



Aspirations Framework

First in a Series of Four Aspirations Briefs

Aspirations is the ability to dream and set goals for the future while being inspired in the present to reach those dreams.
– Dr. Russell J. Quaglia

The Quaglia Institute for School Voice and Aspirations (QISVA) believes that to have high aspirations, a person must believe in themselves, be actively engaged in their learning and work, and see a purposeful connection between today's efforts and tomorrow's goals.

The Quaglia Institute is committed to helping schools foster students' and educators' aspirations so that all can reach their fullest potential and achieve success. The Aspirations Framework outlines a way to recognize and develop aspirations, while trusting in the professional judgment of educators and insights of students to decide what concrete actions are best for their schools. The Framework is a research-based set of principles and conditions, yet it does not provide a prescription for implementation. While QISVA collects best practices and certain tried and true applications, ultimately administrators, teachers, and students must guide decisions about how best to realize the Aspirations Framework in their schools. The combination of the Institute's expertise articulated in the Framework and a school's expertise in their unique culture is what cultivates a learning environment in which all students and adults are inspired to achieve their very best—personally, socially, professionally, and academically.

Thus, the Framework is comprised of four interrelated parts:

- I. The Aspirations Profile that includes Dreaming and Doing**
- II. 3 Guiding Principles**
- III. 8 Conditions**
- IV. The Voice of Students, Teachers, and Administrators in deciding concrete application**

The Institute's **Aspirations Profile** is the realization that genuine aspirations involve both *dreaming* about the future and *doing* in the present to reach one's goals. To achieve genuine aspirations, **3 Guiding Principles** must be present: *Self-Worth*, *Engagement*, and *Purpose*. These Guiding Principles direct the development of educational experiences, from the individual classroom to the entire school building. Students and educators who have aspirations believe in themselves, are meaningfully engaged in their learning and the life of the school, and work with intention toward their goals.

The Guiding Principles, in turn, are lived out through the **8 Conditions** that emphasize relationships, active and engaging teaching and learning, and a sense of responsibility over one's own aims and goals. The 8 Conditions are: *Belonging*, *Heroes*, *Sense of Accomplishment*, *Fun & Excitement*, *Curiosity & Creativity*, *Spirit of Adventure*, *Leadership & Responsibility*, and *Confidence to Take Action*. The 8 Conditions make a difference because they help schools put into practice the 3 Principles that guide Aspirations work.

Developing Self-Worth: Belonging, Heroes, and Sense of Accomplishment

Self-Worth begins when we experience a sense of Belonging: We feel like we are part of the school community while being recognized and appreciated for our uniqueness. We also experience *Self-Worth* when someone in our lives believes in us. We need Heroes: people we can look up to, respect, and learn from. To develop *Self-Worth*, we also need a Sense of Accomplishment. We must be recognized as much for our effort, perseverance, and citizenship as we are for high grades and good test scores. As we build *Self-Worth*, we are more likely to persevere through difficult tasks and be inspired to take the steps needed to reach our goals.

Fostering Engagement in Learning: Fun & Excitement, Curiosity & Creativity, and Spirit of Adventure

Engagement means we are emotionally, intellectually, and behaviorally engaged in our learning and work. When we are emotionally engaged, we experience Fun & Excitement by becoming so involved that we lose track of time. At the end of a lesson or task, we wonder, “Where did that time go?” When we are intellectually engaged, we ask “Why?” or “Why not?” about the world around us. Curiosity & Creativity are alive in how we learn, fostering inquisitiveness and a desire for new discoveries. When we are behaviorally engaged, we have a Spirit of Adventure. We are not afraid to try new things, or to take on healthy challenges, whether we might succeed or fail. With *Engagement*, learning becomes important in and of itself.

Encouraging a Sense of Purpose: Leadership & Responsibility and Confidence to Take Action

Schools must challenge us to think about our *Purpose*—who we want to become as well as *what* we want to be. To reach this goal, we need to explore what it means to have, and create, a successful and rewarding life and to pursue our work with intention and commitment. *Purpose* is about being responsible, accountable, and confident. To develop *Purpose*, we need the opportunity to assume Leadership & Responsibility in our lives. We must learn to make decisions and understand the consequences of our choices. When we have *Purpose*, we have the Confidence to Take Action toward a meaningful, productive, and rewarding future. We believe in ourselves and are motivated to reach our dreams.

In summary, the Aspirations Framework—from the Aspirations Profile through the 3 Guiding Principles and into the 8 Conditions—is a way of scaffolding the various, and at times disparate, initiatives and programs that many schools have adopted. The fourth part of the Framework involves student and adult **Voice** in deciding how to improve the status of the Conditions in a particular school. As an organizing set of common sense ideas, the Framework can help educators and students decide what practices, policies, norms, and customs support student and staff success and which hinder that effort. The Aspirations Framework represents a return to a core belief that every educator holds: There is nothing more important than motivating students and ourselves to achieve our dreams.