



School Voice: A Decade of Data

Parent Voice



QuagliaInstitute.org

The Role of Aspirations in Today's Schools

Today's students want to be successful, whether their goal is to learn algebra or a trade, get good grades, or go to college. Too often, however, students can't reach their future goals and dreams because their schools' conditions are not supportive. The key to understanding whether supportive conditions exist is to ask the students themselves, which is the purpose of the Student Voice Survey. A corresponding parent survey was also developed, as parents' perceptions can contribute significantly to the overall understanding of school culture. This report contains data from 20,261 parents in 244 schools across 14 states.

The *8 Conditions that Make a Difference*® in promoting student aspirations have been identified and defined by Dr. Russell J. Quaglia, an internationally known leader in the study of student aspirations. 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 three Guiding Principles that facilitate Aspirations work: *Self-Worth, Engagement, and Purpose*.

Developing Students' Self-Worth:

Belonging, Heroes, and Sense of Accomplishment

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

Fostering Students' Engagement in Learning:

Fun & Excitement, Curiosity & Creativity, and Spirit of Adventure

Engagement means that students experience Fun & Excitement in their learning. They become so involved that they almost lose track of time. At the end of the lesson, they wonder, "Where did that time go?" Actively engaged students are not afraid to ask "Why?" or "Why not?" about the world around them. Curiosity & Creativity are alive in the way they learn, fostering inquisitiveness and a desire to satisfy their minds with new discoveries. Engaged students also have a Spirit of Adventure. They are not afraid to try new things or to take on healthy challenges, regardless of whether they 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 students to think about their *Purpose* -- who they want to become as well as what they want to be. To reach this goal, students need to explore what it means to have, and create, a successful and rewarding life. *Purpose* is about being responsible, accountable, and confident. To develop *Purpose*, students need the opportunity to assume Leadership & Responsibility in their lives. They must learn to make decisions and understand the consequences of their choices. When students have *Purpose*, they have the Confidence to Take Action toward a meaningful, productive, and rewarding future. They believe in themselves and are motivated to reach their dreams.

All members of the school community can foster the 8 Conditions, making a positive difference in the lives of today's students by supporting the goals those students set and strive to reach.

Demographics

The demographic data are presented both as counts and as percentages.¹

Total number of respondents: 20261

Gender		
Gender	Count	Percent
Male	3788	18.9%
Female	16234	81.1%
Other	0	0.0%

Child is in Grade ²		
Grade	Count	Percent
K	2424	12.1%
1st	2660	13.3%
2nd	2740	13.7%
3rd	3067	15.3%
4th	2953	14.8%
5th	2895	14.5%
6th	3165	15.8%
7th	3021	15.1%
8th	2941	14.7%
9th	2302	11.5%
10th	2089	10.4%
11th	1730	8.6%
12th	1641	8.2%

Age		
Age	Count	Percent
Under 30	1220	6.1%
31-40	8236	41.0%
41-50	8365	41.7%
51-60	1906	9.5%
Over 60	342	1.7%

Years Living in School District		
Years	Count	Percent
1	1313	6.6%
2	1072	5.4%
3-5	3055	15.4%
6-10	3799	19.1%
10+	10621	53.5%

Racial Heritage ²		
Racial Heritage	Count	Percent
White	17003	84.9%
Black or African American	518	2.6%
Hispanic, Latino	1989	9.9%
Asian	401	2.0%
Native Hawaiian	49	0.2%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1063	5.3%
Other Pacific Islander	90	0.4%
Other	319	1.6%

Language Selected by Respondent for Survey		
Language	Count	Percent
English	9841	99.8%
Spanish	21	0.2%

¹Count totals for specific demographics may not equal the total survey count, as not all respondents report demographic information. Total percentages may not equal one hundred due to rounding.

²In this table, the percentages may total more than 100% since respondents were instructed to select all that apply.

The 8 Conditions that Make a Difference

Belonging
Heroes
Sense of Accomplishment
Fun & Excitement
Curiosity & Creativity
Spirit of Adventure
Leadership & Responsibility
Confidence to Take Action

The 8 Conditions have positive effects on the development of student aspirations in schools. The descriptions of these Conditions outline an approach that frames how schools can recognize and nurture the development of student aspirations. The 8 Conditions represent a return to the common belief that every educator holds: There is nothing more important than motivating students to learn. The identified 8 Conditions do not represent an exhaustive list, but each is important if we are to have self-assured, inspired, and goal-directed students. All schools can benefit by creating and cultivating these Conditions in the lives of their students.

