

## Authentic Relationships

Belonging begins with genuine connections. By fostering trust, open communication, and a shared common language, leaders build meaningful relationships that honor the identities and experiences of both staff and students. Self-awareness plays a vital role in this process, helping leaders reflect on their biases and behaviors to create more inclusive and equitable interactions. Authentic relationships, strengthened by clear and inclusive language, lay the groundwork for a supportive and cohesive organizational culture.

# HALLMARKS OF BELONGING

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## Engaged Collaboration

Inclusive organizations prioritize collaborative practices with diverse voices. Engaged collaboration bridges gaps between varying perspectives, encourages collective problem-solving, and strengthens team dynamics. Through shared ownership of goals, communities thrive together.

## Experimentation

A culture of belonging embraces risk-taking and creativity. Organizations that prioritize experimentation create space for innovative solutions to emerge, enabling continuous learning and adaptation. This fosters an environment where diverse ideas are celebrated, driving progress and inclusion.

**USING  
STRENGTHS  
TO BUILD  
INCLUSIVE  
COMMUNITIES**

## Continuous Improvement

Belonging flourishes in organizations that are committed to growth. By regularly reflecting on practices and outcomes, leaders ensure that strategies evolve to meet the needs of their community. Continuous improvement promotes equity, accountability, and the sustained development of an inclusive culture.

The hallmarks of belonging serve as a guide for organizations striving to create spaces where everyone feels seen, heard, and valued. Together, they pave the way for a stronger, more equitable organization.



# Building Belonging



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## What is a common language?

A common language is a shared set of terms and concepts that helps unify a group. It establishes clear communication and ensures everyone understands foundational ideas.

## Why does it matter?

A common language is critical for the success of any organization. It builds a sense of belonging by creating understanding. It provides a framework for resolving conflicts. And it supports new member integration into the culture.

## 3 Dimensions of Common Language

<b>Clarity + Consistency</b>	Ensures phrasing is well-defined and consistently used.	Reduces ambiguity in communication, promoting shared understanding.
<b>Inclusivity + Accessibility</b>	Reflects diverse perspectives, making it relevant to all members.	Uses clear and inclusive language to ensure everyone feels represented and understood.
<b>Reinforcement + Practice</b>	Embeds the language in daily interactions and activities to solidify its usage.	Encourages continuous reflection and refinement to keep it meaningful and effective.

Common language has two foundational building blocks: it is **meaningful** and **relevant**. **Meaningful language** reflects the cultural values, traditions, and lived experiences of the community, ensuring it resonates on a personal level and reinforces shared identity. **Relevant language** is context-specific, aligning with the immediate needs and goals of the group to ensure practical application and impact. Together, these building blocks create a framework that fosters deeper understanding, cohesion, and collective growth within the community.

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Timely

Relevant

Meaningful

Building Blocks Matter

# Why self-awareness?

Fostering growth and connection begins with intentional reflection and action. By designing from our own center, we gain clarity on how our values and behaviors shape our interactions. Having the tools to reflect on who we are and how we show up strengthens our ability to serve our organizations with purpose. When we understand ourselves, we place our staff and students at the center of our work, ensuring every action contributes to a more inclusive and impactful community.



**Strengths-based approach**



Understanding personal strengths, biases, and areas for growth. Reflecting inward helps build a foundation of authenticity and self-honesty.

**internal reflection**

**dimensions of self-awareness**

**external awareness**

**adaptive action**



Recognizing how one's actions affect the team and environment. This awareness fosters empathy and strengthens interpersonal relationships.



Adjusting behaviors to align with the group's values and needs. Practicing adaptability ensures that actions remain purposeful and community-centered.

## Excavate your values

What is my story in relation to the diverse experiences of the community I serve? Understanding your personal journey can uncover connections and biases that shape your leadership.

## Mirror

How do my identities and perspectives shape my positional power? Reflect on how your unique lens influences your role and relationships within your organization

## Be curious

Why and how does my perspective exist? Explore the origins of your viewpoints to better understand their impact and relevance.



