KLSD Learning Café: Belonging in our Schools

October 26, 2022

Past Learning Cafes:

- **Spring 2016** — Assessments in School
- **Fall 2016** — Our Learning Commitment
- **Spring 2017** — Our Learning Commitment
- **Fall 2017** — When the News Enters the Classroom
- **Spring 2018** — Intellectual Engagement in the Classroom
- **Fall 2018** — Feedback: In School & At Home
- **Spring 2019** — Diversity: In School, at Home, in our Community
- **Fall 2019** — John Jay Mascot and Moving Forward Together
- *Spring 2020 – Spring 2021 COVID*
- **Fall 2021** — Learning from the Pandemic Experience
- **Spring 2022:** — Inclusion

Structure of Tonight's Cafe

- 3 brief presentations
- 3 rounds of conversations
- Note takers at each table so District holds on to:
  - The conversations
  - The thinking
  - The feedback

Talking about Belonging: Inclusive Listening Practices

- *Assume good intentions*

- *Recognize that we likely all arrived with somewhat different hopes and expectations for tonight*

- *Monitor your own expectations and your "air-time"*

- *Remain mindful of body language and facial expressions, whole body listening*

- *Expect and accept non-closure*

- *Tonight is an effort to understand what is important to each person in this room, to think together, and to gather thoughts that help us consider next steps*

Tonight's 3 Rounds

- Round One: What do we mean by belonging in schools? How did this focus develop?

- Round Two: Why now? What tensions, if any, might arise with a focus on belonging?

- Round Three: What is KLSD doing to promote a greater sense of belonging for our students? And why is this work complex?

Round One:

What do we mean when we say "Belonging"?

KLSD Focus Areas

What do we mean by belonging?

"the extent to which children feel individually welcomed, respected, included, and supported by others within the school social environment."

(Goodenow and Grady, 1993)

Why is belonging so important in our schools?

"Students' feelings of school belonging can have a profound impact on well-being, identity development, and mental health. And these impacts can last well into adulthood."

(*The Science of School Belonging,* Psychology Today, January 2022)

"Whilst belonging is defined in a number of ways, many scholars agree that a sense of belonging is critical to students' academic motivation, success and well-being."
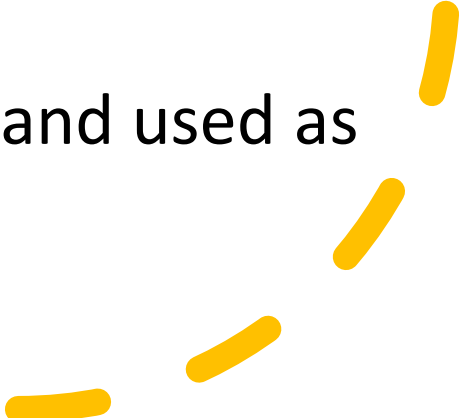
(Osterman 2000, Newman 1991, Goodenow 1993b).

New York State Education Department

2018 NYSED publishes the **Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework**

A welcoming and affirming environment ... is a space where people can find themselves represented and reflected, and where they understand that all people are treated with respect and dignity. The environment ensures all cultural identities (i.e. race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, language, religion, socioeconomic background) are affirmed, valued, and used as vehicles for teaching and learning.

New York State Board of Regents "Call To Action" April 2021

"Schools must create opportunities for all students to learn from multiple perspectives – perspectives that are just as important and valid as the narrow point of view from which history and other content areas have traditionally been taught. We must always be vigilant to guard against the danger of a single story."

KLSD's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy

(excerpts below)

In furtherance of the Board of Education's commitment to fostering an inclusive culture, equitable allocation of resources, and the elimination of barriers to education, the Superintendent of Schools or designee(s) shall:

- Engage in ongoing examination and continual improvement of the learning environment and instructional materials to ensure equitable access, inclusive practices, and **a welcoming environment for all students, staff, parents, and community members**;

- develop individual and organizational knowledge, skills, and practices to create **a culturally responsive and affirming environment in which all students have opportunity to reach their fullest potential;**

