



QUAGLIA INSTITUTE  
**VOICE & ASPIRATIONS**

# **School Voice: A Decade of Data**

## **Student Voice Grades 3-5**



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# The Role of Student Voice and Aspirations in Today's Schools

The Quaglia Institute is committed to making a difference globally—putting into practice the conditions that foster everyone's voice and aspirations in learning communities around the world. One of the many ways the Quaglia Institute encourages schools to listen to the voice of students is through the use of surveys. This report includes data from the 2009-2018 academic years. During that time, the Quaglia Student Voice surveys were taken by 102,750 students in grades 3-5. This school-level survey was administered in 235 schools across 22 states. This data may be utilized to help all stakeholders better understand student voice and aspirations in schools.

Voice is about much more than simply speaking up; it is about engaging in school and making a difference—not only for yourself, but for others. The Quaglia Institute defines voice as *sharing genuine thoughts and ideas, offering realistic suggestions for the good of the whole, and accepting responsibility for not only what is said but what needs to be done*. It is about sharing ideas in a community built on trust and respect, and taking action together for the good of the whole so that everyone can achieve their aspirations.

When student voice is honored and invited, the impact is meaningful. Quaglia School Voice data shows that when students have a voice they are:

- 3x more likely to experience Self-Worth in school.
- 5x more likely to be Engaged in school.
- 5x more likely to have a sense of Purpose in school.

In order for students to flourish, their voices must be heard—and when they are heard, students more readily embrace the conditions in school that will help them reach their aspirations.

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*.

All members of the school community can foster student voice and the 8 Conditions, making a positive difference in the lives of today's students as they strive to achieve their aspirations.

## **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.

## Demographics

The demographic data are presented both as counts and as percentages.<sup>1</sup>

Total number of respondents: 102750

Gender of Students		
Gender	Count	Percent
Boy	51876	51.0%
Girl	49869	49.0%
Other	0	0.0%

Grade of Students		
Grade	Count	Percent
3rd	33733	33.3%
4th	33863	33.4%
5th	33813	33.3%

Age of Students		
Age	Count	Percent
7	387	0.4%
8	17063	16.7%
9	32602	32.0%
10	33434	32.8%
11	17072	16.7%
12	1361	1.3%
Other	90	0.1%

Language Selected by Respondent for Survey		
Language	Count	Percent
English	32801	99.7%
Spanish	104	0.3%

<sup>1</sup>Count 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.

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## 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 student is a valued member of a community while still maintaining his or her uniqueness. It is a relationship between two or more persons characterized by a sense of connection and support. A sense of Belonging is an important condition for a student's feeling of well-being, social engagement, and competence. The Condition of Belonging increases intrinsic motivation, for it fosters self-confidence and investment in the community. Teachers have the opportunity to establish a culture of Belonging in their classrooms, one that promotes their students' sense of well-being, connection, and self-belief.

Question	Total in Agreement	Gender		Grade		
		Male	Female	3rd	4th	5th
1. I like my school.	72.3%	68.0%	76.8%	77.1%	72.0%	67.8%
2. Other students like me.	65.5%	64.9%	66.2%	67.0%	64.6%	64.9%
3. I feel important in my classroom.	50.7%	49.6%	51.8%	55.8%	49.4%	46.8%
4. The principal knows my name.	78.6%	81.6%	75.6%	80.2%	78.0%	77.7%
5. Other students are kind to me.	48.0%	49.1%	46.7%	50.3%	46.7%	46.8%
6. I have friends I can be with at lunch.	82.7%	83.5%	81.9%	82.4%	82.4%	83.4%
7. I think bullying is a problem at my school.	56.2%	57.4%	54.8%	66.8%	55.6%	46.2%

## Heroes

Heroes are the everyday people -- teachers, friends, family -- in students' lives who inspire them to excel and to make positive changes in attitude and lifestyle. Heroes are the people students can connect with, who have a positive influence on them, and who listen to and value their ideas. Heroes build trust in others and belief in oneself. Teachers can be heroes to their students. Students can look up to teachers as people to learn from and communicate with about many things. Building relationships with students through support, guidance, and encouragement enables them to become more confident in their academic, personal, and social growth.

