

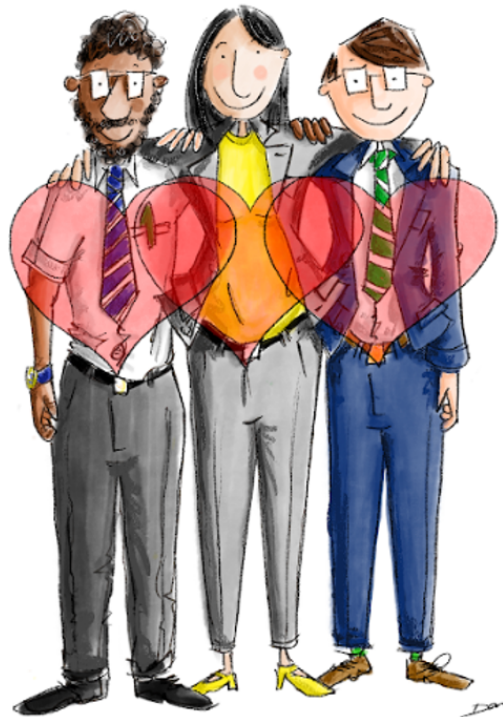


A Culture of Belonging

The Monthly Coach - November 2023

A half-term in, now is a good time to reflect on how much your colleagues feel that they are integral to something meaningful, that their contributions are valued, and that they truly belong to your school/trust community. The feeling of belonging not only enriches the lives of individuals but also has profound influence on professional dynamics.

It is unsurprising that, amid the current challenges of teacher retention, the notion of belonging has surfaced in many recent conferences, books and research papers as a pivotal focus for school and trust leaders in addressing workforce issues.



A new Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) study conducted by Durham University and University of Warwick reviews the evidence base on [how school leadership, culture and climate support teacher retention](#).

It highlights three interrelated leadership approaches and their associated practices to support teacher retention:

1. prioritising teacher development
2. building relational trust
3. improving working conditions

Sounds like a school with a coaching culture, right?

Well, we are thrilled to announce that Leadership Edge is partnering with [ImpactEd](#) to robustly measure the positive impact of our 3-Tier Coaching

Accreditation Programme in terms of improved staff wellbeing, motivation and development, leading to a positive working climate, relationships and classroom experience.

Embedding a culture which creates a strong sense of belonging certainly appears to be an effective way to navigate through our current retention crisis. **If you'd like to know more about how to be part of our research project please reply [here](#).**

Research through the decades has shown that teachers with a sense of belonging are less likely to experience dissatisfaction, high stress and burnout. People are better equipped to tackle the challenges of the job and its overwhelming demands. Certainly the content of those challenges continues to change, but this basic human need for belonging, has not.

Naturally, this need affects children as well as adults. Studies show that students who feel a sense of belonging within an inclusive and nurturing school environment are more likely to attend regularly, experience a productive classroom climate and demonstrate higher academic motivation.



Our innate desire to connect, be accepted, and feel valued is deeply rooted in our evolutionary history, transcending culture, age, and background. To delve further into the cultural story, psychological experience and performance benefits of belonging, try Owen Eastwood's acclaimed book of that title.

In the meantime, we invite you to reflect on the following practical questions, relevant regardless of your context or level of seniority:

- What is your vision for developing a sense of belonging among different stakeholders?
- What are you currently doing to foster belonging?
- How can you further nurture this sense of belonging?

Belonging is the foundation upon which successful schools are built: relationships, trust, responsibility, respect. It also empowers us to invest in the future collectively, encouraging us to take the long view, feeling part of something bigger than ourselves and our current challenges. As Geoff Barton wisely reminded us at a recent ASCL Leadership Conference, "these too shall pass."

To finish, I'd like to borrow inspiration from Leora Cruddas, who concluded her [opening address at the CST Annual Conference](#) with these powerful words of American poet, Langston Hughes:

"Then the hand seeks other hands to help.

A community of hands to help –

Thus the dream becomes not one [person's] dream alone,

But a community dream

Not my dream alone, but our dream,

Not my world alone.

But your world and my world,

Belonging to all the hands who build."

Thank you for your joint and concerted efforts in working to build an education system which creates values-led, people-first communities. Through these, we can lay the groundwork for an evolved education system which truly nurtures our children and colleagues.

Warmest wishes,



Catherine Hulme

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If you're interested in learning how a coaching culture can help your staff develop a sense of belonging within your school community, please reply [here](#).

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