

It is generally accepted that the Self-Worth of teachers is dependent on their knowledge of content, or the academic success of their students. Both are true, yet incomplete, as we have come to learn that Self-Worth for teachers is far more complex. The importance of teachers' Self-Worth has never been fully realized. In this section, we will delve deeper into understanding teacher Self-Worth and its impact on the teaching and learning environment. It has been repeatedly established that high levels of teacher self-efficacy correlate positively with high levels of student achievement (Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006). We also know that teachers with high Self-Worth have a greater tendency to promote positive relationships among peers. This is important because the nature of relationships among the adults within a school has a greater influence on the character and quality of that school and on student accomplishment than anything else (Barth, 2006).

There are three Conditions that foster the development of Self-Worth among students: Belonging, Heroes, and Sense of Accomplishment. It is believed the same Conditions foster Self-Worth for teachers.



## **BELONGING**

For teachers to have any kind of Self-Worth, they must first feel a sense of Belonging, knowing they are part of the school community while maintaining and being celebrated for their individuality. Three-fourths (75%) of teachers surveyed believe they are a valued member of their school community, and 76% report feeling valued for their unique skills and talents (QISVA, 2019). While this reflects a good start, this means slightly more than one-fourth of teachers do NOT feel valued. That is simply too many. (Even one undervalued teacher is too many!) There are many undiscovered talents residing within the staff of every school. When administrators and colleagues truly get to know one another and put forth effort in supporting each other and working together, sense of Belonging grows. Individuals then become more likely to share their talents and put forth maximum effort in the school community.



## **HEROES**

Self-Worth is also nurtured when teachers have people they can learn from and respect. We all need Heroes. For teachers, it is important to have trusted colleagues they can share their successes and challenges with. 91% of teachers report they have a colleague who is a positive role model, and 94% say they have a colleague they can talk to if they have a problem (QISVA,

## HEROES cont'd

2019). These numbers are positive, however they reflect that about one out of every 10 teachers still needs to connect with a trusted colleague. In fostering the Heroes Condition, respect is a key element that must be considered. Only 72% of teachers say that staff respect each other (QISVA, 2019). It is difficult for staff who do not respect one another to connect, collaborate, and move forward with achieving their personal aspirations and their goals for the school. Additionally, if we expect students to respect one another, then that behavior must be modeled by staff. Heroes are important to achieving personal and professional aspirations. They can be found within the school community, as well as externally, but it must be someone who is directly accessible for support and inspiration.



## SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT

Finally, to fully develop Self-Worth, teachers must experience a Sense of Accomplishment. We all desire to be recognized for our hard work and achievements. Yet, only 62% of teachers surveyed said their school celebrates the accomplishments of the staff, and 58% reported they are individually recognized when they try their best. Sadly, 18% report having *never* been recognized for something positive at school (QISVA, 2019). It is difficult to imagine a classroom where students are not praised for their accomplishments, and it should be equally difficult to imagine a school where teachers do not feel valued and celebrated. Teachers should not be afraid to share their successes, but rather honored and celebrated for their efforts on a regular basis. When Self-Worth authentically develops, teachers are able to contribute and grow more confidently within the school community.

Teachers must first believe in themselves as individuals and professionals before they can be expected to believe in their students and have the confidence to partner with them in the learning experience. In order to do this, they must feel like they Belong, have Heroes they can connect with and learn from, and experience a Sense of Accomplishment on a regular basis.

### References:

- Barth, R. (2006). Improving relationships within the schoolhouse. *Education Leadership*, 63(6), 8–13.
- Leithwood, K., Day, C. Sammons, P., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2006). *Seven strong claims about successful school leadership*. Nottingham, England: National College for School Leadership.
- Quaglia Institute for School Voice & Aspirations. (2019). *Teacher Voice Report*. Retrieved from [https://quagliainstitute.org/uploads/legacy/Teacher\\_Voice\\_Report.pdf](https://quagliainstitute.org/uploads/legacy/Teacher_Voice_Report.pdf)