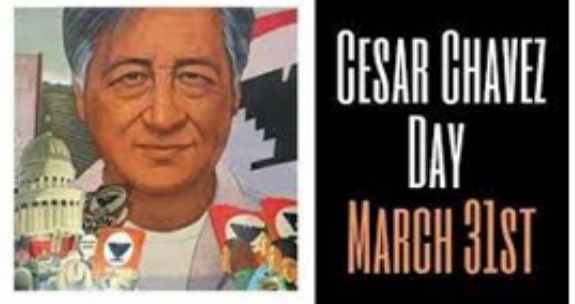


# NIAAA DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, & BELONGING NEWSLETTER



*The purpose of the NIAAA Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging Committee is to provide support, resources, and a pathway to develop and grow underrepresented athletic/activity administrators within the NIAAA. We are committed to intentional acts towards recruiting, fostering, retaining, and celebrating diversity within the organization by recognizing underrepresented individuals and providing opportunities for leadership and belonging. We are committed to equitable access to educational resources, leadership development, and active participation in all organization events.*

Cesar Chávez Day (Spanish: Día de César Chávez) is a U.S. federal commemorative holiday, proclaimed by President Barack Obama in 2014. The holiday celebrates the birth and legacy of the civil rights and labor movement activist Cesar Chávez on March 31 every year. We celebrate the life and legacy of Cesar Chávez, a champion for social justice and advocate for hardworking people who build and sustain our nation. Born into poverty and raised by migrant workers, Chávez courageously dedicated his life to improving conditions for workers across the country. Chávez witnessed firsthand the inequities of an economy that only served those at the top and left millions of hardworking Americans behind. We continue to build an economy from the bottom up and the middle out and that rewards work and not just wealth, we stand on the shoulders of Cesar Chávez and carry forward his fight to advance the rights and dignity of working people and fulfill the promise of America for all Americans.



## APRIL – DIVERSITY MONTH

April is recognized as Diversity Month, an important time for celebrating diversity and promoting inclusion. It is a time to recognize and honor the unique backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives of people from all walks of life. The celebration of Diversity Month offers an incredible opportunity to engage in meaningful conversations, cultural exchange, and learning activities that deepen our understanding of each other and foster mutual respect. Diversity Month was first celebrated in 2004 and it is a significant part of the history of the United States. By acknowledging and celebrating our differences, we can build stronger, more inclusive communities and work towards a more just and equitable society.

### Six strategies for promoting diversity and inclusion at your school – start with the premise that bias is normal

- 1) Appoint a DEI point person but invite others to help
- 2) Hold student forums
- 3) Infuse training with opportunity for self-reflection
- 4) Don't treat bias like a dirty word
- 5) Figure out how to track progress
- 6) Adjust, lean on others, and don't quit

From: Sport Psych Works (<https://www.apadivisions.org/division-47/publications/sportpsych-works/diversity-inclusion.pdf>) - Volume 5: Supporting the Athlete in Society Issue 1: Diversity and Inclusion in Sport

## Cultivating an Inclusive Environment

Creating an intentionally inclusive framework is crucial to create a safe and open sport environment. Awareness of social justice issues can help to create change by increasing social consciousness within the interconnected web of sport and society.

### 1. Start Before You Start

- **Focus on creating an environment that fosters inclusion from the very beginning:**
- Encourage coaches and players to learn about each other's cultural backgrounds, lives, and interests outside of athletics.
- Organize collective meals where everyone can learn about one another's cultures by sharing food.

### 2. Open Communication

- **Open, effective communication optimizes the opportunity for discussion of issues related to inclusion and discrimination:**
- Ensure all athletes have the opportunity to take part in decision-making and planning for diverse social activities.
- Model inclusive language and communication between athletic staff, parents, peers, and athletes.

### 3. Develop/Implement Effective Management Strategies

- **Implement strategies to deal with inappropriate behavior, and effective procedures for managing conflict, so that a positive, welcoming and safe environment is promoted and maintained:**
- Have a plan for dealing with prejudicial or discriminatory language/behavior.
- Be aware of, or develop, policies and procedures for creating an inclusive environment for various specific cultural identities.

