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# Teacher Voice\* Report 2010—2014



\*The Teacher Voice survey mentioned in this manuscript was formerly known as My Voice Staff Survey when it was administered and the results were gathered.



# Acknowledgements for Teacher Voice Report

I am excited about the working relationship between the Quaglia Institute for Student Aspirations and the Teacher Voice and Aspirations International Center (TVAIC). TVAIC, under the leadership of Dr. Lisa Kinnaman, is committed to amplifying teacher voice in order to enhance the aspirations of all learners.

I am also honored to be partnering with two other incredible educational organizations, Corwin Press and Southern New Hampshire University. We know that working together is the only way we will be making a positive and lasting impact on all learners (teachers and students).

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# Teacher Voice Report 2010 - 2014

## The Role of Aspirations in Today's Schools

When people working in schools have high aspirations, *they have the ability to dream about the future, while being inspired in the present to reach those dreams.* Whether their goal is to be a better classroom teacher, become a department head or supervisor, or simply to do their job to the best of their ability, people working in schools want to be successful. Too often, however, school staff can't reach their goals and dreams because the conditions around them are not supportive. As a result, their aspirations flounder and effectiveness wanes, thus affecting the entire teaching and learning environment.

In order for school staff to have and sustain high aspirations, the conditions that enable them to reach their goals must be in place. These conditions are known as the **8 Conditions that Make a Difference®** and are a critical, often overlooked, part of education and school improvement initiatives. The 8 Conditions 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.* 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. In order to measure these conditions in today's schools, the *Teacher Voice Survey* was developed.

The *Teacher Voice Survey* assesses staff perceptions of the teaching and learning environment by asking questions based on the 8 Conditions. By asking how *staff* perceive the school environment, *Teacher Voice* provides educators and those that support them with a powerful tool for understanding both what motivates and inspires every person to achieve, and how well the staff believes their school is meeting those objectives.

## Demographics for the Teacher Voice Survey

A total of 8,053 staff members completed the *Teacher Voice Survey* between 2010 and 2014. Seventy-three percent (73%) were classroom teachers; 14% were certified support staff and 12% were support staff. Twenty-two percent (22%) were male and 78% were female. No school or staff member is represented more than once in this sample. If a school did take the survey more than once, only their most recent results were used for these analyses. The demographic breakdown is as follows:

Current Position		
Classroom Teacher	5,839	72.5%
Certified Support	1,161	14.4%
Other Support Staff	952	11.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,952</b>	<b>98.7%</b>

Years Working in Schools		
First Year	342	4.2%
2-5 Years	1,178	14.6%
6-10 Years	1,579	19.6%
11-20 Years	2,617	32.5%
Over 20 Years	2,276	28.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,992</b>	<b>99.2%</b>

Years at Current School		
First Year	1,156	14.4%
2-5 Years	2,452	30.4%
6-10 Years	1,893	23.5%
11-20 Years	1,748	21.7%
Over 20 Years	756	9.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,005</b>	<b>99.4%</b>

Grade Level <sup>1</sup>		
PreK-2	2,173	27%
Grade 3-5	2,268	28.2%
Grade 6-8	2,559	31.8%
Grade 9-12	2,863	35.6%

Gender		
Male	1,744	21.7%
Female	6,246	77.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,990</b>	<b>99.3%</b>

# Part I: 8 Conditions That Make a Difference

In Part I of this report, the 8 Conditions are defined and data on the survey statements about each Condition are described. The data are reported in percentages based on the combined number of staff who responded “strongly agree” or “agree” to each statement. The results are then discussed in relation to key aspects of the Condition. A section on Administration and Communication is included, as are comparisons between staff and student responses to similar questions. There is also a section about respect in schools. Finally, a brief conclusion and discussion of key areas in need of attention are included at the end of the report.

## CONDITION 1. BELONGING

*The first Condition that needs to be in place to have and sustain high aspirations is Belonging. Belonging entails establishing a sense of community and participation, and believing that all participants in the educational process are valuable members. Administrators expect all employees to be fully active, contributing participants in the life of the school. Staff are recognized and appreciated as members of the school community as a whole, and also for their individual contributions. The pertinent question is: Are standards and expectations for responsibility and success set in a context of peer and administrative support? Schools may be bureaucratic, but their democratic roots should extend to and nourish the entire staff as full partners in the entire educational process.*

### ■ Staff Perceptions of Belonging

There are two key aspects to the Condition of Belonging in schools. First, staff must perceive school as a community in which they feel connected, safe, and supported. Seventy-nine percent (79%) of the staff surveyed agreed with the statement “School is a welcoming and friendly place.” Seventy-four percent (74%) of staff surveyed said they feel comfortable in the staff room. Eighty-two percent (82%) of staff reported that they are proud of their school, and 47% (up from 39% in 2008) agreed that bullying among students is a problem in their school.

The second key aspect of the Condition of Belonging is that staff feel valued for who they are as individuals. Eighty-three percent (83%) of the staff surveyed agreed with the statement “I feel accepted for who I am at school,” and 73% said they felt valued for their unique skills and talents. Seventy-four percent (74%) of staff surveyed believed they were a valued members of their school community, and sixty-six percent (66%) felt that administration makes an effort to get to know them.

Belonging Statements	Percent in Agreement
I feel valued for my unique skills and talents.	73%
School is a welcoming and friendly place.	79%
I am proud of my school.	82%
I think bullying is a problem at my school.	47%
I feel comfortable in the staff room.	74%
Building administration makes an effort to get to know me.	66%
I feel accepted for who I am at school.	83%
I am a valued member of my school community.	74%

## ■ Discussion

The findings reveal that there is a fairly strong sense of Belonging among the staff surveyed. The majority of staff feel connected to their school community and valued for who they are as individuals. These findings are positive and schools should celebrate their ability to successfully foster the Condition of Belonging. At the same time, it is important to realize that one in four staff do not feel valued for their unique skills and talents, suggesting that schools must continue to find ways to recognize individual abilities and celebrate them in visible ways. Additionally, only two-thirds of staff feel that building administration makes an effort to get to know them, suggesting a disconnect between classroom practitioners and administrative staff.

Of great concern is that nearly half of the staff surveyed (47%) state bullying in school is a problem, suggesting that students may not have as strong a sense of Belonging as staff members do. Unfortunately, this percentage has increased since 2008, when only 39% of staff reported that bullying was a problem in their school.

## ■ Implications

Overall, schools have done a relatively good job of fostering the Condition of Belonging among adults, though there is certainly room for improvement. Even with these positive results, it should give those of us who care about schools and the teaching profession pause to consider why some staff do not feel valued or accepted. How do educators work together to strengthen this Condition for staff and students alike? Given the hectic pace of school life, how can schools be more intentional about getting to know one another as a basis for not just congeniality, but professional collegiality?

The Condition of Belonging is the foundation on which the other Conditions are built. If the adults in the school do not feel a sense of Belonging, they will be challenged to develop the Self-Worth needed to actualize their potential. While the Teacher Voice findings are relatively strong for this Condition, schools must continue to cultivate a sense of Belonging in order for staff members' professional aspirations to be high and attainable throughout the building.

## ■ Suggestions for Practice

Staff and administration can foster Belonging through intentional actions

### ***Staff can ...***

- Share professional hopes and dreams with colleagues
- Eat lunch with a colleague that they do not know very well
- Involve support staff in assisting in class with special projects
- Initiate collaboration with a variety of colleagues
- Speak up at staff meetings to allow colleagues to know one's thoughts and opinions
- Rather than judge a staff member who has different views and perspectives, take time to simply listen and seek understanding

### ***Administration can ...***

- Learn the hopes and dreams of staff members
- Acknowledge the schools' internal experts before consulting with educators outside the building
- Involve staff in leading staff meetings and professional development
- Make an effort to be actively involved in classroom learning whether through co-teaching a class or occasionally working side by side with students

- Ensure that staff evaluation and goal setting is meaningful and personal
- Create a staff gathering space that is comfortable and professional

## CONDITION 2. HEROES

The second Condition is Heroes. We have found that school employees who are highly motivated to set and meet high aspirations form meaningful relationships with others in the school and in the profession. Heroes are our trusted guides. Mutual respect and commitment to one another are the hallmarks of a staff dedicated to system-wide school improvement. Too often in today's schools, adults become isolated from one another in a culture dominated by individual competition rather than collaborative support. The Condition of Heroes reminds us that what happens in schools ought never be a solitary enterprise.

