MINDFRAMES for BELONGING, IDENTITIES, and EQUITY

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Fortifying Cultural Bridges

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Contents

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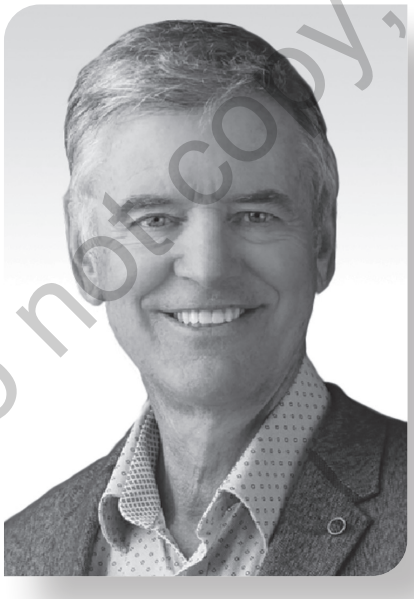
Sonja Hollins-Alexander is the associate vice president, content advisor, and scholar for Corwin Publishing. She has been in the field of education and publishing for thirty years with sixteen of those being in educational leadership at the school, district, and higher education levels, and eight of those being in educational consulting and publishing. During this time, she has served as a school social worker, teacher, assistant principal, principal, coordinator, director of professional learning, and chief of staff, serving in two Metro Atlanta, Georgia, school districts. She continued her profession beyond K–12 as a senior consultant for professional development firms and independently. She has also served on numerous United Way nonprofit boards and served as the board president for Learning Forward Georgia and as a member of the National Affiliate Leadership Council for Learning Forward.

Through her professional journey, she has had experiences in strategic planning, policy development, stakeholder communication and engagement, instructional and curriculum design, facilitation of adult learning strategy, executive leadership coaching, and conference fFacilitation and design, and has served on numerous quality assurance teams with Cognia school accreditation and certification organization. She is a Corwin author of *Online Professional Development Through Virtual Learning Communities* and coauthor of *Collective Equity*.

Sonja holds a bachelor's degree in psychology, a master's degree in social work, a teaching certificate in middle grades language arts, a specialist's degree in educational administration and leadership, and a doctorate degree in curriculum and instruction. She is committed to partner engagement and implementation of evidence-informed sustained professional learning services that positively impact teaching and learning—*not by chance but by design*.

Dominique Smith, EdD, is chief of educational services and teacher support at Health Sciences High and Middle College in San Diego, California. Smith is passionate about creating school environments that honor and empower students. His research and instruction focus on restorative practices, classroom management, growth mindset, and the culture of achievement. Dominique also provides professional learning to K-12 teachers in small and large groups that address classroom and school climate and organization. He holds a doctorate in educational leadership from San Diego State University with an emphasis on equity as well as a master's degree in social work from the University of Southern California. Dominique also holds credentials from San Diego State University in administrative services, child welfare, PPS, and attendance. Smith has been recognized with the National School Safety Award from the School Safety Advocacy Council. In 2018, he delivered a TED Talk on building relationships between students and teachers.



John Hattie, PhD, is an award-winning education researcher and best-selling author with nearly thirty years of experience examining what works best in student learning and achievement. His research, better known as Visible Learning, is a culmination of nearly thirty years synthesizing more than 2,100 meta-analyses comprising more than one hundred thousand studies involving over 300 million students around the world. He has presented and keynoted in over three hundred international conferences and has received numerous recognitions for his contributions to education. His notable publications include *Visible Learning*, *Visible Learning for Teachers*, *Visible Learning and the Science of How We Learn*; *Visible Learning for Mathematics, Grades K-12*; and *10 Mindframes for Visible Learning*.

Setting the Scene

When students cross the school gate, they do not leave their culture, sense of belonging, or identities behind. When students enter the school, they experience a sense of being and culture of the class and school, and their identities are sustained or queried. Some have to code switch from home to school and back again, others do not blink when making the transition, and others learn one is more a safe haven than the other. Schools create societies, sometimes mirroring and sometimes in contradiction to the society around them. When we walk into schools, we can often feel the passion, the sense of an invitation to come and learn, and the care and expectations of significant acceleration of learning—or not.

The **climate of the school** is what students experience every school day. This climate refers to the emotional and physical atmosphere within a school. It involves the students' and teachers' feelings, perceptions, and experiences about their sense of safety, inclusion, and well-being. A positive climate fosters a sense of belonging, motivation, and invitation to learn and relates to whether the school is safe, supportive, and inviting to all who cross the school gate (or, nowadays, come in via technologies). A negative climate can lead to stress, bullying, and disengagement. The climate can be different across the various classes and the playground within a school, and sadly for some students this means they need to act and be treated differently as a function of where they are and who they are in the school. Our interest is ensuring that the collective school climate is fortifying, nourishing, and welcoming everywhere by everyone. This is basic humanity in action.

The **culture of a school** refers to the shared values, beliefs, norms, traditions, and practices that shape the experiences within a school. The culture has been referred to as the "personality" or "health" of the school (Halpin & Croft, 1963; Hoy & Hannum, 1997) and includes the collective identity, attitudes, and behaviors across the school and influences the way individuals (leaders, teachers, and students) interact, collaborate,

and learn in the school. It often relates to the schools' lived mission, the acceptance of diversity or privileged groups or identities, and can be defined as the guiding beliefs and values evident in how a school operates (Fullan, 2007).

A positive school culture can contribute to a positive school climate, although both are essential for creating a supportive, caring, and inclusive place for all students and teachers.

But the culture and climate are not fixed, and they do not eventuate just because it is stated in a mission statement or talked about. Each teacher or student experiences culture and climate in many different ways. Few teachers, for example, wake up each morning and plot how they will make their students' lives miserable today. But some students think this is the case. Few teachers set out to bully, ridicule, and demean their students. But some students believe this is the case. Few teachers do not work hard to like their students. But some students (especially minority students) think this is the case. Russell Bishop (2023) has spent his career listening to minority students talk about their classroom experience, more often taught by majority teachers. He showed that minority students particularly noted whether their teachers liked them or not. For these students, liking them is indicated by whether the teachers created caring and learning environments, had high expectations of them as learners, invited them to engage in cognitively challenging or easy tasks, or whether the teacher pathologized the problem in the class as the students, the race, the resources, the home, and engaged in pathologizing practices (remedial, limited curricula, simplified language, ability grouping, transmission teaching methods). It was less if the teachers "liked" them as individual students, but whether they were also provided rich cognitive experiences that advanced their learning.

Thus, we need multiple perspectives when considering the culture and climate of the school—from the teachers and the students, as their beliefs are very much their lived realities. As argued throughout the Visible Learning books, how we think about the impact of what we do is more important than what we do. Both matter—but it is our thinking, our Why, our purpose, and our beliefs that lead to the climate.

These ways of thinking have been called mindframes, which are more likely to impact student learning and engagement than any particular program, teaching method, lesson plan, and so forth. How we—the leaders, teachers, students, parents—think about these matters is most critical. Simon Sinek (2009) describes the essential element of inspiration through the metaphor of the Golden Circle. Sinek asserts that transformations are driven from a core place of a collective purpose. The Why is core, which can lead to the How and the What.

Sinek argued that leadership could be considered from three different perspectives: First, it can be seen from the standpoint of what successful leaders do. Second, we can take the approach of asking how the leaders do what they do. Third, we can ask ourselves why the leaders do what they do. His major message is that average leaders start and finish their thinking at the outermost circle (the doing). They ask themselves what they are doing and usually do not think further. And so, they fail to consider the much more important questions of how and why they are doing what they are doing. In this way, average leaders often lose sight of their actual goal and thus fail at their primary task: challenging and encouraging people to the greatest possible extent in their development, thinking, and actions. The response in those following the leader is a hollow, mechanical reaction to external stimuli; they are incapable of acting out of an inner conviction. They just do the job, take action, and run their schools irrespective of the impact on their students.

Successful leaders take a different approach. For them, the main question is Why something should be done. This leads them to the question of How to do something and, finally, What to do. It is less about what they do but much more Why and Why they do what they do. Hence, Sinek sees the secret of success as beginning with the inner circle and the question of Why and then continuing outward from there by asking the questions of How and What. Great leaders all had a vision, passion, and belief and could communicate and share these with others.

