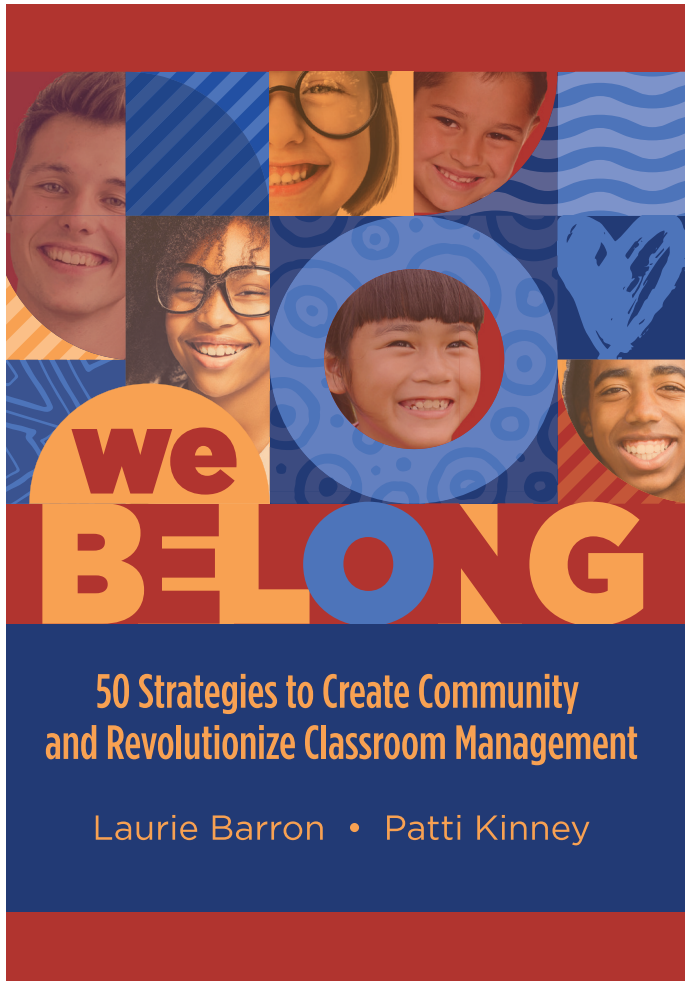# Toolset for

We Belong: *50 Strategies to Create Community and Revolutionize Classroom Management*

by Laurie Barron and Patti Kinney

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Reflection: What Does Belonging Mean to You?

1. Describe or define *belonging* as you understand it, based on your own experiences.

2. List a few places or situations where you feel or have felt a sense of belonging.

3. How can you "tell" you belong in those places or situations? Dig into those feelings of belongingness and describe them.

4. List a few places or situations in which you feel or have felt a lack of belonging.

5. Think back to your student days. What factors contributed to your sense of belonging (or not belonging) at school or in a classroom?

6. List some signs you look for or have seen that suggest students in your classroom don't feel a sense of belonging.

7. Describe what and how you feel when you see a student (or perhaps a child of your own) struggle with belonging.

8. Describe your past experiences—successes and failures—with helping students feel they belong.

9. Describe the ways in which your own background, culture, and life experiences are similar to those of your students.

10. Describe the ways in which your own background, culture, and life experiences are different from those of your students.

A Guided Reading of the Introduction

1. Review the opening text of the Introduction—the three paragraphs beginning on page 1. Highlight (or record) the words, phrases, or ideas that stand out to you. Make notes about why these grabbed you.

2. Highlight the definitions of belonging and school belonging in the "What Belonging Is" section, beginning on page 2. Read them aloud. Then, in this same section, highlight the final two sentences of the Baumeister and Leary quote. Read these sentences out loud. What stands out to you? What experiences from your own practice do they call to mind?

3. Review the list of the research-verified benefits of belonging in the section "Why Belonging in School Matters," beginning on page 3. Highlight any benefits you have personally witnessed. What other characteristics or benefits of belonging you have seen?

4. On pages 3–4, review the bulleted list of what students can experience when they do not feel a sense of belonging in school. Highlight consequences you have personally witnessed. What other consequences of "not belonging" have you seen?

