

Birch Cliff Public School's Plan

Growing the Kindest, Safest, Most Inclusive School

How one little school in Southwest Scarborough decided to take its future in its hands and plant seeds that will help it grow into the kind of school we *all* need to thrive

– Presented in June 2025 –

A special thanks to the Grade 7 Students who bravely shared their hopes and stories at a series of assemblies to help encourage their peers to take part.

Your voices really made a difference.

Thanks also to Parent Council for your encouragement and ideas and to school leadership for allowing this project to take shape.

Voices for Belonging

What's Inside this Report?

Contents

1. **The Heart of the Work - A Community Summary** providing a high-level overview of the work
2. **Voices for Belonging, Our Grow Forward Strategy** - A Strategy outlining the vision, values, and priorities our community believes can help us grow forward together
3. **Full Insight Report** - A detailed overview of findings, organized by questionnaire population, including detailed analysis, numerical data, and community quotes.

Part 1

THE HEART OF THE WORK

A quick ***Community Summary*** presenting an overview of key themes from our **Voices for Belonging** project

WHY THIS WORK, WHY NOW?

Some key issues + quotes that capture “the why”

Too many students have had experiences of feeling unsafe, harmed, unsupported, or excluded;
Families, kids, and staff are hopeful for positive change if we work together as a team;
Our kids are asking for our help growing kindness and solving real challenges

“I haven't always felt safe this year because of all the violence that I have experienced. I also don't feel like (anyone) did anything to stop it or prevent it from happening again.”

“It is never okay for someone to physically hurt me.”

“Responding to parents with concerns...being more present”

“If they didn't have pencils, we could give them one. If they miss their mom or dad, we can tell them it will be ok they will see them after school”

What if we could become the kindest, safest, most inclusive school in Toronto?

WHY THIS WORK, WHY NOW, CONT...

Some more quotes:



"I was once tackled at school at a time when I was surrounded by people who I believed would jump in and intervene to help me out but rather they stood by and did nothing."

"People were being homophobic and i started feeling really bad and wasn't feeling safe and making fun of me it would have helped if more people can learn that being part of the lgbtq2s+ community is completely ok"

"Whenever there was a big problem i went to go talk to the people on yard duty but they said i shold just work it out"

"When you are left out our teachers say "anyone can play with who they want" that doesn't help if you are feeling left out or alone."

"I have learned from feeling almost like invisible and like a ghost. I want to make this a place where kids AND staff all feel welcome!!! "

What if we could become the kindest, safest, most inclusive school in Toronto?

HOW WE LISTENED

Who we heard from, how we gathered stories, what we asked

166 voices: Grades 1–8 students, families, and teachers

Three unique questionnaires + launched with assemblies and storytelling

Open text questions designed with input from parents, students and staff

One overarching possibility: *“What if our school could become the kindest, safest, most inclusive school in Toronto?”*

WHAT WE HEARD FROM ALL

Top overall themes across students, families, and staff

- Feeling safe means being truly seen, heard, and actively supported by both adults and peers.
- Openness, Kindness, Learning, Accountability, and Fairness stood out as core values across responses. As living principles, they hold more power to shape our school community than rules or policies alone.
- Children and families deeply value follow-up and follow-through after harmful experiences. They want to see real learning and accountability emerge from challenging moments.
- There is strong willingness—from both kids and families—to be part of the solution. They're eager for opportunities to help co-create a culture of belonging.
- More than reactive responses to bullying and exclusion, families and children are calling for proactive, educational approaches that prevent harm before it begins.

WHAT'S WORKING

The strengths and assets already present in our community

Caring individual teachers and staff

Inclusive events and accommodations

Peer helpers, spirited clubs, and sports

A community that wants to do better and be part of the solution

A community full of creative ideas that could solve important challenges for our kids

CHALLENGES THAT NEED US

Challenges and patterns that surfaced from multiple voices

Kids are experiencing bullying, exclusion, othering without adequate resolutions

Families feeling confused or in-the dark regarding follow-up and accountability

Teachers overwhelmed by the scale and complexity of the challenges and load

Too many perceive inconsistencies in how issues that cause harm are addressed

Too many have had experiences of school environments or experiences that exclude some/ instead of including all by design

WHERE FAMILIES & STAFF WOULD LIKE TO SEE GROWTH

Hopes shaped by families and teachers

Clear and consistent communication — especially about harm.

Visible adult presence, not just policy.

Shared understanding of what bullying and exclusion mean.

