

# Belonging Disrupted: Students Who Don't Feel Like They Belong to School

Dr. Kelly-Ann Allen

*Department of Educational Psychology and Inclusive Education,  
Data Futures Institute, Monash University*

Belonging was identified as a fundamental human need and a major motivator for human behaviour nearly three decades ago, yet much work continues today to understand its meaning and purpose in our lives as well as its disrupters, drivers, and outcomes. Debate exists, at a theoretical and empirical level, about how belonging should be defined, which leads researchers to question what belonging actually means to the general population and especially young people. This is particularly relevant when schools offer an opportune place of belonging for youth, yet international research informs us that a vast majority of students don't feel a sense of belonging to school. This talk will discuss the interpersonal, intrapersonal and contextual factors that can pose as barriers to school belonging as well as cultural considerations and intersections with technology. While several disrupters of belonging will be identified, this talk will also step through the supporters of belonging and present systemic solutions and strategies for schools that directly draw from student perspectives,