

# BELONGING

## Teachers College

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY



## Episode #00: The Belonging Podcast

(INTRO MUSIC)

**SOPHIA ACQUISTO:** In our 2022 survey of 300 students across 40 states in the U.S, 60% of students do not feel a sense of belonging in school. And only 1% of students agreed that teachers in their school can handle incidents of bias. What are the consequences? Why is belonging important?

Welcome, listeners, to Project Belonging, where we answer these questions, talking to teachers and leaders in the education field about building students' sense of belonging.

I'm Sophia Acquisto. I'm an elementary teacher, a graduate student at Teachers College at Columbia University, and I am a part of the Project Belonging team also here at Columbia University.

**SOPHIA:** So what is Project Belonging? Project Belonging is a program run by Columbia University to help develop students' sense of belonging in school through student-driven team-based projects. We partner with middle and high schools to teach students that empathy and storytelling are crucial in increasing a sense of belonging for them and their peers. It prevents students from feeling isolated, being victims of bullying, feeling what we call educationally displaced, and possibly becoming instigators of hate and targeted violence.

This podcast is another channel to raise awareness of this important issue, have a genuine dialogue with teachers, listen to their stories, and help our listeners make our schools more connected in their communities to be resilient to hate.

This podcast will feature talks with our incredible executive director of Project Belonging, Dr. Amra-Sabic-El-Rayess, a Columbia professor, scholar, author, and survivor of the Bosnian genocide. I look forward to talking with her about what belonging means to her and its importance in positively representing students, creating empathetic and inclusive classrooms, and building resilience through education to prevent hate and violence. We'll also have discussions with other experts in the education field.

**SOPHIA:** If you are a teacher or someone who works with youth who is listening and think you have a story to share related to our work, please reach out to us!

If you want to talk about a time a student in your class or community was struggling with finding a sense of belonging, or a time perhaps when you were a student and had a teacher that said just the right thing that inspires you today in how you include students in activities, we would love to hear your stories. Please contact us through [projectbelonging.org](https://projectbelonging.org).

We look forward to sharing Project Belonging's work with you!

**(OUTRO MUSIC)**