Opportunities to help build inclusive culture, not just report problems.

A system that reflects the voices and needs of all families.

WHAT KIDS WANT US ALL TO KNOW

Hopes and aspirations shaped

Feeling safe means having adults and kids who see and support them.

Fairness and kindness matter more than rules alone.

They want adults to truly listen — and follow through with concrete supports.

Some don't feel fully seen because of how they talk, look, or learn.

They're ready to be part of the solution if trusted and included.

WHAT THE COMMUNITY WANTS TO SEE

Hopes and aspirations shaped by kids, families, and teachers

Clear and consistent communication — especially about harm.

Visible caring adult presence, not just policy.

Shared understanding of what bullying and exclusion mean.

Opportunities to help build inclusive culture, not just report problems.

A system that reflects the voices and needs of all families.

Part 2

VOICES FOR BELONGING, OUR GROW FORWARD STRATEGY

A Short Actionable Strategy that all of us can help bring to life

AN EMERGING STRATEGY

VISION

Birch Cliff is growing into the kindest, most inclusive school in Toronto

SHARED VALUES EXPRESSED THROUGH QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

Openness, Kindness, Learning, Accountability, and Fairness

CHALLENGES OUR COMMUNITY WANTS TO WORK ON

Teachers, administrators, kids, and families all share a desire to create a stronger culture of belonging. There is a clear willingness to work together to support every student and improve the school experience for all. At the same time, too many children are facing bullying, exclusion, othering, favoritism, and unequal access to participation. Gaps in adult supervision, listening, problem-solving, and support persist. Many families feel their concerns go unaddressed, and many teachers feel overwhelmed by the scale of the needs. By coming together in partnership, we can begin to radically reduce these challenges—and build a school where every child, every family, and every staff member feels seen, supported, and included.

#1

Design and Grow Safer, More Inclusive School Environments and Proactive Learning by Acting on the Wisdom of Our Kids, Teachers, Families

We will draw on the lived experiences and best ideas of our students and families as essential guidance in shaping school environments that feel safe, inclusive, and responsive to everyone.

#2

Grow Trust Through Communication and Follow-Through That's Clear, Consistent, and Rooted in Our Values

We will build trust with kids, families, and staff by following through, communicating clearly, and developing a shared understanding of the behaviors that undercut belonging, reduce safety, and cause harm and the behaviours that grow belonging & safety.

#3

Strengthen Adult Visibility, Leadership, and Accountability in Cultivating Safety and Belonging

We will support adults to grow how they show up — with openness, presence, and accountability — to address exclusion and bullying proactively, and to partner with students in creating a culture where everyone feels they belong

20 Beautiful Ideas from Kids and Families to bring it to life

1. “Have a bench on the playground where kids can sit if they want someone to invite them to play”, have an “anyone can play area on the playground with games and fun”
2. “Teach teachers to tell the difference between someone being mean and someone standing up for themselves.”
3. “Let kids start their own clubs — even just two people with the same interest.
4. “Give every student a ‘welcome buddy’ when they’re new or feeling lonely.”
5. “Host lunchroom mixers — random tables with games or themes so kids get to know others.”
6. “Let quiet kids pick how they want to participate instead of always forcing group work.”
7. “Adults should ask what happened *before* giving out consequences.”
8. “A quiet room or area for kids with anxiety or sensory needs to reset without getting in trouble.”
9. “Create an ‘inclusion team’ of students who notice who’s left out and bring them in.”
10. “Help kids learn the difference between snitching and seeking help — and teach when to ask for help.”
11. “Make a calendar of celebration days that reflect the cultures in the school.”
12. “Teachers should eat lunch with students once in a while just to listen.”
13. “Give everyone a chance to be team captain — not just the sporty kids.”
14. “Let kids anonymously say who they’re worried about — and then check in on those kids.”
15. “Teach conflict repair — how to say sorry that actually means something.”
16. “Teachers should have a ‘pause card’ they can give a student who needs a break instead of a punishment.”
17. “Help students create a mural that shows what belonging means to them.”
18. “Have a student-run kindness store — you can earn kindness coins and spend them on fun privileges.”
19. “Ask students to design the school rules together — and explain why they matter.”
20. “Make sure everyone sees themselves in the books, posters, and announcements.”

BUILDING A BRIDGE BETWEEN STRATEGY & ACTION

Here are some questions that could empower change, many hands make light work



Priority 1: Safer, More Inclusive Environments

- **Students:**
What's one small thing you can do this week to help someone feel more included?
- **Teachers/Administrators:**
What's one small thing you can change in your space to make it more welcoming for every student?
- **Families:**
What's one small thing you can do to help the school feel like a safer place for all kids — not just your own?



Priority 2: Trust Through Clear, Consistent Communication

- **Students:**
What's one small way you can show someone you're really listening when they speak up?
- **Teachers/Administrators:**
What's one small thing you can do today to follow up with a student or family who brought something to your attention?
- **Families:**
What's one small thing you can do to support open, respectful dialogue with your child's teacher or the school?



Priority 3: Visible Leadership and Accountability

- **Students:**
What's one small way you can remind an adult that their help matters when something's wrong?
- **Teachers/Administrators:**
What's one small action you can take to show students you're present and committed to their safety?
- **Families:**
What's one small way you can show staff you're a partner in creating a kind and caring school?

Part 3

DETAILED INSIGHTS

From our Voices for Belonging Project

A detailed overview of findings, organized by questionnaire population, including detailed analysis, numerical data, and community quotes.

It began with a simple question
**“What if we could become the kindest, safest, most
inclusive school in Toronto?”**
and a questionnaire sent to kids, parents, and
teachers called “Voices for Belonging”
looking for their best ideas

A number of parents, **4 thoughtful students**,
and the school's administrators
played a role in helping make the questionnaire
clear and easy to understand for all.

We distributed three distinct questionnaires: one for families/guardians/teachers; one for kids in grades 1-3; and one for kids in grades 4-8.

**In total, 166 people completed the
Voices for Belonging Questionnaire**

(47 parents/guardians/teachers + 17 grade 1-3s + 102 grade 4-8s)

Thank you to each and every person who filled one out!

Here are the insights from the questionnaire
organized by population, sharing key themes

Top 5 Challenges Kids Say They Are Facing By Volume

1. **Lack of Consistent, Caring Adult Support when needed** – *mentioned in 19.7% of responses*
2. **Not Feeling Safe, Supported, or Emotionally Regulated** – *18.3% of responses*
3. **Feeling Left Out or Socially Excluded** – *11.9% of responses*
4. **Experiencing Significant Unkindness, Bullying, or Harm** – *7.4% of responses*
5. **Unfairness and Unequal Treatment** – *5.1% of responses*

Top 5 Challenges Guardians/Teachers Say Kids are Facing By Volume

1. **Persistent Bullying and Harmful Peer Behaviour (93.5%)** Families overwhelmingly report that their children have experienced **physical aggression, exclusion, and verbal harm from peers**. Concerns include students being pushed, hit, taunted, or made to feel unsafe during class time and on the playground.
2. **Emotional Safety and Student Wellbeing Are at Risk (87.0%)** Many families expressed that their children feel **anxious, fearful, or emotionally unsupported** at school. Some shared that students dread attending, feel isolated, or lack trusted adults to turn to in moments of distress.
3. **Inconsistent Discipline and Unclear Expectations (58.7%)** There is widespread concern about the **lack of fair, predictable consequences** for harmful behaviour. Families perceive unequal treatment among students and a failure to uphold consistent standards — which undermines trust in school leadership and climate.
4. **Lack of Clear, Timely Communication from the School (50.0%)** Families feel they are often **left in the dark after reporting incidents** or raising concerns. They want more proactive updates, clarity around how issues are addressed, and opportunities for real dialogue — not just top-down announcements.
5. **Limited Follow-Through or Accountability When Issues Arise (21.7%)** Even when concerns are reported, families say they **rarely see action, follow-up, or closure**. This lack of responsiveness leads to feelings of being dismissed or ignored — and diminishes confidence that problems are truly being addressed.

Parent, Guardian, Teacher Questionnaire Insights

47 Responses Received

We asked about:

- What the school does well
- Defining Bullying & Exclusion
- Supporting students facing bullying
- Actions to reduce bullying and exclusion
- Home/School Partnership
- Ensuring every child feels belonging
- Comfortable raising concerns?
- Building understanding of differences
- Reducing the stigma of asking for help
- Wider voices at parent council
- What the school could improve
- Other feedback

According to parents/guardians/teachers

What's working well

- Engaged and caring individual teachers who are approachable, dedicated, and in tune
- Inclusive events and celebrations like pride walk, fun fair, and diverse classroom events
- Strong sporting programs, especially those that feel inclusive
- Accommodations for children with physical, classroom, and dietary needs
- Open library time
- Peer helper roles
- The lovely community itself

