Tracey ([00:00](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=PpGsHGiyv5KJdydg6mv5oHJLTWCGVn6SknNLSXdyI0ewsLKSsoFKG0pzhJ6-1uy_qCbp92nDO7pkG6YqZtIhj3WFXTI&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=0.69)):

Hello, and welcome to NC State's Audio Abstract. I'm your host Tracey Peake. The holy grail for teachers is a classroom full of engaged and attentive students, but sometimes the classroom environment itself can be a barrier to that outcome. We're speaking today with DeLeon Gray, associate professor of education psychology and equity here at NC State, about the concept of belonging and the effect it can have on Black and Latino students in particular. Welcome, DeLeon.

DeLeon ([00:31](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=9nsV1d9hLD4IrGmcGEglRE_opD1MOPpsqIQ1nSVCKRUGbHhzlvhfhTURSGYGEhSdMyQib3jYxFA5lSd4t4lgJd3XgfA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=31.71)):

Thank you for having me.

Tracey ([00:33](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=lfD1OwUQNELEP8bbD3RjIFtA6PNcAH9k9VrvBmGyGbD-tebAycqfDpts0Pkco1nHpCyL-n7A3_YCDh4P5-kHfQXwOeY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=33)):

I am very glad that you're here. Let's get started by defining what you mean when you talk about a feeling of belonging in a classroom. What does that look like?

DeLeon ([00:44](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=2NfCWXyL4RxmuMuMCpIwgD4gICcEL9cJWFgnznuf-iKbfirCfqJP3zTmeqiKie5N_xwFpp_ppY9Mt6-o1EVmV7LpLj4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=44.16)):

Belonging, according to my field, educational psychology, means acceptance, respect, inclusion, and support. It's the sense of psychological membership that a student may have to their classroom or school community. I'm thinking about belonging in terms of the school environment primarily. Now, there are decades of research that talk about the impact that belonging can have on people, whether it's cognitive decrements, when you don't experience belonging, or better health conditions when you do experience belonging.

DeLeon ([01:21](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=gs9TjFk5KCcVBYYR2X_dksKKpcZ-D3ukuhYXPyT6sV5T-mdpiFEftkS23wt6E38RCxV7pi6I0BFJKAHoqz4h0LlFp5c&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=81.99)):

But that also translates into the school environment. But it is also uniquely experienced by students from marginalized communities and from marginalized identity groups. The reason why is because there may have been historical experiences that people before them might have had around a place or being told even physically, if we think back to the '50s, '60s, or even before, "Hey, you don't belong here in this school." But there are still historical traces of that to this day.

DeLeon ([01:50](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=OYVohswoqUNfWCyQEnhzGeO6GpdncZOAo-3fJ-BVpyqVYt2DyMAEO_O3eTZfbf8yu7bE-7wlKU7z52zXpvP7Pe0h4Qg&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=110.94)):

By belonging in my definition, according to my framework, there are three main areas of belonging, and I think of them at a structural level.

DeLeon ([02:12](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=B1w7G98oyHPawGi8fn_yN44nZTicDluToap2iQRmcNLl3buVA38VwqXvis4xdSvuwIb0XcVQHvIN8FMNPGjIXdVBsbY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=132.51)):

One is this idea of interpersonal opportunity structures, which is what teachers typically think about, which is relations to one another and connections to one another, interpersonal bonds, if you will. But then there's also the notion of interpersonal opportunity structures and instructional opportunity structures. Instructional opportunity structures are a chance to get in touch with your ancestral heritage and/or your community through your learning experiences in the classroom. The third is this idea of institutional opportunity structures, which is the idea that I get to practice being a citizen with full rights in this learning space, in this environment, in the school. The idea there is if we want students to be citizens and to push our country forward in the future, then they must have an opportunity to practice being citizens with rights inside of the school. That looks like representation on different boards and committees that are really making decisions about how the school is run and what the school decides to do with its investment in the community.

Tracey ([03:22](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=tUVjoG2mfqNmND4ijME4_xF2ylT_655PrYhOOhFsjF9xW6zIoRauPHrqWrWVG5zqwrQSl0jjf5U5YLdz2Tb997cpcc4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=202.02)):

Now, what are some of the examples in the classroom, you touched on this a little bit, of a situation within a classroom that might negatively impact belonging, that might make a student feel as though they're being marginalized or othered, even though that may not be the intent of the instructor?

