

Reflection: Watkinson's Day of Community and Belonging
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At my school, Watkinson, we had a whole morning to focus on our community (current students, teachers, alumni, trustees, and alumni parents) which were invited to a conversation to talk about what it feels like to be included at Watkinson and what areas Watkinson lacks in for everyone to feel included. The morning started out with a keynote speaker from Jason Craige Harris, an expert in bringing people together and creating a safe environment for everyone. He talked about how compassion is the key of making people feel included, it's important to look in the mirror often and ask yourself "What's the story I am telling about myself and others?" and too watch the assumptions you make throughout your day. Later on, all students went into breakout rooms. Jason Craige Harris was my grades facilitator for our discussion. We started off with a positive question, "when do you feel included and apart of a community at Watkinson?" As we went around the zoom room, students responded with "when I am at club time with friends", "always", "feels like a second home" and "on the retreats". One of the rules of our conversation was to speak in "I" statements, so everyone spoke for themselves and their experiences. You had to speak on your turn, you could not speak out of turn which created an organized conversation forcing people to listen to each other. I really liked this because it created an honest and calm environment. The next question was asking the group, "At what time have you ever not feel welcomed at Watkinson?" and students responded with "when I am in a situation and microaggressions are thrown into a conversation, especially when people do not understand what they are saying" and "the beginning of virtual learning two years ago". I was interested to learn how people do not feel comfortable at times in our Watkinson community, when I feel comfortable, and how everyone's experience at Watkinson is different, which I did. After I signed off from the conference, I felt a sense of hope for the future of Watkinson in making sure everyone feels like they belong and shock of some of the things some of my classmates shared to their experiences at Watkinson.