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Heart Work as Future Work: Teachers' Lived Experiences of Nurturing Belonging and Resilience (Prek-3)

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Abstract

This qualitative phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of PreK–3 teachers in nurturing belonging and resilience among young learners in culturally diverse classrooms across the United States. Specifically, it examined how teachers from different cultural backgrounds foster supportive learning environments for students from diverse cultural backgrounds, the meanings they attach to this heart work, the challenges they encounter, the coping strategies they employ, and the themes that emerge from their experiences. Twelve PreK–3 teachers from various schools across the United States were selected through purposive and criterion sampling. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews conducted using various online interview platforms and were analyzed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis. The findings highlighted the importance of meaningful relationships, inclusive teaching practices, emotional support, and culturally responsive approaches in fostering students' sense of belonging and resilience.
Based on the findings, a Belonging and Resilience Classroom Playbook was developed to serve as a practical resource for educators working with culturally diverse learners.

Keywords: belonging, resilience, phenomenology, cultural diversity, PreK–3 teachers