DeLeon ([03:41](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=6yf6qTf9prrS-Og0oaBOqkwPP44vkWY6cZp1a8SJO9qKw8gR-1vcajjhws9X9Uj5cUT7i0zMNC-3nFRjmMRXSErD77A&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=221.94)):

One of the first and easiest ways I think about this question is around how a teacher responds to a student's mistakes that they may make. It's no doubt that we want students to be able to have learning experiences, and mistakes are a part of the learning process, but how we correct those can signal safety or they can make students feel like the environment is unsafe for them or, "Man, should I even be in this environment?"

DeLeon ([04:07](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=datcnQx2aM1z_bsCiJWes8M_bf7Cn4u0j8fFKwTUgfk-mCzXbuYYbb1Ao4WLA7BGanu7tdsmburMFxAoPVczR4uuUqg&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=247.65)):

An example of things on the negative end there would be if a student is having difficulty, making them feel like they are somehow deficient in a way for having some sort of difficulty. But even in the way you provide assistance and support, "Would you like some extra support? Let me show you how to do this. Here's a way that I've seen other students do it." Or, "Do you need some help?" That intonation can suggest that there's something wrong with me. Sometimes the very same approach, even if it has good intentions, can land differently on different students based on how it's delivered by an educator.

DeLeon ([04:49](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=CaaC_v1itAz7mRvcFmpiidzNzSe_aGcQjSX76-swLZQytJGJvwnEbg1qIWOoCB_M4i80eqdvm3zuprhkxtIQDzbM6EA&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=289.59)):

Another example might be if the teacher is making all of the decisions that don't really reflect the way students experience the world or think about things. The more we engage students' expertise in the classroom, the more likely we are to allow them to feel like, "This environment is built especially for me." The third one that we can think of most easily is, if we're talking about things that students don't think that they'll ever use in their life, "Get me out of here. This is not an environment for me. I'm not being fed intellectually, and I don't see how this relates to my everyday experience." But some other areas are, if we're providing high standards for students, what are the guardrails emotionally that we're providing with encouragement to say that they can reach the high standards?

DeLeon ([05:40](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=O1IeuxPd2dkFnAGS1uR6ybU64RcFK4zQLu7OL0FQ9mpfGjMwM7jH3LCVW2_olNzF4SXQTFQGEkadnL_F23MLdhUGIME&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=340.65)):

Getting your English paper back with a bunch of red ink on it is something that can really be traumatizing for students. But what that red ink says about your potential and let's achieve these standards, you can reach these standards. It really sets the bar. Finally, social and emotional bridging is very important. So, making connections with students' culture, something as simple as allowing students to DJ. And when you play music inside of the room, having other kids be in charge of the vibe that's established in the class. All of that can signal that, "This environment is for me and I should be here and I'm considered."

Tracey ([06:21](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=X15pIlWLdueRfIZg-E2RwIe7hoKwn4MkRW8clpoQhqvnYOi7mIBxiqvorxvtjkppreIfve5i-aLEw1LCe7ZMRyx7Twg&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=381.24)):

Okay. Can we drill down a little bit on some of the examples you gave there, where we're talking specifically about things that... Like a particular child's areas of expertise. What would that look like in a classroom?

DeLeon ([07:04](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=iEOq79APcg6PDaMD3OVgt_BkCWWyjnPbbV9msVH_M0OY9aBACT5xeCroneT8M39mrRs6Hymen7cfkXr7f855SaaSPKk&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=424.74)):

Yeah, that's a great question. There's a couple different ways. The first that comes to mind most easily for me is around academic content. There may be students who are a bit ahead of other students. So, engaging those students and not letting them be bored while one focuses on remediation is a good strategy. So, "Can you please show us how you solve this particular problem?" Allowing that student to have the stage, but not leaving that student alone, where if that student goes up there and they make a mistake, putting the onus on the class to make sure that that student is able to see things all the way through. So, we're not going to leave our buddy Johnny hanging in the front of the classroom. So, "You know what? Who has something to say? Who can lend him a hand, and give him a hint and give him a clue right now?" We all work together to solve this problem because we're getting to this destination together. That's one way.

DeLeon ([08:04](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=mbfxGIAKg890BIN2fDcRNhtDilRrVhlrmHtuEkb-VxQ8Fm1A256re1pNzbOPZFMu0uXLbiVxJQnFREANK9JUvCzvgM4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=484.98)):

But also, expertise does not have to always do with content knowledge. Sometimes it's about knowledge about the world. There's different ways of knowing. We can know things emotionally. We can know things academically. We can also just bring different ways of cultural knowing inside of the classroom. So, the different ways a group might solve a problem, different ways students might even cook or prepare food at home, different music that we listen to. What source or information source did you hear that information from? These different ways of knowing provide us with different ways to reach students and also sharing their knowledge systems that they bring to a problem. Whether it's them helping to provide context, them solving a problem, or them providing larger implications of the real world implications of what we're learning in class. There's opportunities from beginning to end to engage students' expertise and knowledge systems.