### 4. Educate and Train Your Staff

- **An educational approach can help to negate many fears that people have when it comes to addressing diversity:**
- Prioritize educational sessions, perhaps with outside speakers, about diversity issues and cultural awareness.
- Recognize, acknowledge, and educate about special days and events such as International Day of Persons with Disabilities, International Day to End Racism, Gay Pride celebrations, etc.

NIAAA Section 6 Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB) Committee Member, Emily Barkley, CMAA from Union Public Schools in Tulsa, Oklahoma speaks at the Arkansas High School Athletic Administrators Association (AHSAAA) annual conference in Hot Springs, Arkansas on March 8. Barkley gave a history of how the NIAAA DEIB committee was established, the important initiatives of the committee, and some helpful tips for athletic directors struggling with where to begin in their own school to create awareness of the importance of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. A special thanks to NIAAA Board member Dr. Dustin Smith, director of athletic operations and student activities at Greenwood (AR) Public Schools and the AHSAAA for adding this important topic to this year's clinic and for being champions of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging!



## The Need to Belong

By Rick Tune, Athletic Director, Punahou School

Every person in every group, large or small, yearns to feel connected in a deep and meaningful way. The word “belonging,” according to the Cambridge Dictionary, is defined as a “feeling of being happy or comfortable as part of a particular group and having a good relationship with the other members of the group because they welcome you and accept you.” Belonging can’t just be stated, marketed, or implied – it needs to be felt. This feeling isn’t just something fleeting or peripheral, it is at the core of human existence.

Thousands of years ago, the human species started as hunter/gatherers on large, flat, grassy plains. Very early on, humans learned if they came together in large and diverse groups, everyone was more successful. Larger and more diverse communities meant each member of the tribe held specific roles tailored to their skillset. Those skills were used to benefit the entire group. Most importantly, when danger arose, the people in a tribe came together and relied on each other for support because they all shared a common interest in protecting the community they had built together. The Mayo Clinic – a world leader in care and wellness – states, “The social ties that accompany a sense of belonging are a protective factor helping to manage stress and other behavioral issues. When we feel we have support and are not alone, we are more resilient, often coping more effectively with difficult times in our lives.”

A relevant example that hits close to home comes from current NIAAA board member and co-founder of the National Organization of Minority Athletic Directors (NOMAD) Antony Fisher. “I vividly remember the moment I felt I belonged to the NIAAA. It was at the 2018 national conference in San Antonio. I had been to many conferences before this one but never felt truly connected to the organization. However, at this conference, something happened. As the NIAAA recognized the past presidents they came to announce the new president elect, Lanness Robinson. It was the first time I had ever seen someone that looks like me in that leadership position and it sparked me. At that moment I knew I mattered, that I belonged to this organization, and that my efforts could mean something. After that I ramped up my participation in the NIAAA and I am now involved on multiple fronts and am someone for others to look at and see what is possible.”

Belonging is something the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) committee wanted to make a key value. Therefore, they made the recommendation to the NIAAA board of directors to add the letter “B” – for belonging – to their committee name, making it DEIB. The NIAAA board supported this change at the February 2023 board meeting. DEIB Committee member, NOMAD president elect, and longtime athletic director Anthony Thomas of San Francisco University High School has been a DEIB innovator at his previous school, Francis Parker in San Diego, California. Before he came to Francis Parker, the DEIB acronym wasn’t something people in his community were familiar with. Currently, Francis Parker has two full-time DEIB officers and a robust program of student affinity groups. The school continues to evaluate all of its policies and programs through a DEIB lens to make sure everyone feels like a part of the school. Mr. Thomas describes belonging in this way: “Belonging is about feeling like you can be your authentic self. Being inclusive in your conversations with stakeholders, school policies, and especially your hiring practices. The way your school organizes its decision-making processes is critical to pay attention to.”

