NO STUDENT LEFT BEHIND

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Student with doubts about belonging, social signals are more salient and can be more meaningful. Students discover cues from their schools and peers about whether or not they belong, perceptions that can affect their success both inside and outside the classroom. When student doubt that they belong, it can initiate a sequence of cascading circumstances where they translate normal social situations in a harsh light. For a pupil who has a strong sense of belonging at school, a dismissed meeting with a teacher holds no special meaning, but a student who doubts his belonging, can interpret this same inoffensive situation to mean he is not accepted or liked by his teacher. A student who doubts whether he belongs might take it personally if a friend doesn’t eat lunch with him, while a more unworried student will be able to disregard it.

As teacher, we tend to presume our classroom is a nonpartisan environment, but some settings are more inclusive and welcoming to certain types of students than we realize. When a student makes a transition such as from elementary to high school or starting college it is also mindful to know how the environment can be uncomfortable for some students. In this transition new relationships can be formed, old relationships may fade away, and it’s very normal for students to ask, “Do I really belong here?” In occasions that can cause doubts about belonging, it’s important for pupils to know they are not alone in their feelings. It’s also essential for the students to know that worries about belonging will fade with time. In other words, we need to find methods to communicate with our pupils the message that “we are here for you, you’re not alone” and “it gets better.”
As teachers, we can guide them to ease their concerns about transitions by personalizing the idea that we also experienced rough situations and things improved over time. Another way to help students normalized their experiences is through an icebreaker game in which pupils learn about each other’s hobbies, interest, and also to know their lives outside of school. Reflective reading and writing exercise can also be a helpful method for the students. You can request senior students to share their experiences of feeling doubtful about their belonging and how this enhanced over time. Then, ask the students to write about how their own experiences square those of the speaker.

References: