

ASPIRATIONS AND ACADEMIC PROFICIENCY

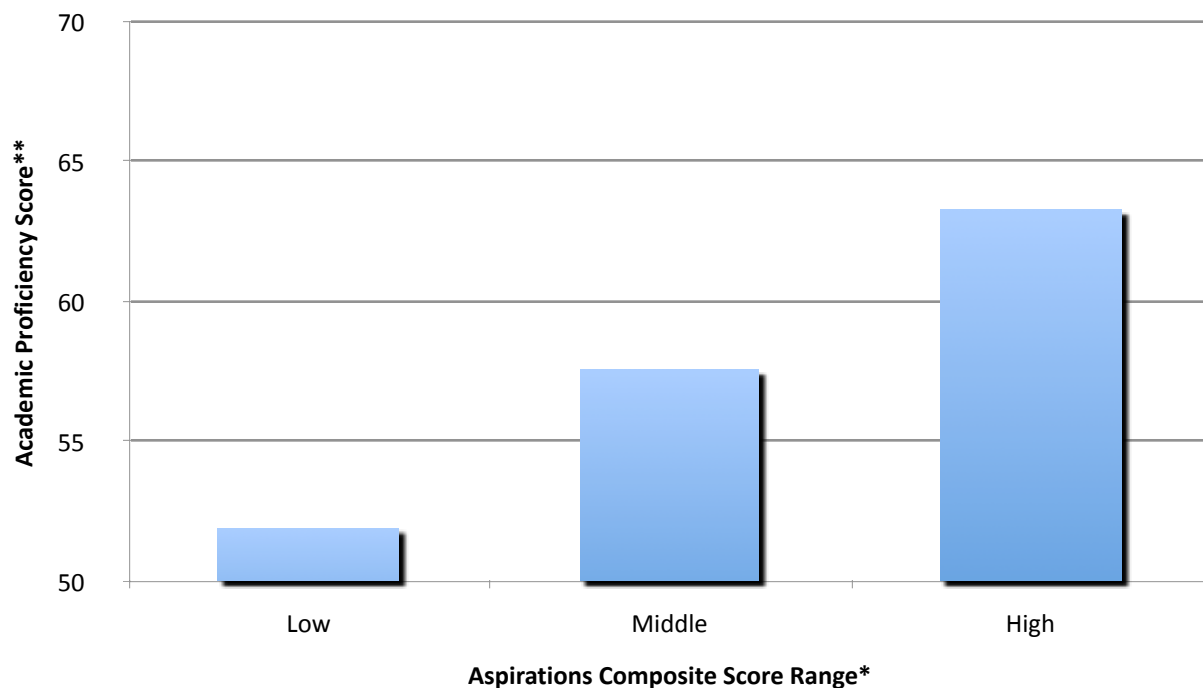
One fact of the current reality of schooling is that academic outcomes – typically, standardized test scores – are the bottom line. The data is easy to collect, easy to understand, and fairly easy to analyze and use to measure progress. Maintaining academic proficiency as the bottom line is not the problem for schools, any more than it would be a problem for a company’s profits to be the bottom line for its shareholders. Rather, problems occur in schools when everything that goes into producing the bottom line is ignored. A businessperson will be the first to tell you that monetary profits are influenced by many things which have nothing to do with money.

Teachers, principals, and superintendents who are under pressure to improve test scores frequently ask the Quaglia Institute to demonstrate the effectiveness of Aspirations work. The academic impact can best be observed in the many school districts we have partnerships with throughout the country and in England. Each school we work with shows measurable gains in its academic program when it works to improve students’ self-worth, active engagement, and sense of purpose. Such evidence of a causal relationship remains anecdotal, though replicable. Many educators find the best evidence for the effectiveness of Aspirations work in their own classroom experiences and observations as teachers. Educators and researchers consistently find the following to be true:

- Students who believe in themselves perform better academically.
- Students who are full partners in their learning perform better academically.
- Students who have meaningful direction in their lives perform better academically.

The far broader challenge in promoting Aspirations work is that, despite the experience of educators and the supporting research on aspirations, there is no statistically scientific way to prove a *causal* relationship between Aspirations work and academic achievement. There is, however, a way to prove a *correlation*. In fact, a recent analysis of 260 schools in thirteen states, which includes data from schools in a variety of socioeconomic circumstances, clearly shows that such a correlation exists.

Aspirations and Academic Proficiency Correlation



This chart shows the results for all middle schools and high schools that took the My Voice™ Survey during the 2007-2008 academic year and for which standardized test score data were also available (N=260). The bars depict schools in three ranges of Aspirations climate – low, medium, and high. The height of each bar indicates the average academic proficiency of schools in that Aspirations range. These results show a strong correlation between high Aspirations scores and academic proficiency.

When this statistical correlation is combined with the anecdotal evidence of our partner schools, the experience of educators, and supporting research, the impact of student aspirations on the academic bottom line becomes obvious. Students who believe in themselves, are actively engaged, and have a sense of purpose perform better in school.

For more information on how Aspirations work impacts schools, visit www.qisa.org.

* The **Aspirations Composite Score** (ACS) for a particular school is an average of the sum of each student's responses to the 8 Conditions statements on the My Voice Survey. The minimum ACS is 57; the maximum is 285. The three ranges represent low, middle, and high scores on the My Voice Survey.

** The **Academic Proficiency Score** (APS) for a particular school is an average of the percentages of students who scored at the proficiency level and above on that state's standardized tests.