

A Crisis of Student Belonging

Belonging is a fundamental human need, yet American youth face an acute crisis of belonging that jeopardizes educational experiences, mental health, & future success

40% of US high school students **do not feel connected to school**

Students that feel **ALIENATED:**

More likely to be **chronically absent**, which is a precursor to

- Bullying
- Mental health issues
- Substance abuse
- Detrimental health and social outcomes in adulthood

In over ½ of US high schools, **30% or more students were chronically absent** in the 2021–2022 academic year

Students with mental health struggles are less likely to attend class

A feeling of alienation can exacerbate rising levels of:

- Anxiety
- Depression, &
- Hospitalization for suicidal thoughts

In 2021, 1 out of 10 high school students attempted suicide

More likely to have **detrimental health and social outcomes in adulthood**, including

- Drug abuse
- Mental health issues

Students that feel a sense of **BELONGING:**

More likely to exhibit **positive educational outcomes**, including:

- Higher attendance
- Higher graduation rates
- Better motivation

More likely to report **higher rates of happiness & self-esteem**

Have a **lower tendency towards drug abuse & mental health issues**

Show lower tendencies towards violent behavior in adulthood

More likely to **enroll in college**

Schools Have a Duty to Help all Students Feel that They Belong

Research-backed practices include:

- **Building a sense of connectedness** where students feel they are cared for by adults and peers
- **Building curricula** that reflects student's diverse identities and teaches children how to manage their emotions
- **Continually assessing students' sense of belonging**, then acting on opportunities to improve