Tracey ([09:06](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=zhT6K91L7gDB1E9MsOMC3ZIPnHdkW5HUjNtY6R68K4Mt9G-ad1DWsefOYM5oWbFVvm092dRCZdinqqCGAPam5Gfzrrg&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=546.09)):

Okay. So, it's more on the teacher to be aware that the different students in her classroom or his classroom have different backgrounds and areas of expertise that they're bringing to bear, then creating an environment where everybody is contributing and we're working together as a whole group toward a goal, academic or emotional.

DeLeon ([09:29](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=9DcuVcxJYRXJo1k1K5jVy9BXlwT2xvTpSX-C_bMe-4U8dR0MOEAWSl7aejh3-zurluwiQtu7wf1T-Lr--_pFGWmiG0c&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=569.16)):

Absolutely. Let me add to that by just saying just even the idea of usefulness and thinking about, "When am I going to use this in my life?" These answers to that question don't always have to be teacher generated, but I as a student might not know why this information might be useful in my life, but my peer might. So, student generated recommendations for how this information could be useful can also go a long way, and it's more likely to stick when it comes from somebody who's learning with you than just from your teacher.

Tracey ([10:05](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=r5x_ZbvPMTNt6QfmpK2cxd-2QXxCkP9XiTw6Bd8Nk3rAQmehnCZPE2H2hL9qWFQjTmhlSrg_WcE9BY27wNcSwc5DjlE&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=605.1)):

Is there a particularly at-risk group in terms of the impact that feelings of belonging have on academic performance?

DeLeon ([10:19](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=LCXdWbs-bVxjl-Y4V7Bdi9ryxvRRoM_OwIu0LCAPavd92Q3_zDSDJLMDF9wYmaE3M8H95wsVo5syQSXT35uUoGK86O4&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=619.5)):

Well, I don't want to frame it as one group that is particularly at risk, but I do want to provide some trends. What we see developmentally is that students, when they're in elementary school, we see them exhibiting higher amounts of motivation, but when they hit middle school, their motivation tends to decline. So, there's something about that transition from elementary to middle school, where you're going from mainly one teacher or maybe a couple to about four different subjects that are core subjects and you have your elective courses, you don't have as much face time with one particular teacher. So, we see a lot of dips in their motivation, but we also see steeper declines in motivation around students of color. This is explained in part by their experiences of belonging.

Tracey ([11:24](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=6MXpiKSwkxqpL1xufzAaa__ePUxDs8qG5obPc7pRvDwtGmiGnSShEf6m0LAJ5_sOkT44CLo-x7vaQbUEwFJM9rt17Lk&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=684.75)):

Yeah, middle school is tough, for sure, for a lot of reasons. So we've touched a little bit on this, but particularly in, let's say, a middle school or a high school situation, where as a teacher you don't spend as much time with individual students as you do in an elementary situation. What are some good core strategies to foster a sense of belonging for all of your students?

DeLeon ([11:54](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=gj2322yz-HtxcZbx94Kf6aeErFgB9FVSMtCGtvgI35FIFSjtNpDyKBVIBIDWy67jap2V-7j9T2CmAqzL8Ay1FKEQ76o&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=714.66)):

Yeah. There's a couple things that educators can do. One of the biggest things that we can do is de-center teacher authority and provide opportunities for agency where students can express their perceptions of the direction of and pace of the learning environment. The flexible use of time is probably the most valuable thing the teacher can have control over and do to allow students to feel like they belong. When students feel rushed or they have to get on to a certain topic, it can make students feel like, "It's on me that I didn't catch the information in time."

DeLeon ([12:57](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=zSwV1peqSQaJ8Naz9E7GJBgknBxOGOVcQwd9eKI7P64pW_OutGM1HBzadUKp8wv_bRtAFr586pRVBMkrJOa59agp9bE&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=777.3)):

Another way that time is used flexibly is around different strategies that educators may use. Let's take this idea of communalism, which I define as serving the community, serving humanity, and preserving different life forms like plants, animals, and human beings, or serving one another in a classroom. Well, a teacher can provide communal learning opportunities to his or her students, but it might not look the same in every lesson. So, if we look across an instructional unit, there may be opportunities to do so on day one by just framing up front, before we jump into any of the new material, let's just stop and ask the purpose full question of, "How is this going to improve the lives of people who I see every day and that I care about?"