Question	Total in Agreement	Gender		Grade		
		Male	Female	3rd	4th	5th
8. Students respect teachers.	45.6%	47.9%	43.1%	54.1%	44.1%	38.5%
9. Students help each other at my school.	53.9%	53.6%	54.2%	61.3%	52.8%	47.6%
10. My teacher cares about me.	86.6%	84.3%	89.0%	89.1%	86.7%	84.2%
11. If I am upset, I can tell my teacher why.	54.6%	54.0%	55.3%	63.9%	53.9%	46.1%
12. Teachers care if I am absent from school.	65.5%	63.3%	67.7%	66.5%	65.0%	64.9%
13. If I have a problem, I have an adult at school I can talk to.	70.1%	68.2%	72.0%	74.5%	69.6%	66.1%
14. Teachers respect students.	81.9%	80.4%	83.5%	85.7%	82.0%	78.3%
15. Students respect each other.	46.5%	48.3%	44.4%	57.8%	44.8%	36.8%

## Sense of Accomplishment

The Condition of Sense of Accomplishment recognizes effort, perseverance, and citizenship as signs of a student's success. Educators have traditionally used a narrow view of accomplishment that refers to academic achievement, innate ability, or who is "best in the class." Sense of Accomplishment, however, is viewed in terms of personal growth and effort, not just through measurable outcomes and countable successes. Teachers have the opportunity to celebrate their students' accomplishments in visible ways. Taking time to recognize and support students' efforts can help motivate them to persevere through difficult tasks, creating an appreciation for hard work and dedication.

Question	Total in Agreement	Gender		Grade		
		Male	Female	3rd	4th	5th
16. My teachers recognize me when I am kind and helpful.	64.6%	63.7%	65.6%	70.1%	64.1%	59.7%
17. I give up when schoolwork is difficult.	6.6%	7.3%	5.9%	7.7%	6.1%	6.0%
18. My teacher tells my parents when I do well in school.	67.9%	65.4%	70.5%	73.0%	67.5%	63.2%
19. Teachers recognize me when I try my best.	68.7%	67.9%	69.5%	72.9%	68.1%	65.1%
20. I give my best effort at school.	83.9%	80.5%	87.4%	85.4%	84.1%	82.3%
21. Getting good grades is important to me.	92.9%	91.5%	94.5%	92.3%	93.2%	93.4%
22. My teacher hangs up my work in the classroom or hallway.	44.2%	41.4%	47.2%	50.5%	43.8%	38.5%
23. I help other students at my school.	73.0%	68.4%	77.9%	77.2%	72.5%	69.5%

## Fun & Excitement

The Condition of Fun & Excitement is characterized by students being inspired. They are actively engaged and emotionally involved in their schoolwork. Students who exhibit Fun & Excitement are usually self-confident, curious, and prepared; they are willing to meet the challenges of the day. Teachers who foster Fun & Excitement provide new opportunities, initiate challenges, and respect individual interests. The first three Conditions -- Belonging, Heroes, and Sense of Accomplishment -- help establish a learning environment in which students can feel safe to have fun together in learning.

Question	Total in Agreement	Gender		Grade		
		Male	Female	3rd	4th	5th
24. I have fun at school.	60.9%	58.1%	63.8%	69.7%	60.1%	52.9%
25. School is boring.	11.1%	14.6%	7.5%	9.9%	10.8%	12.5%
26. Teachers have fun at school.	53.9%	53.2%	54.7%	57.2%	53.6%	50.9%
27. Learning can be fun.	63.5%	60.6%	66.6%	69.4%	62.8%	58.5%
28. I like going to school.	55.3%	50.3%	60.5%	63.2%	54.6%	48.1%

## 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 students to ask "Why?" while creativity gives them the initiative to ask "Why not?" The intensity of Curiosity & Creativity tends to diminish over time due to the habituating effects of the environment. Teachers can devote extra attention to creating a classroom environment that promotes questioning and creative exploration in order to maintain student motivation.