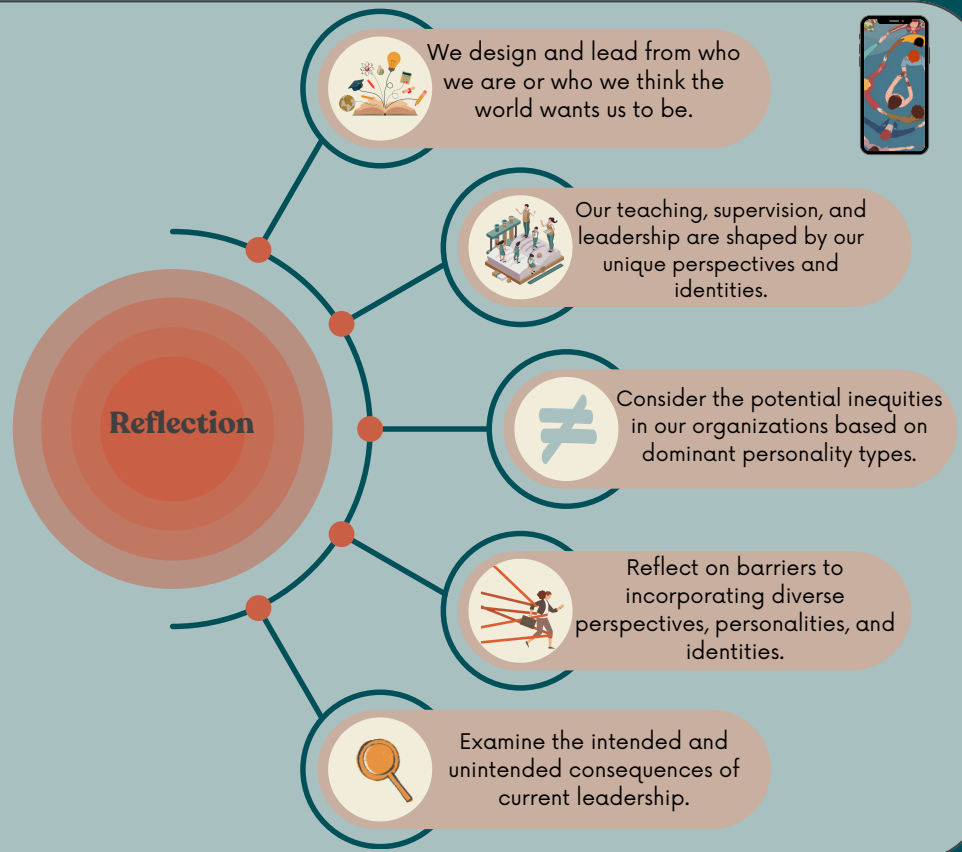
# The Aware Organization

**Will:** Analyze how positional power affects relationships and student outcomes

Understanding the personality of an organization is key to fostering an empowered and inclusive community. By recognizing the collective traits and tendencies that shape decision-making and interactions, we create opportunities to amplify strengths and address blind spots.

This awareness helps us identify and minimize the harmful effects of exclusion, ensuring that every voice is valued. An organizational personality rooted in equity and openness strengthens relationships, builds trust, and cultivates a thriving, collaborative environment.

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## OUR ORGANIZATIONAL PERSONALITY

### Functional structure

Organizes teams by specialized roles, such as marketing, finance, or human resources. While it promotes efficiency within departments, leaders must ensure cross-department collaboration to prevent silos and foster a shared sense of purpose and belonging.



### Divisional structure

Divides the organization into units based on product lines, markets, or geographic areas. This autonomy allows tailored approaches, but leaders should remain vigilant to ensure equity across divisions and avoid duplicating resources.



### Matrix structure

Combines functional and divisional structures, enabling dynamic collaboration through dual-reporting to functional and project managers. Clear communication and role clarity are essential to prevent conflicts and ensure an inclusive environment where diverse voices are heard.



### Flatarchy structure

Reduces hierarchical layers, empowering employees to take initiative and innovate. While fostering collaboration and creativity, leaders should actively address role ambiguity and ensure decision-making processes remain equitable and inclusive.

