



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 a Welcoming Place

March 11, 2026

Welcome

The 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 student is connected to an adult, peers, purpose, and a welcoming space.

Season 4

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

Who is in the room?



Connection Circle

Please introduce yourself by sharing your name, school, and state. Then, tell us what space makes a school feel welcoming to you.

Connected to a Welcoming Space - where everyone feels welcome and supported

Our Time Together

- Reflect on how welcoming spaces build belonging, agency, and connectedness
- Consider how you, your peers, and others can positively contribute to creating a welcoming environment
- Design Sprint update: Where is your team in the design process?

For Today's Session

Please have: a pen, paper, or computer to capture notes, and courage to share!



Over 75% of ancient handprints in European cave art were created by women. These prehistoric women acted as artists, hunters, and creators of early symbolic, calendar-like markings on cave walls and stone



What does the research say?



Research consistently shows

Welcoming school environments improve academic performance and strengthen students' social and emotional well-being.

Intentional efforts—such as nurturing supportive relationships and promoting safety and inclusion—create the conditions for students to thrive.

What does the research say?



Welcome to a space where your voice matters, your ideas count, and your potential is limitless

Putting research into practice

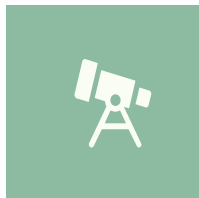
Research consistently shows



“These are your two days to learn about our campus, to figure out where classrooms are, and to learn who the teachers are-and not just on a surface level...they come away with a good sense of who to turn to if they hit a rough patch. Plus, they get to know upper-class students-who volunteer to help newcomers get their sea legs”

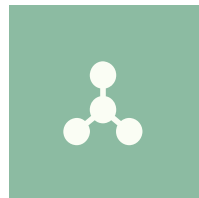
-Alex Adelman, Principal of the Greene School, Rhode Island

Research



Agency

You have power,
choice, and voice to
help create a
welcoming space



Belonging

A culture of
belonging and
respect creates a
safe, trusting, and
supportive
environment



Connectedness

We are part of
something bigger
when sharing
meaningful
experiences in a
welcoming space

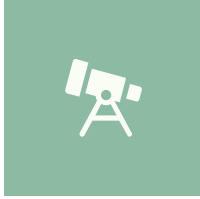
Recall a time when you were in a place that felt welcoming to you



How might you describe it?

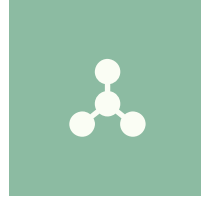
How did it make it you feel?

Our experiences are connected to school success



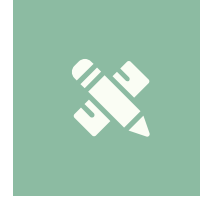
Attendance

Attendance goes up and less days are missed



Behavior

Class engagement increases



Course Performance

Grades improve and students feel successful

Do students at your school experience a welcoming place?



Imagine every classroom in your school was a welcoming place

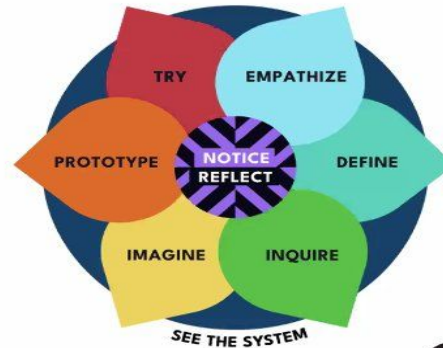
What would we see happening differently?

Large Group Share Out

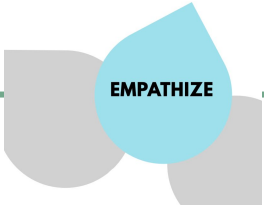


Design Sprint Challenge

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

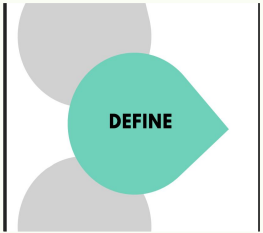


Design Sprint

A light blue teardrop shape with the word "EMPATHIZE" inside, set against a background of overlapping grey circles.

