



NEWS RELEASE

School Superintendents provide support to increase sense of student belonging

May 15, 2024 (Winnipeg, MB) – The Manitoba Association of School Superintendents (MASS) today released a position paper that is aimed at supporting senior school teams collaborating with staff, students, families and the community to support belonging in schools. The paper, titled “A Guide for Student Belonging in Public Schools in Manitoba”, is expected to fill a need seen across Manitoba.

“As a member supported organization of more than 100 senior leaders in the Manitoba public school system, MASS has created this guide to support dialogue on belonging relative to shared values and practices in order for children to truly feel they belong in their school,” says Christian Michalik, MASS Co-President. “Only by supporting an on-going dialogue can we make school a more welcoming place for all children and their families.”

Michalik says MASS’s mandate is to be leaders of learning and its members have a commitment to improve achievement and well-being for all students by raising equity and quality in public schools.

“We hope that this guide offers a helpful framework to developing an ethic of care and hospitality when nurturing belonging for students, families, and staff,” says Michalik, noting that at the heart of Canadian democracy is every child’s right to quality, publicly funded education. “Furthermore, those who govern, lead and work in public schools have paramount legal obligations to ensure a safe and caring school environment for all children and youth.”

The guide was written by Dr. Melanie Janzen with input and guidance from MASS members Tammy Mitchell, Celia Caetano-Gomes and MASS Executive Director, Barb Isaak. The publication defines belonging in the context of public schools and democratic values. It offers a summary of International, National, and Provincial perspectives. It also provides a set of questions to guide reflections and conversations on belonging.

Belonging is not just a feeling, but is enacted, requiring the people with whom individuals share a space to interact with one another in a respectful, safe and caring atmosphere. – excerpt from A Guide for Student Belonging in Public Schools in Manitoba.

The guide is available to the public on the [MASS web site](#).

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