Educational materials and experiences should reflect a range of perspectives and experiences, including those of historically underrepresented groups.
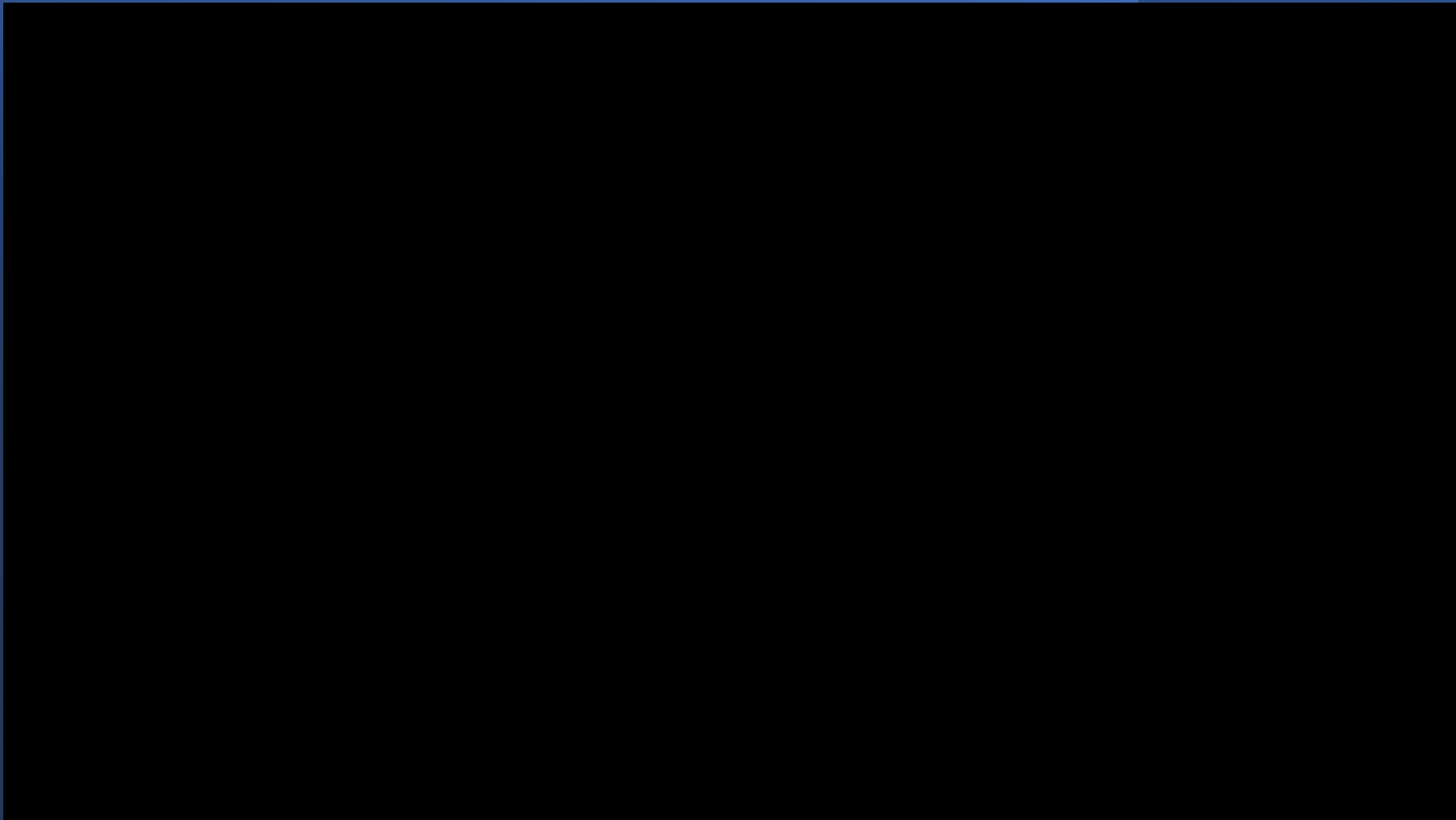
"In short, the most inefficient way to train the mind is to concentrate solely on the mind. That is why it is far more sound with seven-year-old youngsters in school to make sure that they feel at home, that they feel secure and happy, that each individual feels he belongs, than to jump right into the teaching of reading, writing, and arithmetic."

