# Strengthen school belonging and emotional trust

## Summary

Student belonging is the feeling of fitting in, being valued, liked and respected within the classroom. Feeling a sense of belonging is important for all students to achieve their potential in regard to behaviour and their academic work. When students feel as though they belong and are a part of something, they are more likely to display positive behaviour and remain engaged and on-task. Teachers strengthen a sense of school belonging and emotional trust by building rapport with students through a variety of strategies, such as engaging with their interests.

**Australian Professional Standards for Teachers related to this practice**

- 1.1 – physical, social and intellectual development and characteristics of students
- 4.1 – support student participation
- 4.3 – manage challenging behaviour

For further information, see Australian Professional Standards for Teachers AITSL page

## Preparing to Teach

At the beginning of the year, you can choose your own personal catalogue of 'school belonging' behaviours and strategies to get to know and build rapport and trust with students and create an environment of belonging. You will choose behaviours that suit your personal style to ensure that you can deliver these authentically. You can also provide scaffolds and model behaviour that promotes rapport building between students.

Some ideas include:

- Greet students by name as they enter class
- Ask about students' general well-being
- Get to know about students' strengths, interests and goals
- Be available by arriving at class a few minutes before class commences
- Spend time outside of the staff room and make opportunities to run into students
- Let students get to know a little about you personally by sharing some personal interests
- Use humour to build rapport
- Be positive and encouraging of students
- Encourage students to share some of their own personal experiences with each other to promote belonging within a whole class context
- Recognise the contributions all students make to the classroom.

You can learn more about ways to facilitate school belonging (also known as school connectedness) by visiting the inclusionED practice Foster school connectedness using the WISE model.

**It works better if the teacher:**

- gets to know their students and individual interests
- establishes these habits from the beginning of the school year
- shares a bit about themselves and their interests
- demonstrates a positive attitude towards their students.

**It doesn't work if the teacher:**

- demonstrates favouritism
- is negative or puts students down
- stereotypes groups of students.

## In the classroom

**How do I do it?**

1. Implement your chosen strategy/s.
2. Regularly check in with students to ensure they feel like a valued member of the class environment.
3. Observe students for increased engagement with the class.
4. Monitor and check for a decrease in off-task behaviour.

## Materials informing this practice

[Models of Practice core research project](#)