https://www.edutopia.org/article/every-student-matters-cultivating-belonging-classroom/

- Smith Sayner, S. (2018 November 7). 15 ways to bring more positive language into your classroom and school. We Are Teachers. https://www.weareteachers.com/positive-language-in-the-classroom/
- St-Amand, J., Girard, S., & Smith, J. (2017). Sense of belonging at school: Defining attributes, determinants, and sustaining strategies. IAFOR Journal of Education.
- Tennessee Department of Education. (n.d.) *Culturally inclusive practices*. Tennessee State

  Government. https://www.tn.gov/education/education/families/student-support/special-education/culturally-inclusive-practices.html