A Look at Our Schools

Paul Mort and William Vincent

1946, P. 16
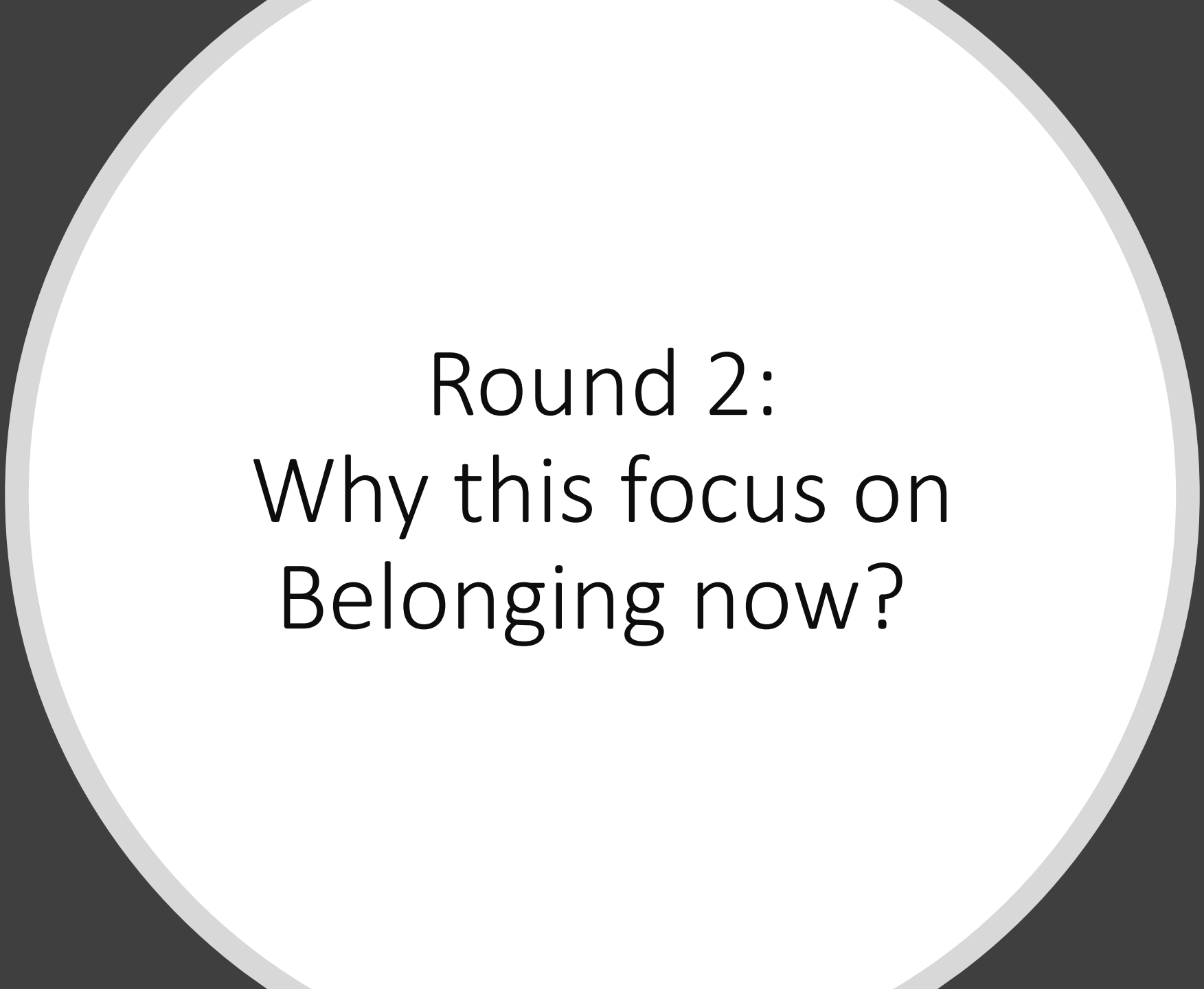
Round One Discussion Questions:

- Introduce yourselves – Why did you come tonight?

- How do you react to the direction provided by NYSED and the Board of Regents? Does it make sense to you? Does it cause you to wonder anything?

- Does the direction provided and/or the concept of belonging raise any questions for you?

Round 2:
Why this focus on Belonging now?

What's happening in the headlines?

CDC Report: March 31, 2022

New CDC analyses, published today, shine additional light on the mental health of U.S. high school students during the COVID-19 pandemic, including a disproportionate level of threats that some students experienced.

Please Read

From CDC Report:

Findings also highlight that a sense of being cared for, supported, and belonging at school — called "school connectedness" — had an important effect on students during a time of severe disruption.

"School connectedness is a key to addressing youth adversities at all times – especially during times of severe disruptions."

Where did the headlines focus?

