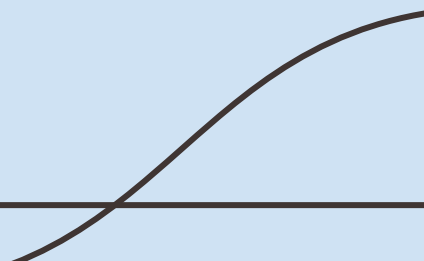




Do I Really Belong Here?

Creative Ways to Assess Belonging in
Independent Schools

Tiffany Russell, PhD
St. Martin's Episcopal School



Why Now?

Why should schools focus on belonging?



Think About a Time...

When you felt true belonging. What was going on? Can you remember what it felt like? Are there any smells or tastes that remind you of that feeling of belonging?



Belonging Defined

Feeling like an accepted, respected,
valued, and legitimate group member.

Accepted

Generally believed.

Respected

Admired deeply, as a result of your abilities, qualities, or achievements.

Valued

Considered to be important or beneficial; cherished.

Legitimate

Real and authentic.

What the Research Says

- ❑ We are hard-wired for connecting with other people
 - ❑ We pick up on and react to cues that our belonging might be at risk
 - ❑ Experiencing exclusion or lack of belonging is intensely painful and can have serious psychological and health consequences.
-

Why Belonging Matters at Work & School

- ❑ Sense of belonging with their coworkers.
 - ❑ “Do I fit in here socially? And, can I connect with others?”
- ❑ Sense of belonging within the school and its culture
 - ❑ “Do I fit in here professionally?” And, does what I have to offer the community truly valued?”

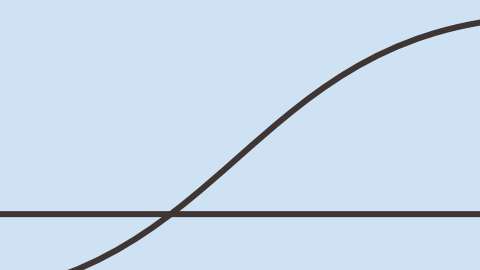
“True belonging doesn't require you
to change who you are; it requires
you to be who you are.”

–**Brene Brown**



Fostering and Assessing Belonging

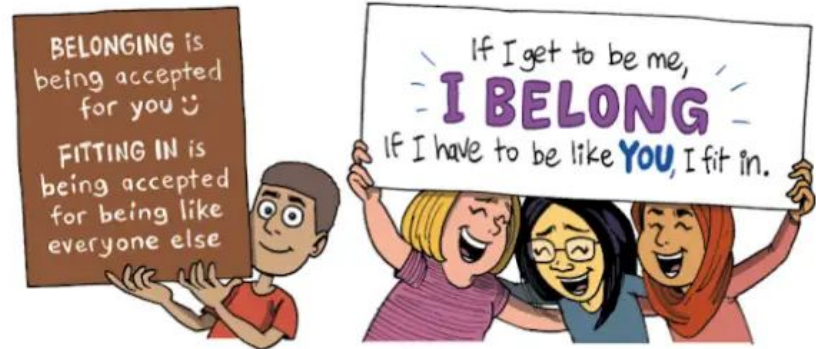
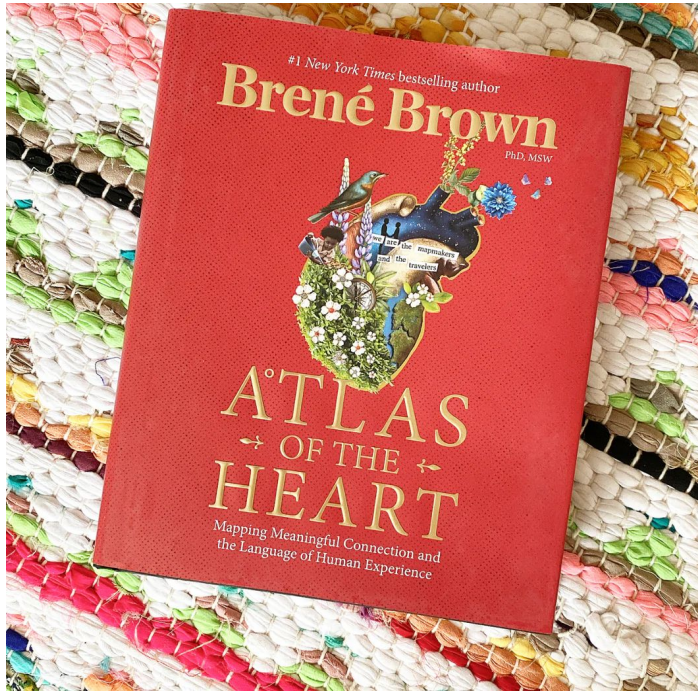
Being and Belonging (qualitative) Interviews, Belonging BookClub,
and the Civic Dinner