We start this book by identifying the core "Why" attributes or the mindframes of those working in schools with specific reference to the culture and climate they seek to develop. Mindframes are our "Why." They represent an internal set of beliefs we hold near and dear to our hearts—a belief that our *primary* role is to be an evaluator of our impact on student learning, use assessment as a way to inform us about our impact and next steps, collaborate with our peers and students about their interpretations of our impact, be an agent of improvement, challenge others to not simply "do your best," but to teach confidence to take on challenges, give and help students and teachers understand feedback and interpret and act on the feedback given to us, engage in dialogue, inform others what successful impact looks like from the outset, build relationships and trust, and focus on learning and the language of learning. The Visible Learning strategies and processes are the "How" to our "Why" . And the "What" refers to the result—the outcomes we intend to accomplish or the evidence of our collective impact on student progress and achievement. These outcomes relate to the strategies to learn so that every student progresses to higher achievement, the confidence to take on challenges and to know how to evaluate where we are relative to where we need to be going, and the thrills and joy of learning and striving for more learning.

In various works, we have developed ten mindframes for these four key participants in schools (Hattie, 2023; Hattie & Hattie, 2022; Hattie & Smith, 2020; Hattie & Zierer, 2018). The ten outlined in this book complement the others, and it can be seen there is much overlap. Five big ideas permeate these various Mindframes: Impact and Efficiency, Feedback and Assessment, Challenging and Accelerated Growth, Learning Culture and Relationships, and Becoming a Teacher and Adaptability.

- **Impact and Efficiency:** You prioritize evaluating the impact of your actions and ensuring that your efforts are efficient and effective. You focus on making every hour count toward improving student outcomes and learning experiences.
- **Feedback and Assessment:** You view assessment as feedback that guides your actions. You engage in dialogue, give and receive feedback, and recognize the power of feedback in fostering success and growth for learning.
- **Challenging Growth:** You embrace challenges and continuous learning. You set high expectations for yourself and your students, actively engage in learning strategies, and enjoy the process of acquiring new skills and knowledge.
- **Learning Culture and Relationships:** You contribute to creating a positive learning culture for yourself and your child. You value relationships, build trust, collaborate, and work to establish effective communication with all involved in the learning process.
- **Ownership and Adaptability:** You take ownership of your role as an adult and evaluator of impact. You adapt to various situations, make informed decisions about de-implementation and implementation priorities, and continuously strive to improve your own learning and your student's learning experiences.

	TEACHERS AND SCHOOL LEADERS	
	EFFECTIVENESS	EFFICIENCY
1	I am an evaluator of my impact	I am focused on my efficiency of impact above all else
2	I see assessment as feedback to me	I see that working long hours is only a badge of honor if each hour *truly* contributes to student outcomes
3	I collaborate about impact	I use each hour wisely and focus only on the things that significantly improve student learning

	TEACHERS AND SCHOOL LEADERS	
	EFFECTIVENESS	EFFICIENCY
4	I am a change agent	I am an evaluator of my impact AND my efficiency of impact
5	I strive for challenge	I am not a busy fool: Being busy is not the same thing as having real impact
6	I give and help students understand feedback	I strive to do less to achieve far more
7	I engage as much in dialogue as monologue	I know how and when to Remove, Reduce, Reengineer, or Replace
8	I explicitly inform students about success	I celebrate and share the efficiencies I have generated
9	I build relationships and trust	I de-implement with great care, checking that my actions generate no harm
10	I focus on the language of learning	I accept that outcomes' ambiguity exists in everything I do; this is why I chose my de-implementation priorities with care, and why I evaluate to know and grow my impact
	STUDENTS	PARENTS
1	I am confident that I can learn and enjoy challenges	I have appropriately high expectations
2	I set, implement, and monitor an appropriate mix of achieving and deep learning goals	I make reasonable demands and are highly responsive to my child
3	I strive to improve and enjoy my learning	I am not alone as a parent
4	I strive to master and acquire surface and deep learning	I develop my child's skill, will, and sense of thrill
5	I work to contribute to a positive learning culture	I love learning
6	I have multiple learning strategies and know when best to use them	I know the power of feedback and that success thrives on errors
7	I have the confidence and skills to learn from and contribute to group learning	I am a parent, not a teacher
8	I can hear, understand, and action feedback	I know how to deal with schools
9	I can evaluate my learning	I appreciate that my child is not perfect, nor are you
10	I am my own teacher	I am an evaluator of my impact

The Research on Climate and Culture in Schools

Ming-Te Wang and Jessica Degol (2016) conceptualize school climate as the shared beliefs, values, and attitudes that shape interactions between students and adults and set the parameters of acceptable behavior and

norms for the school. They cited Freiberg and Stein's (1999) definition that climate was the heart and soul of the school. It is about the essence of a school that leads a child, a teacher, and an administrator to love the school and to look forward to being there each school day.

Ruth Berkowitz and colleagues (2017) used seventy-eight studies to review the various attributes of school climate. We classified their attributes into four major headings:

> Relations (connectedness, social support, peer relations, cohesion),
>
> Involvement (belonging, commitment, confidence, engagement),
>
> Safety (disciplinary climate, safe and respectful openness, acceptance of identities, caring),
>
> Academic press (positive learning environment, high expectations, school quality).

It is the quality of relations between teachers and students and between student and students, their sense of involvement and safety, and the high expectations and experience of a rich, cognitive, appropriate, and complex set of learning experiences.

At the school level, it is the collective intentions and actions of the staff to engender a safe, fair, engaging, and worthwhile culture and climate. Does the student feel safe that their sense of self is recognized, esteemed, and nurtured? Does the student feel they belong in this class and school? Does the student experience the equity of being treated fairly in a caring, open-to-learn culture?

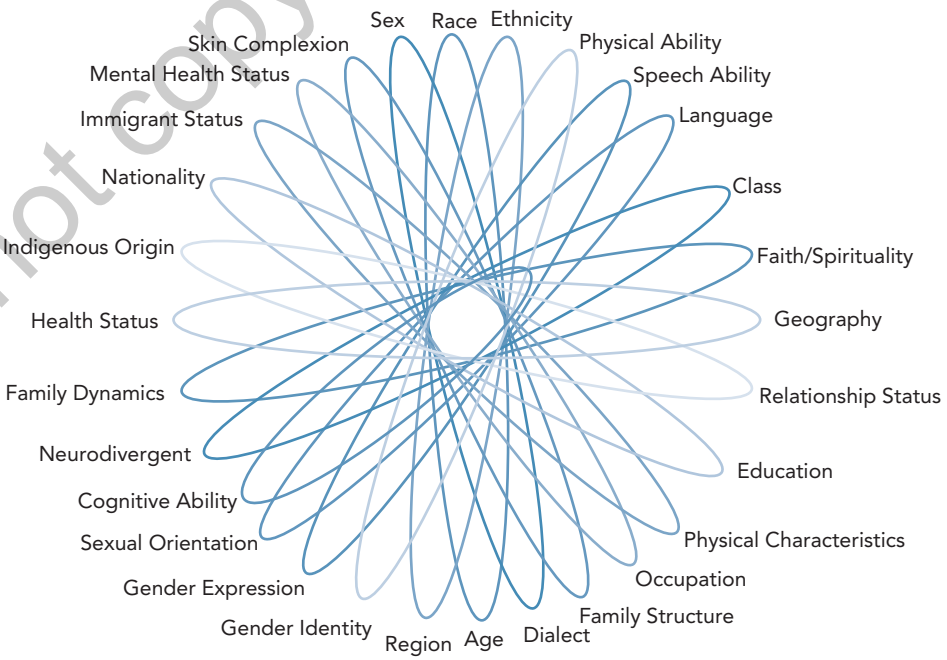
The essence of equity is fairness and justice. An example of a typical study on student perceptions of school climate was completed by Weihua Fan and colleagues (2011). They found three major factors: fairness and clarity of school rules; order, safety, and discipline; and teacher–student relationship. Fairness is related to everyone knowing the school rules, knowing the consequences of attending to the rules, and the fairness of the rules. They want fair treatment, fair assessment, fair opportunity to learn, and much more. Students are less concerned about the nature of discipline and the ways a teacher teaches and reacts with the students, but they are more concerned, whatever the way the class is run, that the teachers react to all fairly.

We debated long and hard whether to use the term "equity" or "fairness" as one of the three themes for climate and culture. Students fundamentally care about fairness and often can be confused by the many ways equity

is used in society, but they have firm notions of what fairness means. We decided to use "equity," as "fairness," while critical, sometimes does not include a sense of justice as well; too many students comply and adapt to the class climate even where there can be injustices.

Every person has their own identity that is created by various intersectionalities, which affects the way they interact, their value system, personal beliefs, and how they think, feel, and act. Identities matter and when they are disregarded, the climate does not empower individuals to show up in the fullness of who they are. A climate that dismisses one's identity can have detrimental effects on individuals in the broader learning community as it fails to value the rich diversity of the human experience. Marginalizing identities in schools refer to social groups or individuals that are systematically disadvantaged or excluded within the learning community. Often times, these groups face discrimination, unequal treatment, and limited access to resources and opportunities based on who they are. The Dimensions of Identities in Figure 0.1 represent intersectionalities that make an individual. Identities and injustices in schools are critical issues that impact students, families educators, and the entire learning community. By actively acknowledging and validating identities, learning communities can create a more inclusive and equitable culture where all members are treated fairly.