'Youth are in crisis': Mental health of US high school students worsened during the Covid-19 pandemic, CDC survey finds

By Deidre McPhillips, CNN

Published 2:02 PM EDT, Thu March 31, 2022

'A cry for help': CDC warns of a steep decline in teen mental health

More than 4 in 10 told the health agency they felt 'persistently sad or hopeless'

By Moriah Balingit
March 31, 2022 at 1:00 p.m. EDT

CORONAVIRUS

Teens faced emotional abuse at home during the pandemic, CDC finds

More than half of high school students said they were victims of verbal outbursts during lockdown, according to a new CDC survey.

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ecisions Teens Make

Post Pandemic: Why the Kids May Not Be OK

Many Americans say we are experiencing a mental health crisis.

Posted April 21, 2022 | ✔ Reviewed by Lybi Ma

WELLNESS → MENTAL HEALTH — March 31, 2022

New data on teens' mental health during pandemic 'echo a cry for help,' CDC official says

Meeting the Mental Health Challenge in School and at Home

From kindergarten through college, educators are experimenting with ways to ease the stress students are facing — not only from the pandemic, but from life itself.

By Eilene Zimmerman

Oct. 6, 2022

Teens in Distress Are Swamping Pediatricians

Around the country, the setting for adolescent mental health care looks ever more like this doctor's office in Kentucky, the next patient arriving every 15 minutes.

'It's Life or Death': The Mental Health Crisis Among U.S. Teens

Depression, self-harm and suicide are rising among American adolescents. For one 13-year-old, the despair was almost too much to take.

362 School Counselors on the Pandemic's Effect on Children: 'Anxiety Is Filling Our Kids'

In a Times survey, counselors said students are behind in their abilities to learn, cope and relate.

By Claire Cain Miller and Bianca Pallaro   Produced by Alice Fang

A new story ...

New headlines

'Appalling' Scores on National Exam Show Extent of Covid's Toll on Students

The results, from what is known as the nation's report card, offer the most definitive picture yet of the pandemic's devastating effects on students.

Math Scores Fell in Nearly Every State, and Reading Dipped on National Exam

The Pandemic Erased Two Decades of Progress in Math and Reading

The results of a national test showed just how devastating the last two years have been for 9-year-old schoolchildren, especially the most vulnerable.

In more recent times, a tension develops between goals:

A focus on greater levels of educational achievement for individuals

A focus on the public good and more inclusive environments

An apparent tension can be perceived between goals:

A focus on greater levels of educational achievement

A focus on developing a sense of belonging for every student

Students who feel like they belong to school are more likely to have successful school experiences. Students' motivation and effort towards schoolwork are influenced by their sense of school belonging.

• Academic success, social inclusion, and life satisfaction (Arslan et al., 2020, Brooms, 2016; Palikara et al., 2020; Scorgie & Forlin, 2019)

• Decreased school dropouts (OECD, 2018; Tuhanioglu, 2016; Uslu & Gizir, 2017)

• Increased academic motivation and lower academic stress or educational dissatisfaction after leaving school (Abdollahi et al., 2020; Allen et al., 2018)

• Reduced likelihood of absenteeism, misconduct, school disengagement, or students leaving school early without a qualification (Allen et al., 2016; Ibrahim & El Zaatari, 2020; Korpershoek et al., 2020; OECD, 2018)

• Academic hardiness (Abdollahi, et al 2020)

• The promotion of academic attainment and increased likelihood of on-time graduation among students with chronic medical conditions (Kirkpatrick, 2020)

• Greater school achievement and reduced school bullying (Arslan, 2021)
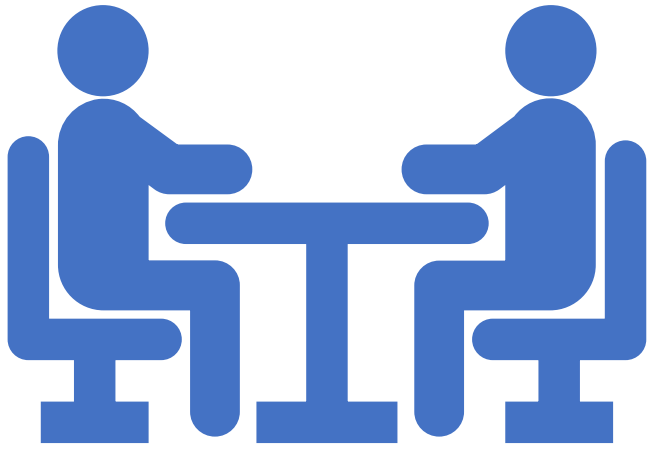
Round Two Discussion Questions:

How do those headlines make you feel?

