The Student Connectedness Project

Designed by Students, for Students

Co-creating safe, accessible & community-focused spaces where every student is connected to adults, peers, and purpose

Connected to Peers

February 11, 2026

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Welcome

The Student Connectedness Project serves as an invitation for students to become learners, leaders, and designers of school connectedness. Together, you will explore how to ensure that every students is connected to an adult, peers, purpose, and a welcoming space.

The Four Connectedness Components

01
Connected to Adults
Caring adults at school can make a big difference in your school experience

02
Connected to Peers
Supportive friendships empower you to feel safe, understood, and encouraged

03
Connected to Purpose
Making a difference lets you feel connected to something bigger than yourself

04
Welcoming Space
Clear academic expectations and a welcoming school make you feel motivated and like you belong

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Who is in the room?

Connection Circle

Please share your name, school/place, state and one word you would use to describe a good friend.

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Connected to Peers - Building Inclusive Communities
Our Time Together

- Explore how your friendships and peer connections might shape your sense of belonging, confidence, and success.

- Learn how your relationships can influence attendance, behavior, and class performance—and how you can make those connections stronger.

- Share ideas and practices that lift up your voice and show how you can take shared responsibility for creating a connected, supportive school community.

- Design Sprint-Where are you in the design process?

For Today's Session Please have: a pen, paper, or computer to capture notes, and courage to share!

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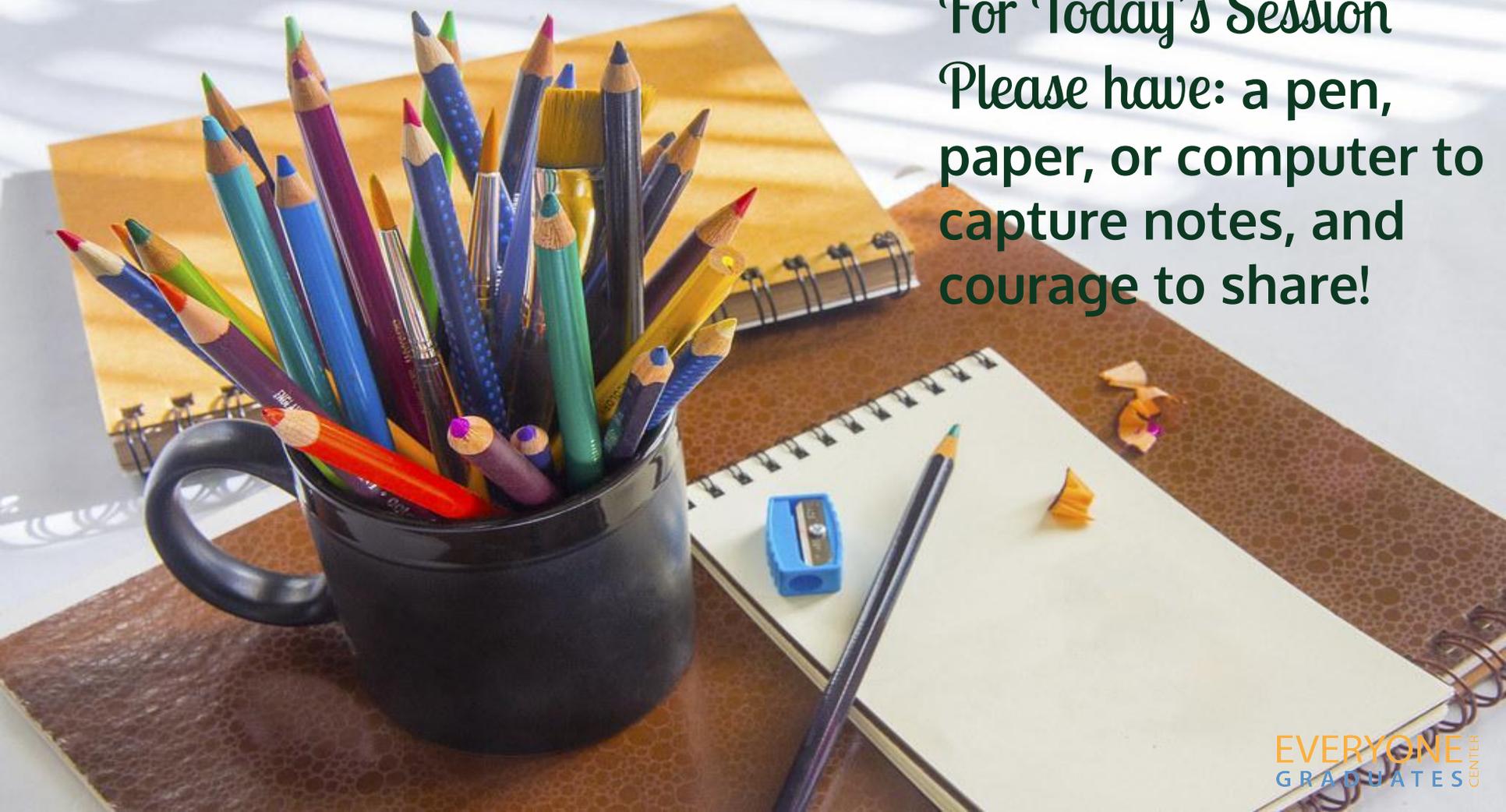
The Research

