
CURRENT CONDITIONS

YOUR ASPIRATION COMMUNICATION

My creed is that public service must be more than doing a job efficiently and honestly. It must be a complete dedication to the people and to the nation with full recognition that every human being is entitled to courtesy and consideration. --Margaret Chase Smith, former Senator from Maine

As we approach the November elections, we are asked to consider the experience and character of the men and women who seek to serve our country as leaders. No matter where we stand politically, these people exhibit care for our country's citizens and the laws that govern them. Those who choose to run for public office commit time and energy in an effort to represent those who elect them. As they aspire to be heroes, we can expect them to listen to and value all perspectives in an effort to make a positive difference in the world. At this important time in our country's history, we can focus on the positive traits of the candidates and the heroism of public service.



CONDITION OF THE MONTH: HEROES

Heroes are individuals who a person can connect with, who have a positive influence, and who listen to and value others' ideas.

5 Strategies for Promoting Heroes

- ✓ Plan time to actively listen to your students.
- ✓ Find ways for students to share different opinions.
- ✓ Teach students about public servants who have been heroes.
- ✓ Debate the issues at stake in the upcoming election that are relevant to your students.
- ✓ Invite local candidates for office to come talk with your class.

2007-2008 My Voice© Surveys

For Consideration and Conversation

In the My Voice© survey of 400,000 students, half (49%) agreed with the statement: "If I have a problem, I have a teacher with whom I can talk." 48% agree that "Teachers care about me as an individual."

- ◆ How do you make yourself available to listen to students?
- ◆ How do you exhibit care to your most challenging students?

E-mail your Heroes stories, thoughts, or ideas to qisa@qisa.org

ASPIRATIONS IN ACTION

ALBION CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT—ALBION, NY

The Albion Central School District is in Year One of their Demonstration Site partnership with the Quaglia Institute for Student Aspirations. Staff there have already taken to heart the importance of listening to student voice. After reviewing and reflecting on their *My Voice*® Survey¹ results in summer professional development sessions, the Aspirations Teams in both the middle school and high school consulted their colleagues about questions they wanted to ask students in focus groups to further understand their data. From among these questions, six were chosen that best represent pressing student issues and concerns. Questions included:

- If you were a teacher in this school, what would you do to connect with students?
- Give us an example of when adults showed they cared about you.
- Share a time when you felt welcome or comfortable at school.

On a Friday in mid-September, Aspirations Team members in both schools paired up to ask over 100 students about their experience in school. Teachers and students all reported on the



positive feelings generated by the focus groups themselves. Students were grateful for the opportunity to express their ideas and opinions, and teachers were appreciative of the students' willingness to be open, as well as for the depth of understanding the students' perspectives provided. When asked for an example of a time when a teacher showed that they cared, one student responded, "You." The teacher, having only just met the student, was confused by this

response and asked what she meant. The student said, "You are taking the time to listen to me and ask me what I think; that shows me you care." Needless to say, the power of listening to student voice is not only in the ideas that surface to improve the school, but also in the act of listening itself.

In another set of responses related to a question about how teachers make school a welcoming place, 11th grade boys shared that when teachers are interactive, when they greet students as they enter the classroom, when they talk about personal things, and when they just chat, they feel welcome. One student in another focus group answered, "When I was a freshman and the teachers helped me when I was lost, that made me feel welcome."

Being a hero to students is no more difficult than listening. The challenge is to consistently make the time to hear students' voices. When we make that time, as they did in Albion, we show we care and make a difference in the lives of our students.

¹ For more information about the *My Voice*® Survey click [My Voice](#)®