5. In the "How to Increase Belongingness" section (beginning on p. 4), put a checkmark by factors you already attend to. Circle or highlight factors that challenge you, that you haven't thought much about, that you would like to learn more about, or that you would like to increase your abilities to provide.

6. Review the section titled "Classroom Management—and the Difference It Makes" (beginning on p. 5). Carefully reread the final two paragraphs. In your own words, briefly summarize the partnership between classroom management and belonging.

7. In that same section, highlight concepts or messages about classroom management that excite you. Which do you find most compelling?

8. In the section, "How to Combine Belonging and Management in Practice" (beginning on p. 8), highlight the topic sentence or key idea in the opening paragraph.

9. In that same section, reread each of the six actions for increasing belonging. Pause after each one and ask yourself, "Can I commit to doing this consistently and better than I have already been doing?" Jot down one idea or goal for action next to each of the six actions.

10. What one sentence, phrase, or idea from the Introduction was the most powerful or memorable to you? Write it down. Continue to refer to it as you make your way through the book.

Brainstorming Guide: What You Already Do to Help Students Belong

Attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors you model	*Ways you relate to students*	*Expectations you communicate to students*
Activities that intentionally teach emotional skills	*Activities that intentionally teach social skills*	*Activities that boost students' confidence in themselves as learners*
Activities that help students see one another's strengths and value	*Activities that give students opportunity to express their opinions*	*Activities that give students opportunity to make choices about their own learning*

Reflection: Does Your Classroom Management Enhance Belonging?

Part I. Examine your classroom management in light of the need for students to belong.

A. List 8 of your management practices or strategies.

(Think about classroom setting, schedule, organization, classroom protocols and procedures, relationships with students, expectations and consequences, problem resolution, your responses to misbehavior, style of instruction, etc.)

B. Go back and thoughtfully examine each one you listed with a focus on belonging. Ask, "Does this help students belong?" Write YES! or Keep! or write NO! or Improve! (for cases where your approach could impede belonging or set it back). Remember: All students are different, and just because something makes one student feel as if he belongs, it may not make someone else feel as if she belongs. For example, recognizing a student accomplishment may make one student feel proud and another student feel embarrassed.

Part II. Identify areas for improvement. Start planning new or changed practices and record this information in the chart space provided or in a similar format.

A. Identify four items from your list that have a NO! label. For each one, set a goal to work toward right away. Name the category for the goal (relationships, consequences, communication, protocols, etc.).

B. Write each goal in specific terms of what you will do that is a new or changed practice. It should be a goal that can be measured. (Ask yourself, "How will I know when this goal has been met?")

C. Set a date for checking up on yourself. Once school is in session, mark goals you are meeting. For others, make a plan of next steps, practices, or adjustments for making better progress. Consider doing this strategy in collaboration with a colleague.

Category	Goal	Checkup Date

Template for Planning Day 1

Directions: Note a strategy, idea of things to say, or activity for each of these first-day components. Some strategies may satisfy more than one category.

How I will greet my students:	
How I will learn my students' names:	
What I want to share about myself and how I will do that:	
How my students will learn about one another:	
How I will assure my students of their value and safety:	
Routine(s) I will establish:	
Collaborative small-group learning activity I will provide:	
Academic activity or lesson that includes ☐ Something to read: ☐ Something to create: ☐ Something fun: ☐ Opportunity for student voice: ☐ Opportunity for student choice: ☐ An academic success for all: ☐ Reference to/use of something in the classroom: ☐ Lesson/activity description:	
How I will end class memorably:	

Student Survey on Teacher–Student Relationships

Instructions: Answer as many as of these questions as you can. Don't include your name or any student or teacher names.

Part 1

1. How can you tell that a teacher accepts or values you?

2. What teacher actions make you wonder whether the teacher likes you or not?

3. What helps you trust a teacher?

4. What makes it hard to trust a teacher?

5. What is the best action you've seen a teacher do in relating to students?

6. What helps you feel positive about a teacher?

7. What causes you to feel uncomfortable with a teacher?

8. What do you wish teachers would do *for sure?*

9. What do you wish teachers would NOT do *for sure?*

Part 2

1. Do you think your teacher(s) would notice if you are having trouble with something you are learning?

2. Do you think your teacher(s) would notice if you are upset about something going on at school?

3. How can you tell when a teacher is really interested in you?

4. How can you tell when a teacher is determined to help you succeed in school?

Part 3

What are one or two top pieces of advice you'd give a teacher about what students your age need?

