



QUAGLIA INSTITUTE
VOICE & ASPIRATIONS

School Voice: A Decade of Data

Teacher Voice



QuagliaInstitute.org

The Role of Aspirations in Today's Schools

School staff members want to be successful, whether their goal is to be a better classroom teacher, to become a department head or supervisor, or simply to do their job to the best of their ability. Too often, however, school staff 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 staff themselves. The Quaglia Teacher Voice survey has been taken by 30,489 K-12 teachers in 415 schools across 26 states.

The *8 Conditions that Make a Difference*® in promoting staff aspirations have been identified and defined by Dr. Russell J. Quaglia, an internationally known leader in the study of student aspirations, and student and teacher voice. 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 Self-Worth:

Belonging, Heroes, and Sense of Accomplishment

Self-Worth begins when staff experience a sense of Belonging: They feel like they are part of the school community while being recognized and appreciated for their uniqueness. Staff 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*, staff also need a Sense of Accomplishment. They should be recognized for their effort, perseverance, and citizenship. When staff have a sense of *Self-Worth*, they are more likely to persevere through difficult tasks and be inspired to take the steps needed to reach their professional goals.

Fostering Engagement in Learning:

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

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

Staff aspirations, and staff perceptions of student aspirations, are important. All members of the school community can foster the 8 Conditions, making a positive difference in the lives of their colleagues and today's students by supporting the goals each person sets and strives to reach.

Demographics

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

Total number of respondents: 30489

Gender of Staff		
Gender	Count	Percent
Male	6904	23.0%
Female	23139	77.0%

Years Working in Schools		
Years	Count	Percent
First Year	1574	5.2%
2-5	5184	17.1%
6-10	5451	18.0%
11-20	9549	31.5%
Over 20	8533	28.2%

Years in Current School		
Years	Count	Percent
First Year	4322	14.3%
2-5	9844	32.5%
6-10	6460	21.3%
11-20	6457	21.3%
Over 20	3203	10.6%

Current Position		
Position	Count	Percent
Classroom Teacher	22026	73.1%
Certified Support Staff (Guidance, Nurse, Ed. Tech., etc.)	4442	14.7%
Support Staff (Custodian, Cafeteria, Secretary, etc.)	3681	12.2%

Current Grade Level ²		
Level	Count	Percent
Pre K-2	8813	29.6%
3-5	9101	30.5%
6-8	9457	31.7%
9-12	11098	37.2%

Highest Level of Education		
Level	Count	Percent
High School/G.E.D.	2092	6.9%
Associate's	1218	4.0%
Bachelor's	10574	34.9%
Master's	6565	21.6%
Master's+	9673	31.9%
Doctorate	217	0.7%

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 and staff aspirations in schools. The descriptions of these Conditions outline an approach that frames how schools can recognize and nurture the development of student and staff aspirations alike. 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 and staff. All schools can benefit by creating and cultivating these Conditions in the lives of their students and staff.

***"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 person is a valued member of a community while still maintaining his or her uniqueness. Belonging entails establishing a sense of community and collegiality -- believing that all participants in the educational environment are valued for who they are. Collegiality depends upon all staff being fully active participants in the life of the school and responsible, contributing citizens of the school community. The pertinent questions are: Are standards and expectations for responsibility and success set in a context of peer and administrative acceptance and support? Does each person on the staff feel like a contributing member of the school's educational mission? Schools may be organized hierarchically, but their democratic roots should extend to and nourish the entire staff as full partners in the overall educational process.

Question	Total in Agreement
1. I feel valued for my unique skills and talents	75.7%
2. School is a welcoming and friendly place	81.3%
3. I am proud of my school	84.8%
4. I think bullying is a problem at my school	43.1%
5. I feel comfortable in the staff room	74.4%
6. Building administration makes an effort to get to know me	67.7%
7. I feel accepted for who I am at school	83.2%
8. I am a valued member of my school community	75.0%

Heroes

Heroes are the everyday people -- mentors, friends, family members -- in our lives who inspire us to excel and to make positive changes in attitude and lifestyle. Heroes are our cheerleaders and trusted guides. School staff who form meaningful relationships with others in the school can become highly motivated to perform at their best. Mutual respect and commitment to one another are the hallmarks of a staff dedicated to building-wide school improvement. Too often in today's schools, adults become isolated from one another. The Condition of Heroes reminds us that what happens in schools should never be a solitary enterprise.

Question	Total in Agreement
9. Students care if I am absent from school	86.7%
10. I have a colleague at school who is a positive role model for me	91.2%
11. If I have a problem, I have a colleague with whom I can talk	93.6%
12. I know my students' hopes and dreams	80.1%
13. Staff respect each other	71.8%
14. Students respect me	91.3%
15. I respect students	99.4%
16. Students care about me as an individual	85.2%

Sense of Accomplishment

Sense of Accomplishment is about recognizing and appreciating effort, perseverance, and citizenship. Meeting performance goals is only one indicator of success. A highly dedicated staff makes contributions "beyond the call of duty." In schools that foster a Sense of Accomplishment, reward systems encourage effort, as well as end product, and perseverance as much as results. Opportunities for colleagues to reward and celebrate one another are as important as recognition that comes from administrators and supervisors.