FIGURE 0.1 Dimensions of Identities



Angus Kittelman and colleagues (2023) investigate the culture and climate of over 350,000 students in forty-nine US high schools (in Georgia). They used a statewide survey of students about School Connectedness, Peer Support, Adult Support, Cultural Acceptance, Social/Civic Learning, Physical Environment, Safety, and Order and Discipline. They found that students enrolled in schools with a lower percentage of minoritized students, smaller schools, and schools with higher academic achievement were more likely to be classified in the positive versus moderate climate profile. Black students were less likely to be classified in the positive profile, whereas Latino and Latina students were more likely to be classified in the positive profile. Importantly, interaction effects depended on ethnicity: In schools with a greater percentage of minoritized students, Black students were significantly less likely to be classified in the negative school climate profile and white students were significantly less likely to be classified in the positive climate profile (see also Cain & Hattie, 2020).

Mattison and Aber (2007), using data from 382 African American and 1,456 European-American students, showed that positive perceptions of the school's racial climate were associated with higher student achievement and fewer discipline problems. Similarly, Hallinan, Kubitschek, and Liu (2009) showed that positive interracial interactions contributed to students' sense of school community, whereas negative interracial interactions inhibited that sense. Understanding the perceptions of climate and culture within a class or school varies not only across many individuals but also among specific races, ethnicities, or cultures (Schneider & Duran, 2010).

While most of the research relates climate and culture to achievement (and this is most worthwhile), our interest is restoring humanity as a principle in the class and school. Regardless of its correlates, it is worthwhile for classes and schools to be fortifying, nourishing, and welcoming for all—for the students, staff, parents, and community—regardless of achievement levels, color, identities, age, or postcode.

The Visible Learning Research and School Improvement Model

The Visible Learning® school improvement model of professional learning is based on the principles developed from the Visible Learning research (Hattie, 2009, 2023) and numerous books, articles, and white papers. It takes the theory of this research and puts it into a practical inquiry model for schools to ask questions of themselves about the impact they are having on student achievement.

The Visible Learning research is based on a meta-meta-analysis of more than 2,100 meta-analyses to date, composed of more than one hundred thousand studies involving more than 300 million students (Hattie, 2009, 2023). Hattie identified more than three hundred factors that impact student achievement from that research. "Visible Learning seeks to get to the crux of this multitude of findings from educational research and identify the main messages by synthesizing meta-analyses. The aim is to move from 'what works' to 'what works best' and when, for whom, and why" (Hattie & Zierer, 2018, p. xviii). The over three hundred (and growing) influences produced from the many meta-analyses have been assigned to one of nine domains: student, curricular, home, school, classroom, teacher, student learning strategies, instructional strategies, and implementation methods. Then, each domain is divided into subdomains—thirty-two in total to drill down into specific influences and the degree to which these influences accelerate student achievement (see https://www.visiblelearningmetax.com for details).

The Visible Learning books serve as a basis for discussing using evidence to inform your teaching and leadership practice and the systems in which these practices are supported. One example might be the degree to which the school has developed a clear picture of the type of feedback culture and practice they aspire to have. This can assist teachers in optimizing their feedback and heighten students' awareness of the benefits of effective feedback. Similarly, it can help school leaders optimize their feedback and boost teachers' awareness of the benefits of feedback. Both of these actions create an awareness of how feedback might get through to each of these key stakeholders.

There are twelve meta-analyses on school climate related to achievement outcomes, based on approximately 456 studies, 338,562 students, with an average effect of .28. But the variance is large, and a closer investigation is needed.

TABLE 1

AUTHOR	YEAR	NO. EFFECTS	NO. PEOPLE	NO. EFFECTS	ES	SHORT DESCRIPTION
Armstrong	2016	19	2294	19	0.46	Physical Ed learning environment
Bektas et al.	2015	25	20,287	25	0.40	School culture
Scheerens et al.	2013	25	2,301	25	0.40	Monitoring of achievement

(Continued)

(Continued)

AUTHOR	YEAR	NO. EFFECTS	NO. PEOPLE	NO. EFFECTS	ES	SHORT DESCRIPTION
Scheerens et al.	2013	25	2,301	43	0.31	Curriculum quality in school
Kocyigt	2017	51	66,391	51	0.30	School culture
Han & Lee	2018	25	2,301	52	0.30	School climate
Karadag et al.	2016	62	81,233	62	0.26	School climate
Scheerens et al.	2013	30	2,761	81	0.22	Achievement mentality in school
Dulay & Karadağ	2017	90	148,504	90	0.22	School climate
Scheerens et al.	2013	28	2,577	83	0.22	Cooperation among school staff
Bulris	2009	30	3,378	152	0.17	Leadership school culture on outcomes
Scheerens et al.	2013	46	4,234	170	0.15	Orderly climate in school

Scheerens et al. (2013) investigated many school climate factors, and the highest effects were an orderly climate, opportunity to learn, effective learning time, and an orientation to achievement across the school. Very low effects were found for consensus and cohesion among staff, the presence or not of homework, parental involvement, and differentiation. From Turkish studies, Kocyiğt found d = .30 of climate on achievement, with the greatest impact from the perception of culture, collaborative leadership, program development, collegial support, and unity of purpose. Also, from Turkey, Karadağ et al. (2016) reported an effect (d = .36) on the climate developed by school leadership on achievement. They argued that the higher impacts include support, communication, trust, and respect developed by focusing on continuous learning and teaching and establishing intentional, positive, and confidential relationships with their school managers, colleagues, and stakeholders.

More specifically, there were higher relations to achievement when there was strong classroom cohesion (the sense that teachers and students are working toward positive learning gains), high levels of teacher-student relationships and support, high levels of student friendship and sense of belonging, and a negative relation when there was too high a level of teacher-student dependency (Table 2).

TABLE 2

FACTORS	NO. METAS	NO. STUDIES	EST. NO. PEOPLE	NO. EFFECTS	WEIGHTED MEAN	SE	ROBUSTNESS
Strong classroom cohesion	2	76	11,187	438	0.66	0.18	3
Teacher-student relationships	5	428	590,784	1,718	0.62	0.04	5
Belonging	3	97	78,931	174	0.46	0.32	3
Friendship	3	60	5,522	229	0.35	0.05	2
Teacher-student support	1	93	8,560	93	0.32	0.03	2
Class climate effects	3	80	582,941	761	0.29	0.02	4
Teacher-student dependency	1	8	3,808	8	−0.24	0.04	1
Students feeling disliked	1	5	1,776	5	−0.26	na	1

It is important to note that many of these factors lead to commitment to the tasks of learning and not merely stopping with positive relations. For example, Mullen and Copper (1994) argued that group cohesion was more related to commitment to task rather than interpersonal attraction or group pride. Haertel et al. (1980) found that learning outcomes were positively associated with cohesiveness, satisfaction, task difficulty, formality, and goal direction, and negatively associated with friction, cliques, apathy, and disorganization. In classrooms with greater cohesiveness and a sense of belonging, there is more likely co-peer learning, tolerance, and welcoming of error and thus increased feedback and more discussion of goals, success criteria, and positive teacher-student and student-student relationships (Evans & Dion, 1991). Many of these climate attributes are important because they are worthwhile in themselves and create opportunities for students to engage, think aloud, see errors as opportunities and not embarrassments, explore, be curious, and work together. Further, developing relationships requires skills by the teacher—such as listening, empathy, caring, and positive regard for others (Cornelius-White, 2007). Students are great detectives of messages

that indicate they are not welcomed, not going to be treated fairly, and the probability that they will advance in their learning with this teacher.

A sense of belonging in the class is a powerful precursor to learning. Belonging refers to how students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school social environment (K. A. Allen et al., 2016). Teachers who develop their students' beliefs and feelings about being personally accepted, respected, included, and encouraged by others are likelier to have students who feel they belong, indeed invited into learning (Moallem, 2013). K. A. Allen et al. (2016) noted that about one-third of students do not feel a sense of belonging at school. Card et al. (2010) found that about one-third of students claimed that they do not feel liked at school.

Concluding Comments on the Research

The sense of belonging relates to having one's sense of identity and cultural attributes recognized and affirmed, and feeling invited to learn alone and with others. This occurs within sustaining environments that embrace diversity, disrupt negative biases, and have equitable opportunities to develop, be with others, and learn and explore cognitively complex ideas appropriately. Schools can mirror the society that is within but can also create climates and cultures that we want to aspire toward. Note the importance of the plural, as there is no one climate or culture. Educators have major roles in ensuring such inviting cultures exist in classes and schools. However, it is critical to understand how students and teachers experience, understand, and flourish in the culture of a class and school. Educators are responsible for ensuring psychologically safe environments to develop ways of thinking or mindframes about belonging, identities, and culture. They decide, more than anyone, what is "normal here."