Do you worry about too much of an emphasis in either direction (towards belonging or towards raising test scores)? If so, share more about your concerns.

What's your reaction to the idea that belonging supports positive academic outcomes? When you think about your own children, do their experiences reflect this idea?

Time to move again ...

Round Three:

- KLSD Practices connected to belonging
- What makes this work complex?

What's happening in KLSD to promote a stronger sense of belonging in our schools?

Structures:

- Morning meetings
- Home base
- Restorative practices
- Clubs, athletics, performing arts & other extracurricular activities
- Inclusive playground plans
- 21st Century classroom design

Family Engagement

- ERJC
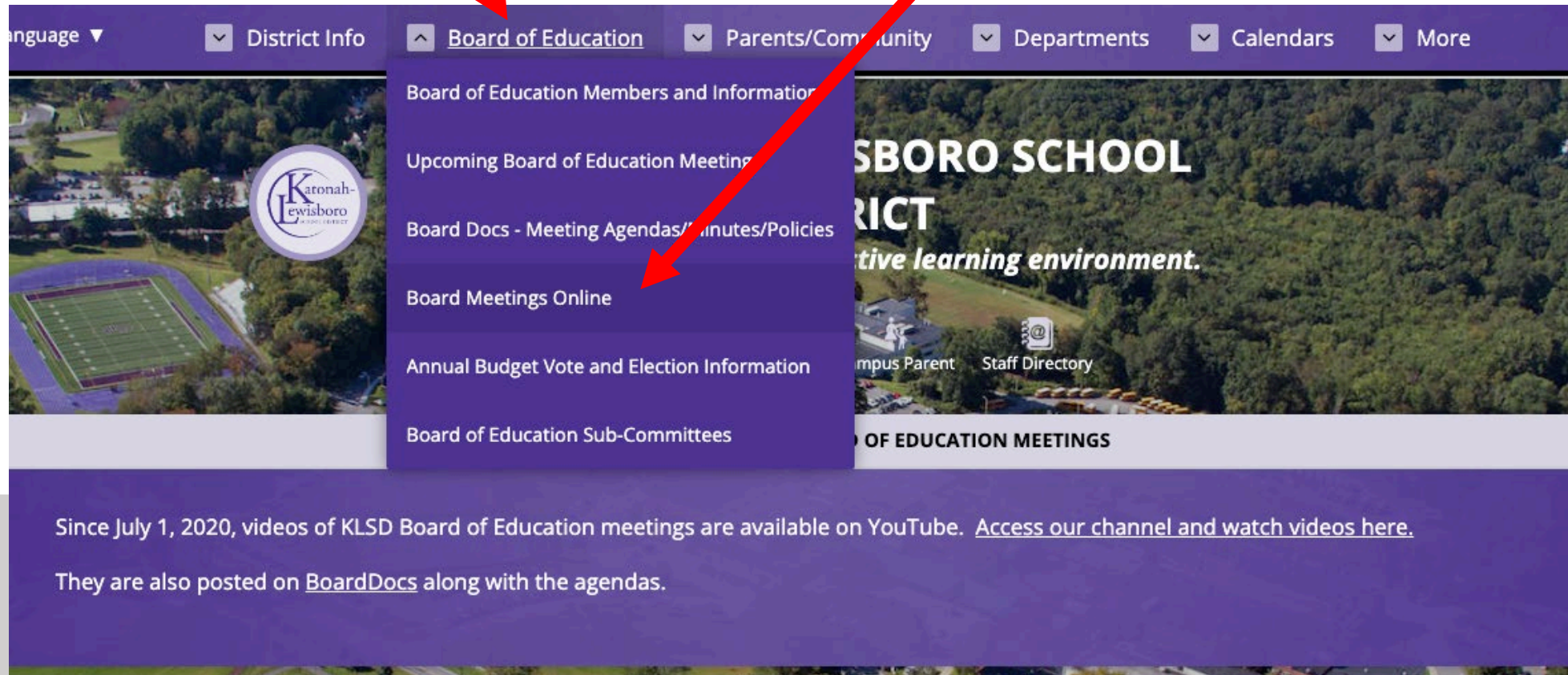- Compact teams
- Challenge Success

Representation:

- Visible iconography in schools
- Classroom and school libraries
- High school summer reads
- Hiring practices

