

[INTRO MUSIC]

Sophie Biddle: Hi, everybody, and welcome to Showing Up. So this is a podcast that we produce at Cultivate Learning. And we are really excited to be offering a live version of our podcast today from Bridge.

Rebecca Wong: And I'm Rebecca. And thank you so much for having us.

Sophie: So please note, just as we start off, that Showing Up is a podcast that features a lot of different themes, including themes of trauma and mental health and resilience. And that can be triggering for some people.

So please, we really encourage you to just listen to your body's cues. Take breaks. Use self regulation strategies. And please don't hesitate to ask for help. No issue is too big or too small.

Rebecca: You can always reach out to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-8255 for support. They will be available to talk with you and connect you with local mental health resources.

Sophie: So this is our podcast, Showing Up. This is a time where we talk about trauma informed care practices for Expanded Learning Opportunities, or ELO programs.

So as you all know, ELO programs include basically anywhere young people spend time out of the school day classroom setting, like after school care, summer camps, and skill based programs.

Rebecca: And we like to start off each episode with something we call a pupdate. So Sophie and I both have dogs. And they're kind of similar. So we like to just give a little pupdate about them.

So my dog is named Gus. He's like a five-year-old, smaller poodle mix. And he was stray. We adopted him when he was two. And he's been a little grumpy. He's not the cuddliest dog.

But I don't know what it is, maybe it's fall time, but he's been a little extra cuddly. And yesterday was like the first time he kind of just sat on my lap on the couch, which is amazing.

And I was just stuck there for about an hour and a half, but it was lovely.

Sophie: Stuck there on the couch, what a bummer.

Rebecca: I know. Sophie, what's your pupdate?

Sophie: My pupdate is that I have a puppy named Monty. He's definitely a pandemic pup. He is eight months old.

And well, I took him to the vet today. He had to go have a little checkup. And it was the first time since the pandemic had really started that I had been able to go in to the vet with him.

And it was really sweet, like I'd realized that they'd tried really hard to make that a positive experience because he leapt out of my car and ran to the door for the vet, dragging his tail.

And he was like, I love this place. They give me treats. Everyone says I'm cute. And it was true. And he was thrilled to go to the vet for a checkup.

Rebecca: Awe, I'm so glad that was such a positive experience for him. Awesome. So today we're doing a live special episode of Showing Up from the Bridge Conference hosted by School's Out Washington.

And we have a youth panel with us today to talk all about creating ELO spaces where young people feel safe, seen and supported.

We have Kai, Ava, Elyse, Avery, and Elliott. And let's go ahead and meet them. And can everybody go around and give some introductions?

Elyse, would you like to start? Could you tell us your name, your pronouns, and share one after school activity that you really like?

Elyse: Yes, my name is Elyse Cherry. My pronouns are she-her. And one after-school activity I've really liked is gymnastics.

Rebecca: Thank you and welcome.

Sophie: Ava, do you want to go next?

Ava: Hi, my name's Ava. My pronouns are she-her. And one activity I really liked was book club.

Elliott: I'm Elliott. My pronouns are he-him. And one after-school activity I really liked was this cooking class that, sadly, no longer exists. But it was still fun when it lasted.

Kai: My name is Kai. My pronouns are he and him. And one after-school activity I really liked was in my after-school coding class.

Avery: Hi, my name is Avery. I-- my pronouns are she-her. And one after-school activity I really liked was I went to Pratt Art School once for like a summer camp.

And it was focused on architecture. And at the end of the camp, we built this model, like a building that we designed. It was really cool.

Sophie: That is awesome, Avery. Thank you so much. So I'm so excited to just have all of you here today.

So today's panel is all about co-creating spaces where young people feel safe, seen, and secure.

And co-creating the spaces is really important to our audience. So I would love to kick off our panel with some questions about leadership and collaboration.

I'd love to hear when was a time that you got to be a leader. Avery, could we start with you?

Avery: Yeah, so once in LEGO robotics, you were supposed to come up with a solution to a problem, like the world on whole faces.

And our problem was space junk. So I got to be a leader by coming up with the solution for our problem. It was like a sphere with a rolling door that basically ate the space junk and then brought it back to the space station to be recycled.

