
Current Conditions

Your Aspiration Communication

"Let it be told to the future world...that in the depth of winter, when nothing but hope and virtue could survive...that the city and the country, alarmed at one common danger, came forth to meet [it]."

~George Washington

Last month we witnessed the 44th peaceful transition of power in our government. This particular historic inauguration is the legacy of men and women who, with hope and virtue, took risks to improve their present and their futures. Our forebearers, of long and recent memory, overcame fear, failure, and difficulty to further a common good. Our students are heirs of this willingness to move beyond comfort, to be tested by challenges, and to create their futures. As educators, we have the responsibility and privilege of discovering our students' hopes and dreams in order to provide the challenges and articulate the lessons of failure that will help them achieve their aspirations.

CONDITION OF THE MONTH: SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE

Spirit of Adventure means tackling something new without the fear of failure or success. Building students' self-confidence and empowering them to face the challenges they encounter every day is part of developing self-directed learners.

5 Strategies for Promoting Spirit of Adventure

- ✓ With your students, co-create a classroom atmosphere supportive of risk taking.
- ✓ Provide all students with a variety of challenges.
- ✓ Model risk taking by assessing students in an unconventional manner.
- ✓ Help students set goals just beyond their reach and record plans for achieving those goals.
- ✓ Share with students your professional failures and what you have learned from them.



2008 My Voice™ Surveys

For Consideration and Conversation

The My Voice™ Student National Report shows that three out of four (76%) students agreed with the statement "I push myself to do better academically." One out of every four (24%) students agreed with the statement "I am afraid to try something if I think I may fail."

- ◆ How do you create an environment where students feel safe taking healthy risks?
- ◆ How do you foster the Spirit of Adventure among your students?

To view the full My Voice™ Student National Report go to www.qisa.org/reports.php

To order My Voice surveys go to www.myvoicesurveys.com

Aspirations in Action

Aspiration Leadership Teams

For many schools, listening to and acting upon student voice is a challenge as well as a risk. Likewise, the process of genuinely involving staff in decisions related to teaching and learning, and also empowering staff to truly become leaders, is risky. To create not only teacher leaders, but a building full of leaders, requires administrators to build trust, encourage open communication, and have professional dialogue with all colleagues. Changing one's leadership paradigm is difficult. However, the benefits of distributing leadership throughout a building are worthwhile and meaningful.

One of the initial steps Aspiration Demonstration Sites take is the development of an Aspiration Team. Teachers, educational technicians and support staff join these teams as voluntary partners in order to understand and improve student aspirations throughout the building. Once established, these teams represent the voice of the staff and seek ongoing input and guidance from students.

Aspiration Teams across the country have accomplished many meaningful and lasting goals. Examples include:

- ✠ One elementary school's Aspiration Team led an initiative to improve teaching and learning building-wide, with a focus on Active Engagement. The team worked with the entire staff to explore and implement best practices. These practices included better use of technology in the classroom, improving integration of the curriculum, and increasing student movement in the classroom. The elementary team also developed a school-wide student leadership program where all students had an opportunity to practice leadership skills. Some of their opportunities included participating in a recycling group or a peer mediation group.
- ✠ A middle school team used their My Voice™ Survey results to guide their efforts to improve the condition of Heroes. The entire staff identified which students they knew well and those students whom no one really knew beyond their names. This project developed into a mentoring program where staff "adopted" students and ensured that all students in their school had a caring adult looking out for their best interests.
- ✠ One high school Aspiration Team developed a more meaningful advisor/advisee program based on the 8 Conditions. Students and staff worked together to develop a program that builds Self-Worth, Active Engagement, and Purpose. To enhance Self-Worth, the advisor groups developed mix-up days where students interacted with peers outside their usual group of friends. Advisor groups also discussed the presidential election and arranged a mock election as a way to foster Active Engagement. In addition, all groups worked on year-long goals related to their hopes and dreams in order to help students achieve a sense of Purpose.

Challenge yourself to work with all colleagues to develop leaders throughout your school.

E-mail your Spirit of Adventure stories, thoughts, or ideas to qisa@qisa.org