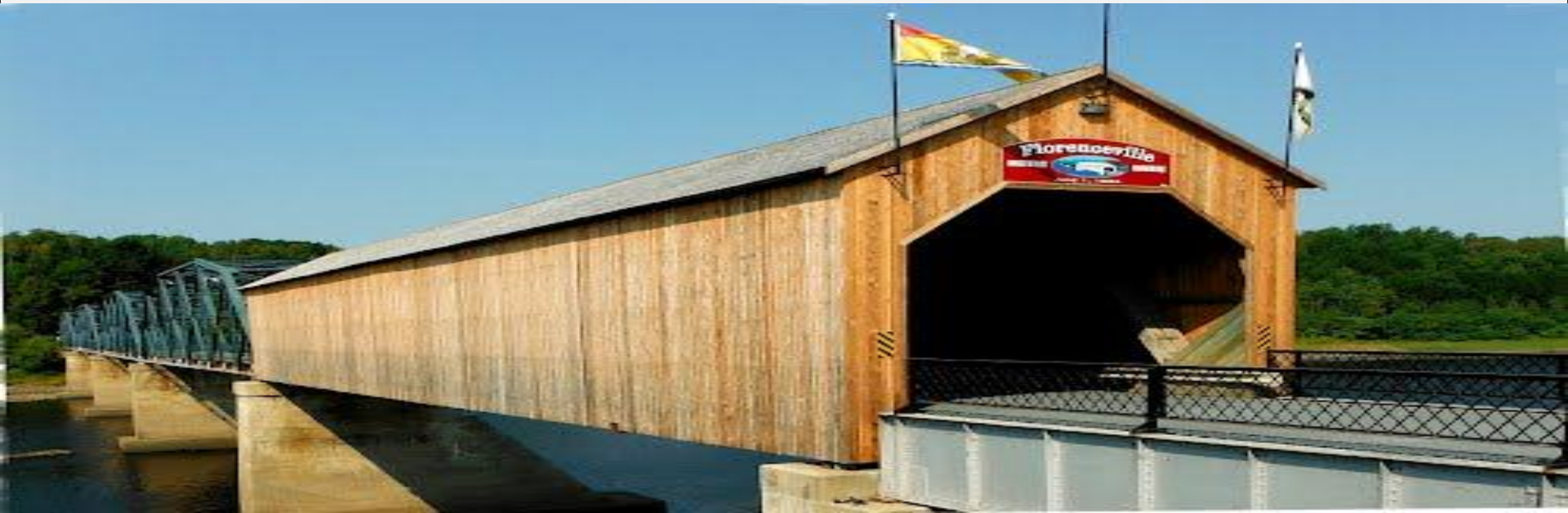


“GETTING USED TO THE QUIET:” IMMIGRANT ADOLESCENTS’ JOURNEY TO BELONGING IN NEW BRUNSWICK

WESTERN UNIVERSITY MIGRATION & ETHNIC RELATIONS
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Presentation Outline

- Origins and Method
- Making Contact
- Public Awareness
- Social Capital and Social Networks
- Citizen Engagement
- Sense of Belonging
- Conclusions



“THIS IS OUR HOME” ORIGINS, AND METHOD



Introduction



Studies of Immigrant Adolescents Suggest....

- Immigrant adolescents (ages 12-19) are permanent residents born outside the country.
- Those individuals who retain their ethnic identity while simultaneously adapting to and identifying with the receiving community (i.e. integration) are more likely to develop a sense of belonging to that community.
- Those who have a strong sense of belonging to their communities and supportive, varied social networks have stronger developmental outcomes such as improved academic performance.



Purpose of the Research

- “*Getting Used to the Quiet*” looks at the welcoming community in the context of integrating immigrant adolescents in a small city and rural town in New Brunswick where there are no earlier non-European immigrant communities to which the newcomers can affix themselves.