***"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

Belonging

The Condition of Belonging means that a child feels he or she is a valued member of the family and school community while still maintaining his or her uniqueness. Additionally, Belonging relates to a parent feeling welcomed by, comfortable in, and of value to his or her child's school. Belonging is a relationship between two or more persons characterized by a sense of connection and support. A sense of Belonging is important to feelings of well-being, social engagement, and competence. Belonging creates an atmosphere that welcomes and connects family and the school community. The Condition of Belonging increases a person's confidence in their abilities and their strengths, since Belonging encompasses acceptance and support. Parents have the opportunity to foster a sense of Belonging, promoting their children's sense of well-being, connection, and self-belief.

Question	Total in Agreement
1. I feel welcome in my child's school.	89.9%
2. My child has difficulty fitting in at school.	16.0%
3. Teachers care about my child's problems and feelings.	74.4%
4. I am proud of my child's school.	83.4%
5. I feel comfortable going to parent-teacher conferences.	90.5%
6. I care about my child's education.	99.7%
7. My input and opinions are valued at my child's school.	63.7%
8. My child is a valued member of his/her school community.	80.6%

Heroes

Heroes are everyday people -- friends, family, coaches, teachers, and parents -- in a child's life who inspire him or her to excel and to make positive changes in attitude and lifestyle. Heroes are individuals children can connect with regularly, who have a positive influence on them, and who listen to and value their ideas. Heroes build trust in others and belief in oneself. Parents can be Heroes to their children. Children can look up to parents as trusted adults to learn from and communicate with about many things. Building strong relationships with children through support, guidance, encouragement, and love can enable them to become more confident in school and life. Additionally, parents should be able to identify people at school whom they can approach with questions or concerns.

Question	Total in Agreement
9. My child has a teacher who is a positive role model.	89.8%
10. I am a positive role model for my child.	98.2%
11. Teachers care if my child is absent from school.	74.0%
12. If my child has a problem, there is a teacher he/she can talk to.	78.2%
13. If I have a problem with my child's school, someone at school is available to help me.	80.8%
14. Teachers let me know what my child does well in school.	71.8%

Sense of Accomplishment

Sense of Accomplishment recognizes effort, perseverance, and citizenship as signs of a child's success. An overly narrow view of accomplishment that refers only to academic achievement or innate ability can actually get in the way of student success in school. Sense of Accomplishment, however, is viewed in terms of personal growth and effort, not just measurable outcomes and countable successes. Parents have the opportunity to celebrate all of the accomplishments of their children. Taking time to recognize and support children's efforts can help motivate them to persevere through difficult tasks, creating an appreciation for hard work and dedication.

Question	Total in Agreement
15. My child is encouraged to practice good citizenship at school.	90.7%
16. Teachers recognize my child when he/she is kind and helpful.	81.7%
17. I recognize my child when he/she gets good grades at school.	98.8%
18. My child gives up when schoolwork is difficult.	18.9%
19. I recognize my child when he/she does his/her best in school.	99.0%
20. My child puts forth his/her best effort at school.	82.2%
21. Effort is just as important as getting good grades.	93.2%
22. It is important to me that my child gets good grades.	95.9%

Fun & Excitement

The condition of Fun & Excitement is characterized by children being inspired. They are actively engaged and emotionally involved in their activities, school, and play. Children who exhibit Fun & Excitement are usually self-confident, curious, and prepared; they are willing to meet the challenges of the day. Parents who foster Fun & Excitement provide new opportunities, initiate challenges, and respect individual interests. Children can be motivated to succeed when parents provide an environment where Fun & Excitement is the norm, not the exception.

Question	Total in Agreement
23. My child enjoys being at school.	82.4%
24. Teachers enjoy working with my child.	85.9%
25. Teachers at my child's school make it exciting to learn.	74.4%
26. My child is bored in school.	20.4%
27. My child enjoys learning new things.	95.4%
28. I was bored in school as a student.	26.2%
29. Learning can be fun.	98.6%
30. Parent evenings/meetings are worth attending.	79.7%

Curiosity & Creativity

The Condition of Curiosity & Creativity is characterized by inquisitiveness, a strong desire to learn new or interesting things, and an eagerness to satisfy the mind with new discoveries. Curiosity triggers children to ask "Why?" while creativity gives them the initiative to ask "Why not?" Both curiosity and creativity are products of the imagination. Experiencing Curiosity & Creativity in the home helps children to become active learners who yearn to explore unknown areas. To support the Condition of Curiosity & Creativity, children need to be challenged to look beyond the status quo to what lies ahead. The intensity of Curiosity & Creativity tends to diminish over time due to the habituating effects of the environment. Parents can devote extra attention to creating a home environment that promotes questioning and creative exploration of ideas.

