
Current Conditions

Your Aspiration Communication

“It is not sufficient, and it may actually undermine our democracy, to concentrate on producing people who do well on standardized tests and who define success as getting a well-paid job.”
– Nel Noddings

4.0. 9 of 238. 680. 87th percentile. What is learning and how do we measure it? Being accountable for results is crucial to the success of schools. Yet those working in schools know that meaningful accountability cannot be reduced to indicators of merely academic “end product.” Such measures represent only one narrow dimension of accountability. Let’s hold ourselves and our students answerable for *all* the factors we know contribute to an educated citizen—among them: effort, perseverance, and making a positive contribution to one’s community. Instilling a SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT compels us to take a broader and deeper view of our responsibility to measure success.



CONDITION OF THE MONTH: SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT

Sense of Accomplishment is viewed in terms of personal growth and effort, not just measurable outcomes and countable successes.

5 Strategies for Promoting Sense of Accomplishment

- ✓ Consider students’ efforts when assessing their work.
- ✓ Teach the importance of learning from mistakes to your students.
- ✓ Create assignments where the process is valued over the product.
- ✓ Begin a regular habit of sharing stories of perseverance in your class.
- ✓ Reflect with your colleagues about accomplishments and struggles.

160,000 Voices

For Consideration and Conversation

In the My Voice[®] survey given during the most recent school year, 83% of high school students surveyed agreed with the statement: “Getting good grades is important to me.” Yet 65% stated that they put forth their best effort at school.

- ◆ How do you hold you and your students accountable?
- ◆ What will you do to widen what “counts” in your classroom?

E-mail your Sense of Accomplishment stories, thoughts, or ideas to gisa@gisa.org

Aspirations in Action

The White Mountains Regional High School Dream Team

[WMRHS](#) in Whitefield, New Hampshire became a QISA Demonstration Site during the 2005-2006 school year. In addition to the staff Aspiration Team, “the Regional” has had a team comprised of students from every grade level for the past three years. After a school-wide assembly that reviewed the results of the school’s My Voice[®] Survey, students were asked if they wanted to become involved in making a positive change in their school. It was made clear that being on the team was not about discussing what staff or administration could do to improve the 8 Conditions for students, but rather about what students could do to improve the 8 Conditions for students. The team meets monthly during a last period with their QISA Field Specialist and gets together on their own between the monthly meetings to keep projects moving.

Like almost all student groups invited to change something in their school, the White Mountains Dream Team focused on the school cafeteria. Besides the usual complaints about the quality of the food, students were concerned about portion size, protein content, and a lack of options—both healthy and unhealthy. One student remarked, “How can we learn to make healthy food choices if they keep taking choices away from us?” Recognizing that they needed to work within state guidelines for nutrition, the students, with the help of cafeteria personnel and a science teacher, weighed and analyzed one week’s worth of school lunches—examining them for protein, carbohydrate, and fat content. They compared their results to national recommendations for teenagers, presented their findings to the school board, and today enjoy nutritious *and filling* school lunches. A recent addition to the cafeteria is a vending machine with dairy choices, something the team also lobbied for.

Another project involves improving school spirit—efforts include more and better school dances, improving communication about sporting events to increase attendance, and school spirit days. A third project has been to increase respect of diversity. The team is trying to bring back Diversity Day—a day long series of talks and workshops that help students examine issues of respect and tolerance. In the meantime they have researched various respect quotes that have been part of daily announcements. Most recently the team has taken up the concern over STAPH infection in schools and is planning a school assembly for students run by students with the help of the school nurse.

Principal Ryan Early has been the Dream Team’s most ardent cheerleader. He sees the student team as a centerpiece in everyone’s efforts to improve student aspirations at the Regional by improving the 8 Conditions that Make a Difference. In an email, one student on the team wrote, “Mr. Early, thank you for always supporting us, the kids, in all we do. I know that I feel like I’m always asking you for stuff, but you always bend over backwards to see that it gets done. Thank you sir, very much. From all of us.” Thanks to everyone’s efforts, including their own, this is one group of students feeling a strong Sense of Accomplishment.