Question	Total in Agreement	Gender		Grade		
		Male	Female	3rd	4th	5th
29. I feel comfortable asking questions in class.	54.9%	57.7%	51.9%	55.8%	54.9%	53.9%
30. I enjoy working on projects with other students.	70.4%	69.8%	71.1%	75.1%	70.1%	66.1%
31. I like to learn new things in my classes.	79.6%	77.6%	81.8%	84.0%	79.2%	75.8%
32. My teacher listens to my ideas.	68.6%	66.7%	70.5%	69.9%	68.7%	67.3%
33. My teacher knows what I like to do.	49.9%	52.0%	47.8%	52.6%	48.9%	48.4%
34. I like what I learn at school.	64.0%	62.1%	66.1%	71.4%	63.5%	57.3%

## Spirit of Adventure

The Spirit of Adventure is characterized by a student's ability to take on positive, healthy challenges at school and home, with family and friends. Students experience the Spirit of Adventure when they tackle something new without the fear of failure or success. Teachers can encourage and support students' Spirit of Adventure by urging them to explore new things. When teachers create an atmosphere that allows for healthy decision making and risk taking, students can become more confident and resilient. Students with the Spirit of Adventure see life as full of opportunities worth exploring for their own sake.

Question	Total in Agreement	Gender		Grade		
		Male	Female	3rd	4th	5th
35. My teacher helps me learn from my mistakes.	84.3%	83.3%	85.4%	85.5%	84.7%	82.9%
36. I only raise my hand if I am sure of the answer.	51.3%	50.7%	51.9%	58.9%	50.5%	44.5%
37. My teacher thinks I am a good student.	81.9%	80.2%	83.8%	83.8%	81.8%	80.3%
38. I am excited to tell my friends when I get good grades.	57.6%	53.4%	61.8%	58.2%	56.2%	58.2%
39. The things I learn in school are important to me.	79.3%	76.2%	82.6%	82.5%	79.2%	76.2%



## Leadership & Responsibility

The Condition of Leadership & Responsibility means students are able to express their ideas and are willing to accept consequences for their actions. It cultivates accountability for the classroom environment and school community. Fostering leadership empowers students to make just and appropriate decisions and to take pride in their actions. Teachers who promote this Condition teach and expect their students to be good decision makers. They provide legitimate decision making opportunities, seek student input, and expect students to be accountable for their actions and words. Students are trusted to make the right decisions and are recognized for doing so.

Question	Total in Agreement	Gender		Grade		
		Male	Female	3rd	4th	5th
40. I see myself as a leader.	41.6%	38.9%	44.3%	44.1%	39.9%	40.7%
41. Other students listen to my ideas.	30.8%	30.6%	30.8%	32.9%	30.1%	29.2%
42. I am a good decision maker.	46.3%	44.3%	48.2%	50.7%	45.1%	43.0%
43. Teachers learn from students.	42.8%	40.6%	45.2%	39.2%	42.3%	46.9%
44. Students help make classroom rules.	38.5%	38.4%	38.5%	41.7%	37.6%	35.9%
45. It is important to follow rules.	94.4%	92.8%	96.0%	96.4%	94.4%	92.4%

## Confidence to Take Action

Confidence to Take Action is the extent to which students 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 educators ultimately strive for: instilling in their students 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. Teachers have the ability to help build their students' Confidence to Take Action by providing support, celebrating diversity, and encouraging independent thinking. By enhancing the quality of academic and personal growth, teachers empower their students to become active and involved members of their learning environments.

Question	Total in Agreement	Gender		Grade		
		Male	Female	3rd	4th	5th
46. I think I am a good student.	73.0%	73.2%	72.8%	76.6%	72.2%	70.3%
47. I want to go to college.	86.4%	84.9%	88.1%	83.8%	86.5%	89.1%
48. I work hard in school.	85.4%	82.1%	88.9%	88.0%	85.4%	83.0%
49. I know how to set goals for myself.	75.5%	75.4%	75.6%	73.3%	75.7%	77.5%
50. My teacher helps me reach my goals.	76.8%	75.8%	77.9%	78.8%	76.9%	74.8%