DeLeon ([13:46](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=gjIdwZ5pwUtvf7S-mE5s180TbaeDP3mrwhz7PW2IZcbokltJkkdlCwJMsiEYg35_DXr0ycZFqV_mKCkjABPHyAY6J_Y&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=826.77)):

Another way that educators can work on this is by allowing students to engage in activities first and then push the point of communalism once they get into the activity to help them generate ideas for how they can use this information that they're learning to be assets to their community. Now, the one thing that I want to say is that time is critical here because opportunities to frame things in terms of communalism or scaffold communalism may not present themselves in every lesson. So, you got to make sure it's dynamic, back and forth between what the students are giving and what opportunities that you see in the classroom for supporting communalism.

Tracey ([14:34](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=k-SRFNt_ojtiILJYlyD-jBJTqcRXoH6LsMmpnyaOQzV7U2I0D6-AWBdeZGSmMl7wrXskEuhD2bN4MqR24ZjraqABjB8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=874.41)):

It sounds more as though if you're fostering not just a kind of top-down model of education, where the teacher is super head person in charge, but making it a little bit more collaborative with the students, that goes a long way toward fostering this sense of belonging.

DeLeon ([15:30](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=siEBVZfFKpGofBiNNRaaBqX7xJLdRpWgBNjp4gWqE9XxKzdwlbG2ZDZZn1q0cM1pOaH4QUR85L14suKGKeJh5mugP98&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=930.87)):

Absolutely, just to build on that, when I think about belonging, it necessarily involves me and others. But when I think about the way sometimes classroom assignments or schools can be structured, we can really promote the notion of individualism from what do you understand? What do you know? Which there is a time and place for that. It can be difficult to emphasize the notion of communalism inside of a school, because you also have to scaffold a sense of weakness inside of a school. You can't just assume that students will work together magically by putting them in groups. You have to let them know, "Hey, look, I'm going to give you one of these materials, one of these materials, and one of these materials. You all get in there and work together and figure it out. Each one of you has a critical element that you need to solve this particular problem."

DeLeon ([16:35](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=b0hg8Wg8fB-5F1pI_UsuRwoJvXWHpAdRTR78e8KUSnIORhmgPokP_9JiFVkrs7qypxXdsALBHXy3CC2dC_OO6G798mM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=995.49)):

Or, "How come have your head down on the desk and the other students are still working in your group?" "Well, already finished." "Well, how is that you could be finished and you didn't lend a helping hand to the people around you? What does that say?" These types of signals and scaffolds allow students to really tap in to the notion of weakness and think collectively about the way they can help other people. The way I personally use it when I work directly with young people is I tell them that not only am I researcher, but people also call me from other places as a consultant. And as a consultant, what I'm typically doing is providing feedback to others. So, not only is this a skill that you should develop because it's just helpful to serve other people, but there's also value in this where you can feed your family by learning how to be a great helper to other people, and people seek out people who are a great help.

Tracey ([17:32](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=-9Q8Y_kEJpqQrXkcNZ-BiE59sOmu0cJ0jfEQzU3nbHWKbhKsC2pFabpeSaZakVbHW3EQXdm9wAaasLStzKQKJhhOIDg&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1052.73)):

Okay. Now, the research that we're talking about here today was conducted primarily with middle school students, Correct? Because they were the ones where you see the decline from elementary. Do you have any plans to maybe follow this cohort through high school? Do you have any data on whether belonging and academic performance level out after middle school, or is that a question that you would like to answer in the future?

DeLeon ([18:02](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=mvEVxiV4M2X80C1NHgmFffeAbLe2KbtnqvSFc_7iUxjaj90ZNH9rftm_b5--rKrGoVEJkmK2SrWPYMJfBduMqv_fSZM&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1082.19)):

There are a couple things to note here about this particular project. I adopt a community engaged philosophy when it comes to a lot of my research. So, I let the issues and problems emerge from the schools that I partner with. Me and my team, we work really hard to start by listening to the schools, figuring out their assets and strengths and what messages they really want to work with their students on to improve students' experiences. We custom build activities and research studies around that. The reason why that's important is because the next study that I build, it may not be a replication of what I did the last time, because this study was based on the school coming to me and saying, "We don't believe that our school climate surveys are good enough to share quality data back with our teachers. So, we need something that is specific to the classroom and not just a school climate measure overall that our district gives out."