It is more than creating flourishing climates; but we do this for a purpose—to engage students in learning, build confidence to take on challenges, feel joy engaging in the struggles of learning, and be committed to worthwhile learning. The positive relations are like a bank—to be built so that when there is frustration, not knowing, errors, and disappointments, there is a bank of excellent relations and high trust to work through these emotions. Learning is hard work and needs this safety to go "to the edge" of what we know and can do. The research on climate and culture points to relations, involvement, safety, and academic rigor as core and among the higher correlates to successful progress to higher achievement. Students desire a sense of predictability that they will be treated fairer, have opportunities to learn, and be in a situation where

all are working toward positive learning gains, high expectations, and working together in these pursuits.

When there is a collective cause, schools ensure that every student feels seen, heard, safe, respected, cared for, trusted, validated, and fortified. This is an ideal state that must be accomplished. The best schools leverage diversity within their organization to create environments of belonging by respecting all identities to promote equitable experiences and outcomes. These environments ensure everyone has the same opportunities, access, exposure, and advancement.

There is a need to eliminate barriers that prevent the full participation of some groups of students based on the dimensions of their identities. Barriers are often hidden and come in many forms. Structural barriers are fundamental to educational inequities (Easterbrook & Hadden, 2021). These structures include policies, practices, or procedures in schools that limit student involvement leaving them powerless in their educational experiences. There needs to be a willingness to take an inventory of who is successful, who thrives, who believes that they matter, and who experiences love and joy, who is burdened, who benefits, who is fortified, who is included, who is distressed, who is hopeful, who is helpless, who excels and then collectively assess the assumptions, biased-based beliefs, stereotypes, and inequitable practices. This action demonstrates a personal and organizational commitment to work in solidarity where we can eradicate injustices in and outside of our learning communities.

The proposal that is the basis of this book is that the Belonging, Identities, and Equity mindframes position educators to question their assumptions and, where they exist, recognize limited mental models that stereotype others to serve diverse populations better and address opportunity gaps. The Belonging, Identities, and Equity mindframes provide a cognitive shift in our ability to engineer our thoughts that lead to inclusive and equitable learning environments.

Identifying the Major Belonging, Identities, and Equity Mindframes

The claim is that it is through developing a sense of belonging that student identities can be affirmed, leading to equity experiences for every student. This book explores the ways of thinking relating to these three dimensions of class climate.

A fundamental notion underlying the climate and culture is "coming together," and there has been much research on the collective power in schools (Eells, 2011; Donohoo, 2016). The essence of school and class

climate and culture is a sense of belonging, a coming together. It is the school's responsibility—starting with the principal and leadership team and filtering to every adult across the school to be responsible for, foster, and respect every person's sense of belonging.

Belonging refers to school bonding, attachment, engagement, connectedness, and community. It is defined as the extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school social environment (K. A. Allen et al., 2016). Hollins-Alexander and Law (2021) identified four major processes for this coming together: having a clear and common purpose for student learning, creating a collaborative culture to achieve the purpose, taking collective responsibility for the learning of all students, and coming together with relentless advocacy, efficacy, agency, and ownership for learning. To achieve this, they claimed there needed to be unconstrained **equity**, including openness and capacity to appreciate differences, disrupting inequities, and connecting dimensions of identity. Thus, a core part of the school climate relates to students' sense of **belonging**, the opportunities and realities of developing their **identities**, and the sense of **equity** for all students. Creating and maintaining a positive and inviting school environment is fundamentally important.

These dimensions of equity, belonging, and identities pertain to all students, including those often marginalized in schools—such as LGBTQIA+, faith, socioeconomic class, family structure, disabilities, race/ethnicity, immigrants, displaced persons, and other similarly disadvantaged groups. Specifically, equity relates to disrupting systemic inequities and biases and embracing diverse cultures. Identities relate to students being able to express diversity and acknowledge their identities and barriers to learning. Belonging relates to being invited to learn, thriving, eliminating exclusion, and shared collaboration. The three dimensions are the core parts of the culture and climate of schools.

To identify the most powerful mindframes, we conducted a Delphi study. A Delphi is a method "for structuring a group communication process so that the process is effective in allowing a group of individuals, as a whole, to deal with a complex problem." To accomplish this "structured communication," "some feedback of individual contributions of information and knowledge; some assessment of the group judgment or view; some opportunity for individuals to revise views; and some degree of anonymity for the individual responses" are provided (Linstone & Turoff, 1975, p. 3).

The Delphi Study

The Delphi method assumes that collective judgments hold greater validity than individual judgments. This approach entails multiple iterative rounds in which experts, while maintaining anonymity, are solicited for their evaluations—specifically, in this context, pertaining to a set of statements addressing the three dimensions of climate and culture. Following each iteration, we provided experts with a synopsis of their collective assessments, incorporated their open-ended remarks, and presented a refined version of the statements for them to re-rate.

Our Delphi comprised two rounds (Law et al., 2024). The initial twenty-five mindframes came from a literature review and input from eleven colleagues. In Round One, eighty-six participants were asked to independently rate the mindframes (eight for Culture, ten for Belonging, and seven for Identities). A free text option was provided for comments, improvements, or additions for each mindframe and any comments on the overall survey and process. Then, from an analysis of the means, spread, reliability, and factor analyses, a reduced set of nineteen items (some enhanced or edited, given the comments) was presented in Round Two to ninety-two participants, who were again asked to respond as to the Criticalness of the Mindframes for the final list. This led to high levels of agreement about the final ten mindframes (See Table 3).

TABLE 3

NO.	LABEL	SHORT DESCRIPTION	MINDFRAME
	Belonging		
1	Invite all to learn	We strive to invite all to learn.	We actively strive to ensure all students feel invited to learn in this school.
2	Value student engagement in learning	We value engagement in learning for all.	We strive to eliminate exclusion by creating a learning community that values student voice and engagement in learning.
3	Collaborate to learn and thrive	We collaborate to learn and thrive.	We collaborate with students, colleagues, families, and community members to learn and thrive in this school.

(Continued)

(Continued)

NO.	LABEL	SHORT DESCRIPTION	MINDFRAME
	Identities		
4	Ensure equitable opportunities to learn	We create equitable opportunities and eliminate barriers to opportunities.	We are relentless in providing equitable opportunities for all students, particularly to eliminate injustices that can continue as barriers to educational access and opportunities for all students.
5	Create sustaining environments	We cultivate fortifying and sustaining environments for all identities.	We cultivate fortifying and sustaining environments for all students to express diversity in their multiple dimensions of identity.
6	Affirm identities	We acknowledge, affirm, and embrace the identities of all our students.	We provide opportunities to acknowledge, affirm, and embrace the identities of all our students.
7	Remove identity barriers	We remove barriers to students learning, including barriers related to identities.	We are collectively responsible for removing barriers to students' learning, including barriers related to identities.
	Equity		
8	Correct inequities	We discover, correct, and disrupt inequities.	We are in a constant process of discovering, addressing, disrupting, and correcting the systemic inequities impacting our students.
9	Respect diversity	We embrace diverse cultures and identities.	We acknowledge, affirm, and seek to embrace the diverse cultures and identities of our students, communities, and colleagues.
10	Disrupt bias	We recognize and disrupt negative biases.	We recognize and then seek to disrupt our unconscious biases toward our students, families, staff, and community.

Part I

Belonging

Mindframe 1

We invite all to learn

We actively strive to ensure all students feel invited to learn in this school.

Questionnaire for Self-Reflection

Assess yourself on the following statements: 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree.

		STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	MOSTLY AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
1.1	We are very good at welcoming and communicating with students so they feel invited to come to this class and school to learn.	1	2	3	4	5
1.2	We are very good at motivating students to engage in school learning, work with their peers, and respect themselves and others.	1	2	3	4	5
1.3	We know perfectly well that some students come to school because it is a safe space for learning.	1	2	3	4	5

(Continued)

(Continued)

		STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	MOSTLY AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
1.4	We know perfectly well that some students do not feel welcome and comfortable learning, especially with their peers.	1	2	3	4	5
1.5	We know perfectly well that some students feel embarrassed when they make errors rather than seeing errors as an opportunity to learn.	1	2	3	4	5
1.6	Our goal is always to actively strive to make the class/school a welcoming place with high trust, excitement, and joy in learning, and where students feel safe to be learners.	1	2	3	4	5
1.7	We are thoroughly convinced we must always actively strive to ensure students feel invited to learn.	1	2	3	4	5
1.8	We are thoroughly convinced that we need to actively listen to our students about their beliefs, emotions, and experiences as learners in class and in this school.	1	2	3	4	5

Vignette

Tai's family has piled up in their car to drive him to school on the first day of ninth grade. As Tai's dad says as they walk on campus, "I'm proud of you, buddy. I didn't make it to high school, and you're already starting." They are so excited to take pictures of Tai walking into the school. Tai poses with the principal at his father's request. Tai is dressed in very baggy pants and an oversized shirt. He is a bit sheepish in his interactions and is reluctant to talk much, but several family members take over the airspace, so it's hard to notice how reluctant he is. They get Tai's schedule and walk with him to his classes as a family. It seems that there are hundreds of photos being taken to document this experience.