Professional Learning & Staffing

- Social justice standards
- Unconscious bias awareness sessions
- Identity work
- Additional special education staff & leadership positions for equity & SEL
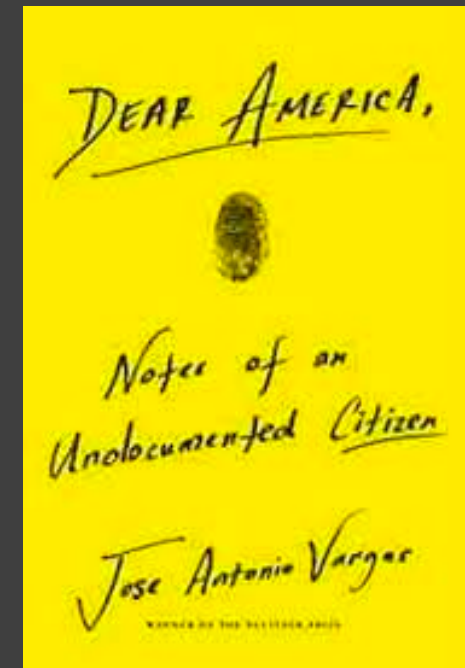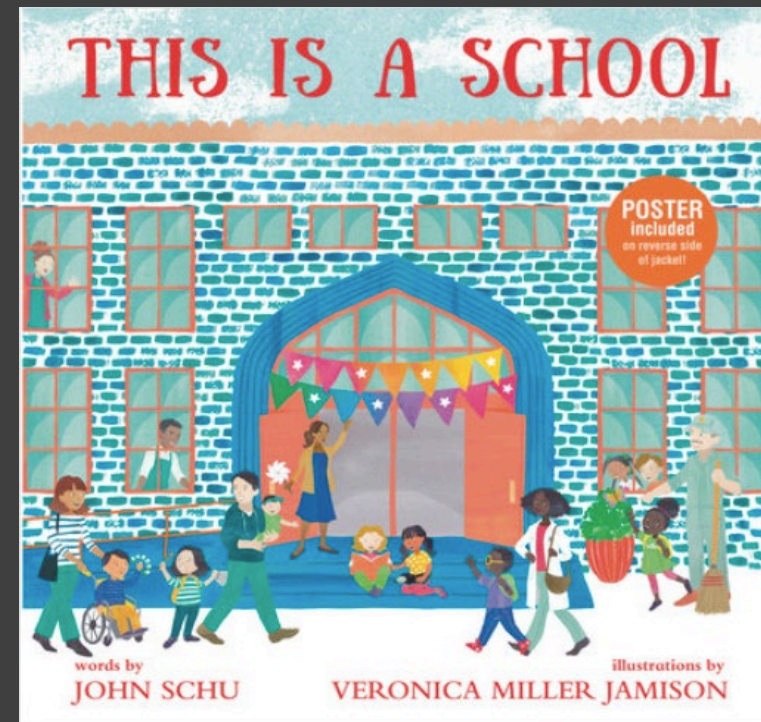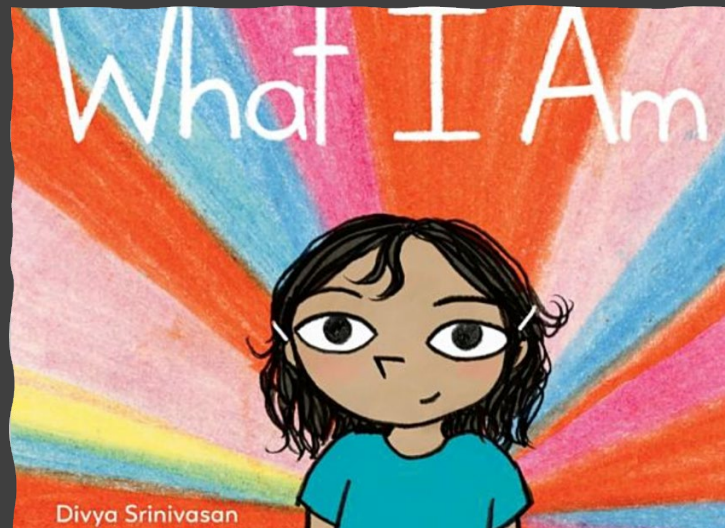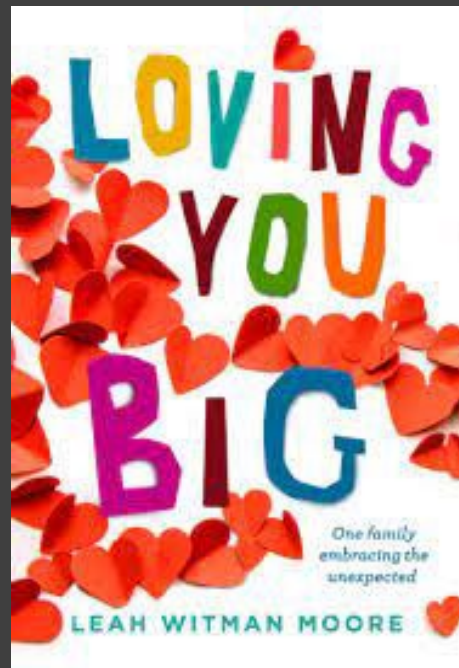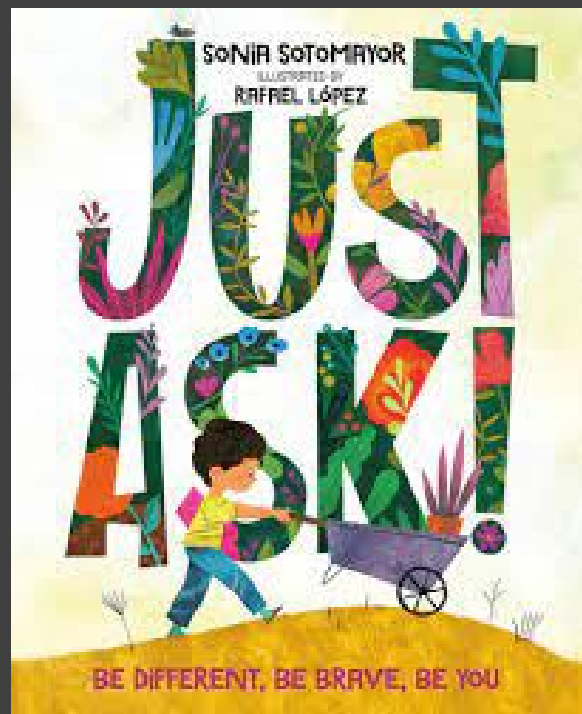
For even more information, watch our KLSD Board of Education Meeting – October 20, 2022 – to hear directly from all five principals and three of our curriculum leaders ...

