Connectedness and Student Social & Academic Outcomes

WCSD Leadership Academy
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Washoe County School District

Session Scope

Our Academy scope will cover:

- Awareness of the connectedness-learning interdependency & strategies to identify disconnection

- The heart of connectedness is meaningful, and trusting relationships requiring skillful intent

- Explore how relationships fuel the dynamic classroom (relevance, rigor, student voice, feedback)

- Moving beyond classroom connectedness to schoolwide connectedness

- Review of progress this year and continuation and integration of practice into 2026-27 SIP

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Today's Learning Intentions and Success Criteria

I am learning about the dependency between connectedness and learning.

- I can access data to demonstrate the relationship between connection and learning.

- I am equipped with strategies to use with staff and students to identify student and staff connectedness.

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Self Reflection

Please read the student description on your card?

Have you known a child with these circumstances?

How did/would I foster a connected school experience?

Please keep this child in mind throughout our discussion?

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Belonging & Connectedness

A student who feels welcome, seen, heard, and included is a connected student. They experience a sense of belonging.

Belonging is the feeling of being appreciated, valued, accepted and treated fairly within an environment that honors and affirms each person's identity, lived experience, and ways of knowing.

This means individuals do not have to minimize or hide parts of themselves to be welcomed or accepted.

It shifts us away from "tolerating" others to embracing and esteeming them because of who they are, not in spite of it.

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Embracing + Esteeming= Belonging & Connectedness

This means **EVERY** individual feels:

- Seen for who they are.
- Safe to express themselves and communicate their needs.
- Connected through meaningful relationships.
- Valued for their contributions.

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Connectedness & Academic Outcomes

1. Approximately 20% of our students do not identify a single trusting adult relationship in the school setting.

2. Based on EWS, approximately 35% of our students are at moderate or high risk.

3. Approximately 35% of our secondary students share signs of depression or suicidality.

4. Approximately 56% of our students perceive positive engagement at school.

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Connectedness & Academic Outcomes

1. Each of these risk indicators is highly correlated with one another.

2. Each of these risk markers is highly correlated with chronic absenteeism, major behavior, suspension, SBAC reading & math performance, GPA, and graduation.

3. We see largely similar patterns of demographic disproportionality with respect to each risk marker as well as each academic outcome.

   A. *Briefly stated, African American, Hispanic, Native American, and Pacific Islander students, as well as students living in poverty, having an IEP, identified as EL or CIT/Foster are disproportionately at-risk (not connected), and disproportionately under-performing academically.*

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Pair Share

1. As a school leader, what surprises you or confirms your thinking in regard to the link between connectedness and academic outcomes?

2. As a school leader, how can I build shared understanding with my staff regarding the patterns we see within our own school?

3. As a school leader, how can I foster ownership and action?

Safe & Respectful Learning

Safe and respectful learning is crucial for student well-being and academic success, encompassing **physical safety, emotional security,** and a **sense of belonging**. It is rooted in **cultural awareness.** It promotes trust, allows for open communication, and encourages active participation and engagement.

We do this because it is a moral obligation. It is also a statutory and policy driven expectation:

- ✓ Civil Rights Act of 1964
- ✓ Title 9 of the Educational Amendments of 1972
- ✓ NRS Chapters 200, 388, 392
- ✓ Board Policys 5700, 5100, 9200, 9210, 9215

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Determining Risk with Positive Presupposition

1. **How do I know if a student is at-risk or lacks connection?**
   A. EWS
   B. Attendance
   C. Behavior
   D. Grades
   E. Demographics (FRL, IEP, CIT, Language, Minority Status)

2. **How do I get a better sense of connectedness?**
   A. Staff connectedness exercises (**Multi-Tiered System of Supports / Connection & Belonging**)
   B. Student connectedness exercises

MTSS/SEL

- https://youtu.be/xjZx0VdmgkE

Connectedness Practice

Increase student engagement and foster meaningful connections between students and school staff with this SEL tool!

Build a Culture of Checking-in

Check-ins help students build positive relationships with a caring adult and support both short- and long- term student engagement.

Greet and Go

Greeting at the door helps students learn each other's names, builds a sense of leadership, and fosters community.

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Fostering Belonging & Connectedness Activity

As a Group:

1. Break into groups (at least two schools represented)

2. As a group brainstorm what fostering belonging and connectedness should look, sound, and feel like. List ideas.

3. Create a T-chart with the following 2 columns:

We could do this in the short term	We could do this in the long term

4. Based on your conversation, mark ideas in each column.

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Connectedness & Belonging

In the Short-Term we could?	In the Long-Term we could?

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Fostering Belonging & Connectedness Activity Cont.

<u>On Your Own or with your site team members:</u>

5. Given all the demands you face, discuss what sort of priority exercises that promote belonging and connectedness should be given.

6. At what intervals do you believe these exercises should take place.

7. How can you build buy-in from your staff to engage in the exercise(s) and to follow through by building meaningful relationships?

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Call to Action

Before next academy, conduct a staff connectedness activity.

Before next academy, consider student voice options related to connectedness.

Read Chapter 2 "Student Behaviors Start With You!" from Connections over Compliance (Desautels, 2020).

Have a great beginning of your school year and call us for support and conversation.

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Thank You for Your Engagement and Participation!

August 1st Academy Survey