According to parents/guardians/teachers

This is what bullying and exclusion means to them

- Intentional and repetitive harm
- The misuse of power and social control
- Having emotional, physical, or psychological dimensions and impacts
- Microaggressions and other forms of “masked” bullying
- Exclusion is seen as both a standalone issue and a form of bullying
- Social rejection and deliberate exclusionary tactics from groups or individuals
- Having an impact on a child’s sense of safety, well-being, and/or mental health
- Distinct from more everyday and healthy forms of conflict

According to parents/guardians/teachers

This is what needs to be prioritized to reduce / eradicate bullying and/or exclusion at our school

- Safe reporting system in which students are believed
- Trained and empowered supervisors ready to truly listen
- Clear, fair, progressive consequences being enforced with mutual care
- Proactive emotional and social education
- Support and solutions for both parties (experiencing harm, causing harm)
- Designing spaces/environments that nurture mindfulness and reduce stress
- Innovative approaches to educational supports / environments that include
- Whole school culture shift to empower kindness, equity, and accountability
- Restorative justice and learning

According to parents/guardians/teachers

This is how we should work to reduce bullying and exclusion

- Increase supervision and train all staff with the goal of radically reducing / eradicating bullying and exclusion
- Engaging students and families as part of the solution to building a healthy culture
- Clear, consistent, fair consequences for harmful behaviour
- School-wide education: assemblies, classroom, socio-emotional education
- Support for both victims and aggressors
- Stronger and clearer communication with families
- Cultural and identity-based education to raise awareness of and reduce identity-based exclusion and hate
- Students need clear avenues, tools, and protocols to seek help
- Parent-facing education and collective agreements would be helpful

According to parents/guardians/teachers

These approaches would help strengthen the home/school partnership

- Transparent, timely communication that makes sense for all parties
- Collaborative problem-solving with all parties / relational
- Visible, present, trust-building leadership (Principals, Teachers, kids)
- Follow-through and accountability, no unclosed loops
- Child-centered conflict resolution (before, during, and after negative exp.)
- Building a shared value system across kids, families, and staff
- Encouraging curiosity and learning about cultural differences, sensitivities, and unique needs

According to parents/guardians/teachers

What parents/guardians feel is need to ensure every child feels belonging

- Prioritize physical and emotional safety - safety is a baseline for belonging
- Affirming and celebrating a diversity of cultures, identities, needs
- Proactive, present, and caring adults
- Supporting students as individuals and with nuance
- Restorative conversations and social education
- Responsive communication with families
- Designing classrooms that anticipate and welcome neurodiverse students
- Address barriers and opportunities for full inclusion of cognitively and physically diverse students with an open and creative solution-focused mindset

According to the parents/guardians/teachers

How parents/guardians feel we could raise understanding across differences

- School-wide cultural education and celebrations
- Neurodiversity education and awareness: students, staff, families
- Social-Emotional Learning and Assemblies with a focus on kindness, empathy, and inclusion (proactive, values-centred, with role models)
- Equity-focused leadership, representative leadership, and/or an equity liaison
- Parental education and mediation
- Transparent, proactive, communication
- No assumptions based on identity, lead with curiosity and openness

According to the parents/guardians/teachers

Who completed the questionnaire

- 50% said yes, they were comfortable raising issues with the school
- 25% said they only felt comfortable raising concerns sometimes
- 15% said no, they were not comfortable raising issues

According to the parents/guardians/teachers

What could be done to reduce the stigma of asking for help

- Overwhelming majority of respondents felt that stigma isn't what's getting in the way of people getting help, what's getting in the way is that there is a lack of follow-through when help is asked for
- Clear, transparent, well-communicated processes
- For those in financial distress – clear, easy to access, processes that maintain privacy
- Safe, private channels for students and parents alike to seek help
- Responsive and respectful staff responses to requests for help
- Normalizing help seeking behaviours through modelling, verbal encouragement. One example idea: an “asking for help” station on playground
- Sharing pathways to mental health supports with the community

According to the parents/guardians/teachers

What could be done to ensure a broader diversity of voices and attendees at parent council?