Top left display: DIVERSITY IS BEAUTIF[UL]
CHUCK CLOSE

Top right display:
OCTOBER IS

Italian Heritage Month

How do you say...

Filipino Heritage Month

Italian
buongiorno
ciao
arrivederci
grazie

good morning
hello
good bye
thank you

Filipino
magandang umaga
kamusta
paalam
salamat

Frank Sinatra
Mike Piazza
Sophia Loren
Ralph Macchi
Joe DiMaggio

Lea Salonga
Olivia Rodrigo
Robert Lopez
Lou Diamond Phillips
Manny Pacquiao
Larry Itliong

Bottom left display:
LET'S CELEBRATE...
Hispanic Heritage
es de la Herencia Hispa[na]

Bottom center displays:
HAPPY DIWALI

Bottom right display:
WELCOME to our CLASSROOM
ALL ARE WELCOME HERE!
WELCOME FRIENDS
All the Colors We Are
Todos los colores de nuestra piel
BELLEN WOOD MORE than PE

NYS ED .gov

Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework

Creating a welcoming and affirming environment

A welcoming and affirming environment feels safe. It is a space where people can find themselves represented and reflected, and where they understand that all people are treated with respect and dignity. The environment ensures all cultural identities (i.e. race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, language, religion, socioeconomic background) are affirmed, valued, and used as vehicles for teaching and learning.

Another perceived tension:

Should we:

