

Lindsay Esposito Principal of Tracey Magnet School

How do you and your school community promote a sense of belongingness?

Belonging is something we work intentionally to build at Tracey. I want every student, staff member, and family to feel seen, heard, valued, and connected to our school community. Our PRINT values: Perseverance/Problem Solving, Respect, Integrity, Neighborly, and Taking Responsibility give us a common language for how we treat one another and how we contribute to our community.

One of the things I am most proud of is that belonging is not viewed as something separate from academics. Through experiences such as Cub Connections, SEL, collaborative learning, student voice, family events, and our focus on equitable participation in the classroom, we create opportunities for students to build relationships with both peers and adults. I also believe staff belonging matters. When adults feel valued, supported, and connected, they are better able to create that same environment for children. Ultimately, I want Tracey to be a place where people know they matter and know that they contribute something important to our community.

What do you value most about your staff?

What I value most about my staff is their commitment to our students. They care deeply about children, and they continually show a willingness to reflect, adjust, collaborate, and do what students need, even when the work is difficult.

I also value the different strengths that each person brings to Tracey. Our classroom teachers, special educators, MLL staff, interventionists, coaches, mental-health professionals, paraeducators, specialists, and support staff all contribute to the success of our students in different ways. I don't expect everyone to approach the work exactly the same way; I value that people bring different perspectives and expertise to the table. There is a shared sense that all of our students belong to all of us.





How does your school community help you to be a better principal?

My school community constantly pushes me to grow. Tracey has taught me that being a strong principal does not mean having all the answers. It means listening, asking questions, being willing to reflect, and sometimes changing course when students, staff, families, or the data tell us that something is not working.

Our students remind me to keep decisions centered on what children actually experience each day. My staff challenges me to think deeply

about instruction, systems, equity, and what they need in order to be successful. Our families remind me how important communication, trust, and partnership are. All of those voices have made me a more reflective leader. I have learned that leadership is not simply about setting a direction; it is about creating the conditions where people feel safe enough to contribute, challenge thinking, take risks, and grow alongside one another.

What are you most proud of and what are you striving to do better?

I am most proud of the community we have built at Tracey. There is a strong identity here. Our students know they are Cubs, they understand what it means to leave their PRINT, and there is a genuine commitment among our adults to educating the whole child. I am especially proud that we continue to push ourselves beyond simply asking whether students are compliant or completing work. We are increasingly asking whether students are thinking critically, communicating, collaborating, making decisions, and taking ownership of their learning.

At the same time, I am striving to get better at ensuring that the experience we want for students is consistently happening in every classroom, for every child. That means continuing to strengthen planning, rigorous instruction, student discourse, equitable participation, and student ownership. Personally, I am also working to create more

opportunities for others to lead rather than feeling that leadership always has to come from me. I want to continue moving Tracey toward a community where students and adults have genuine agency—where people understand the purpose of the work, have a voice in it, and feel responsible for our collective success.

What I am probably most proud of is that Tracey is never finished. We celebrate what is working, but we are willing to look closely at ourselves and ask, What can we do better for kids? I think that willingness to keep learning is one of our greatest strengths.