

Culture By Design: Building an Environment Where Youth Thrive

Research and Resource Guide

Introduction

This research and resource guide summarizes lessons from the session, provides additional topical resources to further develop your application of the topic, and offers research to expand your knowledge.

Lessons from the Session

Culture By Design shows you how to create a positive environment where youth actually want to be by including youth voice and choice in program elements leading to sense of belonging.

Rules vs. Norms

Rules are expectations set by an organization or program leadership and are enforceable through consequences. Norms are commitments both collaboratively developed by and agreed upon by youth for a desired program culture.

Youth Voice and Choice

Youth voice is young people's expression of their own values, beliefs, opinions, and the integration of their voice and choice (decisions) into your program and activities.

Sense of Belonging

A young person's sense of belonging has a great impact on their engagement in your program. Belonging is all about feeling accepted, included, and supported. Belonging transforms youth from passive participants into active contributors. When youth feel genuinely valued for who they are – not just compliant behavior – they're more likely to engage authentically, support their peers, and develop the social-emotional skills that lead to success in school, work, and life.

Resources and Tools

- [10 Practices to Support Youth Voice](#)¹

¹ *10 Practices to support Youth Voice* – National Youth Leadership Council. (2023, August 8).
<https://nylc.org/10-practices-to-support-youth-voice/>

- [A Supportive Classroom Environment](#)²
- [5 Key Components of Student Belonging](#)³
- [The Importance of Student Sense of Belonging](#)⁴
- [50 Classroom Norms for All Ages](#)⁵

Research and Readings

- [What are the Key Elements of a Positive Learning Environment?](#)⁶
- [Impact of Belonging in Out-of-School Time Learning](#)⁷
- [Student Voice and Choice Within After School Activities](#)⁸
- [Simple Ways to Promote Student Voice in the Classroom](#)⁹
- [Establishing Classroom Norms to Enhance Students' Collective Efficacy](#)¹⁰

² *A supportive classroom environment - Casel Schoolguide.* (2024, October 31). Casel Schoolguide. <https://schoolguide.casel.org/focus-area-3/classroom/a-supportive-classroom-environment/>

³ *5 Key components of student belonging in Higher Ed | EAB.* (n.d.). EAB. <https://eab.com/resources/infographic/5-components-of-student-belonging/>

⁴ Regional Educational Laboratory Midwest. (n.d.). The importance of student sense of belonging. In *Institute of Education Sciences.* <https://ies.ed.gov/rel-midwest/2025/01/student-sense-belonging>

⁵ Drew, C., PhD. (2023, December 14). *50 classroom norms for all ages.* helpfulprofessor.com. <https://helpfulprofessor.com/classroom-norms/>

⁶ Rusticus, S. A., Pashootan, T., & Mah, A. (2022). What are the key elements of a positive learning environment? Perspectives from students and faculty. *Learning Environments Research*, 26(1), 161–175. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10984-022-09410-4>

⁷ Alliance, G. B. F. A. (n.d.). *Impact of belonging in out-of-school time learning.* Afterschool Alliance. https://afterschoolalliance.org/afterschoolSnack/Impact-of-belonging-in-out-of-school-time-learning_12-11-2023.cfm

⁸ Balezos, K. (2019). Student voice and choice within after school activities. *University of Massachusetts Amherst.* <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/entities/publication/4843a3b3-5e0c-4b75-802f-c8f7164713f8>

⁹ Pandolpho, B. (2020, March 10). *Simple ways to promote student voice in the classroom.* Edutopia. <https://www.edutopia.org/article/simple-ways-promote-student-voice-classroom/>

¹⁰ Adams, A. (2024, January 24). *Establishing classroom norms to enhance students' collective efficacy.* Edutopia. <https://www.edutopia.org/article/creating-classroom-norms-students/>