Tai's family leaves, and he attends his first class, ethnic studies. The teacher has organized an introductory activity in which students are provided opportunities to share information about themselves, their names, and their backgrounds. As the teacher says, "Please share your name, pronouns, and interests with the people at your table. I'll start. I'm Mr. Quezada, use he/him pronouns, and am passionate about mountain climbing."

Tai begins the conversation introducing himself as Kai and says that he hasn't decided on pronouns, saying, "I was named Tai and assigned male at birth, but now I go by Kai. Sometimes, I prefer she/her, and sometimes I use they/them. I'm still figuring this out. If you have questions, I'm open. Oh, and I love fashion and Disneyland. You wouldn't know that I like fashion based on what I wear, but my family said I should tone it down."

The other students take their turns. At Kai's table are Jessica (she/her, interested in cats), Pablo (he/him, interested in motorcycles, soccer, and girls), and Enrique (he/him, interested in graphic novels but hates his name and goes by Rico). During their conversation, Enrique says, "Hey Kai, why Disneyland?" Before Kai can answer, Mr. Quezada interrupts the class saying, "Now it's time to introduce the people at your table. We want to get to know each other. After this, we will start our racial autobiographies."

(Continued)

(Continued)

When it comes time for the table where Kai is sitting, Pablo volunteers to introduce the group, saying, "So, I'm Pablo, he/him, I'm gonna be famous for soccer. This is my group. You got Jessica, she/her, who loves cats but even more, she's really cool, and we went to middle school together. And then you got Kai, she/her, or they/them, but you may know her from before as Tai. And then we got Rico, and please don't call him Enrique, he/him, and he's your graphic novel and gamer guy. He's new to this area and didn't go to school around here so be cool to him. And yeah, Kai is still working out pronouns so be cool to her and them, too."

Mr. Quezada takes note of the preferred names and pronouns. Next, he sends a quick message to the leadership team noting that the information management system needs to be updated for Kai and Rico as preferred names. The class then gets instructions about starting their racial autobiographies.

What This Mindframe Is About

Students come to school to engage in formal education, acquire skills and knowledge, and for social and personal development. School is the first setting where many scholars learn to socialize with others outside of their family structure. They learn to make friends, develop critical thinking skills, collaborate within teams, and develop time-management and organizational strategies. The school curriculum is designed to cover essential academic content and ensure that all learners receive a well-rounded education. This education is proposed to equip students with future abilities to enter the workforce and prepare them for career paths and life opportunities. In addition to this, well-rounded education is inclusive and equitable, addressing the unique needs of students and their diverse backgrounds as it aims to build life-long competencies. This holistic approach is cultivated by creating environments where students feel invited to learn.

When considering mindframe one, which states, *We actively strive to ensure all students feel invited to learn in this school,* it positions educators to encourage curiosity and a thirst for knowledge while creating life-long learning with students. When students feel welcomed and encouraged, they are motivated to actively participate, explore new topics, ask questions, and make relevant connections. By inviting students

to learn, inclusivity is valued, collaboration is promoted, and instruction becomes enjoyable and meaningful.

Which Factors From the VL Research Support This Mindframe

Belonging

INFLUENCE	NO. METAS	NO. STUDIES	EST. NO. PEOPLE	NO. EFFECTS	EFFECT SIZE
Friendship	3	60	5,522	229	0.38
Belonging	3	97	78,931	174	0.40
Students feeling disliked	1	5	1,776	5	−0.26

A sense of belonging involves a subjective feeling of deep connection with social groups, physical places, and individual and collective experiences. K. A. Allen et al. (2016) considered school belonging akin to school bonding, attachment, engagement, connectedness, and community. Goodenow and Grady (1993, p. 80) defined belonging as the "extent to which students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school social environment." K. A. Allen et al. (2016) noted it was particularly salient for middle and high school students and reinforced the claims above that "not belonging" was too prevalent in many schools. They cited the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) study across forty-two countries, 8,354 schools, and 224,058 fifteen-year-olds, showing student disaffection with school ranged from 17% to 40%. One in four adolescents had low feelings of belonging. Their meta-analysis of fifty-one studies found a d = .56. The highest influences of belonging were teacher support (much more than peer and parent support), caring relations, fairness, and friendliness. Among the most positive personal characteristics were conscientiousness, optimism, and self-esteem. Gender and race or ethnicity were not significantly related to school belonging.

The core source of information that leads to belongingness (or otherwise) is the student's experience in class, their engagement with the teacher and resource staff, and their encounters with front desk personnel. Do they feel invited, welcomed, and respected in a learning organization? A learning organization demonstrably teaches, supports, remediates, and welcomes students to learn, progress, achieve, and enjoy this experience.

We know that many students feel part of a "learning organization" as they play their video games, engage with their peers, and participate in

their sports and social events, primarily because the sense of learning becomes the reward from engaging in the learning activity. For example, they strive for the next level in Angry Birds to continue learning and playing the game. They do not engage in these games because they have to hand in their work when they reach a new level, they do not have to stop learning at one level and forcibly be moved to the next level (lesson) regardless of whether they reached the first level, and they do not get labeled or degraded when they fail in their learning.

Personality

INFLUENCE	NO. METAS	NO. STUDIES	EST. NO. PEOPLE	NO. EFFECTS	EFFECT SIZE
Curiosity	2	15	3,330	18	0.65
Emotional intelligence	11	567	137,458	1,845	0.63
Emotions	2	61	19,941	61	0.60
Happiness	2	51	4,694	51	0.53
Enjoyment	3	93	36,225	102	0.47
Well-being	5	379	395,547	39,282	0.27
Relaxation	1	20	1,841	36	0.16
Student personality	20	1,929	2,384,177	4,545	0.14
Hope	2	56	13,101	34	0.11
Perfectionism	2	104	15,068	534	−0.02
Frustration	1	9	1,418	9	−0.04
Aggression/ violence	3	158	140,148	810	−0.09
Depression	3	96	59,008	113	−0.30
Anxiety	22	1,551	1,698,986	4,983	−0.40
Anger	1	25	11,153	25	−0.65

Students have incredibly multifaceted personalities. Some are perfectionists, some are disruptive, some are curious, some are unmotivated, some are anxious, and others are angry. And some are all these in a single day. These attributes can change instantly, over the day, and certainly over their lifetime at school. Students experience many emotions when invited to be part of a learning organization. These can include feelings of

enjoyment, curiosity, and happiness. The most negative influences relate to student anger, boredom, procrastination, depression, and anxiety.

Procrastination is where students sometimes delay engaging in a task by focusing instead on less urgent, more enjoyable, and easier activities. Students can spend about one-third of their day in such dilly-dallying (Pychyl et al., 2000). Procrastination is more likely to occur when students find the task aversive, where there is a likelihood of failure or noncompletion, and where they feel uninvited to demonstrate their skills and successes (Steel, 2007). Akpur (2020) recommended that teachers set realistic goals (not too hard, not too easy, not too boring), break down tasks into small and manageable steps, give feedback on how they progress toward the goals, and eliminate or remove distractions.

Some have argued that frustration can be favorable as it may elicit increased effort toward task completion (Carver & Schieier, 2001). But it also can be a blend of anger and disappointment (Camacho-Morles et al., 2021). Similarly, hope can have positive and negative relations to success in learning (r =.02). However, hope has much higher relations with self-worth (r = .56), positive affect (r = .47), coping (r = .35), optimism/satisfaction (r = .64), and goal-directed thinking (r = .43). At least a sense of hope, but much more than hope is needed to enhance one's achievement.

Teacher-Student Relationships

INFLUENCE	NO. METAS	NO. STUDIES	EST. NO. PEOPLE	NO. EFFECTS	EFFECT SIZE
Teacher-student relationships	5	428	590,784	1,718	0.47

There is probably no teacher in the world who does not say that teacher-student relationships are core to the teaching-learning equation. Indeed, the effect size is substantial. But this adage often misses two key codicils. First, we should not also forget the degree to which teachers create student-to-student relations. Students sometimes can be cruel, exhibit bias, shun, be intolerant of others, bully, and be harsh critics. Second, these relationships are for a reason, not an end in themselves. There can be classes with excellent relations but little learning or meaning. The reason for developing positive relations is so that the class is an inviting place to come and learn, where errors and not knowing are welcomed as opportunities to learn, and where students can feel safe that everyone treats them fairly.

