



# Ontario Institute for Education Leadership L'Institut de leadership en éducation de l'Ontario

*Ontario Leaders Collaborating for Student Achievement, Equity and Well-being  
La collaboration des leaders en Ontario assure la réussite, l'équité et le bien-être des élèves.*

## The Role of Psychological Safety in Diversity and Inclusion Without it, true DIB is even more of a challenge

By **Amy C. Edmondson Ph.D.**

### **SUMMARY**

In this article Dr. Amy Edmondson draws on decades of her research to confirm that psychological safety is key to the success of organizations where people with diverse skills and backgrounds work together to accomplish challenging goals. She defines psychological safety as an environment in which people believe they can speak up candidly with ideas, questions, concerns, and even mistakes. She argues that psychological safety is vital to leveraging the benefits of diversity because it can help make inclusion a reality.

Edmondson challenges us to think of these three terms – diversity, inclusion, and belonging – as different and interrelated goals. Great organizations, she says, must continue to attract, hire, and retain a diverse workforce while recognizing that hiring for diversity is not enough. They must also care about whether or not employees can bring their full selves to work and can feel they belong in the fullest sense to the community inside the organization.

### **REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS**

1. Consider each of these terms in relation to your leadership practice: diversity, inclusion and belonging.

a. What steps are you taking to ensure that your hiring practices – whether at a school or district level – contribute to building a diverse workforce?

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b. What processes do you have in place to help ensure that new employees experience inclusion?

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- c. How would you assess the extent to which staff in your context feel they belong and have a strong sense of psychological safety; e.g., can bring their full selves to work? What would you do with your findings?

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- 2. Reflect on your responses to the above three questions and identify ways you can strengthen your approach to integrating diversity, inclusion, and belonging in your day-to-day practice and long-range planning.

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- 3. What are your thoughts on Edmondson’s assertion that “leaders who care about diversity must care about psychological safety, just as those who care about psychological safety must also care about diversity, inclusion, and belonging?”

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