

When students and teachers have high aspirations, they have the *ability to dream and set goals for the future while being inspired in the present to reach those dreams*. Whether the goal is to learn trigonometry or a trade, get good grades or go to college, develop a new curriculum, expand one's pedagogical repertoire, or achieve an outstanding evaluation, students and teachers want to be successful. Too often, however, students and teachers do not reach their goals and potential because the conditions that inspire and support them are not in place.

The Quaglia Institute for School Voice and Aspirations (QISVA) promotes 8 Conditions that educators can use to live out the 3 Guiding Principles—Self-Worth, Engagement, and Purpose—in their classrooms and schools. Based on more than four decades of research by the Quaglia Institute, these Conditions prepare students and teachers to strive for and fulfill their academic, personal, professional, and social promise.

The 8 Conditions are:

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLE 1: SELF-WORTH**

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Self-Worth flourishes when students and staff know they are valued members of the school community, have people in their lives they can trust and learn from, believe they can achieve success, and know their efforts and hard work are recognized and celebrated in a variety of ways—academically, personally, and socially.

When students believe they have a voice they are **25%** more likely to report having **Self-Worth**.

### **Helping Students and Teachers Develop Self-Worth**

Both students and teachers must experience a sense of Belonging. They should feel that they are part of the school community while being recognized, appreciated, and celebrated for their uniqueness. Students and teachers experience Self-Worth when someone believes in them and tells them so. They must have Heroes—people they can look up to, respect, and learn from. Finally, to develop Self-Worth, teachers and students must experience a Sense of Accomplishment. They must be recognized as much for effort, perseverance, citizenship, and positive collegiality as students are for high grades and good test scores, and as teachers are for engendering high student achievement results.

With Self-Worth, students and teachers are more likely to persevere through difficult tasks and take the steps needed to reach their goals.

## **BELONGING**



The Condition of Belonging means being a valued member of a community while still maintaining your uniqueness. It is manifested in relationships between two or more persons and is characterized by a sense of connection and support. A sense of Belonging is an important Condition for an overall sense of well-being, social engagement, competence, and a strong collegial working environment. The Condition of Belonging can enhance intrinsic motivation, for it fosters self-confidence and an investment in the community.

## HEROES



Heroes are the everyday people—teachers, colleagues, students, friends, family—in our lives who inspire us to excel and to make positive changes in attitude and lifestyles. Heroes are the individuals students and teachers connect with, who have a positive influence on them, and who listen to and value their ideas. Heroes build trust in others and belief in oneself. Educators are, by definition, Heroes to their students who look up to them as people to learn from and communicate with about many things. Students are often Heroes to teachers, and everyone can be a Hero to their peers. Building positive relationships through support, guidance, and encouragement enables students and teachers to become more confident in their academic, personal, social, and collegial growth.

## SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT



The Condition of Sense of Accomplishment recognizes effort, perseverance, collegiality, and citizenship as signs of success. Schools have traditionally used a narrow view of accomplishment as it refers to academic achievement, innate ability, who is “best in the class”, a snapshot performance evaluation, or a checklist for participation in professional development. Sense of Accomplishment, however, is viewed in terms of personal and professional growth and effort, and is not strictly assessed through measurable outcomes and countable successes. Schools can celebrate a wide variety of accomplishments in visible ways. Taking time to recognize and support students’ and teachers’ efforts can help motivate them to persevere through difficult tasks, creating an appreciation for hard work and dedication.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLE 2: ENGAGEMENT

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Engagement takes root when schools ensure that students and staff are deeply involved in the learning process, showing enthusiasm and a desire to learn new things, as well as a willingness to take positive, healthy steps toward the future.

When students believe they have a voice they are **41%** more likely to report **Engagement**.

### Fostering Students’ and Teachers’ Engagement in Learning

The participation gap will decrease when students and teachers experience Fun & Excitement in the learning environment. Imagine a lesson or professional development session when students and teachers wonder at the end, “Where did that time go?” Students and teachers who are actively engaged in their school and learning also exhibit Curiosity & Creativity. They ask “Why?” or “Why not?” about the world around them, about curriculum, policies, procedures, norms, and customs. Finally, engaged students and teachers have a Spirit of Adventure. They are willing to try new things, regardless of whether they might succeed or fail. With Engagement, learning—and therefore participation in learning—becomes important in and of itself.

