

Total Participants: 62

Topic: Belonging and Inclusion

1. What helps your child feel a sense of belonging at their school?
2. What additional action could be taken at schools to help increase a sense of belonging?
3. How might schools build better relationships with students and families of all cultures, races, backgrounds and abilities?

What helps your child feel a sense of belonging at their school?

- For students who are quieter, it is helpful for the teacher to make space for them to be included (quieter student loved being student of the week.)
- Students do not get much social time. Would like more transitional time in class to shift from one activity to another.
- There is a continued need for all staff to engage in professional learning for equity, belonging, and inclusion.
- Students enjoy activities that are organized and fair. Want all teachers and adults to keep things fair for all students.
- Communication and cultural activities; students connect when they engage in cultural things and have their voices heard. Give students a platform to share about their life and be listened to.
- Curriculum/activities that are accurate and represent all students. Want teachers to be inclusive so that all students feel they can ask for help. Want teachers to be well versed in students' different abilities (i.e., ADHD) and cultures. Want teachers to honor different abilities and cultures to help all students feel more included.
- For some students, peer socialization and acceptance are very important to how they feel about themselves. Students feel very disconnected after COVID which made it hard for them to return to school. The thing that has given them the greatest sense of belonging has been ASB; this has been the bridge of crossing the gap from feeling out of place and feeling disconnected.
- Teacher assigned each student to learn all of their classmates cultures—wish all teachers assigned this to their class.
- Spirit week, COVID has changed everything a lot so it was great for students to get events like this back.
- Teachers making themselves available for students. This helps a lot in that students feel they can count on their teachers for support.

- Very happy with the immersion program that her kindergartener is in. Being a part of the program gives a sense of pride and validation.
- Pre-K program is very welcoming.
- The teacher and paraeducator really care about my kid; they are very welcoming.
- Navigating transportation was easy.
- There were many teachers to help the students.
- For the re-entry, there was a lot of control and support.
- Parents were very happy with the teachers and mentioned the kindness of the teachers that take time to communicate with the students and to encourage them to learn.

What additional action could be taken at schools to help increase a sense of belonging?

- Names matter! Learn how to say and spell names correctly.
- Celebrate cultures!
- Students feel a sense of belonging and validation when they are recognized individually.
- Keep kids talking! Support and grow student voice.
- Little techniques to help them feel safe – knowing small phrases in Spanish to help them feel comfortable.
- Provide 5-minute cue to help students transition between activities; let them know time is running out so they do not feel flustered and left out.
- When virtual last year, teacher would say hey second graders – gender inclusive – not guys; language changes that are gender inclusive are important; make sure future career talk has a mix of races, cultures, and genders so that it is intentionally modeled inclusivity.
- Need better communication with EPS in being more open and honest with parents. Admin needs to be more open and honest about what happens in the classroom and what's happening with students. More/better connection between teacher and parents.
- Want to see students reading books from different cultures and countries. Have fantastic people in other countries (Gandhi, Mother Teresa). Our libraries do not have those books. Libraries don't represent students of color.
- Get back to after-school activities (PTA events). Hold in-person events like an international day with performers and the like.
- New role for Mill Creek PTA; anti-race committees, equity task forces, student affinity groups, town halls at schools (all including DEI), build cultural competency, take a stronger stance on anti-racism. Our demographics are changing and I'm not seeing the anti-racism stance. Say "our schools are anti-racism schools". This needs to happen to create the space to achieve all of the cultural competency goals.
- Continue building the Natural Leader Program. Provide opportunities to share cultures through online events. Build awareness of other cultures festivals.
- Provide an opportunity to share child's view of the school – same opportunity we are having here but, on the classroom or school level.
- Teacher flexibility; students getting the opportunity to bring up their grade

- More help with social and emotional work.
- Group students by skills (in English) and strengthen their skills through activities.
- Activities in class to get to know more about the culture of every family – give children voice and value.

How might schools build better relationships with students and families of all cultures, races, backgrounds and abilities?

