

[Title] A Crisis of Student Belonging

- **Belonging** is a fundamental human need.
- However, American youth face an **acute crisis of belonging** that jeopardizes educational experiences, mental health, and future success.
 - **40% of US high school students do not feel connected to school**

How Belonging Impacts Educational Experiences

- A sense of belonging is highly predictive of positive educational outcomes, including:
 - Higher attendance
 - Higher graduation rates
 - Better motivation
 - Better classroom behavior.
- Students that feel a sense of alienation are more likely to exhibit chronic absenteeism
 - In over ½ of US high schools, 30% or more students were chronically absent in the 2021–2022 academic year
 - Chronic absenteeism is a precursor to a range of consequences, including bullying, mental health issues, substance abuse, and detrimental health and social outcomes in adulthood

How Belonging Impacts Mental Health

- A strong sense of belonging is highly predictive of positive personal outcomes, including:
 - Happiness
 - Self-esteem
 - Lower tendency towards drug abuse & mental health issues
- A sense of alienation among students can exacerbate/add to rising levels of anxiety, depression, & hospitalization for suicidal thoughts among adolescents
 - In 2021, 1 out of 10 high school students attempted suicide

How Belonging Impacts Future Success

- Students that feel a sense of belonging show
 - Lower tendencies towards violent behavior in adulthood
 - Higher college enrollment
- A sense of alienation in school is predictive of detrimental health and social outcomes in adulthood

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