## The Classroom Belonging Scale

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## The Classroom Belonging Scale

Introduction

Research has shown that the relationship a student has with their teacher is a powerful predictor of their sense of belonging to school. The *Classroom Belonging Scale* is designed to measure the student-teacher relationship. The scale was developed by Dr Allen and her colleague, Dr Vicki McKenzie, at the University of Melbourne in 2013. The questions give an indication of the students’ perception of the quality of their relationship with the teacher. By administering the survey, it also makes a clear statement to the students that the teacher cares about them and wants to work at building a positive relationship.

Instructions

The Classroom Belonging Scale is provided on the next page. Administer the survey to the students in their class. The survey may be re-administered each term to assess whether responses have changed over time.

Introduce the survey using the following script:

"As a teacher, it is important for me to develop a good relationship with my students, helping you to connected to our school. To help me better understand your experiences, I would like to collect some information on how you are getting along in this class. There are 9 questions to answer that will help me improve my teaching practices and our classroom environment. Please read each statement carefully and then rate how strongly you agree. There are no right or wrong answers, but it will be most useful to me if you indicate how you honestly feel. I will use your responses to help me improve my own practices to be as supportive as possible."

**The Classroom Belonging Scale**

*Please take a moment and rate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. Please be honest – there are no right or wrong answers.*

**I have a good relationship with my teacher.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Strongly disagree |  | Disagree |  | Neither agree nor disagree |  | Agree |  | Strongly agree |

**My teacher is fair and treats all students in a constructive and positive way.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Strongly disagree |  | Disagree |  | Neither agree nor disagree |  | Agree |  | Strongly agree |

**My teacher allows me to have a say and share my ideas and thoughts with my class.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Strongly disagree |  | Disagree |  | Neither agree nor disagree |  | Agree |  | Strongly agree |

**My teacher respects me.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Strongly disagree |  | Disagree |  | Neither agree nor disagree |  | Agree |  | Strongly agree |

**My teacher expects that I will do well.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Strongly disagree |  | Disagree |  | Neither agree nor disagree |  | Agree |  | Strongly agree |

**My teacher is friendly and likeable.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Strongly disagree |  | Disagree |  | Neither agree nor disagree |  | Agree |  | Strongly agree |

**My teacher cares for me and is available to listen and support me beyond my schoolwork**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Strongly disagree |  | Disagree |  | Neither agree nor disagree |  | Agree |  | Strongly agree |

**The work I am doing with my teacher is valuable and helpful for my future goals**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Strongly disagree |  | Disagree |  | Neither agree nor disagree |  | Agree |  | Strongly agree |

**My teacher is available for help with my work.**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Strongly disagree |  | Disagree |  | Neither agree nor disagree |  | Agree |  | Strongly agree |

Making Sense of the Results

The questions can be considered separately, or the user might calculate an overall belonging score. To do this, the responses are scored as:

1 = strongly disagree

2 = disagree

3 = neither agree nor disagree

4 = agree

5 = strongly agree

Give each question a score, then calculate the mean (add up the numbers and divide by 9). This gives an overall indication of classroom belonging.

After receiving responses, the teacher should spend some time reflecting on how the students responded, both the students as a whole and individuals within the class. How many students agreed or strongly agreed with the questions, and how many disagreed or were uncertain? Are specific students more connected than others? Are there specific questions where scores were especially high or low? How do you feel about the results?

Beyond proceeding with the additional activities in this module, the teacher might also consider if there are specific strategies that might be helpful, especially if one or two areas are particularly low or concerning. Fortunately, there are a lot of resources available online and around the school that can be helpful. For instance:

* If students rate relationships, likeability, and caring low, the teacher might consider spending more time working on their rapport with students.
* If fairness and respect are low, the teacher might want to rethink their disciplinary practices and consider involving students in setting classroom rules, boundaries and consequences.
* If expectations are low, then teachers should ensure they are clearly articulating hat they believe the students can achieve personal success over their learning. It may also be worth discussing school policies so students are clear early on what the school expectations are.
* If values are low, the teacher might want to try to make the value of each lesson particularly clear to the students.
* If academic support is low, it may be worth reflecting on why this could be the case. Is it low due to time pressure? Or unavailability to students outside of class? What support can leadership provide to rectify this issue? Are students encouraged to email questions or questions?

Notes for Success

The responses from students should remain confidential and should be used only to develop an understanding of the students’ perceptions and for teacher self-reflection on their own practices. While the user may wish to discuss the results with a supervisor, mentor, or colleagues, responses should not be used by school leadership for any other purpose (e.g., performance reviews) than for what it was originally intended. The responses are for the teacher’s information only, designed to facilitate reflection on the areas that may be maintained or improved.

Although the scale is designed primarily for a group setting with a teacher, it can also be used for an individual session with a student. The student may wish to rate/discuss each item with a counsellor or teacher and talk through each of the points.

For a mental health professional, the student could be asked to give some examples (e.g., can you think of a time when you were not listened to? How did you feel? What could you have done?). The feedback might be kept confidential, or the mental health professional (with the student’s permission and within the boundaries of confidentiality) may act as an advocate and share the student’s perceptions with a teacher concerned.