Research Questions

- How do the actions of engaged citizens of a community factor into to immigrant adolescents' sense of belonging?
- What is the relative weight of formal services and programs for immigrant adolescents compared with the more intangible and informal actions of engaged citizens in a community?
- How is social infrastructure for immigrant adolescents affected by socio-demographic characteristics such as class, gender, and race?
- Is the social infrastructure for immigrant adolescents the same in an urban and rural setting?



The Sample

85 volunteer participants divided into six groups in each community:


- (1) Immigrant Adolescents
 - (2) New Brunswick-Born Adolescents
 - (3) Immigrant Adults (Stayed)
 - (4) Immigrant Adults (Left)
 - (5) Community Organization Members
 - (6) Local Residents
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Data Collection and Analysis


- Qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews and focus groups with adolescents and adults (2008-2009).
- Non-participant observation, and self-directed photography.
- Analysis of interview transcripts involved looking for common themes and ideas, patterns and relationships, constant comparison.



A Portrait of Fredericton

- **Population** (2006): 50,535, census agglomeration of 85,688.
 - **Major Employers:** Provincial government, retail/service sector, two universities, IT sector.
 - 2006 there were nearly 6,000 immigrants in Fredericton with 6.9% of population foreign-born.
 - **Immigrant-Category:** Economic-class, Provincial nominees, refugees.
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A Portrait of Florenceville

- **Population:** Increased from 800 to 1,500 when it amalgamated with Bristol in 2008.
 - **Main Employer:** McCain Foods, Ltd. (est. 1957) employs over 2,000 people.
 - 2006 145 Florenceville, 325 Carleton County, 10% of residents foreign-born.
 - Between 2006 and 2009, 10 families arrived from Colombia, Mexico, Moldova, and the Ukraine.
 - **Immigrant Category:** Economic-class, Provincial nominees.
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“REACHING OUT AND PULLING US IN” MAKING CONTACT



Fredericton

- Established residents and recent immigrants do not usually come into daily contact with one another.
- Work commands more of people's time, impacting on their associations within and beyond the workplace.
- They are committed to their families, devoting much of their non-working hours to them.



I guess immigrants are kind of out of sight out of mind for many people who are so busy working, studying, and taking care of their children that they don't have time to look around and notice that Fredericton is becoming more diverse. And unless they are adolescents themselves, or perhaps the parents of adolescents, they aren't going to go out of their way to meet the immigrant adolescents in the community.

[Jason, Fredericton, NB, November 28, 2008]



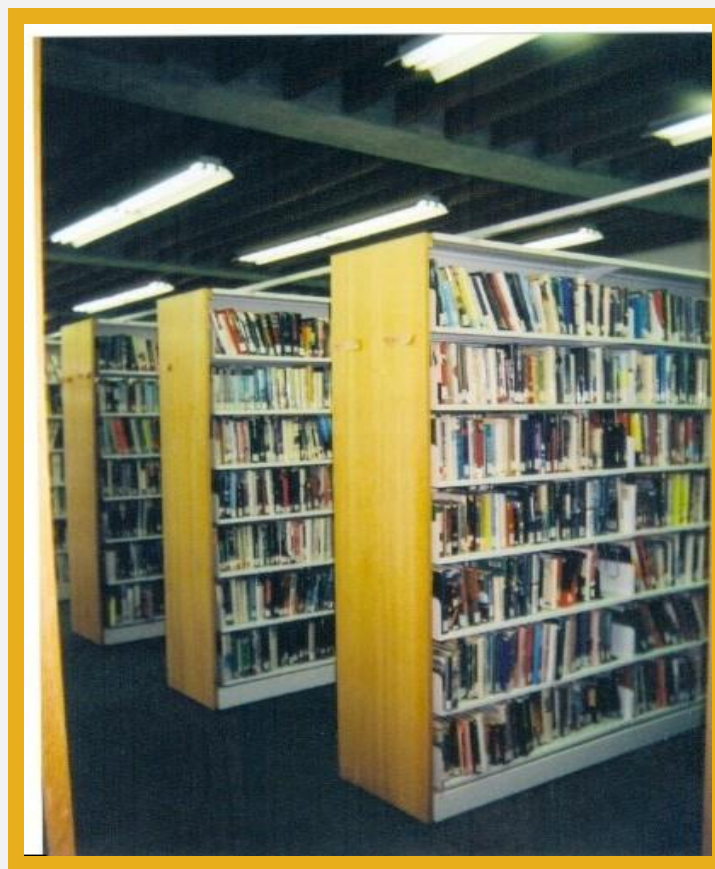
- Few common spaces and organized events where the various cultures can interact;
- Shortage of affordable housing and public transportation for some immigrants, reduce the opportunities available for wider social activities and the personalization of relationships.