Gain Multiple Perspectives

How might students feel more connected at school?

A teal teardrop shape with the word "DEFINE" inside, set against a background of overlapping grey circles.

Define the Challenge

How might we help students feel more connected at school?

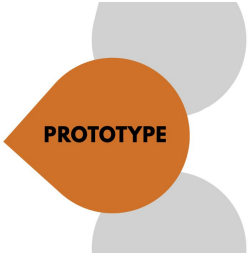
What might make our relationships stronger?

A yellow teardrop shape with the word "IMAGINE" inside, set against a background of overlapping grey circles.

Ideate

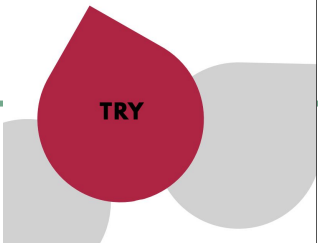
Build on each other's ideas.

Design Sprint

An orange teardrop shape pointing left, containing the word "PROTOTYPE" in white capital letters. It is positioned over a light gray abstract shape.

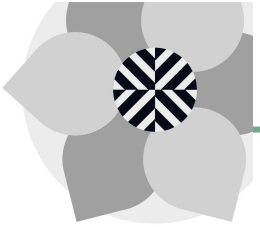
Prototype

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

A red teardrop shape pointing down, containing the word "TRY" in white capital letters. It is positioned over a light gray abstract shape.

Try

Try your idea.

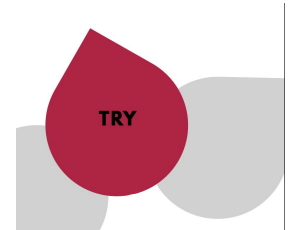
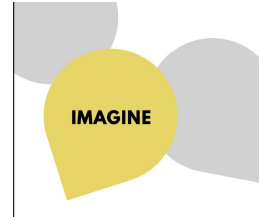
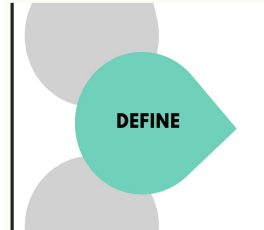
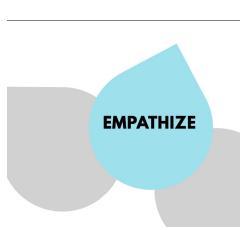
A circular icon with a black and white spiral pattern in the center, surrounded by light gray abstract shapes. The word "REFLECT" is written in black capital letters below the icon.

Reflect

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

Design Sprint Snapshot

Which stage best describes where your team is at today?



Learning
more about
your peers
experiences

Deciding
what to do

Developing
ideas

Trying out an
idea

Design Sprint Share Out

- Share your experiences from gaining the perspectives of others or how you have planned to gain those perspectives
- How did you capture? What have you learned?
- What is one important thing your data helped you learn? DEFINE THE CHALLENGE
- What ideas do you have from what you learned? HOW MIGHT WE. . .





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

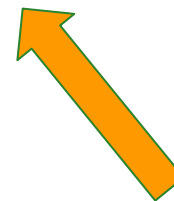
Connected to a
Welcoming Place
March 11

Office
Hours

March 25

Virtual
Showcase

April 29



thank
you

Your Tango

If you have a
strong purpose in life,
you don't have
to be pushed.
**Your passion will
drive you there.**

ROY T. BENNETT



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The Everyone Graduates Center Team



[www.redesign.every1graduates.org
/student-connectedness-project/](http://www.redesign.every1graduates.org/student-connectedness-project/)

EVERYONE
GRADUATES
CENTER

References

- <https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/guiding-principles.pdf> US Department of Education, Guiding Principles for Creating Safe, Inclusive, Supportive, and Fair School Climates, March 2023.
- [The Cost of Innovation: Why True Transformation Requires A Season of Grief | Getting Smart](#) Heidi Vissia, March 3, 2026
- [So, Your District Wants Personalized Learning... Where Do You Start? | Getting Smart](#), Rebecca Midles, Mar 2, 2026
- <https://www.cdc.gov/healthy-youth/what-works-in-schools/safe-supportive-school-environments.html> November 29, 2024.