



Strategies to Support a Positive School Climate

Sense of Belonging

Sense of belonging reflects the degree to which an individual feels included, respected, accepted, and supported by others (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Within a school context, a sense of belonging results in an individual feeling proud to belong to their school (Goodenow, 1993).



Why is it important?

- A sense of belonging is identified as a basic human need (Maslow, 1962) essential to human motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000).
- Relationships that enhance ones' sense of belonging promote a sense of purpose and meaning in life (Lambert et al., 2013).
- Teachers with a strong sense of belonging can, in turn, foster a sense of belonging among students (Pesonen, 2016).

In Practice

Schools can support a sense of belonging at work by providing opportunities for staff to interact with one another and by ensuring that all have an equal opportunity to participate.



What can schools do?

Schools can establish a sense of community and camaraderie through the following actions:

- Implement a variety of strategies aimed at ensuring all employees have opportunities to form bonds with their colleagues (e.g., team outings, non-work games and activities).
- Enhance school connectedness by providing opportunities for staff to have input on school-related decisions.
- Foster a school climate where staff feel supported in both their day-to-day responsibilities and long-term career goals.
- Facilitate an inclusive work culture where individual differences are accepted, all staff have equal rights, and employees feel understood and supported.



Leader Reflection

School leaders can create conditions for staff to form institutional ties and develop support networks by:

- Establishing common goals that everyone can work towards to increase workplace engagement and enhance feelings of competence.
- Praising both individual and collective efforts and encouraging staff to follow suit in celebrating the achievements of their colleagues.
- Facilitating respectful, warm relationships and trust among colleagues by organising informal, non-work-related activities and outings.
- Developing a sense of community through regularly scheduled team meetings where staff can openly share concerns and ask questions on school-related matters.
- Modeling a climate of open communication and collaboration by implementing an open-door policy or setting aside regular office hours to discuss staff concerns.

References

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