Social psychologist Geoffrey Cohen states in his book “Belonging” that, “Belonging may seem like a comfortable but inessential luxury. However, it has potent, wide-ranging effects. Feeling excluded is experienced in much of the same way physical pain is, with both activating many of the same neural networks in the brain.” The need to belong is a basic component of human well-being and the feeling of belonging is part of the solution to some of the most pressing and urgent problems this world faces. The more our world is fully able to embrace diversity, the more we attack all of our shared problems with the full force of our humanity and totality of our collective human experience. By doing that, we give our society the greatest chance to not only survive, but to thrive.

### References

- (1) Angela Theisen, “Is having a sense of belonging important?” *Speaking of Health* 8 December 2021. <https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/is-having-a-sense-of-belonging-important#:~:text=The%20social%20ties%20that%20accompany,difficult%20times%20in%20our%20lives>
- (2) Antony Fisher, Director of Athletics, Minneapolis Public Schools, NOMAD Co-Founder
- (3) Anthony Thomas, Francis Parker Athletic Director, NOMAD Co-Founder and President-elect
- (4) Geoffrey Cohen, *Belonging: The Science Of Creating Connection And Bridging Divides* (New York:W.W. Norton & Company, 2022)

**Other Works Used** - Eastwood, Owen. *Belonging: Unlock Your Potential With The Ancient Code Of Togetherness*. London: Cuercus Editions LTD, 2021.

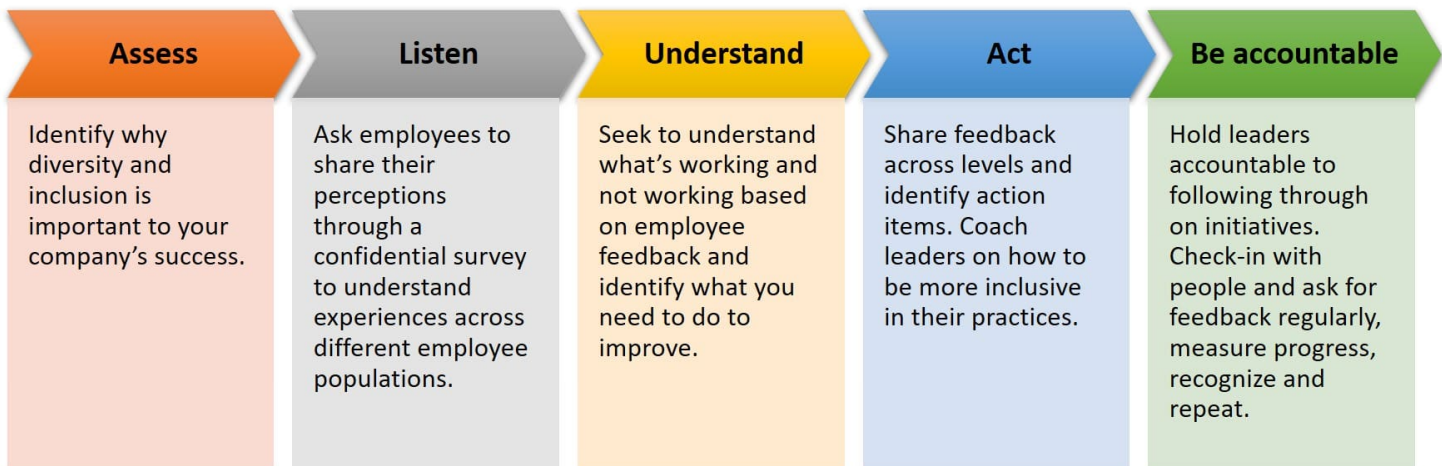
**Reflections on Leading for Equity**

*National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) Magazine*

*By Erin Jones*

<https://www.nassp.org/publication/principal-leadership/volume-23-2022-2023/principal-leadership-march-2023/role-call-march-2023/>

According to People Element (peopleelement.com), organizations with inclusive cultures are eight times likelier to achieve better business outcomes. These include creating a culture of belonging. Below is an example of a process that can assist your organization with this process.



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