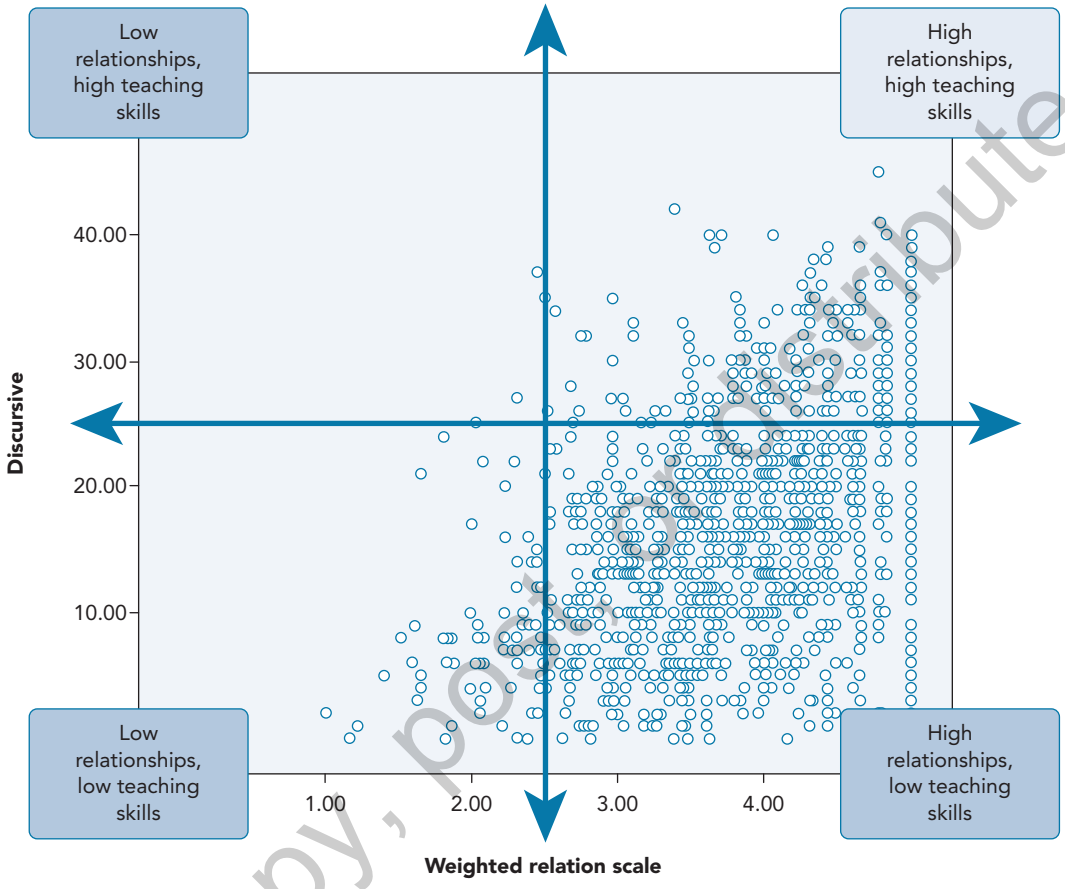
Cultivating connections with students embodies empowerment, efficacy, and respect from the teacher toward the student's contributions to the class and what each student brings from their home and culture. Moreover, nurturing these relationships demands teacher skills—active listening, empathy, genuine concern, and a sincere appreciation for others. Students can discern cues indicating whether they are embraced, assured of equitable treatment, and likely to progress in their learning journey under that teacher (consider teacher credibility). K. A. Allen et al. (2016) found teacher support (autonomy, support, and involvement, r = .46) had the greatest effect, then peer support (r = .32) and parent support (r = .33).

Hence, a pivotal takeaway is to perceive relationships through the eyes of the students. Bishop (2019) highlighted that minority students, in particular, were attentive to their teachers' affinity toward them. This can be observed in various aspects, such as whether teachers fostered nurturing and educational atmospheres, held elevated expectations for their growth as learners, extended invitations for involvement in intellectually stimulating tasks, and whether they attributed classroom challenges solely to the students, their ethnicity, available resources, home environments, or practiced pathologizing approaches (like remedial measures, constrained curricula, simplified language, ability-based grouping, and transmission teaching techniques).

In Figure 1.1, Bishop, (2019) uses a two-by-two quadrant to make his point. On the one axis are relationships and on the other are interactions that lead to effective student learning. He identifies the northeast quadrant, where students have teachers with high teaching interactions with their students as well as high trust and relationships. Recently, he has published a series of books on these northeast teachers and schools (Bishop, 2019, 2023). From his work based on 3,500 observations of 1,263 teachers, he notes that the messages about creating high trust and excellent relations seem to be working, but the message about improving their teaching impact has not. Improving relations is a necessary but not sufficient way to make students feel they belong and can learn in this class.

Cornelius-White (2007) conducted a notable meta-analysis focused on teacher-student relationships. Grounded in person-centered education influenced by Carl Rogers (Rogers, 1995), this study emphasized the essential elements for establishing personal connections between educators and learners. These elements encompass genuine trust in students and cultivating an environment that embraces acceptance and empathy. The teacher's ability to perceive the world from the student's vantage point, adapt their teaching methods with flexibility, display a readiness to

FIGURE 1.1 The Relationships-based Learners' Profile



Source: Reprinted from Bishop, *Leading to the North-East: Ensuring the fidelity of relationship-based learning* (2023). Used with permission.

evolve to cater to individual learning needs, and engage in mutual learning within a secure and trusting educational setting were all integral to these qualities.

In classes with person-centered teachers, there is more engagement, more respect for self and others, fewer resistant behaviors, more teacher release of responsibility, and higher achievement outcomes. Cornelius-White (2007) noted that most students who do not wish to attend or dislike school do so primarily because they dislike their teacher. His claim is that to "improve teacher-student relationships and reap their benefits, teachers should learn to facilitate students' development" by demonstrating that they care for the learning of each student as a person (which sends a powerful message about purpose and priority), and

empathizing with students—"see their perspective, communicate it back to them so that they have valuable feedback to self-assess, feel safe, and learn to understand others and the content with the same interest and concern" (p. 23).

Within classrooms guided by person-centered teachers, a distinct pattern emerges: heightened engagement, a greater sense of self and mutual respect, a reduction in resistant behaviors, an increased delegation of teacher responsibility, and more favorable outcomes in terms of academic achievement. Cornelius-White's (2007) insight highlights a compelling reality—the prevailing reasons behind many students' reluctance or aversion to attend school stem primarily from their unfavorable view of their teachers. His assertion underscores the imperative for "enhancing teacher-student relationships and reaping their rewards," underscored by the need for educators to cultivate an environment that nurtures individual student growth. This involves showcasing a genuine commitment to each student's learning journey, thereby conveying a potent message about the priority and purpose of education. A key is teachers demonstrating empathy—that is, students seeing that they can stand in their shoes and see their learning from their viewpoint.

Building teacher-to-student and student-to-student relations is core to the sense of belonging and is the starting point to then capitalize on this high trust to enact optimal teaching methods and interactions where errors and mistakes are seen as opportunities (not embarrassments). Fostering these critical relationships also allows the following to happen:

- Students can think aloud and hear others thinking as they are learning.
- Teachers and students can have high expectations that all students can master the challenges and hard work of learning.
- Students can feel respected and welcomed as competent learners who wish to drive and strive in their progress to higher achievement.

Fortifying Practices That Create a Learning Culture

Designing learning environments where all students feel invited and valued as learners is a fundamental goal of inclusive and equitable education. This commitment requires educators to intentionally address barriers that may hinder students' sense of belonging and engagement. Educators must recognize that every student is unique, with their own background experiences and aspirations. In this sense, 100 percent of

students are diverse learners, have learning needs, and deserve fairness and justice so they can grow. The success of classrooms is to optimize this variance and allow students to work and learn together.

Inclusive education is a transformative journey that ensures that each student feels invited to learn. This is interwoven into the fabric of the learning community's dedication to enriching the educational experience of every student who walks through its doors. Inclusive educational environments celebrate diversity and believe that differences are a source of strength that fortifies the community. In these environments, learning goes beyond textbooks and enters the personal relevance connected to their realities. From the moment students walk into the school doors, they must become part of a community dedicated to their growth, well-being, and social, emotional, and academic success.