Boys' Photographs



Girls' Photographs



“Do You See Me?”

“Do You Hear Me?”

Immigrant adolescents spoke of not being seen or heard by local residents, particularly their local peers, and of not being included in groups and activities.



How can I explain? For example, if there is a group of kids playing soccer and I am watching them they will call out to me “hey are you new here? Would you like to come and play with us?” A welcoming community would reach out and pull us in.

[Luis, Guatemala, February 14, 2009]



A welcoming community is where they accept you for who you are and they are willing and eager to listen to your story. A lot of people just don't; all of us, some of us, or most of us don't really care to listen to newcomers' stories. That happens. It would be hard for local people to get to know a stranger, and to be really close to a stranger, and especially a stranger from across the world who knows little English.

[Van Anh, Vietnam, 5 November 2008]



Florenceville

- Small size of community more conducive to daily contact between cultures.
- Local residents could not only describe meeting immigrants in the community, but could also detail how relationships with them developed.



- Immigrant adolescents do not describe local residents as “keeping to themselves.” On the contrary, the local residents are regarded as friendly and accommodating.
- They did, however, emphasize how few local residents actually **are** in the community.

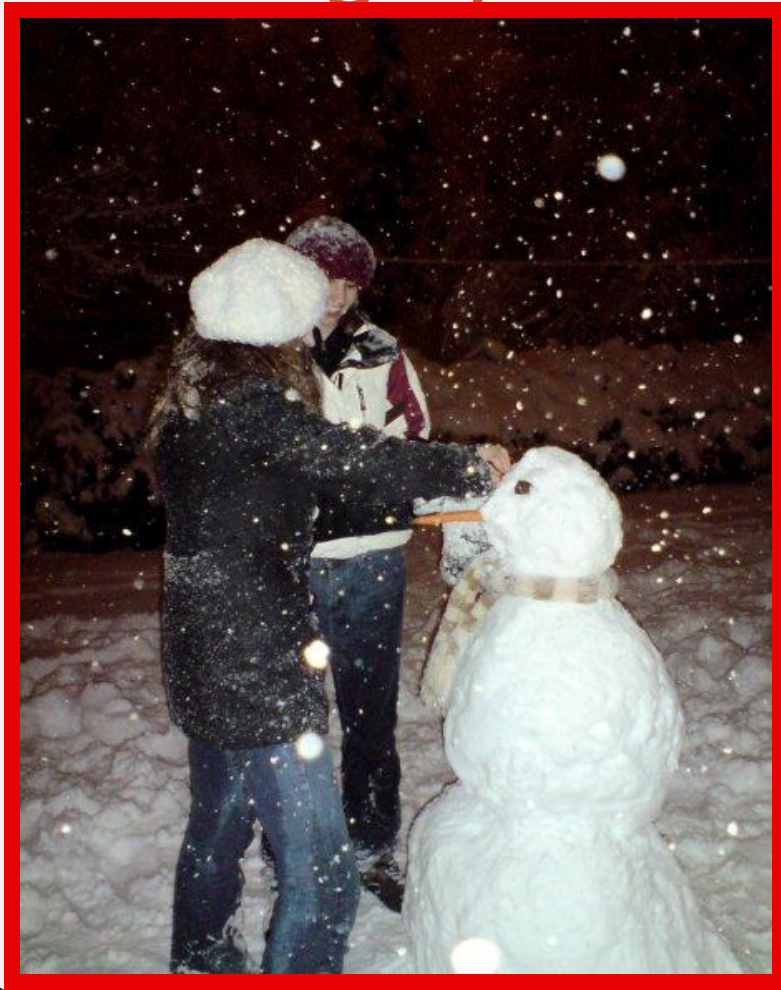


Getting used to the quiet has been very difficult. It is so quiet here. I am used to a very big city with lots of city noises. I don't necessarily miss the city noises but I miss the music. There was always music playing in Colombia. There was always music and dancing and huge crowds of people. Getting used to the empty spaces and not having people around has been kind of lonely.

[Jorge, Colombia, April 1, 2009]



Photographs Boys and Girls



“I See You”

“I Hear You”

- Newcomers do not go unnoticed in Florenceville.
- For the immigrant adolescents being seen is not necessarily a bad thing, especially if it is their abilities and talents being recognized rather than their differences.



- Immigrant adolescents say they have been included in groups and activities at school, and even more so once they learned enough English to be able to communicate.
- They spend time at the homes of their New Brunswick-born friends and they reciprocate with invitations to their houses.



One of the girls from Colombia invited me to stay for dinner at her house. They had this rice dish and it had coconut in it, and I am allergic to coconut. I broke out in hives almost instantly, all over my body. Her parents were really embarrassed. They didn't know what to do and they were afraid to send me home with hives all over me. But we remained friends and I am at her house all the time. They don't feed me coconut anymore.

[Melanie, Florenceville-Bristol, NB, March 3, 2009]



- Learning about the source countries of their immigrant peers has been incorporated into the academic curriculum.