- Offer virtual and asynchronous options for participation and raising questions
- There is a perception of cliquishness, gossip, and a lack of openness to new voices who attend, need for a deliberate shift in meeting culture and tone
- Actively welcome, celebrate, and seek new perspectives
- Increase flexibility in timing and format
- Add new feedback channels so issues can be raised without attending
- Improve and broaden modes of communication and promotion of meetings
- Fix top-down structure and closed agendas make time for real dialogue

According to the parents/guardians/teachers

These are the important improvements the school could make

- More supervision and caring adult presence
- Timely, transparent communication
- Consistent accountability and follow-through
- Broaden student engagement and participation in sports and beyond sports
- Grow mental health awareness and supports
- Leadership visibility and trust
- Inclusive and diverse learning experiences
- Design inclusive classroom, playground, and sports and program environments

According to the parents/guardians/teachers

TOP 5 GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

1. **Ensure Visible, Caring Adult Presence Across All Spaces**
Supervision, trust, and proactive engagement from teachers and staff.
2. **Communicate Clearly, Consistently, and With Follow-Through**
Transparent updates, closed feedback loops, and shared accountability.
3. **Design Inclusive, Safe Environments Across Classroom, Yard, and Programs**
Spaces and systems that welcome diverse learners, abilities, and play styles.
4. **Affirm and Reflect Cultural, Ethnic, Mental Health, and Neurological Diversity**
Identity-affirming curricula, assemblies, celebrations, and supports
5. **Broaden Student Engagement Across Sports, Clubs, and Social Life**
Access, equity, and fairness in participation — beyond the usual suspects.

Student Grade 1-3 Themes

17 responses received

We asked about:

- What we can do to make kids feel included
- What should grown ups do when someone is unkind
- What's unfair, how can we fix it?
- How can we help kids feel safe and happy?
- How can we ensure all kids feel welcome to join clubs, games, and sports?
- How can we welcome new kids?
- What would make the school better for everyone?
- Do you feel like you belong at Birch Cliff?

According to kids in grade 1-3

This is what can we do to make kids feel included?

- **Invite and include:** “Ask them to play,” “Say ‘you can play with us.’”
- **Buddy systems and student leaders:** Encouraging peer connection across groups.
- **Proactive teacher involvement:** Look for lonely kids, help them join in.
- **Teach inclusion:** “Talk more about how to include people.”
- **Program and environment design:** think about who is not being included and what you can do to fix that

According to kids in grade 1-3

Sometimes people say or do unkind things, this is what they think grown-ups and kids should do when that happens?

- **Tell a grown-up:** “Tell the teacher” was the most common response.
- **Fair consequences:** Students want consequences for violence and exclusionary behaviour.
- **Support the hurt child:** “Show that they have someone on their side.”
- **Reflection and repair:** “Say sorry,” and talk things through.

According to kids in grade 1-3

When something feels unfair at school, they think this is what adults and other kids should do to sort it out

- **Listen and take action:** “Ask you what’s wrong,” “Listen to both sides”, “no favourites”, “Help us sort it out.”
- **Fair rules and chances:** Equal play and turn-taking.
- **Student voice:** “Make a new fair rule,” “Let other people have ideas too.”

According to kids in grade 1-3

If someone doesn't feel safe or happy at school, what could help them feel better?

- **Comfort and kindness:** “Ask if they want to play,” “Be kind.”
- **Trusted adults:** “Talk to a teacher,” “Know someone will help.”
- **Buddies and friends:** Consistently suggested as a form of emotional support.

According to kids in grade 1-3

Clubs, games, and sports should be fun for everyone, they think we should do these things to ensure everyone feels invited to join and feels included

- **Better access and invitations:** “Ask them to play,” “Make it known how to join.”
- **More inclusive teams:** Pair strong athletes with others to support.
- **Offer variety:** “Arts and crafts,” “Lots of different options.”, different times of day (e.g. are after school activities leaving out kids in aftercare?)

According to kids in grade 1-3

This is what we should do to welcome new kids in class

- **Be welcoming:** “Say hi,” “Invite them to play,” “Show them around.”
- **Buddy system:** Assign friends or helpers for new students.
- **Creative welcomes:** “Make them a card,” “Have a class party.”

According to kids in grade 1-3

These are the things teachers or helpers could do to make school better for everyone

- **Stop bullying:** “If you see bullying, stop it,” “Bullies should get in trouble.”
- **Ensure safety:** More adults outside, clear consequences.
- **Fun and fairness:** More activities, make it clear which teachers are in the yard, new fair rules.

According to kids in grade 1-3

Do they feel like they belong?