It was fun because I got to lead the idea, and creating it and the prototype and all of that. And I had the vision for it.

Elliott: One time I got to be a leader was this summer camp where I did-- where we were supposed to make a hot chocolate stand. And I was-- like, we had groups of like three people.

And I had a good idea of Mexican-style hot chocolate with cinnamon. And so the other-- so I was kind of the leader there.

And then the other kids started calling me boss, which was kind of awkward.

Elyse: One time I got to be a leader was when me along with nine other students at my school got to take the superintendent on a tour.

Kai: One time I got to be a leader was at a summer camp where we had to design a solution to-- well, we had to design a robot. I built the-- I built most of the thing.

Ava: A time I got to be a leader when I was chosen to play Rosa Parks at our school's Black History Month assembly.

Rebecca: Thank you all for sharing. Those are such wonderful examples. And you guys got to do such awesome things at the programs that you've been in.

Our next question is, so how did it feel when adults gave you that space to lead? Kai, would you like to start?

Kai: Yeah, sure. It feels great when you get to be a leader. You have open space to do what you want. And people look up to you. And it gives you the sort of feeling that's nice, that you're helping people.

Avery: I agree with Kai. It feels good to be a leader, you know. You get to have responsibilities, but then you get to meet requirements. And it's like, I at least enjoy seeing ideas play out.

It's just, it feels good, especially when adults are like OK, I'm going to have you take the lead on this one. And I don't know. It just feels good they're trusting you that you'll be able to do something well.

Elliott: I, I agree with Avery and Kai, just saying, you feel it's kind of you feel like you're valued the more of a-- with adults giving you space to lead. And also, yeah, it's stressful. But that's the fun of it.

Elyse: I feel like, when adults give me space to lead, I feel like they're putting their trust in me. And that also makes me feel really proud.

Ava: When adults give me space to lead, it feels good to know they've put their confidence in me to do that task or something because it makes you feel good. And it makes you feel like they value you. And they value your ideas.

Sophie: Yeah, I really hear all of you say that that's been a really positive experience for you when there was space for you to lead.

And that leadership looks a lot of different ways, too. You all gave really different examples of a time that you got to lead. Like it was everything from acting to building a robot to doing a cooking thing.

And so leadership can look a lot of different ways. But all of those experiences were really empowering.

I am really curious to hear what you would like to tell adults about kids leadership abilities. Elliott, could we start with you?

Elliott: Yeah, sure. So I like to say that kids can be good at leadership. They might even be better at leadership because they don't have a ton of clutter on their mind. Yeah, it's just kids can be leaders.

Elyse: So I would like to tell adults that leadership is cool. And I think it makes kids feel proud and confident. And I also think that every kid, like everybody deserves a chance to lead.

Ava: I agree with Elyse. I think everyone should have a chance to lead and lead someone. Because when you lead someone, it makes you feel like the teacher's value you, like Elyse said.

And it makes you feel empowered and happy. Yeah.

Avery: Yeah, I think adults should be like a little bit more trustworthy about kids leadership abilities only because they sometimes adults can think kids need to be told exactly what to do. And if you don't tell them exactly what to do, they're going to get lost.

But I think that if adults give kids more space to thrive, they would actually be surprised with the creativity of the ideas that kids came up with.

Rebecca: Yeah, I love hearing that advice for adults to just give space for kids to lead. And I think part of that is kind of making environments and situations where you all feel safe to lead, too, to take on those challenges.

So I'm curious what does like a safe place mean to you? And why is that important? Ava, would you like to start?

Ava: Yeah. A safe space means to me like a place that you can connect to people personally. And they like know them. And they can know you without anyone judging you or being mean to you.

And I'm not the loudest person. I'm quiet most of the time. So yes, a safe space is a place where you can be yourself. And you can be as quiet or as loud as you want.

Elyse: A safe space to me is a place where kids won't be judged on what they think or feel. And it's also a place where kids can like feel accepted, like Ava said, to like be themselves. And that's really important.

Elliott: To me, a safe space would mean you won't be discriminated. That's like kind of the more universal term of safe space.

But like, a safe space could also mean a lot of things. It can mean like you have a choice of what you can do. You're not being told to do one thing.