DeLeon ([19:01](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=yb60HpzJ4CHvnPKvm4B4Y3vinkFskk448QrfaLge9eUveYzhrmWXaq8ruMsFBvOSdPsEjuYwY6r6M8C2uGS5PxJKIxk&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1141.71)):

So, we were remixing and reworking, which we had student input on and teacher input on, but some of those students who are part of that particular project and were giving feedback, are now in high school. Now, they're research team members with me. And one of them is even presenting next week at NC State, at our research exchange, we have a research cafe on the topic of belonging, he's going to give the opening keynotes. We like to keep them engaged, but not just as participants or subjects, but as partners who have their own voice and who should lead the conversation on belonging.

Tracey ([19:45](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=tU0qhUU7lbHvdMZ1v9L4Hy8csDkZXWFpSJYxzAB-q4fOyH55YzpPD_RE2-FIsWg-r2ywKmG8TU1XOAm_WxAb_lPbEw8&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1185.33)):

Well, that brings me to a couple of related questions. First of all, did the pandemic, were you able to measure how that might have affected this overall belonging thing? And it's fine if you weren't, we don't have to include that. But were you able to assess and see if the pandemic also had an impact on feelings of belonging? Is this more about maybe developing, going forward, generations of people who could maybe inform how we approach education as a whole?

DeLeon ([20:22](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=-YdIVXpxvtXSwNVyC0DjrQOoIjP1KcUif911V5-dvfRNlT3s_HJeZWvG28lv1XwUK7exrLx19wPPwHUTI6vfjirCw2o&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1222.59)):

Yeah. Two responses to that. The first around the pandemic is that we took a different approach on my team. We said, rather than collecting data to see how that pandemic is impacting schools and students, let's just take a pause on collecting data altogether. We're going to just roll up our sleeves and just ask schools, "How can we help?" We had an opportunity to see students struggle, unfortunately, with issues of wellness. We had an opportunity to see kids wrestle with the fact that they were not always learning academic content, that they felt reflected their own cultures.

DeLeon ([21:20](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=Wz2wG-zC7WkhR7WOtIZ9pfVNJowvaYjpDW55L3XX9apxS0curbgwinXqu9Ka76l3o634UBUTocWYNrPT_taPg-4ldVU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1280.67)):

We also saw them grapple with questions around society and the mistreatment of certain cultural groups inside of society and wanting space to process that information to understand what's possible for them or what they could do to make a society better in the future for people who look like them or people of other ethnic groups who might be harmed. So, by stopping the serve, we really got in tune with what students cared about most. Now, our interventions that we're designing moving forward are a lot more authentic to where students are right now.

DeLeon ([21:59](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=b-rkJX3Hoan7OMp_s1SaWu5pijz1_0shJWmmTS6gPkNegkfjUJzlFltvjsxgRi3Rd46XDK4svI0TST5m9Lq4QFP_w-I&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1319.79)):

Related to your other question, the real vision is to have students involved at every level of the research process, which is entirely different from the way most research is conducted, where we come up with a measure, we design a study ourselves, we write a grant, and if it gets funded, we go out and conduct this research on them. By conducting it with them, we're doing two things. One, we're giving them more exposure and access to university researchers and scholars. The second is we're providing a platform for them to share their voice and their decisions on how the world should be run.

DeLeon ([22:41](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=RAQ-7XRDKcFvW4j6hiyPmYB-668Qm6CALlrbZF4RsHmjuQJa7EA2NwLvmvMlrUFTqymRPm0KyIcxiIapn4FbxlYBQhg&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1361.85)):

One of my greatest feelings right now is the call that I got from a high school student who was excited about the research that he had done. Now, his principal wants him to conduct a professional development with teachers at his school based on the research that he did with us. He's already traveled to the American Educational Research Association, and he has done presentations at other universities like Duke University. So, having a different model for working directly with students on our projects has been what the pandemic has allowed us to pivot towards. Now, we're revving up with a whole new base of human resources behind us in our projects.

Tracey ([23:29](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=U8cH5G9Oqhzibz5H9P77fnC-e_a8adoxktdEkMFy4n43VXPlu9EDEZ_sTypMypwbUNaKa5gM4bv0NmUJzo-92xLIG8w&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1409.1)):

Okay. That sounds really great. So, it's not just students as the subject of your research, but actually involved in designing it, utilizing it, and implementing the findings in ways that will have positive impacts going forward.

