## **HANDOUT**

## **Perspectives on Belonging**

Directions: Read each quotation, then discuss the corresponding questions with your peers. Record your ideas in the space provided on the handout.

**Quotation 1:** From Belonging: The Science of Creating Connection and Bridging Divides by social psychologist and professor, Geoffrey L. Cohen:

Belonging is the feeling that we're part of a larger group that values, respects, and cares for us—and to which we feel we have something to contribute. The word "belong" literally means "to go with," and our species has evolved to journey through life with each other. Our desire to be part of a group is "among the most powerful forces to be found," wrote the eminent social psychologist Solomon Asch.<sup>1</sup>

What, if any, parts of Cohen's definition resonate with you and why?

• What, if anything, do you think is missing from Cohen's definition of belonging? What makes you say that?

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Geoffrey L. Cohen, *Belonging: The Science of Creating Connection and Bridging Divides* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2022), 5.

Quotation 2: From the Othering and Belonging Institute at University of California, Berkeley:

More than just being seen or feeling included, belonging entails having a voice and the opportunity to use it to make demands upon society and political institutions. Belonging is more than having access; it is about the power to co-create the structures that shape a community.<sup>2</sup>

• When compared to Cohen's perspective in the first quotation, what *new* ideas about belonging does this quotation add that resonate with you?

• Think about your school. What would it look like, sound like, and feel like for students to have the power to "co-create the structures that shape [the] community"? Consider aspects of your school like classroom culture, curriculum, school rules, clubs, teams, student government, and assemblies.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> "Glossary of Terms," The Othering & Belonging Institute, accessed August 24, 2023.

**Quotation 3:** From Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We *Live, Love, Parent, and Lead* by researcher and author, Brené Brown:

On page 145, I defined *belonging* as the innate human desire to be part of something larger than us. One of the biggest surprises in this research [on human connection] was learning that fitting in and belonging are not the same thing. In fact, fitting in is one of the greatest barriers to belonging. Fitting in is about assessing a situation and becoming who you need to be in order to be accepted. Belonging, on the other hand, doesn't require us to *change* who we are; it requires us to *be* who we are.3

- According to Brené Brown, what is the difference between fitting in and belonging? Respond to this question in your own words.
- What does it look like and feel like when someone is trying to fit in with a group?
- What does it look like and feel like when someone belongs in a group?
- Why is it sometimes easier for us to try to fit in rather than try to belong?

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Brown, Brené, Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead (New York, NY: Gotham Books, 2012), 231-232.