Indicators help teachers and schools notice when a student might need support before things pile up.

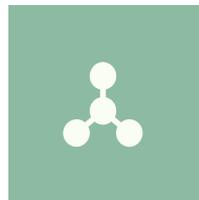It's not about getting in trouble — it's about making sure you have what you need to succeed.

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Research

Agency	Belonging	Connectedness
You have power and voice	You matter and you are seen	You are part of something bigger

Chat Response

Agency

When have you used your voice to help your peer(s)?

Chat Response

Belonging

What helps you and your friends feel like you belong at school?

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Chat Response

Connectedness

Who are the friends or friend groups at school that help you feel connected?

What helps you feel supported or connected?
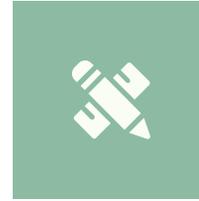
Research Explains Our Experiences at School
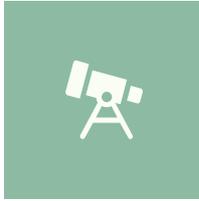
Attendance

Being at school matters
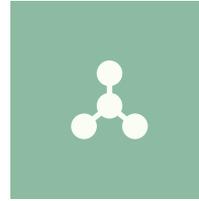
Behavior

How you show up and connect with others

Course Performance

How you are connected to your classes

Breakout: Four Squares- How we connect at school

Making Friends

How do you start a conversation with others?

Joining Clubs and Activities

How do you connect with your peers at school?

Classroom Community

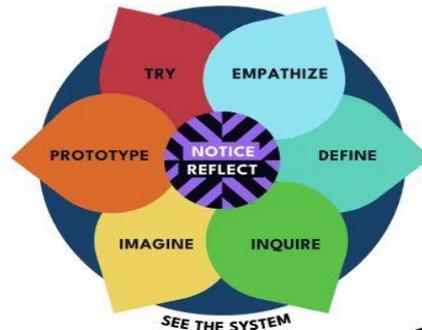How can you and your peers help other students feel welcome?

What else?

What other ways have you experienced connections with your peers?

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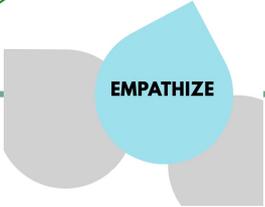
Whole Group Share Out

Design Sprint Challenge

How might we design a way for us as students to feel more connected at school?
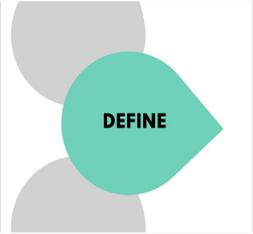
Design Sprint

EMPATHIZE

Gain Multiple Perspectives

How might students feel more connected at school?
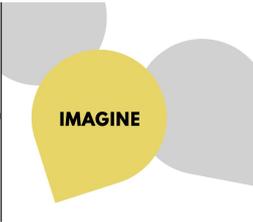
DEFINE

Define the Challenge

How might we help students feel more connected at school?
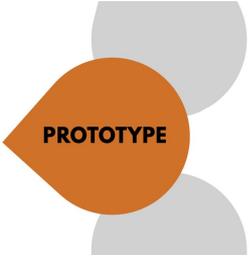
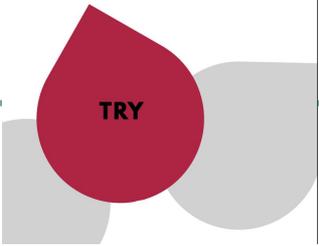What might make our relationships stronger?

IMAGINE

Ideate

Build on each other's ideas.

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Design Sprint

Prototype

How might the idea work? Doesn't have to be perfect.

Try

Try your idea.

Reflect

What worked and what didn't work? How might we build on what is working?

PROTOTYPE

TRY

REFLECT

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Gaining the Perspectives of Others - Understanding Our Context

- **Empathy Interviews**

- **Student Surveys**

- **Shadows**

- **Conversation Cafes**

- **Focus Groups**

EMPATHIZE

Gain Multiple Perspectives

How might students feel more connected at school?