DeLeon ([23:42](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=ui0juw7iCPPOzFW59qSxnKmXLE_gZZLCmQxfmipT2zCC4OVqM3p8kyow5WacjbU6B5X7zrGlTwBGJfwdrkS1FBquHog&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1422.48)):

That helps their peers know that whatever we're trying to research and uncover, we're after something that's going to be the real deal at the end and it's going to honor their voices and their desires for how schools should be.

Tracey ([23:55](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=-0FyJG6eIneUK2BxzhNzi3Nmx7JosmdBhZMV3jn4Ro_6rulAf2UQ3j4KByDHvYj62j_sT2xwDFpZRS__YzWHCijHYFs&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1435.74)):

Wonderful. Well, I always ask researchers this question in some form of another or another in my podcast. What was, I like to say, the coolest thing you discovered while doing this work or the most interesting piece of this research for you?

DeLeon ([24:12](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=ctvkKJ0xXrYADjPaPp3Q3CZ1ZbuaE9z4VBCsEN_7E-zpnIggJrXgI3QepBhcDT4qlMtQg1Re6GZVfH1HeaKfz4iKf9U&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1452.42)):

Yeah. There's two things that come to mind. The first is, when we connected with teachers, because our partnership was mainly with administrators first, but then we said, "Okay, teachers get to choose the final items." So, we gave them an item bank from a survey items based on a lot of theory on belonging. We went to them and said, "Can you choose the items that you think are the most practical and relevant to your instruction?" But we realized that, although we did this work with administrators, we had to get over the hump of mistrust and skepticism. Why? Because surveys and measurement have been used and weaponized against educators so much. It takes a lot of undoing and trust building first. So, the idea that the good research that you have to do with educators requires you to slow down was a huge learning experience for our team, but it benefited us greatly.

DeLeon ([25:14](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=WTuSeMbxGsKtDTRNOaGH74SZp6k6zWgcFRsaS5ckqXhKiW-DkI_OL8yMHSy8dyDuP6SssRa4dUXvL4hCHvtx7cUsMso&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1514.34)):

The second thing that was an aha moment actually came from our findings. What we found was that by surveying students in their belonging experiences across all of their academic subjects, math, science, English language, arts, and social studies, we found that students' engagements level, the same student, might be high in one class, low in engagement in another, high, low. But what explained their dips and spikes in engagement was their opportunities to belong that they're teacher was providing inside of the classroom.

DeLeon ([25:49](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=4f8rmJEpVYMRsq-gfln-FTFArZhXLiJpifJrAvfE7CJ3uCJcScuXRqXzYDN_7PM22zWfVHDxBXP6c-kF2O1GhK4COGc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1549.68)):

What does this mean. Every time a student gets into a classroom, it's a new opportunity to engage that student. When we talk about students being not motivated or this student is unmotivated, we're really placing the onus on the student instead of honoring the fact that motivation also resides within the context of our learning environment. What we found was there's things that teachers can do within their power to address belonging vulnerability in students, even if this student has been disengaged in another classroom. So, we need to disassociate students from whatever reputations they might have in another classroom and just know that we possess the power, as educators, when they're in our classrooms, to make them feel accepted, respected, included, and supported.

Tracey ([26:42](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=DGcJceQ4xCLG9rRjpu7czVMIBvzbL4aC1PD5VJ5PtKlno7MwWmTgOsk2YbBnwYsKeUeR-dyxjc-B0B-MUA4iyNgiHyY&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1602.66)):

Wonderful. Well, thank you so much for being here today, DeLeon. This has been a very interesting conversation.

DeLeon ([26:50](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=6io7hGzUrB6L9e-IZ8ciM5URMvoYecSNc1o-XgBkc9DZg9Woj4vZXepRExgkwV9S779eGRrMgNdOhZc9paNyoYv8itU&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1610.34)):

Thank you.

Tracey ([26:53](https://www.rev.com/transcript-editor/Edit?token=bpejZkVukdxdirsbxGwAzgtm9YsO-UJOQUHkvSWFWnCOgCGy4PTtOOnyP0Hz8yHSrmuG7fMtdG2TSxbJ7scaJmAoZoc&loadFrom=DocumentDeeplink&ts=1613.79)):

We've been speaking today with DeLeon Gray, associate professor of education psychology and equity here at NC State. This has been Audio Abstract. I'm your host, Tracey Peake. Thank you so much for listening.