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Belonging is a Key Factor in School Success – from Kindergarten to College

A sense of belonging is a basic human need, just like the need for food, shelter and safety. It enables the ability to see value in life and to cope with challenges.¹

Carissa Romero from [Mindset Scholars Network](#) explains: "Students who are confident they belong ... are able to engage more fully in learning. They have fewer behavior problems, are more open to critical feedback, take greater advantage of learning opportunities, build important relationships, and generally have more positive attitudes about their classwork and teachers."

On the contrary, Romero continues: "When we find ourselves in situations...in which we feel like an outsider, we use our mental energy to monitor for threats, leaving fewer resources for higher cognitive processes. When students feel as if they don't belong in a school setting, the cognitive energy that should be used on social engagement and learning is being used to scan for group barriers, discrimination and stereotypes."

In the video series [How Learning Happens](#), Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond from the Learning Policy Institute says, "When that sense of belonging is there, children throw themselves into the learning environment and when that sense of belonging is not there, children will alienate, they will marginalize, they will step back."

Stark County school educators have responded proactively to this research. They designed student 'advisory-type' groups that meet regularly to build positive peer and adult relationships and connect students to experiences that nurture a sense of belonging.

Local university leaders share that it's not just secondary students who need advocates – it's critical for college students as well. Universities have responded by supporting students beyond academics. They have created food pantries, emergency funds and support services that address the personal, immediate needs of students (see related sidebar). These actions affirm to students that they belong in that university family.

From kindergarten to college and career, a sense of belonging improves performance and persistence. Students and staff members come from all walks of life, backgrounds, and experiences. When we all belong, our differences can provide the rich perspectives and varied talents needed to help schools, businesses and our community not just survive, but thrive.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/pieces-mind/201403/create-sense-belonging>

The Stark Education Partnership (a 501(c)3 non-profit organization) collaborates with education, business, civic and community members across the entire spectrum – cradle to career – to create and respond to opportunities that will provide ALL students with education and career success.

Are Students Unaware of College Campus Services?

The top three reasons college students stop out are emotional stress (33%), cost of attendance (29%) and caring for a child/family/friend (28%).

Many students also report being unaware of campus services that can often help in these areas.

MORE THAN HALF
56% unaware of mental health services

2 OUT OF 5
41% unaware of emergency financial help

80% unaware of childcare support

State of the Student Experience: Fall 2020: Higher Education During Disruption, Gallup and Lumina Foundation