Question	Total in Agreement
17. I have never been recognized for something positive at school	18.2%
18. I actively encourage students to practice good citizenship	98.4%
19. I receive constructive feedback from colleagues	74.1%
20. Our school celebrates the accomplishments of the staff	62.4%
21. I am recognized when I try my best	58.0%
22. Professional development is an important part of my educational growth	84.8%

Fun & Excitement

The Condition of Fun & Excitement is characterized by staff being inspired by their shared passion for being educators. Fun & Excitement is about being interested in and engaged by one's work. Such enjoyment and satisfaction improves one's effectiveness. When staff are excited, they are eagerly and actively involved, and tend to contribute more. If all staff are expected to be enthusiastic about coming to school, then they should be provided diverse, interesting, challenging, and enjoyable work experiences.

Question	Total in Agreement
23. I enjoy working here	85.4%
24. I make learning relevant to my students	95.5%
25. Students enjoy working with teachers	84.4%
26. Students have fun at school	80.5%
27. Students make school an exciting place to work	88.9%
28. I have fun at school	85.4%
29. Learning can be fun	99.3%

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. Allowing and encouraging all the participants in the school to question and explore fosters this Condition. Staff should be encouraged to trust and nurture their own curiosity and creativity. One of the greatest obstacles to learning in schools is the routine that can set in day after day, term after term, year after year. All staff members in an educational institution should be open to the same growth and change we expect of students. A genuine learning organization is one in which everyone is inquisitive and innovative.

Question	Total in Agreement
30. At school I am encouraged to be creative	71.2%
31. Building administration is open to new ideas	68.4%
32. I enjoy learning new things	99.0%
33. School inspires me to learn	84.6%
34. Our school is a dynamic and creative learning environment	71.5%
35. Staff work in a collaborative manner	73.3%
36. Meaningful professional development opportunities exist in my district	56.4%
37. I feel comfortable asking questions in staff meetings	68.7%

Spirit of Adventure

The Spirit of Adventure is characterized by a person's ability to take on positive, meaningful challenges at school. This Condition is about being supported so that one can take healthy risks, trusting that it is all right to make mistakes and knowing that there is something to be learned from all consequences -- positive and negative. Any new idea, strategy, or tactic can pose a risk; for some, it might be making a career change, and for others, simply trying out a new way of doing something. Creativity and innovation spring from the sense of security and support that allows and encourages employees to take healthy chances.

Question	Total in Agreement
38. Setting yearly goals with my supervisor is important for my work	65.3%
39. I challenge myself to do my job better every day	96.7%
40. Staff are supportive of each other	76.6%
41. I am afraid to try something if I think I might fail	10.8%
42. My colleagues help me learn from my mistakes	70.4%
43. I am concerned my colleagues will resent me if I am too successful	13.6%
44. I am excited to tell my colleagues when I do something well	63.2%

Leadership & Responsibility

The Condition of Leadership & Responsibility allows all members of the staff to have a voice in the school -- letting them know they matter and are trusted to make decisions. If all personnel are expected to be responsible members of the school community, they should be trusted enough to have a voice in their departments and in the building as a whole. A school that encourages Leadership & Responsibility embraces and promotes mutual trust and acceptance of individual rights, responsibilities, opinions, and beliefs. All of its members are allowed to practice leadership skills, to understand and accept consequences, and to learn from their mistakes and move forward with greater knowledge and understanding.

Question	Total in Agreement
45. I see myself as a leader	79.6%
46. My colleagues see me as a leader	60.4%
47. I have a voice in decision making at school	54.5%
48. I know the goals my school is working on this year	75.8%
49. I actively seek out student opinions and ideas	84.3%
50. I encourage students to make decisions	97.5%
51. Building administration is willing to learn from staff	61.9%

Confidence to Take Action

Confidence to Take Action is the extent to which a person believes in him- or herself. This is the Condition for which we should all strive. Schools that foster this Condition encourage all staff members to believe in themselves, trusting that they can be successful and are making a difference. Though society's expectations of schools are high, the confidence needed to meet those expectations must be internal to each member of the staff. Awards, accolades, and other external recognition for success are welcome, but the intrinsic desire to provide service to the best of one's capabilities must drive effectiveness. Schools that value, respect, and celebrate the opinions and ideas of all staff members foster positive development of everyone's self-worth and confidence.

Question	Total in Agreement
52. I believe I can be successful	97.0%
53. I believe I can make a difference in this world	94.4%
54. I feel confident voicing my honest opinions and concerns	60.4%
55. I work hard to reach my goals	97.4%
56. I am excited about my future career in education	72.4%
57. Continuing my education is important for my future	84.2%
58. I think it is important to set high goals	97.1%

Administration and Communication

The presence or absence of the 8 Conditions in a school can depend largely on how authority and power are exercised and distributed in the school and district. Effective leadership shares decision making. Additionally, effective leadership at all levels requires effective communication.

Question	Total in Agreement
59. Central office understands the unique culture of our school	48.9%
60. We communicate effectively in our building	50.7%
61. Building administration is visible in our school	79.4%
62. Building administration knows my professional goals	56.1%
63. Building administration is accessible to me	81.5%
64. I communicate effectively with parents	85.0%