Kai: So a safe place means to me where it feels like where you feel you won't come to physical harm or be criticized. Or where you won't come to physical and mental or harm, a place that you're protected and loved, that's what it means to me.

Avery: I think the most important thing in a safe space is inclusivity, more specifically people being willing to listen to you and you being willing to listen to them.

It's important because sometimes if you're somewhere where that's not supported, where that's not valued, you end up not wanting to do things.

If you really liked doing this one thing, but it had a horrible environment, and the people there were just super mean, and they would shoot down all your ideas, you would end up not wanting to do that anymore.

So that's why I think that inclusivity is most important.

Sophie:

Thank you guys for those reflections. I heard a lot of similar themes that safety feels really important to even wanting to be somewhere, first of all.

That if it's not like a place that feels safe and inclusive and a place where you can connect with people, it doesn't even matter if the activities are really great.

So it was one thing I heard. And I also heard the importance of being safe physically and sort of like mentally and emotionally, too. That it's a kind of a holistic understanding of safety.

And I'm curious if you guys could tell us about a time when one grown-up in particular really supported you, made you feel safe and supported. Kai, could we start with you about a time when a grown-up helped you feel supported?

Kai:

Yeah, sure. So when a grown-up made me safe and supported, it was one of my counselors at the after-school program.

They made me safe and supported by they helped me find something to do. And it was just a small gesture, but it meant a lot because not everyone is like that.

Avery:

I think that-- well, a time that a grown-up supported me was I really like my science teacher. He's actually my math and science teacher.

And he's a really good teacher. He's always trying to not make things like traditional school. But yeah. I really like him.

But a time he supported me was when I just totally did not get this thing in math. And everyone was saying-- he's like, does anyone know what this is?

And people are raising their hands and like, oh, it's this and something, something away from zero. And I'm like, what? Could you say that again, but in English, please?

And so I raised my hand. And he came over. And he worked it out for me in a way that made it a lot more sense.

So I think that was supporting. Because sometimes kids can get-- like I know that I felt self-conscious about math and other subjects, too.

And so I think when you have a teacher who's really nice and understanding, that sometimes things can be hard. There's so many things that you just need to be shown the trick to or the formula, right?

And if you don't know it, then you can't really do it. But you can pick it up. So it's he's always saying, it's not about your intelligence. It's just whether you've been shown it or not.

Ava:

A time when I felt supported was in English. We were doing this group assignment. And everyone was talking. They weren't really giving me a chance to talk.

And my teacher came over. And she let me have a chance to talk. And it really made me feel like she was there. And yeah.

Elyse: A time when a grown-up supported me was when my teacher-- I had this writing assignment. And it was overdue. And I told my teacher about it. And she was like, oh, it's OK. You need time to get stuff done. And she was really supportive and really caring.

Rebecca: Well, thank you all for sharing. I think it's really heartwarming to hear ways that adults have supported you. And kind of along those lines, another part of our topic today is about feeling seen. And Ava, I think your example really resonated with me because I was definitely also the quiet one.

And somebody giving you that space to talk and giving me space to talk sometimes is a way that people use to make me feel seen.

And to me, one part of feeling seen is about all the different pieces of my identity that are supported by the people that I'm with, so if I identify as a really quiet person.

And I'm curious how adults in your life make different aspects of your identity feel seen. Elliott, you want to start?

Elliott: My parents-- one thing that makes me feel seen is they take it seriously like I take it seriously. They take it seriously, which is great. It is weird, but yes.

Avery: At my school they're really supportive of everyone. And they know how growing up can be a difficult time for everyone. So every time we introduce ourselves, they ask for our pronouns.

And they had us filling out a form about how you want to be seen, how you pronounce your name, what do you want to be called, should we use those pronouns with your family, with your parents. It felt really supportive. And I liked that.

Ava: In my school, there's a bunch of different clubs. And like Avery said, they are supportive of many, many people, every single person.

And we have a Black Leaders club. And that makes me feel like they don't just see one culture. They see all of them. And it makes me feel like my identity is being seen and they care about everyone in this school.

Elyse: So my teacher sent a survey out when we were first starting school about what are some holidays like your family celebrates.

And I think that make me feel seen because one holiday that my family celebrates is Kwanzaa. And it made me feel proud that like he asked that question. And I got to say my answer.