- Teachers prepare the local students for the arrival of newcomer students through the use of geography books, online articles, and audiovisual materials.



Language Barrier

- Participants overwhelmingly cited language acquisition and communication barriers as the greatest challenge to settling into both communities.



- In Fredericton immigrant adolescents think that their poor English isolates them from their peers.
- Participants (immigrant and non-immigrant) referred to the local residents as being in a hurry all the time and becoming impatient when trying to understand an immigrant's “broken” English.
- In Florenceville a notable effort is being made to overcome the language barrier by both the immigrant adolescents and the staff and students in the schools.



They are such nice people and we tried so hard to talk to them even when they didn't speak any English. It was hilarious when we all tried to communicate at first. We all would smile and point and we would play charades and make signs with our hands and faces. When that didn't work we tried dictionaries. Sometimes I will write the word down in English for them to look at, and well that doesn't help much but I try.

[Brandon, Florenceville-Bristol, NB, 3 March 2009]



“WHERE ARE WE FROM? WHY ARE WE HERE?” PUBLIC AWARENESS



Fredericton

- Citizens are knowledgeable of the province's immigration goals and of the economic reasons why immigrants are needed, but they are not aware of who is in their community now and where they are from.



- Immigrant adolescents described cultural stereotypes, misunderstandings, and racist name-calling by peers and teachers.



- I don't fight with people anymore, but it is really hard not to. They call me racist names all the time and try to take advantage of me. I tried to ignore them but they wouldn't stop calling me names so one day I did hit one of the girls in the school and I got into trouble. I don't do that anymore. When this happens, and it happens all the time, the first thing that comes to mind is to hit them, but I know that isn't the best way to deal with mean kids. So I try to put their words out of my head and think about something else. I think ignoring them is the best way of handling it (*Callie, Sierra Leone 28 February 2009*).



Florenceville

- Most citizens are aware of their presence and are accepting of them.
- Certain sectors of the population believe that immigrants are coming to take their jobs away.
- Residents of all ages voluntarily partake in Spanish classes and multicultural celebrations in the community.



“REACHING OUR POTENTIAL” SOCIAL CAPITAL AND SOCIAL NETWORKS



Fredericton

- Immigrant adolescents care deeply for their parents, they “parent their parents,” and worry that their parents are not adjusting to their new lives as well as they should.
- Social support provided by neighbours was mentioned by the dependents of economic class immigrants, but not by the dependents of refugees.
- Making friends in Fredericton has been a difficult task. A gender difference was noted with the boys having an easier time socializing and making friends than the girls.