"Rx for Peer Relationships" Template

Directions: Identify a relationship situation or need in the classroom. Then prescribe a treatment for that situation. Write the prescription as an action that can be carried out by one or more students. Include the amount, frequency, and duration of the treatment. (Tailor your directions to be age appropriate.)

R_x Relationship Rx for (class name) _____

_____

Date _____

Need or condition requiring treatment:

Description of treatment:

Dosage (How much?)   Frequency (How often?)

Duration (For how long?)

Expected results or side effects:

School Safety Checkup

1. Safety starts with the "feel" of the place.

Components	✔ Yes	✔ No
Are all areas of the school and classroom neat, clean, pleasant, and orderly?		
Do classroom arrangements give as much space as possible to move and learn?		
Do seating assignments minimize clashes or other discomfort?		
Are school policies on bullying and other unsafe, discriminatory, or mean behaviors stated and consistently adhered to by adults?		
Are school health policies and practices stated and consistently enforced and adhered to by adults?		
Do students know there is adequate supervision, particularly in the places where mistreatment is likely to take place?		
Do supervising adults have and use their authority (consistently and effectively) to act in keeping students safe from other students?		
Are students' fears about safety taken seriously?		
Do students have safe opportunities to share their concerns?		
Are families warmly welcomed to the school and given chances to be involved?		

Notes/Actions Needed:

2. Effective, positive classroom management is a key factor in students' safety.

Components	✔ Yes	✔ No
Is mutual respect a top priority?		
Are routines, schedules, guidelines, limits, expectations, and consequences clearly established, predictable, and consistently followed?		
Are expectations and consequences equitable?		
Are students expected to speak positively to one another and taught how to do this?		
Are students given advance notice of changes in schedules, expectations, and assignments?		
Is misbehavior handled privately between teacher and student?		

Notes/Actions Needed:

School Safety Checkup—(*continued*)

3. Acquiring and practicing social-emotional skills helps students cope with feelings of insecurity.

Components	✔ Yes	✔ No
Do students have a secure and private way to ask questions, ask for help, or report problems?		
Are students given lessons in self-advocacy and other skills of self-regulation and self-control?		
Do students receive instruction in social–emotional skills?		
Are students taught ways to respond to teasing and bullying, as either a victim or a bystander?		
Do students learn strategies for helping to keep situations from escalating into violence?		
Do students have frequent experiences that help them feel in control?		

Notes/Actions Needed:

4. Comfortable relationships with trusted adults help students feel safe.

Components	✔ Yes	✔ No
Are adults in the school approachable, caring, and kind?		
Do staff members say "please" and "thank you"?		
Are teachers confident, showing joy and excitement about their jobs?		
Are teachers truthful and trustworthy—keeping their word, following through, and doing what they promise?		
Are teachers calm during crises, transitions, or chaos?		
Do teachers give positive responses and encouragement?		
Are teachers "on top of" what is going on in the classroom or other school locations?		
Can teachers be counted on to consistently protect students from verbal teasing, name calling, and being bothered, bullied, demeaned, or intentionally excluded?		
Do teachers actively protect students from discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, religion, physical appearance or capabilities, academic achievement, sexual orientation, political views, socioeconomic status, or family involvement in school?		