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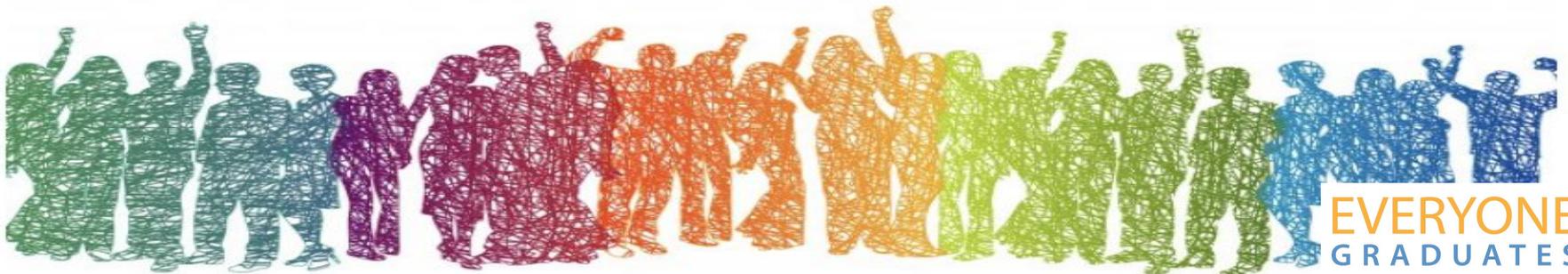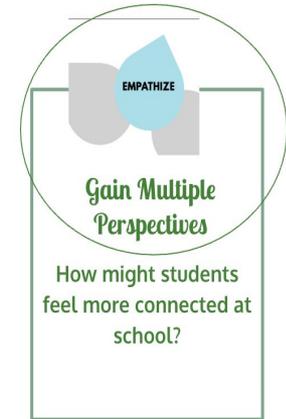
Design Sprint Snapshot
Which stage best describes where your team is at today?

EMPATHIZE

DEFINE

IMAGINE

TRY
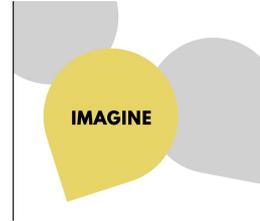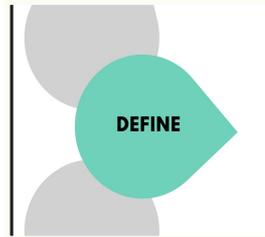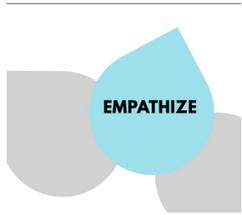
| **Learning more about your peers experiences** | **Deciding what to do** | **Developing ideas** | **Trying out an idea** |

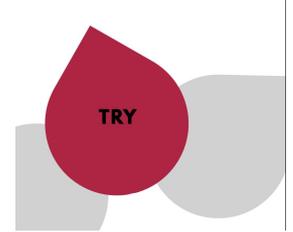EVERYONE
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Design Sprint Share Out

- **Share your experiences from gaining the perspectives of others** or **what you have planned to gain those perspectives**

- **How did you capture what you learned?**

- **What is one important thing your data helped you learn?**

- **What ideas do you have from what you learned?**

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Questions?

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Great design starts with *us*.

Next Steps

Create a team

January 2026

Attend Virtual Sessions and Co-Creation

Connected to Adults January 28

Connected to Peers February 11

Connected to Purpose February 25

Connected to a Welcoming Place March 11

Office Hours

March 25

Virtual Showcase

April 29

https://www.redesign.every1graduates.org/student-connectedness-project/

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What About Social Media?

Citation	Keypoint	Takeaway
Kelly, et al (2023)	The quality of peer relationships matter for well-being and peer-relationship quality.	It's not just how much you're online — how you use it *and who you connect with* makes a difference.
Valkenburg, et al (2024)	For ages 10-18, increased social media use predicted *more* time with offline friends and did *not* show a clear negative effect on social skills — although teens with high social anxiety did show reduced social skills.	Using social media didn't automatically hurt in-person friendships — in many cases it helped stay connected — but if you're already anxious it might be tougher.
Angelini, et al (2022)	Different perceived social media features impact friendship quality, both directly and via online social support and emotional expression.	The kinds of tools on social media (how you post, share feelings, support friends) *and* how you use them matter for how strong your friendships are.

How Can Students Support Each Other Positively Online?

Whole Group

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thank you

please don't forget
the importance of
human connection
in a world that is so
driven by follows
and likes.

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