- When asked about their proudest moment or biggest accomplishment since arriving in Fredericton, almost all of the immigrant adolescent participants referred to making their parents proud rather than themselves:

My mom is really happy when we talk about our day at school, when we share things with her. My mom says life isn't easy here, but for us we just do our best to study as much as we can and do well so my mom thinks it was a good decision to come here. So I just want my parents to be proud of me and not have to worry about me.

[Mai, Taiwan, December 10, 2008]



Florenceville

- The immigrant adolescents worry their parents (mothers) are not adjusting to their new lives as well as they should.
- Ethnic networks play a larger role in the adolescents' lives because there is a critical mass of people in the town from the same country.
- Making friends has been less problematical and there were no obvious gender differences.



- The lack of separate EAL classrooms in the schools has facilitated contact between the two groups and provided the immigrant adolescents with a sense of inclusion or membership in the school community.
- Immigrant adolescents have therefore been afforded a network of knowledgeable local peers who support them in their adjustment to school and the wider community.



“FEELING LIKE WE ARE A PART OF SOMETHING” CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT



Fredericton

- Outside of school and the multicultural association, few relationships are being built, few adult role models.
- Immigrant adolescents claim that the effort to fit into their schools and wider community rests solely with them.



There are many students there and when new students come to the school from different countries the other students don't take interest in them; they aren't interested in new stuff or new people.
[Heo, South Korea, January 31, 2009]



Florenceville

- The most engaged citizens are local adolescents in the schools who have made the effort to include their immigrant peers in their social networks.



“ARE WE HOME YET?”
SENSE OF BELONGING



Bicultural and Well-Adjusted

- 8 Participants have been in the community for over 3 years, having arrived when they were entering adolescence, at around grade 6.
- They have adopted a bicultural identity and appear to be confident, comfortable, and fulfilled by their new lives.



Torn Between Two Cultures

- 7 Participants have been in the community for less than 3 years. They are in the process of constructing a bicultural identity for themselves, but they do not understand exactly what that identity is and what they should do with it.
- They are beginning to feel comfortable in the community, but also miss “home” so they feel torn between two cultures and unsure if they belong to either.



Struggling but Optimistic

- 14 (almost half) participants have been in the community for less than 3 years and still identify primarily with their home culture.
- They do not feel like they belong, but they are optimistic about their future in New Brunswick.
- They are aware that being in Canada will offer them tremendous opportunities and they are ready to “fulfill their dreams.”



Lost in Translation

- Length of time in the community does not seem to make a difference to the 2 participants who do not feel like they belong to the community, and they are pessimistic about ever finding that sense of belonging.



“THERE’S NO PLACE LIKE HOME” CONCLUSIONS



- Although Florenceville does not have the formal programs for immigrant adolescents that a city the size of Fredericton is able to deliver, the citizens of Florenceville compensate for this absence by generally being more involved in their settlement and integration than the citizens of Fredericton.



- Do these findings indicate that small towns are more welcoming and better able to include immigrants than larger cities?



Contact Theory

- Allport's 1954 *the Nature of Prejudice*:
- Under certain conditions, bringing together individuals from opposing groups could reduce inter-group prejudice.
 1. equal status;
 2. common goals;
 3. institutional support
 4. a perception of similarity and friendship between two groups

Equal Status

- Both groups perceive equal status in a given situation. If one party has advantages that the other does not, then this unbalances power.
- Groups should be of equal status **coming into the contact situation;**
- The status positions that are held by members of the two groups within the **face-to-face contact encounter proper must be equal.**




Fredericton

- Provincially nominated parents of the immigrant adolescent participants have gradually joined the ranks of the city's university-educated, middle class professionals.
- The addition of ten refugees from Colombia, the Congo, Liberia, and Sierra Leone to a total population of immigrant adolescents in Fredericton, however, made social stratification based on social class and race more obvious.
- By placing the students in EAL classrooms the schools made the contact situation proper unequal.



