



BELONGING TEACHER MANUAL

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

Belonging means building meaningful, compassionate relationships with ourselves, other people, and the wider world we are part of. Wayfinder's Belonging Toolkit is a 7th-9th grade curriculum designed to support students to practice belonging in their lives.

- + 50+ lessons to build belonging
- + 100+ hours of in-class programming
- + 25-minute lessons designed to fit into advisory or weekly class
- + Kit of classroom tools to create a safe and structured container for learning
- + Digital and physical student toolkit with frameworks, journal prompts, and reflection tools
- + Plug-and-play, flexible use curriculum
- + Use as a standalone curriculum or as a precursor to Wayfinder's Purpose Toolkit

Curriculum Connections

The Belonging Toolkit integrates the following conceptual frameworks to meet the needs of 21st century students:

- + CASEL's Core SEL Competencies
- + Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- + Social science and psychology research
- + Social media and screen time
- + Connection to place and the natural world
- + Mindfulness and compassion practices

Curriculum Components

Belonging Check-ins // Belonging Check-Ins are structured meetings designed for students to regularly check-in about their relationships with themselves, each other, and the wider world. The Belonging Check-In Kit is designed as a set of digital cards that allows educators (and their students) to customize each check-in by choosing from our menu of effective and developmentally appropriate protocols.



1. **Welcome Ritual** // Welcome Rituals are brief (1-4 mins) activities to begin a Belonging Check-In. They create a clearly delineated start and allow everyone to acknowledge and greet one another.
2. **Experiences** // Experiences are brief activities that support students to enter the mindset necessary to fully engage in this class. Many of the activities involve movement and play, while others encourage moments of calm and stillness.
3. **Personal Exchanges** // Personal Exchanges make up the majority of Belonging Check-Ins, emphasizing the importance of both sharing with others and listening to others.
4. **Closing Rituals** // Closing Rituals are brief activities that create a clearly delineated end to the meeting. They allow the group to reflect on their experience during the session and synthesize what they heard, learned, and felt.

Foundational Lessons // Foundational Lessons are meant to explicitly establish the foundation for a safe and open classroom culture where students feel they belong. The goal of these 13 lessons is for students to connect with their peers, express their needs, and learn to be in community together. Lessons are organized into four modules:

1. **Assessing Our Needs** // Assessing belonging needs and challenges students are facing.
2. **Learning about Each Other** // Connecting with each other in relaxed, fun, and engaging ways.
3. **Understanding Belonging** // Experientially introducing Wayfinder's philosophy of belonging.
4. **Practicing Agreements** // Establishing classroom norms to safely and effectively learn and grow.

Skill Building Lessons // Skill-Building Lessons are activities and frameworks to deepen students' understanding and practice of belonging. They are meant to be facilitated weekly after Foundational Lessons have been completed. All Skill-Building Lessons are accompanied by Deeper Dive activities (projects, journaling prompts, media, classroom activities) which allow educators to extend each lesson. The 37 Skill-Building Lessons are arranged into 10 modules across 3 chapters:

1. **Belonging With Ourselves** // Students explore their identity and values, helpful and unhelpful habits, emotional awareness and regulation skills, and strategies for dealing with pressures from school, friends, and family.
2. **Belonging With Each Other** // Students explore how they might deepen their current relationships, widen their circle of belonging through empathy and inclusivity, developing new relationships, and draw on social support to help them through challenges.



3. **Belonging in the Wider World** // Students explore how they might build meaningful relationships with the places they inhabit, the natural world, and the human species of which they are a part.

BELONGING PRINCIPLES

The Wayfinder Belonging Toolkit guides students to deepen their relationships with themselves, each other, and the wider world. Our understanding of belonging is grounded in four principles:

Belonging is more than a *feeling*.

Belonging is *practice* you can build.

Belonging is a basic human need. Belonging means feeling accepted for who we are and feeling that we are a valuable part of something larger than ourselves. Belonging (whether it is with other people or a place) makes us feel safe and rooted.

However, by emphasising the “feeling” of belonging, we can often forget that belonging is also a practice we can develop. Belonging is not a *passive feeling* we either have or do not have, it is an *active practice* we can engage in by building connections--nurturing relationships with other people, paying attention to and participating in the places we inhabit, and building a caring relationship with ourselves.

Belonging is more than connecting with people *similar* to you.

Belonging is valuing one another, despite our *differences*.

Belonging often feels easier to build with people who are similar to us. When we connect over what we share in common, it helps us to feel understood. Finding areas of overlap in our experiences, interests, and beliefs, supports us to build the bridges with other people that are vital to belonging.

True belonging means increasing our capacity for connection so that it reaches across difference in addition to building upon what we share. Meeting difference with a curious and appreciative mind widens our conception of belonging, allowing us to recognize that belonging is possible across the rich tapestry of humanity.



Belonging is not about *fitting in*.

Belonging is having the *courage to be true to yourself* and supporting others to do the same.

Our desire to belong is so strong that sometimes we feel we need to conform to be accepted. But when we change or hide parts of ourselves to fit in, we end up with a false sense of belonging. Because we are not being authentic, we feel disconnected from the people with whom we sought connection. And because we've made the decision that only some parts of us are acceptable while others are not, we feel disconnected from ourselves.

Belonging doesn't require us to change ourselves; it requires us to be honest with ourselves—about who we are, what matters to us, what we like, what we don't like, what we think, what we feel, what we fear, what we dream. Learning to accept and love all of the parts of ourselves and to share them with the world is a courageous act that allows us to practice belonging wherever we go.

In turn, belonging requires us to meet other people with the same acceptance and love so they feel free to be themselves too. When we can show up in the world as ourselves, and support others to do the same, we have laid the foundations for true belonging.