Being and Belonging Interviews

1. Fundamental to an episcopal education are the values of diversity, equity and inclusion. What does diversity, equity and inclusion mean to you?
 2. Reflect on this statement: All children and families at SMES are valued equally and feel a sense of belonging.
 3. Imagine a child at SMES was exploring their gender identity and classmates were struggling to understand, and as a result they were saying hurtful things to the child. What should be our response?
 4. Families of color are underrepresented at SMES, often resulting in one student of color in a classroom, if at all. Discuss what SMES can do to help families of color at SMES to feel a sense of belonging.
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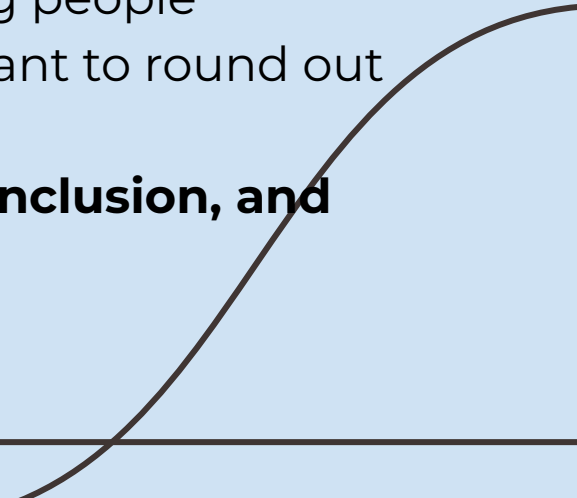
Belonging BookClub



The Dinner Model

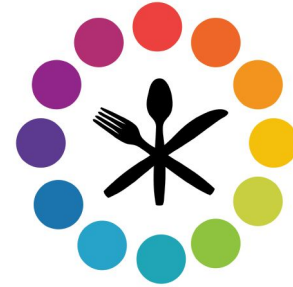
- Equitable Dinners is a collaboration between Out of Hand Theater, the National Center for Civil and Human Rights, The King Center, and Partnership for Southern Equity, The Absalom Jones Center for Racial Healing among others.
 - A Decatur Mom wanted to do something to end the disparities between students of color and their white peers in Decatur City Schools.
 - The dinner model and group conversation was used in the 1960's in Chicago (The Chicago Dinners) and other cities where grassroots leaders sought to build connections across difference.
-

What Did We Learn from the Data?

1. We learned that folks were yearning for a connection!
 2. We learned what was working and what to modify or enhance
 3. We understood through the eyes of new and cemented families what school practices were excluding people
 4. We confirmed that qualitative data is important to round out the story
 5. Informed our schools first **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Strategic Plan**
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St. Martin's
EPISCOPAL SCHOOL



CIVIC DINNERS®

A Conversation on Belonging

November 18, 2021

01

*Be Curious and Willing
to Learn*

Conversation is as much about listening as it is about talking. As you learn, try to sit with any discomfort and remember that it's okay to be wrong at times.

02

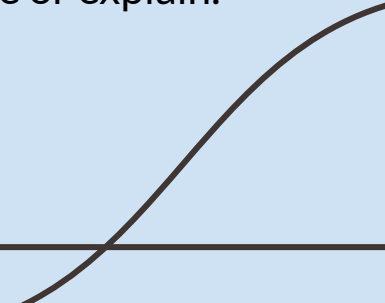
*Be Mindful & Show
Respect*

Conversations encourage vulnerability. Be mindful of people's privacy and acknowledge their bravery. What is said here stays here, what is learned here leaves here.

03

Lived Experience

Be respectful of those with lived experience. Avoid tokenizing them or putting an undue burden on them by asking them to educate or explain.



04

Suspend Judgement &
Assumptions

Setting judgments aside
opens you up to learning from
others and makes them feel
respected and appreciated.

05

Be Authentic & Welcome
That From Others

Speak authentically from
your personal experience.
Personal stories open our
hearts..

06

Impact Matters

What you say and how
you say it matters deeply.
Take responsibility for
the impact of your words.

True belonging only happens when we present our authentic, imperfect selves to the world, our sense of belonging can never be greater than our level of self-acceptance. – Brene Brown

**Thank you and let's stay
connected!**

trussell@stmartinschool.org

