

BRAIN GYM

How New Leaders Emerge and Form Their Identity

Key Takeways

Research into leadership emergence has uncovered several consistent themes:

- Self-Image Transformation
- Contextual Adaptability
- Role Tension
- Moral Orientation
- Environmental Barriers

AITSL Standards: 6 & 7

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Comparison is the Thief of Joy: Lessons from Social Comparison Theory

Key Takeways

- Social comparison theory drives self-evaluation: upward to superiors (motivation or inadequacy), downward to inferiors (esteem boost) —excess harms growth.
- In schools/social media, it fuels development via role models and successes, fostering goals/belonging, but unchecked steals joy.
- Reframe with growth mindset: "Is this working for me?"—compare to past self, value strengths, act on dissatisfaction.
- Adults model by avoiding kid contrasts, monitoring self-talk, supporting passions to build confidence.

AITSL Standards: 1,3,4,6,7

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This Week's Mini PD

A Sense of Belonging as Core Business

"They have accepted me as an individual, as a personality, as an entity. I belong! I am important! I am somebody!" Beatrice Sparks, *Go Ask Alice*.

According to the [Kids Mental Health Foundation](#), schools should focus on a culture of belonging because it is one of the strongest levers for students' learning, wellbeing and behaviour. When students feel they truly belong, they are more willing to show up, try hard and stay connected to the school community.

Why belonging matters

- Higher engagement and achievement: students with a strong sense of belonging put in more effort, have lower absenteeism and achieve better academic outcomes.
- Better wellbeing and mental health: belonging acts as a protective factor, linked with greater happiness, confidence and lower rates of loneliness, anxiety and depression.
- Stronger relationships and behaviour: when students feel accepted and respected, they are more likely to cooperate, follow school expectations and build positive friendships.
- Long-term impact: the benefits of belonging extend beyond a single year, supporting ongoing engagement and success as students move through school.

Voices that illustrate the importance

Educational psychologist DeLeon Gray describes school belonging as "feeling a sense of acceptance, respect, inclusion and support in a learning environment." He notes that "students choose to be in environments that make them feel a sense of fit," mentally and physically.

The respected academic and author, Angela Duckworth, is adamant that a sense of belonging is the single most powerful predictor that a student will thrive in school – not just survive it.

Focusing on belonging is therefore not an "extra" initiative; it is core business for any school that wants students to learn well, behave well and be well.

School Spotlight

The Catholic Diocese of Lismore identifies five domains of its *Fullness of Life Framework*:

1. Mission
2. Pastoral Care
3. Catholic Leadership
4. Learning and Teaching
5. Family, School and Community Partnership

As an educator, can you identify which of these is

- a) your school's greatest strength, and
- b) the one that needs the most work?

TED Talk

How to raise
kids who can
handle hard
things

[Watch it here](#)

Happy, Silly Thoughts

You honestly
still look 59
from a
distance

Seen on a Birthday Card

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