Belonging is not about *ownership*.

Belonging is about being a *part* of something.

Belonging is often misunderstood to mean ownership of things, people, or places—"They belong to me, this belongs to us." This view comes from the belief that people and the natural world are commodities to be utilized and traded. Underlying this belief is the cultural story that each of us is a separate individual, and that the human species is separate from the rest of the natural world.

However, another way to understand belonging is that each of us *belongs to* the human family, and the human family *belongs to* the larger community of the natural world. Belonging understood in this way positions us within a vast and interconnected web of life that precedes us by billions of years. Our success is determined by our ability to nurture reciprocal relationships within this web. To forget that we are part of it is to alienate ourselves from the belonging upon which our lives depend.



RESOURCES OVERVIEW

Belonging Check-in Kit // Belonging Check-Ins are structured meetings designed for students to regularly check-in about their relationships with themselves, each other, and the wider world. Designed as a set of digital cards, the kit allows educators (and their students) to customize each check-in by choosing from our menu of effective and developmentally appropriate activities.

Classroom Culture Kit // In order to effectively facilitate the Belonging Toolkit, educators must create a classroom culture of belonging. Designed as a set of digital cards, the Classroom Culture Kit includes tips for meaningfully connecting with students, tools for student engagement, and protocols for sharing and debriefing.

Lesson Guides // Lesson Guides provide concise step-by-step facilitation instructions for each of the 50 lessons in the toolkit. Each Guide provides a concise overview of the relevant academic research that informs the lesson's design.

Slide Decks // Lessons with more complex instructions include accompanying Google Slides presentations to support the ease of facilitation. These slide decks can be used for both in-person and distance learning contexts.

Deeper Dive Activities // At the end of each lesson guide are Deeper Dive activities to extend the 25-minute lesson or explore the topic more deeply over the course of several lessons. Deeper Dive activities come in a variety of formats such as projects, journaling prompts, media, classroom activities, and COVID-specific reflections which offer students a diverse range of ways to practice the skills of belonging.

HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE BELONGING TOOLKIT

Curriculum Flexibility

The Belonging Toolkit has been carefully designed with flexibility in mind. Here are some guidelines to help you choose which Foundational and Skill-Building lessons to facilitate and when.

FOUNDATIONAL LESSONS // We recommend that you start by facilitating the Foundational lessons in the order presented below.



Assessing Our Needs	Highly Recommended
Learning About Each Other	Choose 1-3 lessons depending on the rapport between students in your class
Understanding Belonging	Highly recommended to complete the full module in order
Practicing Agreements	Choose 1-4 lessons based on your students' familiarity with upholding community agreements and if they chose these topics as their community agreement

SKILL BUILDING LESSONS //

1. We recommend that you facilitate the chapters in the module in the order they are presented: Belonging With Ourselves, Belonging With Each Other, Belonging in the Wider World.
2. If you cannot facilitate all of the lessons from each module, we recommend that focus on modules that are most relevant to students, based on the student responses you receive on the Belonging Assessment, and the Step In, Step Back lesson.
3. When you have chosen to facilitate a module, it is highly recommended that you facilitate every lesson in each module in the order presented.

LEVELS // Each lesson is classified as Level 1, 2 or 3 based on the complexity of the lesson's concepts, and the required depth of existing trust between and with your students.

- + **Level 1:** Lessons are relatively simple, more accessible to younger students, and don't require much vulnerability from students.
- + **Level 2:** Lessons introduce concepts that some students may be familiar with, and require some trust-building between students.
- + **Level 3:** Lessons explore more complex concepts, and require a relatively deeper sense of trust among students.

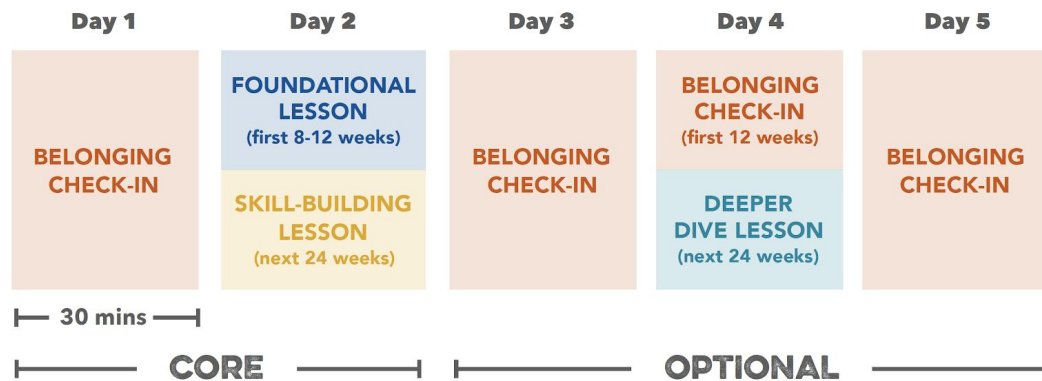
Designing Your Syllabus

Below are our recommendations for implementing the toolkit in advisory and as a standalone weekly class.

ADVISORY // 2-5 classes/week, 20-30 minutes each



If implemented in advisory, we recommend using the Belonging Toolkit at least two days a week where the first class each week is a Belonging Check-In followed by a Foundational or Skill-Building Lesson. If using the toolkit for more than 2 days, we recommend adding classes in the order below.



WEEKLY BELONGING CLASS // 1 class/week, 45-60 minutes each

If implemented as a weekly standalone class, we recommend that the Belonging Toolkit is used at least once a week for a 45-60 minute lesson. The first half of the class would be a Belonging Check-In followed by a Foundational Lesson (first 8-12 weeks) or Skill-Building Lesson (next 24 weeks).