Kai: So one way my teachers make me feel seen by-- because this one teacher has-- you see, I like to read. And this teacher, he likes to read the same series as I do.

And it makes me feel represented. Or it makes me feel like I have someone who shares my interests and that is an adult, which is good.

Sophie: I love how there are really common themes even in these different, very individual experiences.

But there are ways that grown-ups can show up for us when we're kids that helps us just feel like they get us, like making sure that we have time to talk, or making sure that-- or just connecting with us about things that we have in common with them.

Even just knowing that we read similar books or might watch similar movies is a great way to feel connected. And that those kind of little things matter a lot is really cool to hear.

I am curious, what advice would you guys like to give to teachers and after-school counselors on how to support kids and make spaces where kids feel like they belong? So Avery, could we start with you?

Avery: Yeah, so I have always liked teachers who like teaching funny or memorable ways. And for that reason, I think it's important to not have this air of seriousness around you all the time. And instead come up with a fun activity or a silly way to learn something.

Teachers have to remember that, or have to imagine that they're kids, and think would this be fun for me as a kid. If it's not, you really have to be truthful about this with yourself. Because if it's not, students are probably not going to want to learn about your subject.

And I think that all teachers genuinely care about their subject. And they don't want any student to say, oh yeah, that's my least favorite class or activity. It's just so boring. You don't want that.

Kai: I have advice for the teachers. So sometimes teachers do things because they think that people will like their classes better if they like the teachers themselves.

But people actually don't like the teachers if they do that because their opinions of what the kids like nowadays is... Sorry, adult!

Sophie: Kai, are you kind of getting at the idea that it's sort of obvious if a grown-up's trying too hard to have--

Kai: Yeah, you don't have to try too hard. There's a lot of people that will like you if you're just who you are.

Elliott: I 1000% agree with Kai. You don't need to try too hard to get people to like you. And this goes for teachers, too. Stuff is more memorable when you're engaged in it or like it.

So like teachers, if the teachers are memorable, then you'll probably remember the topics. And also like this whole thing is also about the whole being seen kind of air around this whole thing.

Ava: Yeah, I agree with Kai and Elliott. You need to be, you don't always have to be so uptight all the time, if that's the type of teacher that you are.

Sometimes you can be laid back and be the best teacher you can be. And sometimes, let the kids slide. But I feel like if I like have a bunch of overdue assignments, give them time to figure it out.

Maybe something's wrong with them or something's wrong at home or something. And maybe they're just not telling you. So sometimes, teachers just need to be respectful of kids and what's going on in their lives not at school.

And they just need to be aware of everything that's happening in their lives, not everything, but still.

- Elyse:** I totally agree with everyone. If you're a teacher, like an after-school teacher or just a regular teacher, you can't like try too hard to make this person trust you because that's not making them trust you.
- It's actually putting more stress on their shoulders. So sometimes, like Ava was saying, just let them slide because they might have things going on at home that you don't know about that.
- And if you're being really strict and uptight, that's probably making them feel really bad. And that's not helping you supporting them. You're pushing them down. You're not helping them at all.
- Rebecca:** I think those are some really great insights. I think some things that I heard were like to show up authentically as yourself, and also to kind of approach things with some compassion and respect.
- And I think that's all part of being a trauma informed care provider is to know that maybe some other things might be going on.
- And you don't always know, but to know that that's a possibility, and to maybe give some grace and some compassion for the young people in your care.
- Sophie:** To kind of jump back to some of our discussion earlier about identity and all the different things that make up one's identity, like age or disability or race or gender or even just interests and different values.
- I was really interested in that some of you guys were talking about how adults helped your identity feel seen because they connected with you on interests.
- And I was just curious how would you describe your own identity? I'm curious if somebody feels comfortable sharing how they would describe their own identity.
- Kai:** I would describe my identity as someone who knows a lot, but has a lot to learn.
- Sophie:** Kai, that's beautiful.
- Rebecca:** I know. That was so wise I love it.
- Sophie:** Does anybody else have thoughts they'd like to share about that question?
- Avery:** I see myself as a multicultural middle school girl. And I'm happy that I have strong relationships with friends and teachers. And I'm athletic. And I can do well in school.
- Elliott:** I would describe myself as somebody who kind of does know a lot of things. And also, I just really like really weird stuff, like wacky, kind of.
- Elyse:** Some things that build up my identity are like I'm really wacky and weird. And I love food.
- But I've got a lot to learn, kind of like what Kai said. And yeah, mainly I'm just really weird. But also I'm a very nice person. Yeah.
- Ava:** I would describe myself as a kind, kind of quiet person who likes to read books and is in middle school, likes to learn, and likes to grow every day, and do new things, try new things. And yeah.

