



# **Parent Voice Data Report**



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## The Role of Voice & Aspirations in Today's Schools

Today's students want to be successful, whether their goal is to learn algebra or a trade, obtain 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 Voice survey was also developed, as parents' perceptions can contribute significantly to the overall understanding of school culture. The full Quaglia Institute data set for parents includes 26,443 surveys between 2010-2023 in urban, rural, and suburban schools. The Parent Voice survey was updated in summer 2019 and since then 1,701 parents in 31 schools across 8 states took the new survey during the 2019-2023 academic years. This data may be utilized to help all stakeholders better understand 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 your own children but for all students. The Quaglia Institute defines voice as *sharing thoughts and ideas in an environment underpinned by trust and respect, offering realistic suggestions for the good of the whole, and accepting responsibility for not only what is said but also what needs to be done*. It is about sharing ideas in a community where everyone's voice flourishes and actions are taken for the good of the whole so that students can achieve their aspirations.

We want to take a moment to recognize the challenges students, educators, and parents faced during the COVID-19 global pandemic and recognize their resiliency as they experienced extended remote learning and challenging transitions back to in-person learning. The impact felt by families during this time should be considered along with the data in this report. Remote and hybrid learning was very difficult for many families, while others thrived. Similarly, the transition back to school campus was welcomed by some, while others struggled greatly. Educators have been diligently addressing significant learning loss, behavior challenges, and increased mental health needs of students. There is no denying that COVID-19 has left a significant mark on schools and students' experiences.

## 8 Conditions That Make a Difference

The data presented in this report is organized by the *8 Conditions That Make a Difference* as identified and defined by Dr. Russell Quaglia, an internationally known leader in the study of student voice and aspirations. The 8 Conditions are:

***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. We define aspirations as the ability to dream and set goals for the future while being inspired in the present to reach those dreams. The descriptions of the 8 Conditions outline an approach that frames how schools can recognize and nurture the development of student aspirations. The 8 Conditions represent a core belief in education: 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. The 8 Conditions make a difference because they help schools put into practice the three Guiding Principles that facilitate Student Voice & Aspirations: *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 and make a positive difference in the lives of today's students by supporting the goals students set and strive to reach.

***There are three prominent lessons we have learned from parents, students, and teachers when it comes to supporting voice. We should all be: listening more than speaking, learning more than convincing, and leading more with others.***

***-Dr. Russell Quaglia***

# Demographics

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

Total number of respondents: 1701

Gender		
Gender	Count	Percent
Male	319	19.2%
Female	1341	80.6%
Other	4	0.2%

Child is in Grade <sup>2</sup>		
Grade	Count	Percent
K	263	15.7%
1st	228	13.6%
2nd	255	15.2%
3rd	295	17.6%
4th	258	15.4%
5th	233	13.9%
6th	191	11.4%
7th	189	11.3%
8th	188	11.2%
9th	128	7.6%
10th	130	7.8%
11th	107	6.4%
12th	84	5.0%

Age		
Age	Count	Percent
Under 30	125	7.4%
31-40	665	39.3%
41-50	681	40.2%
51-60	190	11.2%
Over 60	31	1.8%

Years Living in School District		
Years	Count	Percent
1	158	9.4%
2	145	8.7%
3-5	343	20.5%
6-10	332	19.8%
10+	698	41.6%

Racial Heritage <sup>2</sup>		
Racial Heritage	Count	Percent
White	1233	73.7%
Black or African American	67	4.0%
Hispanic, Latino	165	9.9%
Asian	53	3.2%
Native Hawaiian	10	0.6%
American Indian or Alaska Native	341	20.4%
Other Pacific Islander	20	1.2%
Other	64	3.8%

Language Selected by Respondent for Survey		
Language	Count	Percent
English	1687	99.2%
Spanish	14	0.8%

<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.

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

## Belonging

The Condition of Belonging means that a child feels valued as a member of the family and school community while still maintaining their uniqueness. Additionally, Belonging relates to a parent feeling welcomed by, comfortable in, and of value to their 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.

Survey Statement	Total in Agreement
1. I feel welcome in my child's school.	86.4%
2. My child has difficulty fitting in at school.	16.9%
3. Teachers care about my child's problems and feelings.	77.7%
4. I am proud of my child's school.	78.1%
5. I feel comfortable going to parent-teacher conferences.	87.2%
6. I care about my child's education.	99.5%
7. My input and opinions are valued at my child's school.	61.7%
8. My child is a valued member of the school community.	78.9%

## Heroes

Heroes are the everyday people—friends, family, coaches, teachers, and parents—in a child's life who inspire them 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.

Survey Statement	Total in Agreement
9. My child has a teacher who is a positive role model.	88.6%
10. My child has friends at school.	93.5%
11. Teachers care if my child is absent from school.	75.0%
12. There is a teacher my child can talk to if they have a problem.	80.3%
13. If I have a problem with my child's school, someone at school is available to help me.	77.8%
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 students' 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.

Survey Statement	Total in Agreement
15. My child is encouraged to practice good citizenship at school.	89.3%
16. Teachers recognize my child when they are kind and helpful.	84.2%
17. My child shares with me what they are learning in school.	85.6%
18. My child gives up when schoolwork is difficult.	20.8%
19. I recognize my child when they do their best in school.	98.4%
20. My child puts forth their best effort at school.	83.1%
21. I believe effort is just as important as getting good grades.	94.9%
22. It is important to me that my child earns good grades.	91.6%

## 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.

Survey Statement	Total in Agreement
23. My child enjoys being at school.	81.5%
24. Teachers enjoy working with my child.	85.2%
25. Teachers at my child's school make learning exciting.	73.5%
26. My child is bored in school.	21.5%
27. My child enjoys learning new things.	96.1%
28. Teachers know what my child likes to do outside of school.	60.0%
29. Learning can be fun.	98.5%
30. Parent evenings/meetings are worth attending.	79.5%



## 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.

Survey Statement	Total in Agreement
31. My child feels comfortable asking questions in class.	77.4%
32. My child's classes help them understand what is happening in everyday life.	66.5%
33. I encourage my child to ask questions when they are curious.	97.6%
34. My child is encouraged to think independently at school.	77.8%
35. My child is interested in what is taught at school.	80.7%
36. School inspires my child to learn.	74.1%
37. My child learns about current events at school.	65.9%
38. My child has opportunities to be creative at school.	84.3%

## 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.

Survey Statement	Total in Agreement
39. I want my child to do better academically.	85.2%
40. My child is afraid to try something if it might result in failure.	34.6%
41. I support my child when they are trying new things.	99.3%
42. Teachers help my child learn from mistakes.	74.6%
43. My child wants to do their best at school.	92.7%
44. My child likes challenging assignments.	64.3%
45. My child is excited to tell me when they are successful in school.	92.1%
46. I encourage my child to participate in extracurricular activities.	94.0%



## 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 words and actions. 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.

Survey Statement	Total in Agreement
47. My child has opportunities to be a leader at school.	72.2%
48. Teachers encourage my child to make decisions.	76.4%
49. I encourage my child to make decisions.	99.6%
50. My child makes good decisions.	86.2%
51. My child takes responsibility for completing homework.	77.5%
52. I know the goals my child's school is working on this year.	63.7%

## Confidence to Take Action

Confidence to Take Action is the extent to which children believe in themselves. It encourages them to dream about their futures while being motivated to take steps in the present to achieve their goals. 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.

Survey Statement	Total in Agreement
53. My child sets high goals.	79.0%
54. I believe my child can be successful.	98.5%
55. School is preparing my child well for the future.	74.1%
56. My child knows the kind of person they want to become.	74.6%
57. I believe my child can make a difference in this world.	98.3%
58. I think it is important for my child to continue education after high school.	90.1%
59. My child plans for the future.	69.7%
60. Teachers believe in and expect my child to be successful.	84.5%
61. My child understands how school will benefit their future.	85.8%
62. My child works hard to reach their goals.	84.6%
63. My child thinks about others when making decisions.	84.9%
64. My child is excited about their future.	88.3%

For more information, please contact the Quaglia Institute at [support@quagliainstitute.org](mailto:support@quagliainstitute.org).