Question	Total in Agreement
31. My child feels comfortable asking questions in class.	76.9%
32. My child's classes help him/her understand what is happening in his/her everyday life.	70.0%
33. When I was in school, my classes helped me understand what was happening in my everyday life.	57.4%
34. I enjoy learning new things.	98.3%
35. My child learns things that are interesting to him/her at school.	87.7%
36. School inspires my child to learn.	74.0%
37. What my child learns in school will benefit his/her future.	93.4%
38. What I learned in school benefits me today.	84.1%

Spirit of Adventure

Spirit of Adventure is characterized by a child's ability to take on positive, healthy challenges at home and school, with friends, family, adults, and peers. Children experience Spirit of Adventure when they tackle something new without the fear of failure or success. This Condition is important to building children's self-confidence and enables them to face the challenges they encounter every day. Parents can encourage and support their children's Spirit of Adventure by urging them to explore new things. When parents create an atmosphere for healthy decision making and risk taking, children can become more confident and resilient. They may be less concerned with whether they succeed or fail, and more interested in the discovery that is part of learning from our successes and failures. Children with a Spirit of Adventure see life as full of opportunities worth exploring for their own sake.

Question	Total in Agreement
39. I push my child to do better academically.	95.5%
40. My child is afraid to try something if he/she thinks he/she will fail.	34.5%
41. I am afraid to try something if I think I may fail.	15.3%
42. Teachers help my child learn from mistakes.	71.7%
43. My child wants to do his/her best at school.	93.3%
44. My child likes challenging assignments.	67.4%
45. My child is excited to tell me when he/she gets good grades.	93.4%
46. I am excited to tell my friends when my child does well in school.	84.5%

Leadership & Responsibility

The Condition of Leadership & Responsibility means children are able to express their ideas and are willing to accept the consequences for their actions. It cultivates accountability at home and school. Fostering leadership allows children to make just and appropriate decisions and to take pride in their actions. Parents who promote this Condition teach good decision making skills and expect their children to be good decision makers. They provide real and age-appropriate decision making opportunities, seek their children's input, and expect their children to be responsible for their actions and words. Children are trusted to make the right choices and are recognized for doing so. This Condition is about learning to lead others, and learning to lead one's own life, responsibly.

Question	Total in Agreement
47. I see my child as a leader.	75.9%
48. Teachers encourage my child to make decisions.	76.5%
49. I encourage my child to make decisions.	98.9%
50. My child is a good decision maker.	79.6%
51. I am a good decision maker.	93.7%
52. I know the goals my child's school is working on this year.	64.2%

Confidence to Take Action

Confidence to Take Action is the extent to which children believe in themselves. It encourages them to dream about their future while being motivated to set goals in the present. This Condition is at the heart of what parents and educators ultimately strive for: instilling in children a confidence in and expectation of success. Confidence to Take Action is characterized by a positive and healthy outlook on life and by looking inward rather than outward for approval. Parents have the ability and potential to help build their children's Confidence to Take Action by providing support, celebrating diversity, and encouraging independent thinking. By enhancing the quality of academic and personal growth, parents encourage their children to be active, involved, and contributing members of their families and communities.

Question	Total in Agreement
53. My child sets high goals.	82.4%
54. I believe my child can be successful.	99.2%
55. School is preparing my child well for the future.	81.4%
56. My child knows the kind of person he/she wants to become.	78.5%
57. I believe my child can make a difference in this world.	98.3%
58. I think it is important for my child to go to college.	92.4%
59. I believe I can make a difference in this world.	92.2%
60. Teachers believe in my child and expect him/her to be successful.	86.5%
61. School prepared me well for my future.	75.2%
62. My child works hard to reach his/her goals.	85.7%
63. I work hard to reach my goals.	97.7%
64. My child is excited about his/her future.	89.5%