Florenceville

- All of the immigrant adolescents are relatively homogeneous with respect to their urban, professional, middle-class family backgrounds.
 - They did not view themselves as being of lower socio-economic status than their New Brunswick-born peers. Nor did they regard themselves as members of a visible minority group.
 - School have no formal programs or specialized staff in place for newcomer students. The immigrant adolescents are treated no differently than their New Brunswick-born peers in this respect. Lack of a separate EAL classroom means that teachers and students have had no choice but to figure out how to communicate with them.
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Common Goals

- The attainment of common goals should be an interdependent effort based on cooperation rather than competition.
- In communities, majority and minority groups might be given a project involving high levels of negotiation and problem solving to complete together, like raising money for a charity, working on community development initiatives or hosting an event.



Fredericton

- Largely uncritical acceptance of the value of immigration to economic development.
- The larger size of the city and the fact that immigrants are not central to Fredericton's major industries – government and education – reduces the pressure to engage newcomers.
- Residents of Fredericton do not appear to have a common goal to work toward.



Florenceville

- Rurality and relative remoteness are unattractive features.
- Many people gain initial experience at McCain Foods Ltd. then migrate to larger cities in central and western Canada. The high population turnover in the small town creates a great expense for McCain Foods, Ltd with respect to the hiring and training of human resources; it also inhibits community development and makes long-range community planning difficult.
- Residents are acutely aware that they have to capitalize on the experience, skills, investment, and creativity that is available through immigrants moving to the community.



Institutional Support

- Intergroup contact will also have more positive effects when it is explicitly supported by authority figures and social institutions.
- Authority sanction establishes norms of acceptance and guidelines for how members of different groups should interact with each other.




Fredericton

- As the provincial capital of New Brunswick, authority figures and social and cultural norms dictate that immigrants of all ages be accepted in Fredericton, but the institutions that provide jobs and services have been slow to adjust their agendas to more extensively reflect the city's growing cultural diversity.
- Residents are respectful toward immigrants, but few have given much thought to providing opportunities for them to become more involved in the community's institutions and, subsequently, to become embedded in diverse social networks.



Florenceville

- One-industry town. Its citizens are dependent on the farming, manufacturing, and professional support divisions of a single employer – McCain Foods, Ltd.
 - Not only does McCain Foods determine, to a great extent, the economic and social well-being of the residents of Florenceville-Bristol, by employing the majority of these people either directly or indirectly, it also shapes their view of the world.
 - McCain Foods recognizes that cultural diversity contributes to their bottom line. This organizational culture appears to be transmitted to the wider community, resulting in a general acceptance and promotion of cultural diversity by authorities, institutions, and the social and cultural norms that guide them
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Perceptions of Similarity and Friendship

- Superficial contact is unlikely to change attitudes or beliefs since this type of contact does not involve meaningful communication.
- The contact situation must be regular and involve communication about important, rather than trivial, issues.
- Regular contact situations enable observation of actual behaviour from which qualified judgements can be made about other people




Fredericton

- Fredericton's social networks tend to be small, interconnected, and difficult for newcomers to penetrate.
- Most of the parents of the immigrant adolescent participants in Fredericton do not work in institutions where they could interrelate with local residents with similar professional backgrounds. Instead they are self-employed, unemployed, or still learning English.
- The immigrant adolescents' parents therefore cannot give them access to social networks so they must make friends on their own.



Florenceville

- Some of the parents of New Brunswick-born adolescents work with the immigrant parents at the McCain Foods Global Technology Centre, making contact between the teens more likely.
 - Curiosity on the part of the local adolescents in the community appears to have eased the development of close friendships with the immigrant adolescents.
 - The lack of separate EAL classrooms in the schools has further facilitated contact across the two groups and provided the immigrant adolescents with a sense of inclusion or membership in the school community.
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QUESTIONS???