School Safety Checkup—(*continued*)

4. Comfortable relationships with trusted adults help students feel safe.—(*continued*)

Components	✔ Yes	✔ No
Do teachers have a deep knowledge of the unique learning needs of each student and demonstrably help them succeed academically?		
Do teachers periodically check their assumptions about students and actively work to uncover their blind spots?		
Do teachers reflect regularly on their practice to recognize implicit bias and address and prevent new biases?		
Do teachers respect the confidentiality of student comments?		
Do teachers protect the safety of students' questions and contributions in learning situations?		
Do teachers use humor appropriately and sarcasm cautiously?		
Do teachers keep open, respectful communication with students' families?		
Notes/Actions Needed:		

Template for a Student Safety Commitment

I, _____ [individual name], a member of _____ [group or class name], commit to consistently taking these actions to protect my own safety at school:

I will _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

I will _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

I will _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

I will review this contract and evaluate my progress on the following dates:

_____

Date: _____   Signature: _____

"Anatomy of a Quality" Template

Focus on _____

Class: _____   Date: _____

Student Names: _____

What does this term mean? (Write your definition.)

What *words* can someone use to demonstrate this quality?

What *actions* can someone take to demonstrate this quality?

What *body language* (facial expressions or gestures) demonstrates this quality?

How does it feel when you experience this quality through someone's words, actions, or body language?

Student Survey on Schoolwide Belonging

Instructions: Think of each question as it relates to school. Answer as many as you can. Don't include your name or any student or teacher names.

1. What does it mean to "belong" in your school and your classes?

2. Why does it matter for students to feel a sense of belonging at school?

3. How can you tell if someone does NOT have a sense of belonging at school?

4. How do you think it feels to NOT have a sense of belonging at school?

5. What can teachers do to help students belong?

6. What can students do to help other students belong?

7. What is something you've done to help someone else belong?

8. What is something you could do to increase your own sense of belonging?

Log of Teachable Skills and Practices That Increase Belonging

The following skills and practices have been shown to increase belonging for students—on both the giving and receiving ends of the actions. Intentionally integrate these practices into your plans for lessons and activities. Indicate the dates that you provided an opportunity for your students to specifically practice each of the skills and what activities or lessons you presented.

Skill or Practice	Date	Lesson/Activity Notes
Give and expect respect from classmates		
Create an inclusive classroom community by embracing diversity (racial, linguistic, cultural, etc.) and engaging with differences with curiosity and respect		
Actively resist and protect against the exclusion of anyone		
Practice kindness and helpfulness		
Work collaboratively in diverse teams to complete tasks, make decisions, debate constructively, and solve problems—academic topics, classroom-living topics, and social issues in the local community		
Take some responsibility for their own belonging		
Increase awareness and use of their own personal resources, skills, and abilities		
Increase social awareness in their communities and the wider world		
Grow in self-management and control of emotions in socially aware and meaningful ways that respect and honor differences		
Learn and practice organizational and planning skills		
Make choices about classroom life and their own learning		
Have a voice in classroom life and their own learning, and make efforts to hear from students who haven't had a voice		
Learn, practice, and improve skills of coping and flexibility		
Take part in making real and meaningful decisions		

Log of Teachable Skills and Practices That Increase Belonging (*continued*)

The following skills and practices have been shown to increase belonging for students—on both the giving and receiving ends of the actions. Intentionally integrate these practices into your plans for lessons and activities. Indicate the dates that you provided an opportunity for your students to specifically practice each of the skills and what activities or lessons you presented.

Skill or Practice	Date	Lesson/Activity Notes
Build self-awareness skills, including how they may relate to identity and equity		
Build reflection skills that help them "check in" with themselves in terms of their assumptions about the world and identify any biases that they have or may be developing		
Gain academic confidence and a satisfying view of themselves as students		
Experience mastery and competence		
Have experience with autonomy		
Set, manage, and achieve goals		
Learn ways to bounce back from failure		
Engage actively in learning activities		
Enjoy learning and opportunities to make it relevant to their lives and interests		
Enjoy fun, humor, and excitement in the classroom		
Have meaningful and frequent participation in classroom events of all sorts		
Participate in creative endeavors, leadership, and responsibility		
Advocate for themselves as learners and for issues they believe in, and seek help when needed		
Give and receive kind, constructive feedback		
Learn about and practice growth mindset		

Template for Student Goal Setting

NAME:

GOAL:

What I need to learn, practice, or be able to do:	
Resources I can use:	
Where I can get help (or from whom):	

THE PLAN:

Steps to complete	Dates	How I'm doing with this; what I need to adjust
Actively resist and protect against the exclusion of anyone		
Practice kindness and helpfulness		

REFLECTION:

Did I reach my goal? If not, what kept me from reaching it?		
What was most satisfying?		
What worked well?		
What would I do differently next time?		
What more do I want to do or learn about this?		