Practice 1.1: Building Invitational Cultures

In a recent *New York Times* article, Khullar (2016) stated that "social isolation" is a growing epidemic that is increasingly recognized as having dire physical, mental, relational, and emotional consequences. Being isolated and having few, if any, friends can be devastating (particularly among adolescents). It is not the number of friends but the quality of the friends that matters: having someone who can be trusted, who can be turned to for support, and who will stand by you (Carroll et al., 2009; Houghton et al., 2016). In elementary schools, teachers can fulfill this role for some students, but there is increasing reliance on peers to be these high trust friends in high schools.

Without a sense that each student is invited to learn, there can be feelings of isolation and loss of connectivity to the community. When educators explicitly invite each and every student to a culture of learning, the climate shifts to a welcoming atmosphere that boosts student involvement. Awareness of others' feelings and a sense of inclusivity can strengthen the universal commitment to creating invitational cultures.

When schools fuel the value of assessing students' voice and personal experiences, a greater sense of connections and inclusivity of the learning community is fostered. As members of the learning community deepen their understanding of students' current mindset and what motivates them to learn, doors open to actively ensuring that all feel invited to learn. There are multiple ways to assess students' beliefs and motivations in learning communities. The *Student Belonging Assessment* adapted from Whiting et al. (2018) has been used to assess student belonging in the learning community.

As a collective, the administration of the *Student Belonging Assessment* to your students can identify strengths and areas of opportunity that can increase students' sense of belonging.

FIGURE 1.2 Student Belonging Assessment

I feel like a real part of (school name).
People here notice when I am good at something.
It is hard for people like me to be accepted here.
Other students in this school take my opinions seriously.
Most teachers at this school are interested in me.
Sometimes I don't feel as if I belong here.
There's at least one teacher or adult in this school who I can talk to if I have a problem.
People at this school are friendly to me.
Teachers here are not interested in people like me.
I am included in lots of activities at this school.
I am treated with as much respect as other students.
I feel very different from most other students here.
I can really be myself at this school.
The teachers here respect me.
People here know that I can do good work.
I wish I were in a different school.
I feel proud of belonging to (school name).
Other students here like me the way I am.
I feel loyal to people in (school name).
I feel like I belong to (school name).
I would be willing to work with others on something to improve (school name).
I like to think of myself like others at (school name).
People at (school name) care if I am absent.
I fit in with other students at (school name).
I participate in activities at (school name).
I feel out of place at (school name).
I feel like my ideas count at (school name).
(School name) is a comfortable place for me.
I feel like I matter to people at (school name).
People really listen to me when I am at school.

Source: Adapted from Whiting, Everson, & Feinauer, 2018.

The invitational theory developed by William Purkey and John Novak (2016) focuses on a humanistic and optimistic methodology for inclusive and inviting learning environments. The theory is based on the belief that all learners can grow and experience positive academic, social, and emotional development. In Invitational Educational Theory there is a common language of transformation, consistency, and coherence of practice of this sense of belonging. Figure 1.3 illustrates the 5 Powerful P's of Invitational Educational Theory.

FIGURE 1.3 5 Powerful P's of Invitational Educational Theory

5 POWERFUL P'S	DESCRIPTION	IMPLEMENTATION EXAMPLES
People	While everything in life adds to or detracts from human success or failure, nothing is more important than people. It is the people who create a respectful, optimistic, trusting, and intentional society.	All members of the learning community work collectively to increase consistency and cohesion. Activities include increasing teacher collective efficacy, building relationships among all learning community members, and creating a culture of care, respect, and restoration for all.
Places	The school's physical environment offers an excellent starting point for moving from theory into practice because places are so visible. Almost anyone can recognize unkempt buildings, cluttered offices, peeling paint, or uncleaned spaces. Fortunately, places are the easiest to change because they are the most obvious element in any school environment. They also offer the opportunity for immediate improvement.	Careful attention is given to the physical environment, including adequate lighting, well-maintained buildings and grounds, clean restrooms, attractive classrooms and cafeterias, displays celebrating student accomplishments, the posting of student work, and cultural representations. Ways are found to enhance the physical environment of the school, no matter how old the building.
Policies	Refer to the procedures, codes, and written or unwritten rules used to regulate the ongoing functions of individuals and organizations. Ultimately, the policies created and maintained communicate a strong message regarding the value, efficacy, ability, and collective responsibility of all members in the learning community.	Attendance, grading, progress, promotion, behavior, well-being, and other policies are developed and maintained within a circle of respect for everyone involved. Families are kept informed through newsletters, bulletins, phone calls, and meetings. Every school policy is democratically developed, easy to understand, and made available to everyone involved.
Programs	Programs focus on goals that reflect the broader scope of human needs. Invitational Education requires that programs be constantly monitored for impact and to ensure they do not detract from the goals they were designed for.	Programs are aligned to create safe schools, the wellness of the members in the learning community, and enrichment opportunities for all. They strongly encourage community and family participation.
Processes	The final "P," processes, addresses how the other four "P's" function. Processes address such issues as cooperative spirit, democratic activities, collaborative efforts, and collective activities. They focus on how the other "Ps" are aligned and conducted.	Process is how things are done in the school. A democratic ethos is valued along with an academic orientation. All activities and procedures are designed to honor and include everyone. Ideas, suggestions, and concerns are welcomed in the inviting school.

Source: Adapted from Purkey and Novak, 2016.

It is the fifth premise that is core to this Mindframe, and realizing potential derives through an educator's genuine ability and desire to care about self and others, create high levels of trust (and trust is based primarily on the memory of invitations sent, received, and acted upon successfully), share responsibility based on mutual respect, engender optimism about untapped potential (hence the claim that an educator's purpose includes working with students to help them exceed what they consider their potential), and a transparent intention "to create, maintain, and enhance total environments that consistently and dependably invite the realization of human potential" (Purkey & Novak, 2016, p. 3).

Practice 1.2: Creating a Sense of Belonging Through the Class Community

Culture, inclusion, identities, and belonging directly affect outcomes for young people. A sense of belonging is critical for students to develop a sense of self-identity, efficacy, and academic skills. Students with a strong sense of belonging are equipped to handle challenges, emotional distress, and corrective feedback. To create a sense of belonging in the learning community, each student must have a relationship with at least one caring adult. When we strengthen connections with students, we create welcoming and inclusive environments for all. Schlossberg (1989) states that belonging and mattering are intertwined, and when one is made to feel like they belong, they also feel that they matter. When belonging is absent from an environment, students feel marginalized, out of place, and like they don't matter. They are anxious about fitting in. Regardless of race, gender, socioeconomic status, language, and other dimensions of identities, students worry about how they are perceived, included, and accepted for who they are.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2021) states that creating an environment of belonging doesn't just happen but requires educators to carefully consider young people's experiences and recognize their unique values and lived narratives. Individuals need to be seen, heard, valued, and affirmed to build a sense of agency rooted in deep connections and a strong sense of belonging. As we create these environments, we share humanity, care, civic commitment, and a feeling of self-worth and community responsibility. Social belonging is a fundamental human need, hard-wired into our DNA. As social beings, humans are fundamentally formed where we can even bond with strangers over the experience of not having anyone with whom to bond (Carr, Reece, Kellerman, et al., 2019). In Maslow's Pyramid of Hierarchy of Needs (1943), belongingness is recognized as a major need that motivates human behavior. This need lies at the center of Maslow's Pyramid, where individuals desire to be a part of something bigger and more important than themselves.

School cultures that cultivate belonging where every student matters foster student identity by allowing students to demonstrate their genius and develop their passions for learning. According to Steele and Vargas (2013), identity-safe classrooms are "those in which teachers strive to ensure students that their social identities are an asset rather than a barrier to success." Conversely, when schools are identity-neutral and void of cultural fortification, students experience emotional and psychological insecurity. For example, one in five students between the ages of twelve and eighteen reports being bullied based on various dimensions of identities, ranging from racial or ethnic group membership to gender identity, physical attractiveness, body size, or disability status (Hernández & Darling-Hammond, 2022). Educators who employ practices to strengthen interpersonal connections, elevate trust, and build empathy mitigate biases in the dimensions of identities that affect student belonging. Listed in Figure 1.4 are practices that create a sense of belonging and classroom community.