Rebecca: I love that. All of that was so great. It's so awesome to hear how you guys describe yourself because, obviously, you know there's something to I see meeting you guys on Zoom.

But it's really awesome to hear more about you.

I'm curious how you talk about your identity with your friends or with adults in your life.

Kai: I'll go again I guess. So I talk about my own identity when I'm not sure what it is.

And then I gather together all the things I like to do, who I am, and I mush them together in a big pot, and then I stir.

This is all proverbial, by the way. And then what's left is identity.

Avery: I think that's a great way to describe it.

Kai: Thank you.

Avery: I don't know. I refer to myself as a girl. Sometimes, my friends have told me that I'm the person who they come to, to talk or get something off their chest.

And I think that's really nice to hear coming from someone, that they can trust you. And sometimes when I get excited, my voice can get really high. And I'm pretty short.

So sometimes, when people meet me, they think I'm younger than I am or say things like, oh, you look at a little girl. Or your voice sounds like a five-year-old.

And I mean, I don't love that because people make assumptions about me because I'm small. And sometimes, they'll treat me like I'm not capable.

I don't love that because it makes me feel different than other people. But I think that overall, I'm just pretty normal.

But as people were saying, I also do like things like reading, food, and being weird.

Elyse: How I talk about my own identity with my friends and adults in my life-- most of my friends say my voice is really loud and that I can't whisper.

I mean, that's fine. And I can whisper, kind of, not really, though.

But other of my friends say I'm really kind and caring. And yeah.

But also, they think I'm really, really weird. And I like being called weird. I think it makes me different than other people. I think I'm really unique. And I like different things than other people normally would.

Elliott: This is another aspect. But I also like reading a lot. So like I sometimes like to recommend books to my dad because he really likes reading, too. Yeah that's just a very short answer. But yeah.

Ava: I agree with Avery. You don't believe how many people call me short every single day, mostly my sister, I'm like four or three or something.

And yeah. I'm kind. A lot of people call me nice, kind, easy to talk to sometimes,

Elyse: One more thing to say. Ava, you're not that short. But you are pretty short for seventh grader. OK. Sorry. Continue.

Sophie: I mean, this is a great time to remind our listeners that Ava and Elyse are sisters.

Guys, yeah. I thought that was really interesting. Thanks for sharing those reflections because it was interesting to hear about.

I think this is kind of a complicated question. And it was interesting to hear some of you reflect on ways that your friends will talk about who you are or how they see you. And that becomes part of your identity.

And also like interests-- and Elyse, I thought your comment about enjoying being weird or unique was like also a common theme, that every-- that it feels special to be kind of like unique and seen more fully, like outside of a stereotype.

Avery, yeah, I see that you have something else you want to add.

Avery: Yeah, I just wanted to say something about stereotypes. I think that sometimes it can be hard because you're trying to squeeze yourself into this model of a perfect human or something.

But I think that like Elyse was saying, you really have to embrace like who you are and all of your weirdness and individuality.

And you just have to say, this is who I am. And you can include that in your identity, in the identity melting pot.

And it's just-- stereotypes are really mean way of trying to classify a huge group of people into this one perfect thing.

Sophie: Yeah, Avery, I think there is a lot of wisdom there. And I loved the way that you summarized Kai's opening idea around the identity melting pot.

And I'm just really proud of all of you. I think all of you have really found your own identity melting pots really young and shared all of that today in this really brave way.

So I just really want to say thank you to all of you so, so much for joining us. Again, this has been Kai, Ava, Elyse, Elliott, and Avery.

And we really hope for everybody listening that hearing from these brave and thoughtful young people has been inspiring and encourages you to co-create spaces in your ELO programs where everyone feels a sense of belonging.

[MUSIC PLAYING]