

Two–Minute Tips

This Week’s Topic: Strategies That Promote Belonging

Young people who feel like they belong and are valued by their ELO providers and peers are able to engage more fully in learning and programming. They have fewer challenging behaviors, take greater advantage of learning opportunities, build relationships, and generally have more positive attitudes about their work and adult providers. They are also more likely to show persistence and perform better in school. When young people are uncertain about whether they belong, they become hyper aware for cues in the environment that signal whether they fit in or are welcome there. They are distracted from programming due to this additional stress which negatively impacts building valuable relationships.¹

Practice Tips

Here are a few quick tips to promote belonging in your program.²

Program Environment

Develop program norms and behavioral expectations. Reference and reinforce them during programming and conflict resolution.

Example: “How can we show respect in group work?”

Safety

Hold all participants, fellow staff, and yourself accountable to norms and expectations. Acknowledge micro aggressions and bias in language or actions. Emphasize that everyone is equally responsible and accountable for, and contributes to, creating a positive and safe environment for all.

Example: “Sarah, was it kind to cut John so you could be line leader?”

Teaching and Learning

Provide activities where participants can share about their backgrounds and interests, integrate information about participants into activities, promote participation and perseverance in all, model an attitude that values learning and hearing from everyone, and reinforce that everyone’s contributions are equally valuable and treated with respect.

Example: “You’ve all provided creative suggestions, thank you! Min or Tom, are there any thoughts you’d like to share before we move on?”

Build Intentional Relationships

Be intentional about building relationships with all of your participants, families, schools, and the larger

community. Integrate their needs, cultures, and backgrounds into programming. Ask open-ended questions, smile, nod, reference information you learn in future conversations and programming, later ask follow-up questions that reference previous conversation.

Example: “How did your soccer game go this weekend, Sam?”

Tips in Action!

Watch staff at Coyote Central promote a sense of belonging for participants in a cooking program.

Want more two-minute tips?

Check out:

<https://depts.washington.edu/cqel/expand-ed-learning-opportunities/>

There you will find the latest tip, an archive of past tips, and a discussion board to connect with peers!

¹Mindset Scholars Network. (2015). *Belonging*. Retrieved from

<http://mindsetscholarsnetwork.org/learning-mindsets/belonging/>

² Zakrzewski, V. (2013, August 21). How to create a positive school environment. *Greater Good Magazine*.

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_to_create_a_positive_school_climate