- Communication is a big issue; emails, calls, texts; I want to know what is going on; heads up on what is coming in the future so I can prepare my child; the more I know, the better; life gets busy, I appreciate the phone calls that remind me and then cue me to check my emails.
- I have been impressed with how inclusive the communications I have seen are. I see the different language options, the inclusive holidays, and traditions. In the classroom, think about being inclusive for different kinds of learners—for example learners who require a longer amount of time, it would be helpful to know what is coming in the classroom.
- Some parents are not on social media so Facebook should not be the only way to communicate.
- Increase communication and understanding. Incorporate more two-way communication and engagement. In our home we are having hard conversations about anti-Asian hate, George Floyd; would like schools to partner with this work. More communication from the top down to families, partnership between schools and families (like this Zoom call or Town Halls), to discuss hard things.
- Teach about different cultures' holidays. In order to facilitate the inclusion of other holidays, you need to include people from their backgrounds and cultures. Example: Last year, a teacher said that all Asians were placed in internment camps (untrue), but it sent the message that the teacher felt that all Asians are the same. Continue to work to include families and parents to promote openness.
- Internet doesn't always give accurate information. Student shared with parent the information about Hispanic Heritage month. Need to work with other parents to include more information and vet the information for one another.
- Sometimes there are mixed experiences; we are from Ukraine, and the teacher shared information about the Ukraine. It was good for students to share, but it may be too sensitive for families. Ukraine, not the Ukraine, but it was a little offensive to us. I see families here from many countries, and we may think about sharing our cultures and the representatives from these countries. You can show the successful people from these countries and celebrate them. I want to share the positive- books about the Pac NW and learn about our own region and include cultural books and history books.
- We wanted our student to eat food from home but get the feeling that our student may be ashamed that it's not a sandwich. There needs to be a feeling of inclusivity from staff to help students feel that this is ok. Maybe it would help to teach about different cultures' foods.

- Students are rusty at interacting with one another. They don't know how to communicate well. Teaching how to interact with emotional intelligence during such a crazy time in our lives, would be helpful; how to solve conflict so both people feel heard. Increase the opportunities in classrooms and in school to learn more about this.
- Opportunities for indoor games from various cultures for students to explore during down/free time. Inclusiveness should not be forceful. All children need to know that it is OK to share your culture.
- Communication should be in the classroom as well. Parent only has had one chance to meet with the teacher and it was in a large group; wished she had more opportunities to meet and talk with the classroom teacher before parent teacher conferences. Would love opportunities to meet all the families in the classroom in similar format as tonight.
- More integration of family with the students and teachers; help us feel like a big family.
- A program for parents who want to learn English and about the educational system. Help for them to learn about services they aren't aware of.
- A mother mentioned she misses meeting other parents and exchanging information with them. She suggested a WhatsApp group or something similar where parents could voluntarily meet other parents.
- They mentioned the need to have an open house in person as opposed to via Zoom.
- Connection with the school and also among parents.
- Creating activities and meetings to get to know one another and share.
- Parent groups—conversation groups for parents regarding what's happening in the lives of their children.
- Opportunities for parents to share in the classroom where their children are: art, Spanish, music, photography, sports, etc.

Action Items:

What we are doing:

- The district has added all major religions significant holidays to the recognition calendar to be more inclusive of holidays.
- Every employee in the district spent 6 hours of professional development on October 15 focusing on equity, diversity and inclusion. The day included student and parent voice.
- The new strategic plan contains several initiatives around community and family engagement and have specific action steps with accountability.

What we will do:

- We will look at School Improvement Plans and will ensure they include specific programs and activities to engage families in two-way partnerships.
- At Instructional Reviews we will see that action plans include improving student-to-student healthy interactions.

- The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion team has ESSER funds to improve the diversity of books in libraries.
- We will finalize action plans in the strategic plans that pertain to family and community engagement as well as belonging and inclusion, and provide updates to the board and community on progress.