

As administrators and policy makers strive for all educators to reach their professional promise, they must ask: How can teachers meet high professional standards if they doubt their value to the school community? How can they meet and exceed expectations if they are not professionally engaged? How can they set and reach professional goals if they do not see a purpose in doing so? If teachers are to enjoy professional, personal, and collegial success, they must believe in themselves, be actively engaged in the school, and see the connection between their efforts and the goals they set for themselves. When these experiences are present, teachers' aspirations flourish and performance improves.

The Quaglia Institute is committed to helping schools foster teachers' aspirations so that all educators can reach their fullest potential. When teachers have genuine aspirations, they have the *ability to dream and set goals for the future while being inspired in the present to reach those dreams*. The Quaglia Institute believes that for teachers to achieve high aspirations, 3 Guiding Principles must be present: Self-Worth, Engagement, and Purpose.

The Guiding Principles provide educators with a practical model that can be used to guide professional experiences, from individual classroom teachers to the entire school staff as a whole. If professional development, goal setting, and evaluation support each of the Guiding Principles, teachers will be more likely to achieve professional and personal success. The 3 Guiding Principles are:

1. SELF-WORTH

Self-Worth occurs when teachers know they are valued members of the school community, have a colleague in their lives they can trust and learn from, and believe their effort and hard work are recognized and celebrated in a variety of ways.

2. ENGAGEMENT

Engagement happens when teachers are deeply involved in their professional experiences, as characterized by enthusiasm and desire for learning new things, and a willingness to take positive, healthy steps toward the future.

3. PURPOSE

Purpose exists when teachers take responsibility for who and what they want to become, not only in terms of their professional careers, but also by being confident, responsible members of their community.

Individuals can support the 3 Guiding Principles for teachers by:

Helping Teachers Develop Self-Worth

For teachers to experience their value in the school community, they must experience a sense of *Belonging*. They must feel that they are part of the school community while being recognized, appreciated, and celebrated for their uniqueness. Teachers also experience Self-Worth when their colleagues and administrators believe in them and tell them so. They must have *Heroes*—people they can look up to, respect, and learn from. Finally, to develop Self-Worth, teachers must experience a *Sense of Accomplishment*. They must be recognized as much for effort, perseverance, and positive collegiality as they are for engendering high student achievement results.

Fostering Teachers' Engagement in Learning

Engagement increases when teachers experience *Fun & Excitement* in their professional environment. Engagement means that teachers become so involved in the school day they lose track of time and space. Imagine at the end of a professional development session, a teacher wondering, “Where did that time go?” Teachers who are actively engaged in their school also exhibit *Curiosity & Creativity*. They ask “Why?” or “Why not?” about curriculum, policies, procedures, norms, and customs. They do not accept the long-standing status quo as the only correct approach. Finally, engaged teachers have a *Spirit of Adventure*. They are willing to try new things, knowing they will continue to learn and move forward regardless of failure or success.

Encouraging a Sense of Purpose in Teachers

Far too many teachers have lost a connection between the daily school experience and who they are as educators. Various high stakes policies have many educators questioning their purpose and role. Schools must think seriously about the characteristics that accompany being a successful school and how achievement is recognized and rewarded. Schools must balance the call for improved academic performance with the myriad of other factors to be considered in preparing students for success beyond graduation. A sense of Purpose involves developing teachers' sense of *Leadership & Responsibility*. Teachers must participate in meaningful decision-making and be provided with authentic opportunities to share in responsibility for the school community. When teachers find purpose in their professional lives, they will have the *Confidence to Take Action* in order to secure a meaningful, productive, and rewarding future for themselves and their students.

Concluding Thoughts

When schools ensure the Guiding Principles of *Self-Worth*, *Engagement*, and *Purpose* are in place, teachers are more likely to achieve high aspirations. Teachers with high aspirations show marked improvements in professional performance, collegiality, and in making positive contributions to their school community. When all teachers believe in themselves, are engaged in the school, and experience meaning and purpose in their work—the larger goal of helping teachers and students reach their fullest capacity can finally be met.