FIGURE 1.4 Practices That Create a Sense of Belonging and Classroom Community

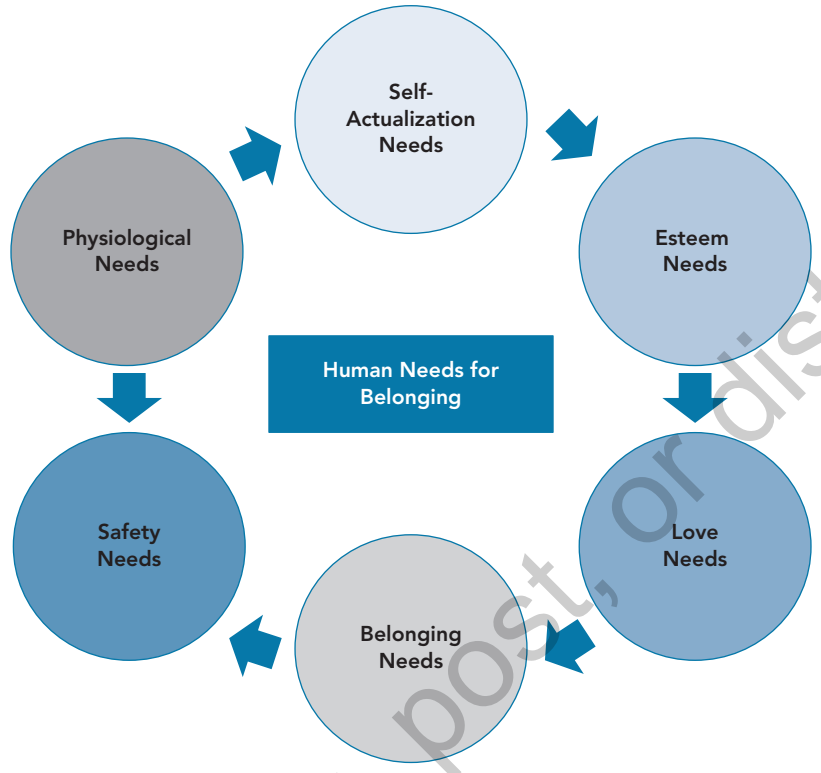
PRACTICE	EXAMPLE
Establishing community agreements with learners ensures that the classroom environment is respectful and identity safe and promotes individual and peer collaboration.	***Community Agreement:*** Co-constructing Agreements – practices that build community, individual efficacy, and collective responsibility. **We will work collaboratively with peers, teams, and groups in a respectful manner by actively listening and sharing our ideas.*
Using restorative practices to create trusting relationships that proactively build a sense of community, prevent and address conflict, reduce exclusion, and establish strong social and emotional environments.	***Restorative Practice:*** Employing Circle Discussions is a way to foster community and intimacy in a classroom and serve academic, social, and emotional purposes.
Implementing learning experiences that enable students to explore their own identities, develop a strong sense of self-awareness, and strengthen individual assets.	***Cultural Connections:*** Tapping into Funds of Knowledge – Students are encouraged to include information about themselves, their families, homes, cultural practices, family traditions, rare medical conditions, languages spoken, interests, and passions within content aligned to their specific funds knowledge.
Engaging in culturally fortifying practices, content, and materials that build bridges between students' experiences and disciplinary learning.	***Critical Literacy Instruction:*** Taking a Critical Stance – Centers learning on disrupting the commonplace, interrogating multiple viewpoints, focusing on social-political issues, and acting and promoting social justice.

Schools that create a sense of belonging through the community are action-oriented in demonstrating strategies to ensure individual and collective academic success. The fabric of this practice is interwoven in the Mindframe of cultivating, fortifying, and sustaining environments for all students to express diversity in their multiple dimensions of identity. Until we focus on matters of belonging, educators will continue to see deeply ingrained inequities that shape outcomes where some benefit and others do not. Suppose we fail to recognize the need for this human condition that is critical to student success. In that case, we fail to create meaningful school experiences for students without care, connections, community, or confidence.

Practice 1.3: Enhancing Relationships Through Collective Reflection

Slaten et al. (2016) stated that every student should know for certain that they belong. When educators strive to create connections and build relationships with students, they ensure that every student feels like a true member of the school. The history of schooling has been long marked by exclusion and segregation of many students based on certain dimensions of identities (Agran et al., 2020). When students are excluded from learning environments, relationships are negatively impacted and learning outcomes are compromised. In the widely recognized framework of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943), individuals display six major needs that lead to personal growth, strong relationships, and overall well-being. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs offers insights and guidance that can lead to an outstanding educational experience where all members of the learning community feel a sense of belonging. In today's diverse and interconnected world, inclusion and belonging are imperative for learning communities to thrive. The journey to fostering belonging starts with recognizing and respecting the uniqueness of each individual, acknowledging their contributions, identifying specific human needs, and a commitment to ongoing reflection on actions that can be taken to ensure that everyone feels a sense of belonging. In Figure 1.5, The Human Needs for Belonging graphic connects to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) theory and the key components that drive human motivation and a sense of belonging. The Human Needs for Belonging graphic outlines six human needs that impact how individuals engage, their motivation, and ways of being.

FIGURE 1.5 The Human Needs for Belonging



The Human Needs for Belonging Reflection Tool below in Figure 1.6 encourages collective reflection on how students in the learning community experience belonging. When educators gather together to identify how each of the needs of belonging are experienced in all aspects of the school environment, culminating actions will lead to greater student experiences. For each of the human needs of belonging, reflect on what you are doing well and what are opportunities for improvement.

FIGURE 1.6 The Human Needs for Belonging Reflection Tool

HUMAN NEEDS FOR BELONGING	SCHOOL-BASED PRACTICES	WHAT ARE WE DOING *REALLY WELL* IN THIS HUMAN BELONGING NEED?	WHAT ARE OPPORTUNITIES FOR *IMPROVEMENT* IN THIS HUMAN BELONGING NEED?
Self–Actualization Needs	• Helping students fulfill their dreams • Creating spaces for students to be true to themselves • Cultivating environments where students experience inner peace		
Esteem Needs	• Building students' confidence • Forging opportunities of social acceptance among the student class • Ensuring reciprocity of respect by modeling respecting others within the learning community		
Love Needs	• Maintaining healthy and fortifying connections with students and other members of the learning community • Listening to and understanding students' needs and concerns • Building trust through reliability, honesty, and integrity		
Belonging Needs	• Assisting students to build and maintain friendships and social interactions with one another • Providing emotional, academic, and social support for students • Valuing and validating students' feelings, thoughts, experiences, identities, and intellectual curiosity		

HUMAN NEEDS FOR BELONGING	SCHOOL-BASED PRACTICES	WHAT ARE WE DOING *REALLY WELL* IN THIS HUMAN BELONGING NEED?	WHAT ARE OPPORTUNITIES FOR *IMPROVEMENT* IN THIS HUMAN BELONGING NEED?
Safety Needs	• Protecting students from physical harm, immediate danger, and environmental threats • Providing psychological safety and emotional support to support student overall well-being • Fostering environments with wraparound services that connect school, home, and community		
Physiological	• Designing environments that serve students basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, and medical • Maintaining communication to provide basic needs support to identified families • Educating students and families on the need for adequate sleep necessary for overall well-being		

Source: Adapted from Carter, 2020.

When the learning community commits to reflection and making adjustments throughout the school year, the current landscape can transform for students who do not feel valued, seen, or validated. This transformation helps students develop confidence, engagement, and a stronger connection to their school community, ultimately contributing to their academic success, stronger teacher-student relationships, enhanced peer-to-peer relationships, and the relationship to learning. Good reflection of the evidence of student's belonging and sense of invitation to come and learn should culminate in observable actions (Falvey et al., 1997). By engaging in this collective reflection process on the evidence, schools can create a culture of continuous improvement by ensuring that their practices align with the goal of fostering a strong sense of belonging for every student. It is a dynamic and ongoing effort requiring collaboration, open dialogue, and a collective commitment to creating an inclusive, supportive, invitational educational environment.

Key Messages

- A well-rounded education prepares students for future success in chosen career paths and life opportunities by providing knowledge and skills developed through a viable curriculum and opportunities for social and personal development. Inclusive and equitable school environments are equally important to their future success, where students know they are invited to learn.
- Schools that place intentionality and value on inclusive spaces and promote instructional practices that are enjoyable, meaningful, and relevant for students create inviting learning cultures. The invitational theory developed by William Purkey and John Novak (2016) focuses on a humanistic and optimistic methodology for inclusive and inviting learning environments.
- A sense of belonging is developed by a student experiencing positive engagement with all learning community members in the school environment, including front office staff, cafeteria personnel, and other resource staff. In this environment, students know that they are welcomed, respected, and there is intentionality in their ability to learn, progress, and achieve.
- Students have many different multifaceted personalities and emotions that can change quickly within a school day and throughout their K–12 school experience. When they feel a task is aversive and uninviting to demonstrate their skills and successes, the attribute of procrastination is observed (Steel, 2007), and there can be a turn-off to the learning.
- Developing positive teacher-student relationships is core to teaching and learning. This connection between the teacher and the student is important and foundational for classrooms that are inviting spaces where errors are seen as opportunities for learning. But good relations is not enough; it is but the (powerful) starting point. As well as psychologically and emotionally safe spaces where students are treated fairly and with respect by all learning community members, there need to be learning activities and experiences leading to all students knowing that they are progressing and have the skills to tackle new challenges and new learning.