

Making an Impact on Student Aspirations: A Positive Approach to School Violence

By Russell J. Quaglia

The buses are rolling, school bells are ringing, and the future of America marches forward to begin another day of learning. Just another school day, right? Well, not exactly. The innocence of going to school has been replaced with caution, uneasiness, insecurity and, in some cases, fear. The thought of another act of school violence has placed us all under red alert.

Whether we realize it or not our concern for potential violence has us making schools more impersonal than ever. The National Center for Student Aspirations (NCSA) is taking a different approach. We are trying to personalize the otherwise impersonal world we call school. We do this in the name of aspirations and have identified eight conditions that affect the development of student aspirations.

NCSA has surveyed more than 50,000 students nationwide and more than 90 percent said they believe teachers are concerned about their academic growth, but only 40 percent believe their teachers care about their personal and social problems or their feelings. Students' perception that teachers care only about academic development reflects the frenzy of educational reform, driven by tougher standards, assessment measures, and now by a mania for safety regulations and devices.

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