### ■ Staff Perceptions of *Heroes*

The Condition of Heroes emphasizes the critical ways adults in the building believe in, support and inspire each other. In response to Teacher Voice questions about this Condition, 90% of staff surveyed said they have a colleague who is a positive role model and 93% agreed with the statement "If I have a problem, I have a colleague with whom I can talk." However, these more positive responses are in contrast to a later statement to be discussed within the condition Spirit of Adventure in which only 65% of staff reported the are excited to tell their colleagues when they do something well.

The Condition of Heroes is also about respect throughout the entire school community. Ninety-one percent (91%) of staff surveyed said students respect them and 99% said they respect students. Fewer agreed (71%) with the statement "Staff respect each other." It is important that mutual care and concern exists between teachers and students in order for the condition of Heroes to live within a school. High percentages of staff agreed with the following statements: "Students care about me as an individual" (84%) and "Students care if I am absent from school" (86%). Four out of five staff (80%) agreed with the statement "I know my students' hopes and dreams."

Heroes Statements	Percent in Agreement
Students care if I am absent from school.	86%
I have a colleague at school who is a positive role model for me.	90%
If I have a problem, I have a colleague I can talk to.	93%
I know my students' hopes and dreams.	80%
Staff respect each other.	71%
Students respect me.	91%
I respect students.	99%
Students care about me as an individual.	84%

### ■ Discussion

Across the board, high numbers of staff agreed with the statements under the Condition of Heroes. Of particular note, nine out of ten staff said they have a colleague who is a positive role model and someone they can talk to. The Condition of Heroes depends on individuals having positive relationships with one another. Clearly school staff surveyed have developed such bonds in their professional lives.

Students can also be Heroes to staff—students can inspire staff with their enthusiasm, inquisitiveness, and willingness to try new things. While a relatively high percentage of staff said they think students care about them (84%), the fact that 20% of staff admit to not knowing their

students' hopes and dreams is cause for concern. When the Condition of Heroes is in place, staff are more confident in themselves and more trusting of others, and schools could benefit from continued efforts to foster the Condition.

Respect plays a key role in the Condition of Heroes and almost all staff believe there is mutual respect between staff and students. However, little more than seven out of ten said staff respect each other. One concern is the relationship between the nearly universal agreement that staff have a colleague to talk to if one has a problem, in a context in which not all staff respect each other. One may wonder whether, in some cases, the "problem" being discussed among trusted colleagues is another member of the staff whom neither respect. How do staff members define respect among colleagues? How can schools do a better job of creating a culture of professional and personal respect among staff? These questions must be discussed in an open and honest way for the Condition of Heroes to be cultivated.

## ■ Implications

Respect among colleagues creates an environment where staff not only believe in and support one another, but work together in the best interests of students. Everything must be done to cultivate an atmosphere of respect, trust, and professionalism. Staff must learn to share with one another any genuine concerns they have in an honest and forthright way. Gossip and blame, if they exist, must be banished and conversation that might typically take place in the parking lot must be brought into the staff room for examination and, ultimately, resolution. For this to occur, a safe environment free of bullying (however subtle), fear of repercussion, and deference to a "pecking order" must be created and actively maintained. Shifting a professional culture from one of distrust and keeping one's opinion to oneself to a culture of mutual dialogue and respect is rarely an overnight achievement, but one worth the energy and effort to put in place.

It is important for staff to identify and recognize their personal and professional Heroes. Every educator should be on a never-ending growth trajectory that includes learning from Heroes within the school community and the profession at large.

## ■ Suggestions for Practice

Staff and administration can foster Heroes through intentional actions

### **Staff can...**

- Identify and recognize personal and professional Heroes
- Discuss with colleagues the characteristics of Heroes
- Actively seek out a mentor who can support professional goals
- Provide guidance to a new staff member for the entire year
- Connect with educators outside of their own school for support and perspective
- Make an effort to listen to colleagues' ideas and suggestions
- Learn something that is important to each of their students and colleagues
- Show respect regardless of receiving respect
- Commit to not be a part of gossip or blame
- Come to meetings prepared and on time (a clear sign of being respectful of others)

### **Administration can...**

- Strive to serve as a Hero to staff and students
- Invite staff sharing about personal and professional Heroes

- Develop a new staff mentoring program
- Eat lunch with staff and students
- Insist that teachers get to know students in order to develop a better teaching and learning environment
- Create protocols for safe conversation about difficult topics among staff
- Expect honesty from staff and cultivate an atmosphere that allows for dissent and people playing “Devil’s Advocate” (some administrators even have this as a standing role at meetings, rotating staff to take on the role)
- Begin and end all meetings on time (regard for others’ time is a mark of professional courtesy and respect)

### CONDITION 3. SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT

*Sense of Accomplishment is about recognizing and appreciating effort, perseverance, and citizenship. Meeting performance goals in one’s job is only one indicator of success. Highly dedicated employees make contributions beyond the “call of duty.” In schools that exhibit a Sense of Accomplishment, reward systems encourage effort as well as end products. When staff are recognized for their effort, they are more motivated to persevere through difficult tasks and to create a healthy work environment through hard work and dedication.*

#### ■ Staff Perceptions of *Sense of Accomplishment*

When asked questions about the Condition of Sense of Accomplishment, 84% of staff surveyed agreed with the statement “Professional development is an important part of my educational growth.” Seventy-five percent (75%) said they receive constructive feedback from colleagues. When asked about whether effort and perseverance are celebrated in their school, 59% of staff said their school celebrates the accomplishments of the staff. Fifty-six percent (56%) of staff surveyed agreed with the statement “I am recognized when I try my best,” and nearly one in five (19%) stated they have never been recognized for something positive at school. Sense of Accomplishment is also about recognizing citizenship. Ninety-eight percent (98%) of staff stated that they actively encourage their students to practice good citizenship.

Sense of Accomplishment Statements	Percent in Agreement
I have never been recognized for something positive at school.	19%
I actively encourage students to practice good citizenship.	98%
I receive constructive feedback from colleagues.	75%
Our school celebrates the accomplishments of the staff.	59%
I am recognized when I try my best.	56%
Professional development is an important part of my educational growth.	84%

#### ■ Discussion

The Condition of Sense of Accomplishment emphasizes the importance of taking time to recognize and celebrate accomplishments, whether big or small. Though this can typically be accomplished in small ways (sticky notes of appreciation, tokens of gratitude left in mail boxes, etc.), less than two-thirds of staff surveyed said their school celebrates staff accomplishments, only 56% of staff felt that they are recognized when they try their best, and almost one in five said they have never been recognized for something positive at school. The fact that so few staff believe they receive this kind of support is surprising and worrisome. If nothing else, it can be a source of burnout if one feels their best efforts go unnoticed.

It is encouraging to note that the vast majority of staff consider professional development to be an important part of their professional growth. While this will clash with a later finding about whether or not the professional development offered by districts is meaningful (just over half agree), most staff do believe that the effort to learn and continue one's professional growth is vital to the experience of being an educator. That teachers consider themselves life-long learners bodes well for the future of our educational system as it continues to experience the growing pains of moving from a 20th century industrial model to the more learner centered approaches emerging in this century.

## ■ Implications

School staff need to be appreciated for their contributions, citizenship, and initiative. Without a Sense of Accomplishment, their willingness to be part of the school community and to go above and beyond in their daily work will wane, ultimately impacting students in negative ways. For the Condition of Sense of Accomplishment to thrive, schools must find more effective ways to recognize staff effort and support perseverance. More importantly, staff need to be appreciated in ways that are meaningful to them. School leaders may think they recognize staff for their accomplishments, but they may not do so in ways that staff find supportive or meaningful. In many cases, a short, sincere note of gratitude means more than Teacher of the Month accolades. Schools must have open discussions about how to cultivate recognition systems that are fair and transparent to avoid any hints of favoritism or special treatment. In addition, the challenges of workload, a factor that can potentially diminish Sense of Accomplishment, must be examined more closely.

Finally, while the majority of staff said they receive constructive feedback from their colleagues, this still leaves a full quarter of staff that do not feel supported by their peers. More than ever, education has become a profession where everyone needs everyone else to be effective. Peer observations and time for staff to meet around an agenda that they have collaboratively set with administrators are critical to successful outcomes. Similarly, despite the fact that most staff say professional development is important to their growth as educators, 16% of staff don't agree. This must be closely examined so that all educators, and certainly all members of the teaching staff, consider life-long learning an absolutely necessary part of the job.

## ■ Suggestions for Practice

Staff and administration can foster Sense of Accomplishment through intentional actions

### ***Staff can ...***

- Invite a colleague into their class to observe and provide constructive feedback
- Become involved in a school service project that interests them
- Acknowledge a colleague's hard work and accomplishments
- Involve classes in community service or service learning project
- Join an online professional development organization

### ***Administration can ...***

- Actively involve staff in professional development decisions
- Provide ongoing feedback and support for teachers to improve their instruction
- Clear time and provide coverage for teachers to observe one another
- Reserve a portion of all staff meetings for agenda items set by staff (even better: memo the memo-able and turn over the entire staff meeting to an agenda set entirely by the staff)
- Celebrate staff accomplishments and successes in small but meaningful ways
- Ask staff what meaningful recognition looks like to them

- Move away from limited, zero-sum forms of recognition (e.g. teacher of the month parking spaces) toward forms of recognition that are openly accessible and available to any and all employees
- Go out of their way to recognize those least visible

## CONDITION 4. FUN & EXCITEMENT

*Fun & Excitement is about being interested and engaged in one's work; enjoyment improves one's effectiveness. When staff are excited, they are eagerly engaged, actively involved, and they contribute more. If we expect all employees to be enthusiastic about coming to school, we must provide diverse, interesting, challenging and enjoyable work experiences.*

### ■ Staff Perceptions of *Fun & Excitement*

Fun & Excitement is first and foremost about staff being emotionally engaged and invested in their work. Eighty-three percent (83%) of staff surveyed said they enjoy working at their school. Additionally, a high percentage (82%) of staff agreed with the statement "I have fun at school," and almost all (99%) agreed with the statement "Learning can be fun."

Students play an important role in whether the Condition of Fun & Excitement is present in a school or classroom. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of staff surveyed agreed that "Students make school an exciting place to work." Eighty-four percent (84%) of the staff surveyed think students enjoy working with teachers and 78% of staff agreed with the statement "Students have fun at school." Nearly all of the staff surveyed (95%) believe that they make learning relevant to their students.

Fun & Excitement Statements	Percent in Agreement
I enjoy working here.	83%
I make learning relevant to my students.	95%
Students enjoy working with teachers.	84%
Students have fun at school.	78%
Students make school an exciting place to work.	87%
I have fun at school.	82%
Learning can be fun.	99%

### ■ Discussion

The findings for the Condition of Fun & Excitement are generally very positive. Almost all staff said they are excited to work with students and agreed that learning can be fun. Slightly fewer said they have fun at school and enjoy working at their school, suggesting that the school environment may actually dampen staff enthusiasm. Schools must examine this disconnect and find ways to fully leverage staff enthusiasm about their work. Without the Condition of Fun & Excitement, staff may be less likely to personally invest in their daily work and create an engaging learning environment for students.

The weakest findings in this Condition are about staff perceptions of students. While close to nine out of ten staff agreed that students make school an exciting place to work, fewer said they think students enjoy working with teachers and even fewer reported that they believe students have fun at school. Taken together this means staff believe they enjoy being at school more than the students (despite the best efforts of staff to make learning relevant). This is unacceptable, as all those in the learning environment should feel an emotional investment in their involvement at school. It is not enough for staff to be excited about teaching and learning. Students must also be highly engaged. How can schools address this issue? What can be done to foster a teaching and learning environment that engages the passions and interests of all stake-holders?

## ■ Implications

Keeping in mind that these are staff perceptions of students, the findings suggest that school-wide discussions about what students find most engaging about their learning, as well as the role staff play in that process, may reveal important information about Fun & Excitement in the school. In addition, while the rate of enjoyment is high among staff, it is not universally experienced. A variety of factors may contribute to this including the aforementioned issues connected to Belonging (not feeling valued), Heroes (not feeling respected), and Sense of Accomplishment (not feeling sufficiently acknowledged). There may also be diminished enthusiasm among school staff as state and federally mandated standards and curricula squeeze out the autonomy and creativity that is an important part of feeling personally connected to one's work. Recognition of these challenges, coupled with intentional efforts to balance the teaching and learning experience may increase staff ability to embrace Fun and Excitement in the school community.

## ■ Suggestions for Practice

Staff and administration can foster Fun & Excitement through intentional actions

### **Staff can...**

- Incorporate professional passions and interests into their teaching
- Learn something new and exciting to teach students
- Understand what makes learning relevant for students
- Do something fun and unexpected for students and colleagues
- Attend after school events and functions to demonstrate enthusiasm for the school

### **Administration can...**

- Share their professional passions and interests with staff
- Be an upbeat, enthusiastic force in the building
- Support fun spirit days throughout the school year
- Encourage staff to incorporate everyday relevance and real-world learning into their teaching
- Work to support requested field trips that are both enjoyable and educational

## CONDITION 5. CURIOSITY & CREATIVITY

*At the center of the 8 Conditions we find Curiosity & Creativity. Allowing and encouraging all the participants in the school building 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 mundane 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.*

## ■ Staff Perceptions of *Curiosity & Creativity*

The Condition of Curiosity & Creativity encourages staff to experience the joy of exploring new ideas. When asked about learning, 99% of staff surveyed stated they enjoy learning new things and 83% said that school inspires them to learn. However, just 54% agreed with the statement "Meaningful professional development opportunities exist in my district," and only two-thirds of staff (67%) said the building administration is open to new ideas. Only 67% of staff surveyed agreed with the statement "Our school is a dynamic and creative learning environment," and 69% agreed with the statement "At school I am encouraged to be creative." Similar numbers (68%) of staff agreed with the statement "I feel comfortable asking questions in staff meetings" and 72% agreed that staff work in a collaborative manner.

Curiosity & Creativity Statements	Percent in Agreement
At school I am encouraged to be creative.	69%
Building administration is open to new ideas.	67%
I enjoy learning new things.	99%
School inspires me to learn.	83%
Our school is a dynamic and creative learning environment.	67%
Staff work in a collaborative manner.	72%
Meaningful professional development opportunities exist in my district.	54%
I feel comfortable asking questions in staff meetings.	68%

## ■ Discussion

Questions about the Condition of Curiosity & Creativity revealed that virtually all staff surveyed like to learn new things and more than four out of five staff feel that school inspires them to learn. Despite these high numbers, just two-thirds said school administration is open to new ideas. This suggests that while staff want to explore new ideas, administration is perceived as limiting their ability to do so. This experience of limited openness to new ideas is reinforced by the finding that just two-thirds of staff report feeling comfortable asking questions in staff meetings. We should all be concerned that under such circumstances administrators may be making decisions with what they believe is tacit staff approval, while in actuality, confusion or disagreement goes unrecognized as the professional questions of one-third of the staff are unexplored.

Of equal concern is that the universal enjoyment of learning that staff report experiencing in general seems unfulfilled by the professional development that is actually offered in districts. There is a nearly universal finding from focus groups conducted in schools that Quaglia Institute for Student Aspirations works with (so not randomly selected or necessarily representative) that many educators are asked to participate in professional development that has no relevance for them. Rather, staff believe that professional development is planned in order to fulfill mandates and credit hours (e.g., Smartboard training when they do not have a Smartboard, math training when they are social studies teachers, etc.). This may, in turn, contribute to just two-thirds of staff feeling school is a dynamic and creative learning environment. Not experiencing creativity and relevance in their own learning, teachers may feel diminished in their ability to provide such an environment for their students.

## ■ Implications

Curiosity & Creativity means that staff must be encouraged to ask “Why?” and “Why not?” While inevitably decisions must be made by those entrusted to make them, the practical wisdom of professional educators—including their questions and creative suggestions—must be a vital part of the decision-making process. Absent such professional Curiosity and Creativity, schools run the risk of making misguided decisions or settling for conformity to decisions made without staff input rather than a genuine commitment to decisions that comes from staff being involved in the process. In particular, this applies to decisions made at either the building or district level about professional development. As previously stated, the vast majority of staff believe that professional development is an important part of their professional growth and that learning can be fun. The severe gap between those beliefs and the reported discontent with professional development being offered in districts must be addressed.

## ■ Suggestions for Practice

Staff and administration can foster Curiosity & Creativity through intentional actions

### **Staff can ...**

- Act upon things they are curious about and seek opportunities to learn
- Initiate collaboration with colleagues
- Try something new in the classroom
- Develop two solutions for every school-wide problem
- Bring their most creative selves to their next brainstorming session
- Take the time to learn about something outside of the area they teach
- Challenge themselves to bring more art, music and movement into their teaching

### **Administration can ...**

- Support new ideas and creative thinkers
- Relentlessly encourage and support all relevant questions about the school
- Continually seek feedback and ideas related to professional development
- Provide relevant and engaging professional development sessions
- Create opportunities for staff to lead staff meetings and professional development
- Invite “off the wall” ideas or solutions during staff meetings

## CONDITION 6. SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE

*Spirit of Adventure is about being supported so that one can take healthy risks, trusting that it is all right to make mistakes and knowing there is something to be learned from any consequence—positive or negative. Any type of new idea, strategy, or tactic can pose a risk. For some, it might be making a career change, 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 risks and explore new territory.*

### ■ Staff Perceptions of *Spirit of Adventure*

The Condition of Spirit of Adventure is about staff trying new things. It is about staff moving from their comfort zone to their challenge zone, while at the same time avoiding their panic zone. Staff face two common obstacles when they take risks: a fear of success and a fear of failure. Ninety-seven percent (97%) of staff surveyed said they challenge themselves to do a better job every day, and only eleven percent (11%) reported they are afraid to try something if they think they may fail. In terms of anxiety related to success, 15% of staff agreed with the statement “I am concerned my colleagues will resent me if I am too successful.” More troubling, just 65% reported they are excited to tell their colleagues when they do something well.

Another key aspect of Spirit of Adventure is whether staff feel supported when they are inspired to try new things. Support can come from many sources, including peers and supervisors. Seventy percent (70%) of staff surveyed believe colleagues help them learn from their mistakes, but only 63% said setting yearly goals with their supervisor is important for their work. Seventy-six percent (76%) of those surveyed stated that staff are supportive of each other.

Spirit of Adventure Statements	Percent in Agreement
Setting yearly goals with my supervisor is important for my work.	63%
I challenge myself to do my job better every day.	97%
Staff are supportive of each other.	76%
I am afraid to try something if I think I may fail.	11%
My colleagues help me learn from my mistakes.	70%
I am concerned my colleagues will resent me if I am too successful.	15%
I am excited to tell my colleagues when I do something well.	65%

## ■ Discussion

Findings for Spirit of Adventure are mixed. On the one hand, almost all staff say they challenge themselves to do a better job every day. On the other hand, staff express some concern about what it means to fail—one in ten are afraid to try something if they might fail. Additionally an even greater number worry over what it means to succeed—15% fear peer resentment if they are too successful and one-third appear unwilling to share their success with peers. Furthermore, less than two-thirds of staff consider setting yearly goals (which they may or may not achieve) with their supervisor important for their work. It would appear that educators are comfortable taking positive risks in an insulated way (I challenge myself...), but are less comfortable when the risks taken may expose them to the scrutiny of others, whether colleagues or supervisors.

Despite these concerns, support from colleagues received the highest percentage of agreement in this category. Combined with the seven in ten staff who indicate that their colleagues help them learn from their mistakes, this further reinforces the earlier finding that professionalism among peers is strong. However, these findings also mean that one out of four staff members does not feel supported by peers and many do not feel colleagues contribute to the learning that can come from risks and mistakes. For a Spirit of Adventure to thrive, the professional climate must be safe for staff both to fail and to succeed. What measures are in place to support staff in trying new things and taking risks, and to learn from both successes and mistakes? What contribution do evaluation systems make to either the support of or detriment of healthy risk-taking that is a vital part of innovation and growth?

## ■ Implications

Schools must decrease staff resentment towards the success of others and increase staff excitement around the individual successes that comprise team, grade-level, department, and ultimately, school success. One person's success does not diminish another's ability to be successful. One educator "looking good" does not necessitate another educator looking bad. The isolation that was a part of the inherited model of school (individual teachers secluded in classrooms free from the observation of peers and administrators) must continue to be replaced by team experiences in which colleagues learn from, support, and celebrate one another in ways that reduce fear and anxiety in either failure or success.

The fact that slightly more than three out of five staff see setting yearly goals with their supervisor as important to their work reveals a further area in need of development. Schools reach their fullest potential if there is a culture of visible, active goal setting, not only among peers but also between staff and administration. New teacher assessment systems designed upon coaching and support approaches, rather than evaluative, carrot-and-stick approaches hold the promise for improving this result. Certainly traditional models of once-a-year, dog-and-pony-show observations do little to promote a meaningful and supportive supervisory experience. For staff to take the steps necessary to reach their professional goals and dreams those aspirations must be articulated and, when

possible, facilitated by the school community, in particular administrators. To do this, administrators need to create time to meet regularly with their staff on an individual and team basis.

## ■ Suggestions for Practice

Staff and administration can foster Spirit of Adventure through intentional actions

### **Staff can ...**

- Explore a new way of teaching an old lesson
- Follow through with an idea that might result in failure
- Support colleagues who take risks
- Share their goals with their students and colleagues
- Share their failures and successes with students and colleagues

### **Administration can ...**

- Support staff who try something new, even if they are not successful
- Schedule time to meet regularly with staff on an individual and team basis
- Make yearly goal setting a relevant experience for staff
- Revisit individual staff goals on a regular basis
- Share your professional successes and mistakes and how you learned from those experiences
- Encourage push back and dissent by making such feedback repercussion free
- Model risk taking and transparency

## CONDITION 7. LEADERSHIP & RESPONSIBILITY

The Condition of Leadership & Responsibility deals with giving every member of the staff 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 must be trusted enough to have a voice in their classrooms, 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 successes and mistakes, always moving forward with greater knowledge and understanding.

### ■ Staff Perceptions of *Leadership & Responsibility*

The Condition of Leadership & Responsibility is twofold: staff must develop strong decision-making skills and have real leadership opportunities. This creates an approach to shared and responsible decision-making in which everyone feels accountable to school improvement and student success. Ninety-seven percent (97%) of staff stated that they encourage students to make decisions, and eighty-three percent (83%) said they actively seek out student opinions and ideas. Unfortunately, only 53% of staff reported that they themselves have a voice in decision-making at school and just six out of ten (60%) said building administration is willing to learn from staff. Clearly most staff do not believe they are afforded the same level of voice they report extending to the students they work with.

When asked about being a part of leadership in their school communities, three-fourths (76%) of staff reported that they know the goals their school is working on this year. Seventy-nine percent (79%) of staff surveyed agreed with the statement “I see myself as a leader,” while just 61% said their colleagues see them as a leader. This gap indicates untapped potential and an opportunity to cultivate staff leadership.

Leadership & Responsibility Statements	Percent in Agreement
I see myself as a leader.	79%
My colleagues see me as a leader.	61%
I have a voice in decision making at school.	53%
I know the goals my school is working on this year.	76%
I actively seek out student opinions and ideas.	83%
I encourage students to make decisions.	97%
Building administration is willing to learn from staff.	60%

## ■ Discussion

The findings in this Condition reveal that although more than three out of four staff see themselves as leaders, this self-perception does not necessarily translate into leadership opportunities and action as less than two-thirds of staff surveyed believe their colleagues see them as a leader. For the Condition of Leadership & Responsibility to thrive, this gap needs to be closed. The finding that barely half of those working in schools believe they have a voice in decision-making is a cause for concern, if not alarm. Such a profound disconnect between staff and participation in setting policy, choosing curriculum, or contributing to other governing functions may be at the root of much of the discontent circulating in the teaching profession. If educators feel that decisions about what to teach, how to teach and at what pace to teach are made remotely in an ivory tower or gilded policy chamber, they may wonder about their role in a very fundamental way.

## ■ Implications

It is nearly impossible for individuals to reach and sustain their aspirations in a school system in which staff believe they have the ability to be leaders and a desire to participate in decision-making, yet feel their opinions are either not sought or when given go unheeded. Administrators—at all levels—operating in such a system run the risk of confusing conformity with commitment as educators go along to get along and continue to teach as they have always taught.

Schools must tap into the valuable resource that is the professional and practical wisdom of their staff. Administrators and other decision-makers at the school, district, state, and federal levels must see Teacher Voice as integral to successful decision-making. It is critical that leaders value the expertise of the staff that work closely with students every day. For their part, staff must take the initiative to become actively involved in decisions that affect them and students in the teaching and learning environment.

Staff and administration can foster Leadership & Responsibility through intentional actions

### **Staff can ...**

- Seek and accept opportunities to take on leadership roles
- Attend and actively participate in school board meetings
- Clarify, if need be, the goals the school is working on
- Support colleagues who take on leadership roles
- Avoid the tendency to think in “us” (staff) vs. “them” (administrators) categories
- Be willing to be held accountable for the things they say they are going to do

## Administration can ...

- Delegate leadership and responsibility wherever possible
- Avoid the tendency to think in “us” (administrators) vs. “them” (staff) categories
- Invite Teacher Voice into all decision-making; be sure to create the time and space for this to happen
- Practice transparency in all decision-making
- Be clear about school goals
- Share their professional goals as a school leader

## CONDITION 8. CONFIDENCE TO TAKE ACTION

The eighth and final Condition is Confidence to Take Action. Schools that foster this Condition encourage all 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 employee. Awards, accolades, and other external recognition for success are welcome, but the intrinsic desire to provide the best service one is capable of must drive effective employees. Schools that value, respect and celebrate the opinions and ideas of all staff members foster the development of everyone's sense of purpose and positive engagement in both individual classrooms and the school community.

### ■ Staff Perceptions of *Confidence to Take Action*

The Condition of Confidence to Take Action is the pinnacle of the 8 Conditions framework and also the goal of all educational ventures: to provide staff with enough belief in themselves that they can set goals for the future and take steps in the present to reach those goals. When asked questions about goal-setting, 97% of staff surveyed reported they think it is important to set high goals. Ninety-seven percent (97%) also said they work hard to reach their goals. However, fewer than 60% agreed with the statement “I feel confident voicing my honest opinions and concerns.”

The ability to set and reach goals is directly connected to a generally positive view of one's future. Ninety-seven percent (97%) of staff surveyed agreed with the statement “I believe I can be successful.” Ninety-four percent (94%) agreed with the statement “I believe I can make a difference in this world.” Eighty-four percent (84%) said that continuing their education is important to their future. However, only 69% of staff are excited about their future career in education.

Confidence to Take Action Statements	Percent in Agreement
I believe I can be successful.	97%
I believe I can make a difference in this world.	94%
I feel confident voicing my honest opinions and concerns.	59%
I work hard to reach my goals.	97%
I am excited about my future career in education.	69%
Continuing my education is important for my future.	84%
I think it is important to set high goals.	97%

## ■ Discussion

There is a difference between dreaming about the future and taking the steps necessary to reach those dreams. The Condition of Confidence to Take Action is defined by the successful integration of these two processes. The good news is that majority of staff surveyed appear to know it is important both to set high goals and to work hard to reach them. More than nine out of ten staff believe they can be successful and that they can make a difference in the world. School administration and staff should celebrate these positive findings. There appears to be a solid sense of purpose among school staff.

Alongside this goal-oriented and optimistic view of the future, just three out of five feel confident saying what they honestly think. This is tied to earlier findings that reported a diminished experience of having a voice—whether in decision-making, asking questions in staff meetings, or in the administration’s perceived willingness to learn from the staff. Of additional concern is that just seven out of ten staff are excited about their future in the field of education. Schools must tap into the positive findings around goal setting and making a difference so that staff are able to bring their optimism to schools today and in the future. Equally important, school staff need to take responsibility for their career choices—and the students they work with—and stay passionate about their work.

## ■ Implications

Schools and educational systems (districts, state departments of education, etc.) need honest input and feedback if they are to make good decisions and healthy changes for the benefit of staff and students. They must do a better job of making it safe for staff to voice their opinions and of being open to the professional expertise of those “in the trenches.” While the profession has built more or less effective systems for pushing information and learning “down the chain of command,” systems for gathering information “from the bottom up” are not as robust and even seen as less important by some in positions of authority. This is problematic as it reduces the confidence of the very professionals needed to implement the positive changes that are important for the sake of students. It is difficult to “implement with fidelity” policies one feels they had no voice in creating. The result has been a fairly unchanged status quo despite decades of education reform efforts. This situation can be vastly improved if we honor the professional experience and expertise of those who have chosen teaching as a career and find ways to encourage and listen to their voices.

## ■ Suggestions for Practice

Staff and administration can foster Confidence to Take Action through intentional actions

### **Staff can ...**

- Continue to work from areas of strength
- Maintain a spirit of optimism and belief that there are few greater jobs on earth than helping students achieve their aspirations
- Actively pursue setting and achieving high goals for themselves
- Work to overcome fear of expressing honest opinions and concerns
- Focus on the reasons they became educators and make decisions based upon those core beliefs

## Administration can ...

- Hold high expectations for themselves and all staff
- Provide the necessary support for staff to meet expectations
- Hold staff accountable for what they say they are going to do, rather than holding them accountable for what administration says they should do
- Invite people to express their honest opinions and concerns
- Honor the opinions of others, even if they differ from one's own
- Encourage and make time for dialogue about the future of education and the teaching profession

## ADMINISTRATION AND COMMUNICATION

*The presence or absence of the 8 Conditions in a school can depend in large part on how authority and power are exercised and distributed in the school and district. Effective leadership ensures the 8 Conditions are alive and well within individual staff members, and the school community as a whole. Additionally, effective leadership at all levels requires effective communication.*

### ■ Staff Perceptions of Administration and Communication

Within the school building, 80% of staff say building administration is accessible to them, and 77% say the administration is visible in the school. However, just 48% agree with the statement “We communicate effectively in our school.” Fifty-five percent (55%) believe that building administration knows their professional goals. Additionally, 86% of staff said that they communicate effectively with parents, while only 45% said that the central office understands the unique culture of their school.

Administration and Communication Statements	Percent in Agreement
Central office understands the unique culture of our school.	45%
We communicate effectively in our school.	48%
Building administration is visible in our school.	77%
Building administration know my professional goals.	55%
Building administration is accessible to me.	80%
I communicate effectively with parents.	86%

### ■ Discussion

While relatively high numbers of staff said the administration is accessible and visible, far fewer said this translates into effective communication and professional understanding. It is not enough for administration to be present—they must create, and provide for, meaningful interactions with school staff, fostering an environment of open, honest, and supportive communication. Being visible in the building is the foundation for a strong school culture, but administrators must be willing to develop effective methods of communicating with and supporting their staff in a way that values their voice.

Central office administration faces even greater challenges in fostering staff aspirations, in part because they do not have daily interaction with staff and also because they are removed from the daily experience of working with students. The fact that less than half of staff feel the central office understands their school culture reflects the need for increased communication and interaction. Central office must find ways to be in schools, interacting with staff and students, on a regular basis.

Doing so will change the nature of the educational system, from how decisions are made to the types of policies that are created.

Finally, while more than four out of five staff believe they communicate well with parents overall, survey results highlight the fact that at all levels, communication within the school community must be strengthened so that the purpose of teaching and learning can be fully realized.

## ■ Implications

A key feature of any healthy professional environment must be a climate free from the fear of retaliation (e.g., being assigned extra duties, being isolated, being given a difficult class, being fired, etc.) for expressing one's honest concerns. Absent such a climate, staff concerns may go underground, where they can fester and ultimately impede a school's ability to achieve its mission and goals. In addition, schools must move away from administrative systems in which professional errors lead to blame and covering up mistakes, rather than effectively communicating through challenges and learning from failures. These types of ineffective practices reduce the amount of accurate information in the system, eroding trust and leaving decision makers under-informed. Further mistakes are then inevitable, creating a downward spiral of problems, rather than the improvement trajectories we are all seeking. Schools must create and maintain systems where mistakes lead to professional accountability and learning. This will open up communication and facilitate leaders making informed decisions that benefit all in the system.

Another way to improve relationships between staff and administration is to commit to win-win decision-making. Sometimes administrators make decisions that support their own agendas and unintentionally diminish the effectiveness of a teacher or staff (e.g., last minute schedule changes). Similarly, staff can sometimes make decisions that support their own agendas and unintentionally diminish the effectiveness of an administrator (e.g., not enforcing school policy because it takes away from time). This has the unintended consequence of creating a less than supportive environment, ripe with tension between administrators and staff—thus diminishing the effectiveness of both. When administrators (at all levels) and staff commit to never acting in a way that improves their own effectiveness if it hurts that of someone else, the partnership between them becomes mutually supportive and everyone gains.

## ■ Suggestions for Practice

Staff and administration can foster communication through intentional actions

### **Staff can ...**

- Invite administrators at all levels to visit and even teach in their classrooms
- Resist an "us" vs. "them" mindset when it comes to administration
- Bring honest concerns to administration in a spirit of partnership and dialogue
- Share professional goals with administrators
- Acknowledge the efforts administrators make

### **Administration can ...**

- Invite staff to share their professional goals; ask how administration can help them achieve those goals
- Create systems of accountability that lead to learning rather than finger pointing and blame
- Be visible throughout the school building; central office administrators should spend time in schools on a regular basis
- Improve upon an "Open Door" policy by posting regular office hours (i.e., times when they will be available and undistracted)

## Part II: Comparison of Staff and Student Perceptions (Academic Year 2013—2014 only)

### DIFFERENCES IN STUDENT AND STAFF PERCEPTIONS

When comparisons are made between similar questions from the Teacher Voice and Student Voice Surveys, interesting differences are revealed.

School pride, a critical element of the Condition of Belonging, reflects a person's level of commitment to, and investment in, what happens at school. Only 60% of students agreed with the statement "I am proud of my school"; a number that stands in stark contrast to the 85% of staff members who agreed with the same statement. This difference of 25% emphasizes the diverse ways each group views, and is invested in, the school environment. For the school community to work together to support student and staff aspirations, these numbers must be more closely aligned. All members of the school community must be invested in and have pride in the school for it to succeed.

Relationships are key to this investment. A comparison of statements from the Condition of Heroes suggest that staff need to do a better job of letting students know that they are important. When asked if students care if staff members are absent from school, 86% of staff agreed that students do indeed care. In contrast, only slightly more than half (52%) of students think staff members care if students are absent from school. How can it be that roughly half of students do not believe that staff care if they even show up? This is a shocking finding that needs to be urgently addressed. If students do not think it matters to staff whether they are at school or not, how can we expect them to show up, let alone engage and achieve?

Another significant difference between staff and student views is in relation to respect. There are three components of respect in schools measured by the surveys: staff respect for students, students' respect for staff, and respect among peers. When asked if staff respect students, 99% of staff said that they did. While this is one of the strongest findings in the survey, it comes into question when compared to how students perceive the same phenomenon from their point of view, with less than two-thirds (64%) agreeing that staff respect students. This is a tremendous gap between how the two groups perceive staff respect for students. If all staff believe they respect students, why do one-third of students fail to perceive or experience that respect? Conversations around these differences must be held to better understand how staff and students define respect, and what behaviors and attitudes they associate with experiencing respect in the school setting.

Similar results were found in regard to questions about students' respect for staff. While the vast majority (91%) of staff say that students respect them, students have a much different view. Just 35% of all students surveyed reported that students respect staff. While it is not surprising that students may be more clued in to student disrespect towards staff that occurs in conversations out of the earshot of adults, a gap of 56% should be cause for concern. Here again, conversations need to be held to decrease these differences and help each group better understand the other.

Finally, the lowest findings are in respect for peers. Seventy-four percent (74%) of staff agreed that staff respect each other and just 35% of students said that students respect each other. It would seem that while a certain amount of respect accrues to the "vertical" relationships in a school, the same cannot be said of the "horizontal" relationships. Without respect it is nearly impossible to build strong relationships, which are the basis for the first three Conditions related to Belonging, and the foundation of the entire 8 Conditions framework.

Statements from <i>Teacher Voice</i> and <i>Student Voice</i> Surveys about respect	Percent in Agreement
I respect students.	T = 99%
Staff respect students.	S = 64%
Students respect me.	T = 91%
Students respect staff.	S = 43%
Staff respect each other.	T = 74%
Students respect each other.	S = 35%
*T = Staff S = Students	

There are also important differences worth highlighting between staff and students views around the Condition of Fun & Excitement, which is about being interested and engaged in one's work. The more engaged a person is, the more inspired they are to try new things and take on new challenges. Both staff and students play a role in making school fun and exciting. Staff set the stage for the Condition through their enthusiasm, their creativity, and their passion for learning. Students respond by being actively engaged and emotionally involved in their schoolwork. For the Condition of Fun & Excitement to be in place, both groups need to work together.

The national data reveals that nearly 9 out of 10 staff (89%) surveyed feel that students make school an exciting place to work—a very positive finding that should be celebrated. In addition, staff universally (99%) agree that learning can be fun, more than 8 in 10 say they have fun at school (83%), and enjoy working at their school (85%). Students, however, apparently do not pick up on staff' enthusiasm. Less than two-thirds (64%) say they believe staff enjoy working with them. An even lower number of students (48%) perceive staff as having fun at school and a little more than half (53%) of students say they enjoy being at school themselves. These disconnects play a role in how students view their learning, as well as how they view those who teach them. If students don't believe staff members are happy working with them, they won't be inspired to engage with learning themselves. Educators must find other ways to share with students the reasons they chose to work in the field and the passion they feel for both teaching and students themselves.

The other side of this issue is whether students are having fun at school. Of the staff surveyed, 79% believe students have fun at school. In itself, this percentage is worrisome because it means that 1 in 5 students are not seen as being engaged by those that teach them. Even more concerning is the disconnect between staff and student perceptions in this area. While the vast majority of staff believe that students are having fun and 74% of students agreed that "Learning can be fun," 43% of students report that "School is boring" and only 44% say "Teachers make school an exciting place to learn." The challenge is to find new ways to foster the Condition of Fun & Excitement in today's schools. Just as students and teachers may have different definitions of respect that need to be addressed, they also should work towards finding common ground on what would make learning more engaging.

Statements from <i>Teacher Voice</i> and <i>Student Voice</i> Surveys which highlight differences	Percent in Agreement
I am proud of my school.	T = 85%
I am proud of my school.	S = 60%
Students make school an exciting place to work.	T = 89%
Teachers make school an exciting place to learn.	S = 44%
Students have fun at school.	T = 79%
School is boring.	S = 43%
I enjoy working here.	T = 85%
Students enjoy being at school.	S = 53%
I have fun at school.	T = 83%
Teachers have fun at school.	S = 48%
Students care if I am absent from school.	T = 86%
Teachers care if I am absent from school.	S = 52%
Learning can be fun.	T = 99%
Learning can be fun.	S = 74%
I am a valued member of my school community.	T = 75%
I am a valued member of my school community.	S = 46%
I make learning relevant to my students.	T = 95%
I learn new things that are interesting to me at school.	S = 72%
*T = Staff S = Students	

## SIMILARITIES IN STUDENT AND STAFF PERCEPTIONS

While there are a number of differences between the ways staff and students perceive the educational environment, there are also some similarities between the Teacher Voice and Student Voice survey results. These similarities group around three of the Conditions: Spirit of Adventure, Curiosity & Creativity, and Leadership & Responsibility.

Both students and staff have fears about sharing their successes with their peers. Just 66% of staff agreed with the statement “I am excited to tell my colleagues when I do something well” and a similar percentage of students (61%) agreed with the statement “I am excited to tell my friends when I get good grades.” These findings present a curious dilemma: if schools are to encourage students to succeed academically, why is there such reluctance among students to share good grades? If systems are supporting staff to meet their maximum potential, why are so few staff members excited to tell their colleagues when they do something well? Staff members need to do a better job modeling self-worth, confidence, and pride in their effort and achievement. Schools must make it safe for everyone—staff and students alike—to succeed, and celebrate those successes in a supportive environment.

Part of developing this type of confidence is about actively participating in the community. Here again, there are some sad similarities between staff and student survey results. When asked if they are comfortable asking questions in staff meetings, just 69% of staff members agreed. A similar percentage of students (63%) said they were comfortable asking questions in class. In other words, only about two-thirds of staff and students feel comfortable actively participating in their learning community. This means that one out of every three staff members and students are not comfortable voicing their questions or concerns about what is happening or what they are learning. Staff and

students alike must challenge themselves to be more engaged, contributing members of their community. The system must also work to foster an environment of safety and trust where all voices are heard and valued.

Staff and students were also asked two critical questions about being responsible leaders. First, they were asked if they see themselves as a leader. Second, they were asked if they think others see them as a leader. While differing numbers of staff (79%) and students (66%) see themselves as leaders, the most surprising similarity lies in the discrepancy between the number who see themselves as leaders and the number who think others see them that way, too. Of the staff surveyed, just 62% think their peers see them as leaders, a gap of 17%. Over one-third of students (37%) think the same way, with a gap of 29% between the way students see themselves, and the way they perceive their peers view them. In each group, significantly fewer staff and students think their peers see them as a leader than how they see themselves in that light. Schools need to teach students about leadership and help them grow into those roles. Teachers and school staff are already leaders by virtue of their positions, and it is worth exploring why so many don't think others see them that way. How can these perceptions be better understood and, ultimately changed?

Statements from <i>Teacher Voice</i> and <i>Student Voice</i> Surveys which highlight similarities	Percent in Agreement
I am excited to tell my colleagues when I do something well.	T = 66%
I am excited to tell my friends when I get good grades.	S = 61%
I feel comfortable asking questions in staff meetings.	T = 69%
I feel comfortable asking questions in class.	S = 63%
I see myself as a leader.	T = 79%
I see myself as a leader.	S = 66%
My colleagues see me as a leader.	T = 62%
Other students see me as a leader.	S = 37%
*T = Staff S = Students	

## Part III: Odds Analysis

The goal of an odds analysis (logistic regression) is to determine to what degree a predictor variable influences an outcome variable. The result of these analyses is an “Odds Ratio”—a finding that staff who agree with a predictor statement (e.g., I have a voice in decision making at school) are x times more likely to agree with an outcome statement (e.g., “I work hard to reach my goals”) than those who do not agree with the predictor variable. There are many possibilities for such analyses given the statements on the *Teacher Voice survey*. For the purposes of this analysis, the primary interest was in the relationship between statements that at face value are connected to Teacher Voice, Staff Aspirations (that is, goal setting and the effort to achieve those goals), and Staff Support of Student Voice. The following statements were utilized for this analysis:

### **Teacher Voice**

- I feel valued for my unique skills and talents.
- I am a valued member of my school community.
- I feel confident voicing my honest opinions and concerns.
- At school I am encouraged to be creative.
- Building administration is open to new ideas.
- I feel comfortable asking questions in staff meetings.
- I see myself as a leader.
- My colleagues see me as a leader.
- I have a voice in decision making at school.
- Building administration is willing to learn from staff.

### **Staff Aspirations**

- I work hard to reach my goals.
- I believe I can make a difference in this world.
- I know the goals my school is working on this year.
- I am excited about my future career in education.
- Setting yearly goals with my supervisor is important for my work.

### **Staff Support of Student Voice**

- I actively seek out student opinions and ideas.
- I encourage students to make decisions.

Using the individual statements associated with Teacher Voice as the predictor variables and the individual statements associated with Staff Aspirations and Staff Support of Student Voice as the outcome variables (and controlling for school, survey year, and all demographic indicators), the following results emerged:

Staff Voice (Predictor Variables)	Staff Aspirations (Outcome Variables)				
	I work hard to reach my goals.	I believe I can make a difference in this world.	I know the goals my school is working on this year.	I am excited about my future career in education.	Setting yearly goals with my supervisor is important for my work.
I feel valued for my unique skills and talents.	3x	3x	3x	4x	3x
I am a valued member of my school community.	4x	5x	3x	4x	3x
I feel confident voicing my honest opinions and concerns.	3x	3x	4x	4x	3x
At school I am encouraged to be creative.	3x	3x	3x	4x	3x
Building administration is open to new ideas.	2x	3x	4x	3x	3x
I feel comfortable asking questions in staff meetings.	3x	3x	3x	3x	3x
I see myself as a leader.	4x	7x	2x	3x	2x
My colleagues see me as a leader.	3x	5x	2x	3x	2x
I have a voice in decision making at school.	3x	4x	4x	4x	3x
Building administration is willing to learn from staff.	3x	3x	5x	3x	3x

Overall, it is clear that school staff members who believe they have a voice are more likely to agree that they also have the skills they need to be successful and to aspire more than those who do not believe they have a voice. Those who agree with the particular predictor variable “I have a voice in decision making at school” are three to four times more likely to work hard to reach their goals, believe they can make a difference in the world, know the goals their school is working on, be excited about their future career in education, and agree that setting yearly goals with their supervisor is important for their work. Staff who see themselves as leaders and believe their colleagues see them as leaders are seven and five times more likely to believe they can make a difference in the world, respectively. Staff who believe they are valued members of the community are four times more likely to say they work hard to reach their goals and are excited about their future careers in education than those who do not feel similarly valued. Teacher Voice has a profound impact on every aspect of a staff member’s ability to dream about the future and be inspired in the present to reach those dreams.

Administrators at all levels should make it a high priority to invite and cultivate Teacher Voice. Not only because it impacts staff positively, but because staff are a source of practical wisdom and experience that can help a school move forward and achieve its goals. A system cannot improve without the support and participation of the staff that make up the learning community. The mission and objectives of a school can only be enhanced when administrators and professional educators come together with students to take a school to ever higher levels of performance and positive outcomes.

In addition to impacting staff aspirations, Teacher Voice also impacts staff members’ capacity to support and encourage student voice. As staff grow in their own ability to exercise voice, they are more equipped to support students in doing the same.

Staff Voice (Predictor Variables)	Staff Support of Student Voice (Outcome Variables)	
	I actively seek out student opinions and ideas.	I encourage students to make decisions.
I feel valued for my unique skills and talents.	2x	2x
I am a valued member of my school community.	2x	3x
I feel confident voicing my honest opinions and concerns.	2x	2x
At school I am encouraged to be creative.	2x	3x
Building administration is open to new ideas.	2x	2x
I feel comfortable asking questions in staff meetings.	2x	2x
I see myself as a leader.	2x	3x
My colleagues see me as a leader.	2x	3x
I have a voice in decision making at school.	2x	3x
Building administration is willing to learn from staff.	2x	2x

While not as dramatic as the impact on staff aspirations, staff who feel like they have a voice profess to actively seek out student opinions and ideas and encourage students to make decisions at double and triple the rate of their colleagues who do not believe they have a voice. Teacher Voice is a necessary part of any effective effort to raise the level of Student Voice. It is difficult to give what you do not have. Staff may find it challenging to allow students a voice when they feel like they themselves do not have a voice in decision-making.

Among the most significant impacts of Teacher Voice is the relationship between staff believing they have a voice in school and their sense of relationship with building administrators. School staff who believe building administrators are open to new ideas and willing to learn from them are ten and fourteen times more likely to believe that building administration is willing to get to know them than staff who do not feel such openness. This willingness to learn from staff also signals a seventeen times greater sense of accessibility and a nine-fold greater sense of visibility. This suggests that administrators who are accessible and visible are perceived as significantly more willing to learn from staff, a factor that has potential to greatly strengthen a school community.

Staff Voice (Predictor Variables)	Relationship with Building Administration (Outcome Variables)			
	Building administration makes an effort to get to know me.	Building administration is visible in our school.	Building administration know my professional goals.	Building administration is accessible to me.
I feel valued for my unique skills and talents.	8x	4x	5x	7x
I am a valued member of my school community.	7x	4x	5x	6x
I feel confident voicing my honest opinions and concerns.	7x	4x	4x	8x
At school I am encouraged to be creative.	6x	4x	4x	5x
Building administration is open to new ideas.	10x	7x	5x	12x
I feel comfortable asking questions in staff meetings.	6x	3x	4x	6x
I see myself as a leader.	2x	2x	2x	2x
My colleagues see me as a leader.	2x	1.4x	2x	2x
I have a voice in decision making at school.	9x	5x	5x	10x
Building administration is willing to learn from staff.	14x	9x	6x	17x

These odds ratios reveal a correlation between various indicators, but not a direction of causality. Yet whatever the direction of causality, these results indicate the importance of administrators being open to the professional input of all staff without regard to personal affiliation. Cultivating a high degree of respect for the value, skills, input, creativity, leadership, and curiosity of each and every member of the school community will nurture positive relationships with staff and in turn cultivate a greater willingness on the part of staff to lend their voice to decision-making.

## Part IV: Conclusion

The Teacher Voice Report reveals both positive findings and areas in need of dramatic improvement around each of the 8 Conditions that Make a Difference. Results also indicate some profound differences in the way staff and students view school, as well as some sad similarities. While schools should be proud of their accomplishments, there is clearly much work to be done to improve even the most positive of these findings. In particular, staff perceptions of students, staff willingness to take healthy risks, and the recognition of staff effort, perseverance, and citizenship must receive additional attention as areas staff report as particularly weak. One key to all of this is Teacher Voice. If Conditions are to improve for staff, they must be able to safely and freely articulate their concerns and questions. They must see themselves as leaders, and believe they are valued members of the school community.

The 8 Conditions—Belonging, Heroes, Sense of Accomplishment, Fun & Excitement, Curiosity & Creativity, Spirit of Adventure, Leadership & Responsibility, and Confidence to Take Action—as well as Administration and Communication, need to be in place if school staff are to set and reach meaningful goals. The survey findings reveal that Belonging, Heroes, Fun & Excitement and Confidence to Take Action are perceived by staff to be relatively strong. In contrast, Sense of Accomplishment, Curiosity & Creativity, Spirit of Adventure, Leadership & Responsibility, and Administration and Communication have mixed results with a number of statements receiving surprisingly low scores. If schools are to be places where teaching and learning thrive, these findings must be reflected upon, discussed, and addressed by the school community. Listening to the voices of staff is a critical step in this process.

# APPENDIX A

## Teacher Voice survey: Academic Years 2010 – 2014

Condition	Survey Statement	Total % in Agreement
<i>Sense of Accomplishment</i>	I have never been recognized for something positive at school.	19%
<i>Sense of Accomplishment</i>	I actively encourage students to practice good citizenship.	98%
<i>Sense of Accomplishment</i>	I receive constructive feedback from colleagues.	75%
<i>Sense of Accomplishment</i>	Our school celebrates the accomplishments of the staff.	59%
<i>Sense of Accomplishment</i>	I am recognized when I try my best.	56%
<i>Sense of Accomplishment</i>	Professional development is an important part of my educational growth.	84%
<i>Administration &amp; Communication</i>	Central office understands the unique culture of our school.	45%
<i>Administration &amp; Communication</i>	We communicate effectively in our school.	48%
<i>Administration &amp; Communication</i>	Building administration is visible in our school.	77%
<i>Administration &amp; Communication</i>	Building administration know my professional goals.	55%
<i>Administration &amp; Communication</i>	Building administration is accessible to me.	80%
<i>Administration &amp; Communication</i>	I communicate effectively with parents.	86%
<i>Spirit of Adventure</i>	Setting yearly goals with my supervisor is important for my work.	63%
<i>Spirit of Adventure</i>	I challenge myself to do my job better every day.	97%
<i>Spirit of Adventure</i>	Staff are supportive of each other.	76%
<i>Spirit of Adventure</i>	I am afraid to try something if I think I may fail.	11%
<i>Spirit of Adventure</i>	My colleagues help me learn from my mistakes.	70%
<i>Spirit of Adventure</i>	I am concerned my colleagues will resent me if I am too successful.	15%
<i>Spirit of Adventure</i>	I am excited to tell my colleagues when I do something well.	65%
<i>Belonging</i>	I feel valued for my unique skills and talents.	73%
<i>Belonging</i>	School is a welcoming and friendly place.	79%
<i>Belonging</i>	I am proud of my school.	82%
<i>Belonging</i>	I think bullying is a problem at my school.	47%
<i>Belonging</i>	I feel comfortable in the staff room.	74%

<i>Belonging</i>	Building administration makes an effort to get to know me.	66%
<i>Belonging</i>	I feel accepted for who I am at school.	83%
<i>Belonging</i>	I am a valued member of my school community.	74%
<i>Confidence to Take Action</i>	I believe I can be successful.	97%
<i>Confidence to Take Action</i>	I believe I can make a difference in this world.	94%
<i>Confidence to Take Action</i>	I feel confident voicing my honest opinions and concerns.	59%
<i>Confidence to Take Action</i>	I work hard to reach my goals.	97%
<i>Confidence to Take Action</i>	I am excited about my future career in education.	69%
<i>Confidence to Take Action</i>	Continuing my education is important for my future.	84%
<i>Confidence to Take Action</i>	I think it is important to set high goals.	97%
<i>Curiosity &amp; Creativity</i>	At school I am encouraged to be creative.	69%
<i>Curiosity &amp; Creativity</i>	Building administration is open to new ideas.	67%
<i>Curiosity &amp; Creativity</i>	I enjoy learning new things.	99%
<i>Curiosity &amp; Creativity</i>	School inspires me to learn.	83%
<i>Curiosity &amp; Creativity</i>	Our school is a dynamic and creative learning environment.	67%
<i>Curiosity &amp; Creativity</i>	Staff work in a collaborative manner.	72%
<i>Curiosity &amp; Creativity</i>	Meaningful professional development opportunities exist in my district.	54%
<i>Curiosity &amp; Creativity</i>	I feel comfortable asking questions in staff meetings.	68%
<i>Fun &amp; Excitement</i>	I enjoy working here.	83%
<i>Fun &amp; Excitement</i>	I make learning relevant to my students.	95%
<i>Fun &amp; Excitement</i>	Students enjoy working with teachers.	84%
<i>Fun &amp; Excitement</i>	Students have fun at school.	78%
<i>Fun &amp; Excitement</i>	Students make school an exciting place to work.	87%
<i>Fun &amp; Excitement</i>	I have fun at school.	82%
<i>Fun &amp; Excitement</i>	Learning can be fun.	99%
<i>Heroes</i>	Students care if I am absent from school.	86%
<i>Heroes</i>	I have a colleague at school who is a positive role model for me.	90%
<i>Heroes</i>	If I have a problem, I have a colleague I can talk to.	93%
<i>Heroes</i>	I know my students' hopes and dreams.	80%
<i>Heroes</i>	Staff respect each other.	71%
<i>Heroes</i>	Students respect me.	91%
<i>Heroes</i>	I respect students.	99%
<i>Heroes</i>	Students care about me as an individual.	84%

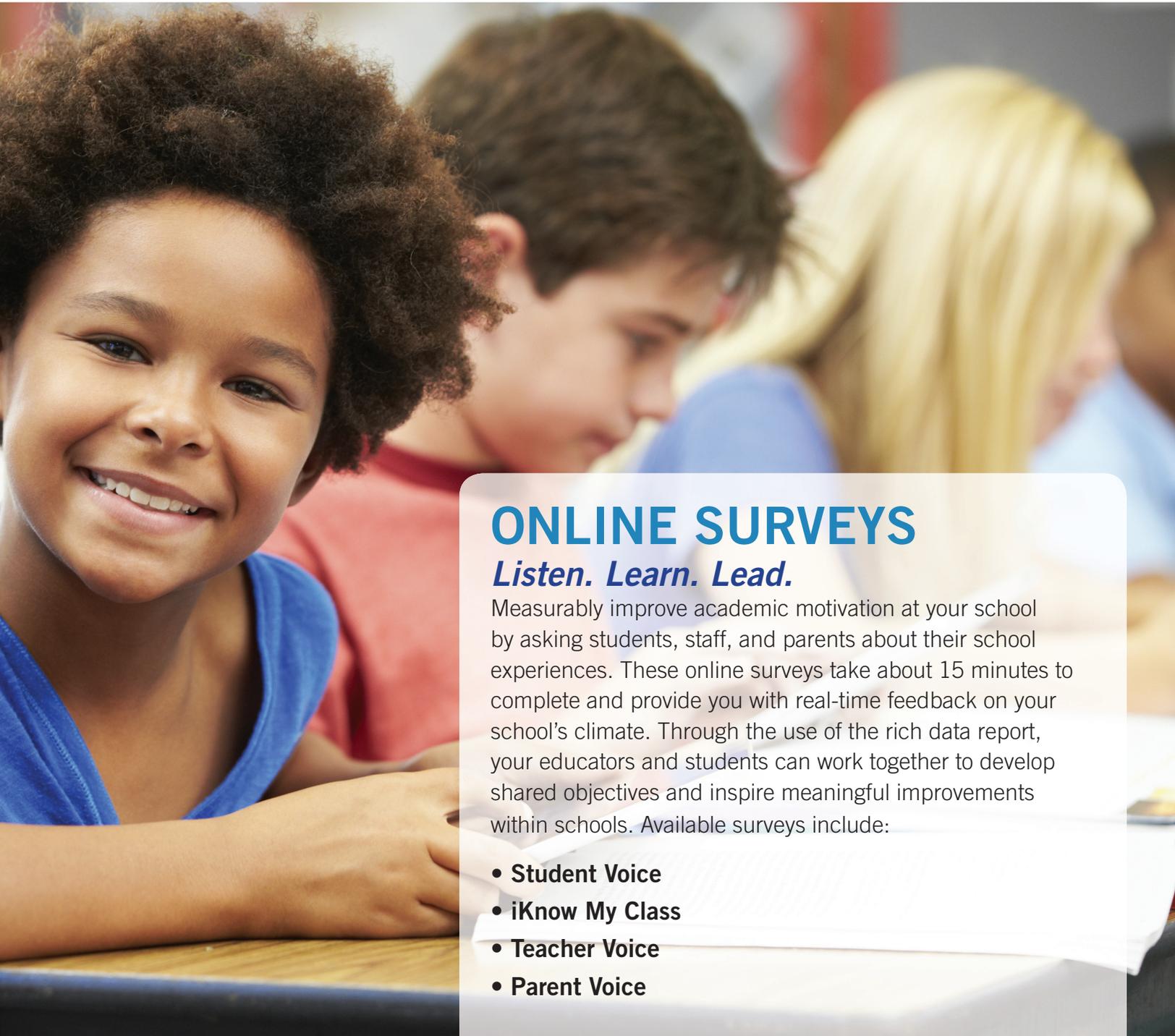
<i>Leadership &amp; Responsibility</i>	I see myself as a leader.	79%
<i>Leadership &amp; Responsibility</i>	My colleagues see me as a leader.	61%
<i>Leadership &amp; Responsibility</i>	I have a voice in decision making at school.	53%
<i>Leadership &amp; Responsibility</i>	I know the goals my school is working on this year.	76%
<i>Leadership &amp; Responsibility</i>	I actively seek out student opinions and ideas.	83%
<i>Leadership &amp; Responsibility</i>	I encourage students to make decisions.	97%
<i>Leadership &amp; Responsibility</i>	Building administration is willing to learn from staff.	60%

(Footnotes)

- 1 Respondents were allowed to select all that apply in answer to this question; thus, the total exceeds 100%.



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