## FUN & EXCITEMENT



The Condition of Fun & Excitement is characterized by being intellectually engaged and emotionally involved in our schoolwork and professional lives. Students and teachers who exhibit Fun & Excitement are usually self-confident, curious, energetic, and prepared; they are willing and able to meet the challenges of the day. To foster Fun & Excitement in schools, students and teachers need to be offered new opportunities and meaningful challenges that are connected with their individual interests and the needs of the school.

## CURIOSITY & CREATIVITY



The Condition of Curiosity & Creativity is characterized by inquisitiveness, eagerness, intellectual engagement in learning, and a strong desire to learn new or interesting things. Curiosity invites the question “Why?” while creativity involves taking the initiative to ask “Why not?” The intensity of Curiosity & Creativity tends to diminish over time due to the habituating effects of the environment. To sustain student and teacher engagement, schools can devote extra attention to creating environments that promote questioning, problem solving, innovation, and creative exploration.

## SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE



The Condition of Spirit of Adventure is characterized by our ability to take on positive, healthy challenges at school and home, with family and friends. Students and teachers experience a Spirit of Adventure when they tackle something new without the fear of failure or success. When schools promote effective decision making and healthy risk taking, students and teachers can become more confident and resilient. Students and teachers with Spirit of Adventure see life as full of opportunities worth exploring for their own sake.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLE 3: PURPOSE

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Purpose in school is fostered when students and staff take responsibility for who and what they want to become, both in terms of professional careers and by being confident, responsible members of their community.

When students believe they have a voice they are **37%** more likely to report having **Purpose**.

### Encouraging a Sense of Purpose

Far too many students do not see a connection between their school experience and who they are or who they want to become. Too many teachers have lost a connection between the daily school experience and who they are as educators. Schools must think seriously about the traits that characterize a successful school and how achievement is recognized and rewarded. Schools must balance the call for improved academic performance with myriad other factors that impact preparing students for success beyond graduation. Schools must also challenge students to think about the characteristics that accompany successful and rewarding work. A sense of Purpose involves developing students' and teachers' sense of Leadership & Responsibility. Students and teachers must participate in meaningful decision making and be provided with authentic opportunities to share in the responsibility for the school community. When students and teachers find purpose in their lives, they will have the Confidence to Take Action to secure a meaningful, productive, and rewarding future.

## LEADERSHIP & RESPONSIBILITY



The Condition of Leadership & Responsibility means being able to express ideas and a willingness to accept the consequences of our actions. It cultivates accountability for the classroom environment and school community. Fostering leadership empowers students and teachers to make just and appropriate decisions and to take pride in their actions. Schools that promote this Condition expect their students and teachers to have a voice and be good decision makers. They provide legitimate decision-making opportunities, seek student and teacher input, and expect participants to be accountable for their actions.

## CONFIDENCE TO TAKE ACTION



Confidence to Take Action is characterized by a positive and healthy outlook on life that comes from looking inward rather than outward for approval. It is the extent to which students and teachers believe in themselves and their ability to make a difference in their schools. This Condition is at the heart of what schools ultimately strive for: instilling in students and teachers both confidence and an expectation that they will be successful. Schools can help build Confidence to Take Action by having high expectations, providing support, and encouraging independent thinking. By enhancing the quality of academic, professional and personal growth, schools empower participants to become active and involved members of the learning community.

### Concluding Thoughts

In an era of educational policy that changes almost daily, schools must be grounded in a set of principles that are solidly based on research and that provide a practical, common sense approach to professional growth and learning. The 8 Conditions provide schools with this framework. This is not a new fad in education; in fact, these Conditions are the same ones that inspired us when we first became educators, and they will be the same conditions that inspire generations of educators to come. The Condition of Belonging will never be replaced with a Condition of Alienation; the Condition of Fun & Excitement will never be replaced with a program of Intentional Boredom, and the Condition of Leadership & Responsibility will never be replaced with efforts to nurture Apathy.

We must take education back to the basics—the basics that ensure students' and teachers' feelings of self-worth, engagement in the life of the school, and sense of purpose in the world around them. The 8 Conditions can be used by all schools to improve relationships with students and teachers, make teaching and learning more relevant and engaging, and create a renewed sense of purpose in classrooms and schools. If nothing else, the 8 Conditions are a clear reminder of why we entered the field of education in the first place—to make a difference in this world.