- Celebrate differences?
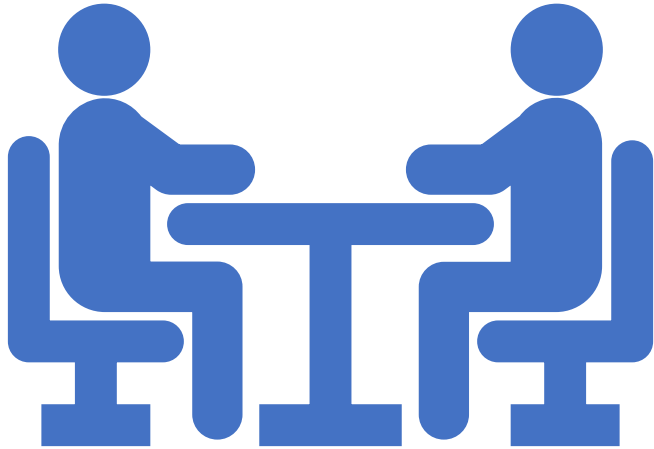- Focus on commonalities?
- Both?
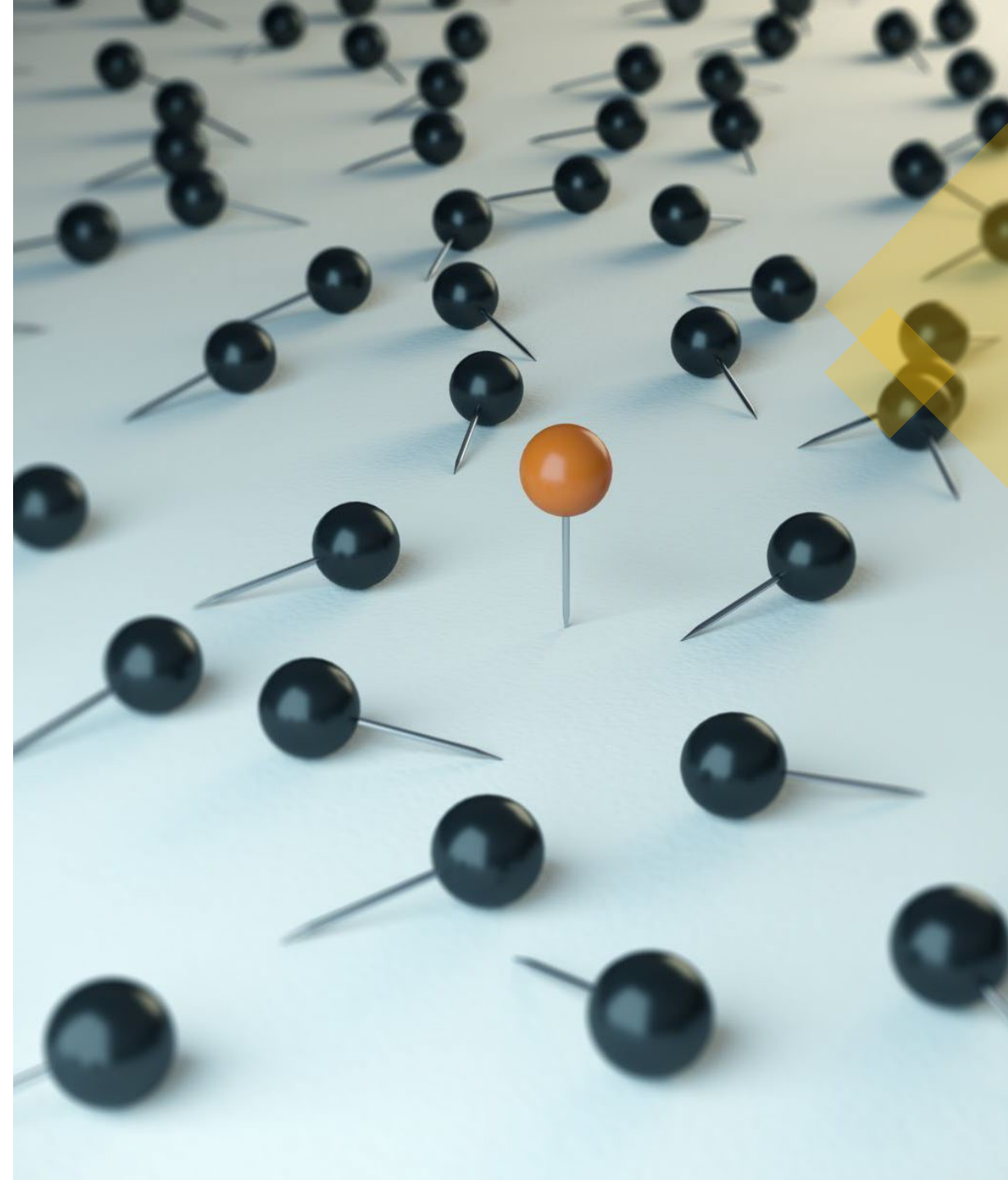
Please Read
(again ☺)

Round Three Discussion Questions:

Possible questions:

• What are your thoughts about the ways KLSD is thinking about strengthening the sense of belonging for every student in our schools?

• Can you share examples from your own lives or your children's lives of why naming different aspects of identity can be affirming and important? And/or do you have questions about this practice?

• Is there anything else you'd like to share at your table before we conclude tonight?

Thank you for joining us.