- 13 - yes
- 3 - sometimes
- 0 - other responses

Student Grade 4-8 Themes

102 responses received

We asked about

- When someone is left out we should...
- When someone is being mean, kids and adults should...
- What the kindest, fairest, most inclusive school would do differently
- What to do if kids are not feeling safe or welcome
- How we can make our clubs and teams more fair and inclusive
- What you'd like to teach adults to help make the school better
- Do you feel like you belong?

According to kids in grades 4-8

When someone is left out we should...

- **Invite and Include** - Kids want to be asked in — simple acts of kindness matter.
- **Teachers Should Step In** - Students want adults to notice and act, not just oversee.
- **Teach Inclusion Skills** - Kids need real tools for how to include others — not just reminders.
- **Take Exclusion Seriously** - Dismissive responses make it worse — listen and respond with care.

According to kids in grade 4-8

When someone is being mean, kids and adults should...

- **Take Real Action** Students are frustrated by inaction. They want consequences, not warnings.
- **Stand Up for Each Other** Peers should speak up, step in, and support the person being hurt.
- **Be Fair and Listen to Both Sides** Adults sometimes misjudge situations. Kids want to be believed and treated fairly.
- **Involve Parents When It's Serious** Some feel real change comes when families are included in the solution.

According to kids in grades 4-8

Say this is what the kindest and fairest schools would do differently?

- **Listen to Both Sides** Students want adults to hear everyone's version — not just the loudest or most upset.
- **Be More Consistent and Unbiased** Kids feel adults sometimes play favourites, pick sides, or overlook power dynamics.
- **Make Fairness Visible** Whether it's teams, snacks, classroom rules — students want equal treatment they can see and trust.
- **Support Conflict Resolution** They want help navigating tough moments — not just to “figure it out alone.”

According to kids in grades 4-8

This is what would help if they are not feeling safe or welcome

- Supportive Friends Make a Difference Students repeatedly said having just one kind, loyal friend made them feel safer and less alone.
- Being Heard and Believed
- Feeling ignored or disbelieved made things worse Listening without judgment was a strong ask.
- Many students shared that adults didn't see what was happening or dismissed their concerns. They want adults to be present, fair, and protective
- Respect for Identity and Difference - Homophobia, name-calling, and exclusion based on appearance or background were common. Students want a school where all identities are affirmed.
- Make Safety Procedures Feel Safe Lockdowns and drills sometimes felt more chaotic than calming. Students are asking for clearer instructions, serious tone-setting, and adults who model calm during emergencies.

According to kids in grades 4-8

Making Clubs + Teams Fair and Inclusive

- **Give Everyone a Real Chance** Kids want teams and clubs that welcome **all skill levels** — not just the most experienced. “Start practice teams.” “Pick based on effort, not just skill.” “Let everyone try.”
- **Create More Spaces to Belong** Students asked for **more clubs, more co-ed teams, and options beyond sports**. “Make clubs based on what people like.” “Board game club!” “More for younger kids.”
- **Treat Everyone Fairly on the Team** Concerns about favouritism, unequal playing time, and lack of encouragement came up often. “Stop favouring the same kids.” “Let everyone play.” “Cheer for everyone.”
- **Fewer Barriers, More Inclusion** Kids flagged issues around gender, ability, and social cliques as barriers. “Be nicer to kids who aren’t the best.” “Let people with disabilities play too.” “Don’t just pick your friends.”

According to kids in grades 4-8

What Would You Teach Adults to Make School Better?

- **Really Listen to Kids** Students want adults to hear them out — fully. “Listen before reacting.” “Don’t just say sorry and move on.” “Take us seriously.”
- **Be Fair and Avoid Favouritism** Repeated concerns about bias in how rules are applied and who is believed. “Treat every kid the same.” “Don’t just believe your favourite.”
- **Understand Before You React** Kids want adults to ask questions, understand context, and **not jump to punishment**. “Don’t yell right away.” “Ask why it happened.” “Let us explain.”
- **Make Safety and Kindness Real, Not Performative** Calls for better drills, better support during conflict, and adults who model kindness. “Teach us how to be kind — not just talk about it.” “Make lockdowns feel safer.” “Be calm and fair.”
- **Support Mental Health and Learning Differences** Many students asked for time, space, breaks, and compassion. “Don’t give too much work.” “Give breaks.” “Understand anxiety.”

According to kids in grade 4-8

Do you feel like you belong?

- Yes - 50.5%
- Sometimes - 42.6%
- No - 6.9%

THANK YOU

To everyone who participated in Voices for Belonging.

To everyone who decides to learn from these insights.

To everyone who helps grow our school into the kindest,
safest, most inclusive school in Toronto.