

A man in a dark suit and tie is speaking at a podium. He is holding a pen in his right hand. In the foreground, several hands are clapping, suggesting an audience. The background is bright and out of focus.

Eight Ways to Motivate Your Staff

Sara E. Quay and Russell J. Quaglia

Fostering the aspirations of faculty and staff is the key to job satisfaction and increased productivity.

There is no principal in our nation today who has not been impacted by state or federal education reform. Indeed, school leadership has been altered by the presence of high-stakes testing, mandated curriculum frameworks, and the charge to attract and retain highly qualified teachers. But while principals must attend to these critical areas, they must not lose sight of other characteristics of a healthy and successful school. In particular, they must not lose sight of the fact that their teachers and other school staff need to feel supported in pursuing their professional goals and aspirations. For when members of the school community feel motivated and inspired to do their work, the rewards include increases in retention, job satisfaction, and productivity.

IN BRIEF

The authors describe eight conditions that principals can support to motivate faculty and staff to achieve their fullest potential. They include: fostering a sense of belonging; establishing the principal as a “hero”; celebrating personal growth and effort; making work fun and exciting; encouraging curiosity and creativity; creating a spirit of adventure; providing opportunities for leadership and responsibility; and inspiring confidence to take action.

Eight Conditions That Make a Difference

Backed by more than two decades of research and inquiry, the Global Institute for Student Aspirations has identified eight conditions that need to be built into the educational environment in order for all members of the school community—students, teachers, staff, and administrators—to reach their fullest potential.

Below is a description of each condition, accompanied by sample questions that principals can use to generate a deeper understanding of their relationship to teachers and staff.

1. *Belonging* means being a valued member of a school community, while maintaining one’s individuality. Belonging is a relationship, characterized by a sense of connection and support, that increases intrinsic motivation by fostering self-confidence and community investment.

Questions to consider:

How do I show my teachers and staff that they are respected and valued as individuals?

How do I ensure that my staff feels connected to the school as a whole?

In what ways do I create time to hear the concerns and feelings of my staff?

How do I encourage my teachers and staff to be accepting of one another?

2. *Heroes* are the everyday people—colleagues, friends, family—in people’s lives who motivate them to excel and positively change attitudes and lifestyles. Principals can be heroes to their staff and faculty, someone to learn from and communicate with about their work.

Questions to consider:

How am I a positive role model for my teachers and staff?

How do I show my staff that I am there when they need me?

What steps do I take to ensure my staff’s success?

How do I encourage my teachers and staff to be positive role models for students?

3. *Sense of Accomplishment* is the recognition of effort, perseverance, and citizenship as signs of a person’s success. It is viewed in terms of personal growth and effort, not just as measurable outcomes. By taking time to recognize, support, and celebrate these accomplishments of faculty and staff, principals can create a community of individuals who are motivated to persevere through difficult tasks.

Questions to consider:

How do I celebrate various types of faculty and staff accomplishments?

What specific steps do I take to assist school members in goal-setting and attainment? How much time do I spend with my staff, helping them to do their best?

In what ways do I make my faculty and staff aware of my own goals and accomplishments?

4. *Fun and Excitement* are characterized by faculty and staff being actively engaged and emotionally involved in their work. People who find their work fun and exciting are usually self-confident, curious, and prepared to meet the challenges of the day.

Questions to consider:

How do I know what my faculty and staff find fun and exciting?

What strategies do I use to engage and involve my staff in our collaborative work?

How do I vary my leadership strategies?

In what ways do I exhibit a passion for my work and my school?

5. *Curiosity and Creativity* are characterized by inquisitiveness, eagerness, and a strong desire to discover new or

interesting things. Curiosity triggers individuals to ask “Why?” while creativity gives them the initiative to ask “Why not?” Being curious and creative allows faculty and staff to become active learners who welcome the challenge to look beyond the status quo. Because curiosity and creativity tend to diminish over time, principals must pay attention to creating a school environment that promotes questioning and exploration.

Questions to consider:

How do I encourage faculty and staff to look beyond the easy answers and solve complex problems?

How do I provide time for faculty and staff to explore individual areas of interest?

How do I help my faculty and staff connect their work to everyday life?

In what ways do I create a school culture that asks questions and explores new ideas?

6. Spirit of Adventure is characterized by the ability to take on positive, healthy challenges at work. People experience the spirit of adventure when they tackle something new without fear of failure. Principals encourage and support their staff’s spirit of adventure by creating an atmosphere that allows for healthy decision-making and healthy risk-taking. By challenging them to explore new things, principals can build their confidence and resiliency.

Questions to consider:

In what ways do I support my staff’s successes and failures?

How do I make new challenges exciting to pursue?

How do I encourage my faculty and staff to explore new opportunities?

How do I model my willingness to pursue new areas of interest?

7. Leadership and Responsibility describe the ability of faculty and staff to express their ideas and their willingness to accept consequences for their actions. By fostering these leadership

FOR MORE INFORMATION

To learn more about ways that principals can integrate the eight conditions into their leadership, read *Changing Lives Through the Principalship* (Quaglia & Quay 2003). Available from the NAESP National Principals Resource Center, 800-386-2377.

characteristics, principals empower members of the school community to make appropriate decisions and to take pride in their actions. Principals who promote leadership and responsibility teach their faculty and staff to be good decision-makers, provide legitimate decision-making opportunities, and expect accountability.

Questions to consider:

In what ways do I provide leadership opportunities for faculty and staff?

How do I recognize and celebrate faculty and staff who take on leadership roles?

How do I provide opportunities for my faculty and staff to make meaningful decisions?

When do I initiate conversations about my own decisions and actions?

8. Confidence to Take Action is the extent to which faculty and staff believe in themselves and are encouraged to set goals for the future while working to meet them in the present. This level of aspiration can be achieved only when all other conditions are established and supported. This condition is characterized by a positive and healthy outlook on life and by looking inward rather than outward for approval. Principals can help build staff confidence to take action by providing support, celebrating diversity, and encouraging independent thinking.

Questions to consider:

How do I encourage my faculty and staff to put forth the effort necessary to achieve their goals?

How do I create a school environment where faculty and staff believe that they can achieve their goals?

What methods do I use to recognize when faculty and staff meet their goals?

How frequently do I ask my staff about the progress they are making toward their goals?

As principals are inundated with new initiatives and political agendas designed to allegedly improve schools, they cannot lose sight of what really matters in educational reform: their students and staffs. In the rush to implement new state and federal guidelines and mandates, don’t lose sight of the people who are most critical to the success of the educational process. Now is the time for principals to do what they can to enable their faculties and staffs to reach their fullest potential. These eight conditions are a good beginning. ■

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WEB RESOURCES

The Global Institute for Student Aspirations provides additional information on the material covered in this article.

www.globalaspirations.org

“Keeping Your Staff Motivated” by Betty Hollas, published in *Principal*, November 2001, offers six practical tips.

www.naesp.org/ContentLoad.do?contentId=709/

accel/TEAM describes Douglas McGregor’s motivational behavior models, Theory X and Theory Y. www.accel-team.com/human_relations/hrels_03_mcgregor.html