Template for a Student Behavior Agreement

The Background

1. My behavior goal This is a behavior I wish to change, begin, replace, or stop.	
2. Background on this behavior This is why I identified this behavior as something I want start, stop, or change.	
3. Behavior reflection This is why I engage in this behavior—how I feel when I do it or how I feel later. OR: This is why I wish to develop this behavior—what I hope or expect will happen and how I expect or hope to feel.	
4. Effect on others This is how my behavior affects others. OR: This is how my new behavior might affect others and how I hope others will respond.	

The Plan

1. Steps to take This is exactly what I will do, in the order I'll do it.	
2. Progress indicators This is what I will look for as evidence that I am making progress toward my goal.	
3. Goal achievement This is what I will look for as evidence that I have achieved my goal and changed my behavior in a way that is more than temporary.	
4. Help and support There are the people who can help or support me as I work to keep this agreement.	
5. Timeline and monitoring Here are the target dates and the name of the person who will help monitor my progress.	

I agree to this plan.

Signature: _____   Date: _____

Witness (co-monitor):

Template for Self-Reflection on a Learning Task

Name:	Date:

Project or assignment:

Now that I'm done, here are my first thoughts about my overall work experience:

The strategy that I used that was the most effective was . . .

The most exciting idea or discovery related to the topic was . . .

While working on this task, here's what I did well:

I found this to be a roadblock to my progress or best work:

While working on this task, I discovered this about myself:

As far as my working process, I could use help with . . .

I'd describe my attitude or mindset (as I was doing the task) this way:

Here's how I'd rate my effort on this (*circle one or write something else*):

my best   almost my best   fairly good   half-hearted   could do way better

After completing the task, I'm still confused about or still want to learn this:

GOAL

Here's one goal I will set for doing this task more completely **OR** doing something differently on the next task:

Template for a Student Collaboration Agreement

In working on a task with other students, I agree to

- Come to the group prepared with all necessary materials.

- Look directly at the person talking and listen thoughtfully.

- Show respect for everyone's ideas and seek to understand the perspective of others.

- Participate equally with thoughtful, respectful ideas and questions.

- Take my turn talking (and not interrupt another speaker).

- Do my best to help everyone have equal time to give ideas and ask questions.

- Explain reasons or evidence for any answer, suggestion, or argument that I put forth.

- Take responsibility for finishing my equal part of the work, on time, without being reminded.

- Take responsibility for helping others succeed with their work.

- Take responsibility for managing myself.

- Give meaningful, useful feedback to other group members.

- Take part in solving problems or resolving conflicts.

- Help and encourage others in the group.

- Stay with my group during work time.

- Frequently rate myself on how well I hold to these agreements.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Template for Individual Reflection on Collaborative Work

Name: _____ Date: _____

Group task _____

	Strongly agree	Agree	Somewhat agree	Disagree
I completed all the tasks for which I was responsible on time.				
I contributed positively and usefully to our group.				
I did my very best work.				
I worked well with the other group members.				
I was a good listener and didn't try to take over the group.				
I respected the ideas and contributions of others in the group and gave them helpful feedback.				
I worked with others to solve problems as they arose.				
I was flexible and willing to change things when necessary.				
I did my fair share of the group's work.				
Other group members would say I was a good member of the group.				

Here's what I did especially well:

Here's what I need to improve:

The most important thing I learned from others in my group was . . .

Template for Group Reflection on Collaborative Work

Group Task _____ Date: _____

Students in the group _____

	All of the time	Sometimes	Rarely	Not very often
We finished our task on time.				
Everyone contributed to the project.				
We did the very best work we could.				
We cooperated with one another.				
We helped one another when needed.				
We shared ideas, discussed them, and came to an agreement.				
No one tried to take over the group.				
We were flexible and willing to change things when necessary.				
Everyone did their fair share of the group's work.				
We were good teammates.				

The best part of working together was . . .

Something we could have done better was . . .

Something we learned that we all agree was important: