

MY VOICE NATIONAL STUDENT REPORT (GRADES 6-12) 2011



Acknowledgements



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Executive Summary

Students have something to teach us. That is the underlying philosophy of the Quaglia Institute for Student Aspirations. The 2011 MyVoice™ National Student Report provides students an opportunity for their voices to be heard and demonstrates the vital importance of listening to them.

Students who have aspirations have *the ability to dream and set goals for the future while being inspired in the present to reach those dreams*. The presence of high aspirations is fostered by the Quaglia Institute for Student Aspirations' 8 Conditions that Make a Difference®: *Belonging, Heroes, Sense of Accomplishment, Fun & Excitement, Curiosity & Creativity, Spirit of Adventure, Leadership & Responsibility, and Confidence to Take Action*. These Conditions comprise an overarching framework of three Guiding Principles—Self-Worth (*Belonging, Heroes, and Sense of Accomplishment*), Engagement (*Fun & Excitement, Curiosity & Creativity, and Spirit of Adventure*), and Purpose (*Leadership & Responsibility and Confidence to Take Action*)—which are critical for students' success in school. The MyVoice Student Survey was developed to assess these Conditions and Guiding Principles.

The MyVoice Survey comprises 63 statements that address the 8 Conditions, as well as a set of demographic questions. For the present report, the MyVoice Survey was completed by 57,883 students in grades 6-12 during 2010-2011 academic year, representing 203 schools from across the United States. The gender and grade level breakdowns were roughly evenly distributed, and the sample was both racially and socioeconomically diverse.

The highlights of the results for each Condition, as well as trends in the Conditions across grade levels and gender differences, are as follows:

1) *Belonging is experienced in some form by the majority of students in their schools, but many ways it is lacking.*

Though a strong majority of students report feeling accepted for who they are at school, most students fail to report feeling valued as members of their school community or that teachers care about their problems and feelings. More than a third of students do not report experiencing school as a welcoming and friendly place, and nearly 1 in 5 express that they have difficulty fitting in at school. A disconnect appears to exist between the genuine best intentions of schools to create a school environment in which students feel they belong, and the reality that many students report experiencing.

2) *Heroes are present in most young people's lives, yet student-teacher relationships in general are in need of improvement.*

About three quarters of students say they have a teacher who is a positive role model, and nearly all students in our survey report that their parents care about their education—these are encouraging signs. Less encouraging, only slightly over half of students say teachers care about them and that they have a teacher they feel comfortable talking to if they have a problem; more than half fail to report that they think their teachers would care if they are absent from school. Moreover, levels of respect between students and teachers are generally perceived as relatively low.

3) In general, *Sense of Accomplishment* is reported at moderately high rates; still, some indicators of this Condition are less than ideal.

The vast majority of students value getting good grades, and at least three quarters of students report putting forth their best effort in school, being encouraged to practice good citizenship at school, and that their teachers recognize students who are kind and helpful. At the same time, about 2 in 5 students fail to report that teachers recognize them when they try their best, and only half report that their teachers communicate with their parents about what they do well. Moreover, an unacceptable proportion of students (more than 1 in 6) report giving up when schoolwork is difficult, and that one quarter of students do not report exerting their best effort in school is problematic.

4) Rates of *Fun & Excitement* experienced by students in their schools are, at best, modest.

Perhaps most telling, about half of all students believe school is boring and about an equal proportion fail to report enjoying being at school. Majorities of students additionally fail to report that they perceive teachers having fun at school or making it an exciting place to learn. These results seem to fall short of students' own expectations, given that about 7 in 10 students believe learning can be fun.

5) Most indicators of *Curiosity & Creativity* are moderately high, yet many students are uninspired by their school and most fail to see its relevance to their everyday lives.

It is encouraging that five of the seven indicators of this Condition are reported at rates of at least 70%. In contrast, well below half of students say their classes help them understand what is happening in their everyday lives, and more than a third fail to report that school inspires them to learn. While two thirds of students feel comfortable asking questions in class and that school encourages creativity, the one-third who fail to report these are a cause for some concern.

6) Results for *Spirit of Adventure* were mixed; some suggest that students are highly invested in school, while others show signs of fear of failure and inadequate support.

Strong majorities of students report pushing themselves in school and desiring to do their best. Nonetheless, more than a quarter report they fear trying something if they anticipate failure, and more than 3 in 5 fail to report that they like challenging assignments. These results may be the case at least in part because many students do not perceive adequate support in school: more than a third of students fail to report their teachers will help them learn from their mistakes, and well over half fail to report students in their school are supportive of each other.

7) Some indicators of *Leadership & Responsibility* suggest students are confident, though most students fail to report their school environments adequately foster this Condition.

On the positive side, the results show that roughly two thirds of students see themselves as leaders and good decision makers. Furthermore, moderately high agreement that teachers encourage students to make decisions suggests one aspect of the school environment is conducive to this Condition. On the less positive side, most other school environment indicators in this Condition suggest the majority of students do not feel their schools provide adequate opportunities to actualize these capacities. Just over 1 in 3

students feel that other students see them as leaders, despite most reporting that they see themselves as leaders. Only half of students believe their teachers are willing to learn from them, and less than half know their school's goals. Perhaps most troubling, only 44% feel they have a voice in decision making in their schools.

8) Of all the Conditions, *Confidence to Take Action* shows the highest agreement across the statements, suggesting students in general are confident in themselves and their futures, goal-directed, and prepared to work hard.

Clear majorities of students (more than 8 in 10) report high goal-striving and excitement about their futures. Ninety-three percent believe they can be successful. Nearly 9 in 10 believe going to college is important for their future. These results are strong indicators that most young people are indeed confident to take action toward achieving their high goals. Students are somewhat less confident in their ability to make a difference in the world and that their schools are preparing them well for their futures; at least 3 in 10 fail to agree that these are the case in their schools. And while 74% of students feel that their teachers believe in them and expect them to be successful, this means about one quarter of students do not believe their teachers have as high an expectation of their success as the students themselves do.

9) Our exploration of trends in the 8 Conditions across grade levels shows that nearly half of the statements on the *My Voice* Survey show practically significant trends across the grade levels, and all but one of these significant trends suggest *worsening* of various aspects of the Conditions from the beginning of middle school through at least the middle of high school.

Of the 63 statements on the *My Voice* Survey, 27 show practically significant trends across the 6th-12th grade levels. Of these significant trends, only one suggests improvement in a particular aspect of the school environment: perceptions that bullying is a problem in school decrease from 54% agreement in 6th grade to 36% in 12th grade. To be sure, neither figure is acceptable; we interpret this trend to suggest efforts to curtail bullying remain vital at all grade levels, though of particular importance in the middle school years.

Of the remaining 26 statements that show significant trends, all but one are in the downward direction through the middle school years; unfortunately, the one upward trend is reflective of increasing *disengagement*: in 6th grade, 34% students report school to be boring, but by 10th grade the percentage jumps to 53%. Many of the statements exhibiting downward trends are consistent with this theme of decreasing engagement in school across the middle school and into the high school years. Two other themes emerge: from early in middle school to early in high school, student-teacher relationships are increasingly perceived as less positive, and school is increasingly perceived as less relevant. Only two of the statements, both indicators of *Heroes*, reversed the downward middle school trends in high school; the rest either continued in the downward direction or leveled off at their markedly lower rates in the high school years.

10) In general, gender differences across the 8 Conditions were minimal and thus of little practical import.

Only two of the 63 *My Voice* statements show practically significant differences between males and females. Given these minimal differences, we suggest that gender should not be viewed as a particularly meaningful factor in how educators foster the 8 Conditions.

Summary

Overall, the results of the *My Voice* National Student Report (Grades 6-12) 2011 reflect much of what we have seen in the popular and scholarly discussions around the current state of the American education system. In general, students are confident in themselves, value doing well in school, and have a strong desire to set and achieve their goals. At the same time, there are some less positive themes suggested by these results which require educators' attention:

- Student-teacher relationships, which have the potential to be powerful contributors to student engagement and academic success, are not as strong as they could be; moreover, perceptions of them appear to weaken rather than strengthen through the middle school and into the high school years.
- At all levels of secondary education, students are sub-optimally engaged—and trends across the grade levels suggest this problem gets worse, not better, the longer students are in school; and
- While school in general is perceived as important, it is not perceived as particularly relevant to many students' lives, and this perceived relevance generally declines as students progress through school.

One finding in this report that has not adequately found its way into the national conversation, but we believe is essential to the broader effort to improve our nation's education system, addresses the role of student voice in schools. Less than half of students in secondary education in this country feel that they have a voice in decision making in their schools. While upon entry into middle school, a clear majority of students believe they have a voice, barely one-third say they do by 12th grade. We believe this is a particularly important finding. Of the issues highlighted in this report and acknowledged by educators everywhere—student-teacher relationships in need of strengthening, student disengagement, and inadequate perceived relevance of schooling to students' lives—fostering student voice stands to have a positive impact on each of them. When students feel they have a voice, they are more likely to feel invested and engaged in their schools; when students believe teachers are listening to their voices, mutual trust and respect is likely to flourish; when students' voices are heard and acted upon in schools, the schools stand to become more relevant to the students' lives and are more likely to be seen as serving their needs. In addition, students' perspectives, insights, creativity, energy, and confidence may help schools take on the many other challenges they are facing.

Taken together, students' general self-confidence and desire to achieve, coupled with schools' apparent struggles to engage them, support them, and show them how the classes are relevant to their lives, could be *either* a recipe for reduced performance, dropout, and ultimately a squandering of the full potential of our youth, *or* the ingredients of a meaningful partnership between educators and students as they chart a way forward together. If schools are to be places in which teaching and learning thrive, we must choose the latter. Listening to the voices of students can and should be the first step.

The Role of Student Aspirations in Today's Schools

When students have high aspirations, *they have the ability to dream and set goals for the future while being inspired in the present to reach those dreams*. Whether their goal is to learn algebra or a trade, get good grades or go to college, today's students want to be successful. Too often, however, students can't reach their future goals and dreams because the conditions around them do not support their desire to do so. As a result, their aspirations flounder and achievement wanes.

In order for students to have and sustain high aspirations, the conditions that enable them to reach their goals must be in place. These conditions are known as the **8 Conditions that Make a Difference**[®] and are a critical, often overlooked, part of education and school improvement initiatives. The 8 Conditions have been identified and defined by Dr. Russell J. Quaglia, an internationally known leader in the study of student aspirations. The 8 Conditions are: *Belonging, Heroes, Sense of Accomplishment, Fun & Excitement, Curiosity & Creativity, Spirit of Adventure, Leadership & Responsibility, and Confidence to Take Action*. The 8 Conditions make a difference because they help schools live out the three Guiding Principles of Aspirations work: *Self-Worth, Active Engagement, and Purpose*.

Developing Students' Self-Worth:

Belonging, Heroes, and Sense of Accomplishment

Self-Worth begins when students experience a sense of Belonging: They feel like they are part of the school community while being recognized and appreciated for their uniqueness. Students also experience *Self-Worth* when someone in their lives believes in them. They need Heroes: people they can look up to, respect, and learn from. To develop *Self-Worth*, students also need a Sense of Accomplishment. They must be recognized as much for their effort, perseverance, and citizenship as they are for high grades and good test scores. As students build *Self-Worth*, they are more likely to persevere through difficult tasks and be inspired to take the steps needed to reach their goals.

Fostering Students' Active Engagement in Learning:

Fun & Excitement, Curiosity & Creativity, and Spirit of Adventure

Active Engagement means that students experience Fun & Excitement in their learning. They become so involved they lose track of time and space. At the end of the lesson, they wonder, "Where did that time go?" Actively engaged students are not afraid to ask "Why?" or "Why not?" about the world around them. Curiosity & Creativity are alive in the way they learn, fostering inquisitiveness and a desire to satisfy their minds with new discoveries. Engaged students also have a Spirit of Adventure. They are not afraid to try new things, or to take on healthy challenges, regardless of whether they might succeed or fail. With *Active Engagement*, learning becomes important in and of itself.

Encouraging a Sense of Purpose:

Leadership & Responsibility and Confidence to Take Action

Schools must challenge students to think about their *Purpose*—*who* they want to become as well as *what* they want to be. To reach this goal, students need to explore what it means to have, and create, a successful and rewarding life. *Purpose* is about being responsible, accountable, and confident. To

develop *Purpose*, students need the opportunity to assume Leadership & Responsibility in their lives. They must learn to make decisions and understand the consequences of their choices. When students have *Purpose*, they have the Confidence to Take Action towards a meaningful, productive, and rewarding future. They believe in themselves and are motivated to reach their dreams.

In order to measure the 8 Conditions that Make a Difference in today's schools, the *My Voice* Student Survey was developed.

***My Voice* Student Survey**

The *MyVoice* Student Survey assesses various aspects of student aspirations by asking students to respond to 63 statements about the 8 Conditions, as well as demographic questions. Students respond to the 8 Conditions statements on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *Strongly Agree* to *Strongly Disagree*. The survey takes approximately 15 minutes to complete. By asking students how *they* perceive their school environment, *My Voice* provides educators with a powerful tool for understanding both what motivates and inspires students to achieve, and how well students believe their school is meeting those objectives. *MyVoice* is a powerful tool for initiating innovative, meaningful school reform.



My Voice National Student Report (Grades 6-12)

The My Voice National Student Report (Grades 6-12) is organized around the 8 Conditions. In each section, the Condition is defined and data on the survey statements about that Condition are described. The data are reported in percentages based on the combined number of students who responded *Strongly Agree* or *Agree* to each statement. The results are then discussed in relation to key aspects of the Condition. Separate sections are dedicated to trends across the grade levels from sixth through 12th grades, as well as gender differences.

Demographics for the My Voice National Student Report (Grades 6-12) 2011

The MyVoice Survey was completed by 57,883 students in grades 6-12 during 2010-2011 academic year. Two hundred and three schools from across the United States representing various sizes and socioeconomic backgrounds were included. The gender breakdown was 50% male, 50% female. Grade level and race/ethnicity breakdowns were as follows:¹

GRADE LEVEL	
Grade 6	16%
Grade 7	17%
Grade 8	17%
Grade 9	15%
Grade 10	12%
Grade 11	12%
Grade 12	11%

RACE/ETHNICITY	
White alone	69%
Black or African American alone	9%
Two or More Races	8%
Hispanic/Latino origin	7%
American Indian or Alaska Native alone	2%
Asian alone	2%
Other race alone (not listed above)	2%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	1%

CONDITION I. BELONGING

The Condition of Belonging means that a student is a valued member of a community while still maintaining his or her uniqueness. It is manifested in relationships between two or more persons and is characterized by a sense of connection and support. A sense of Belonging is an important Condition for a student's feeling of well-being, social engagement, and competence. The Condition of Belonging is likely to enhance intrinsic motivation, for it fosters self-confidence and investment in the community.

Students' Perceptions of Belonging

There are two key aspects to Belonging in schools. First, students must perceive school as a community in which they feel connected, safe, and supported; such an environment is foundational for learning. Unfortunately, in general, this does not appear to be the case to the degree it should be: As indicated in Figure 1, only two thirds of students report that their school is welcoming and

¹ These categorizations of race and ethnicity follow from the 2010 United States Census reporting; the term "alone" following the race categories can be understood to mean "Non-Hispanic/Latino."

friendly, just over half agree that their teachers make an effort to get to know them, and 45% of students feel that bullying is a problem at their school.

The second key aspect of the Belonging is that students feel valued for who they are as individuals in the larger context of their school. Some indicators of this are encouraging: Approximately three quarters of students report feeling accepted for who they are at school, and better than half acknowledge they are proud of their school. At the same time, less than half of students believe they are valued members of the school community and that teachers care about their problems and feelings. Nearly one in five students express that they have difficulty fitting in at school.

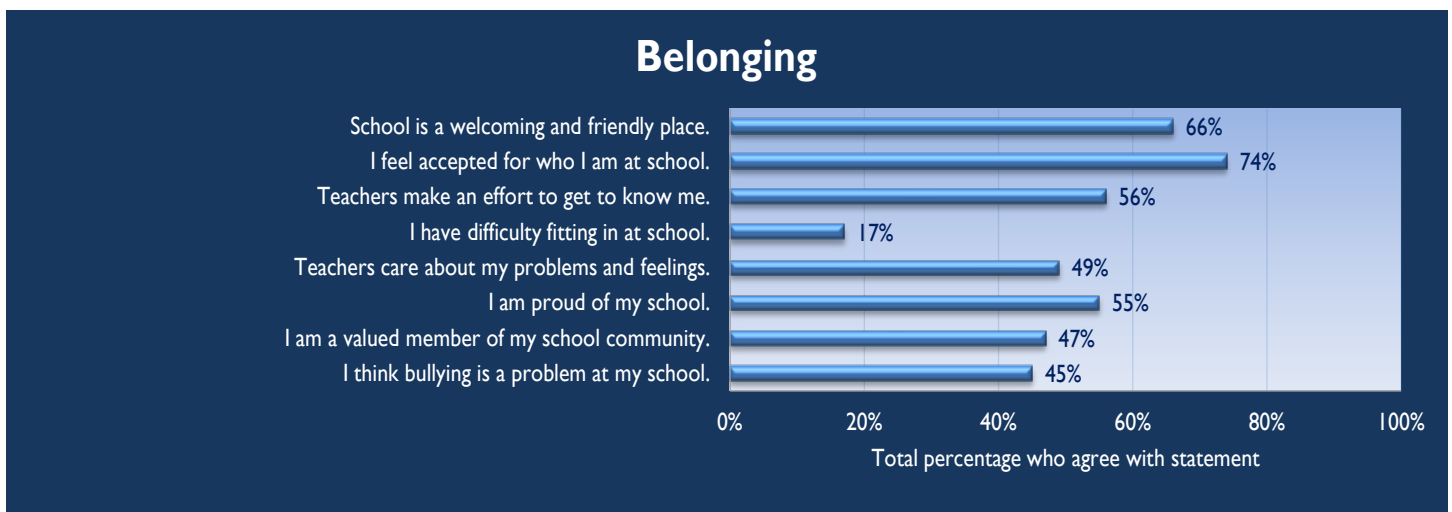


Figure 1. Total agreement with Belonging statements

Discussion

The findings that many students do not experience school as a place they feel safe, supported, or valued may surprise teachers and school leaders who by and large make genuine efforts to get to know their students and foster a sense of community in their schools. Though most students do report feeling accepted for who they are at school, this does not in itself translate into feeling valued. Indeed, there is an apparent disconnect between what the adults in the school are working toward achieving in this regard and what the students are experiencing. How might schools go about better understanding this disconnect? One important, yet often overlooked, source of information and ideas is the students themselves. What does a welcoming and friendly school look like *to the students*? What types of programs and practices are most likely to make them feel they truly belong? Teachers and school leaders certainly stand to benefit from posing these important questions, and the benefit is twofold: an enhanced understanding of the students’ experience based on their responses, and an acknowledgement to students that their input is valued.

CONDITION 2. HEROES

Heroes are the everyday people—teachers, friends, family—in students’ lives who inspire them to excel and to make positive changes in attitude and lifestyles. Heroes are the people students can connect with, who have a positive influence on them, and who listen to and value their ideas. Heroes build trust in others and belief in oneself. Educators are, by definition, Heroes to their students who look up to teachers and school leaders as people to learn from and communicate with about many things. Building relationships with students through support, guidance, and encouragement enables them to become more confident in their academic, personal, and social growth.

Students’ Perceptions of Heroes

The Condition of Heroes emphasizes the critical ways teachers, as well as parents and fellow students, show respect and provide support and inspiration for one another. There are certainly some positive signs that teachers and parents do play the role of hero in students’ lives. Encouragingly, three quarters of all students report that they have a teacher who is a positive role model, and the vast majority believe their parents care about their education.

At the same time, barely over half of students feel that their teachers care about them as individuals and have a teacher with whom they can talk if they have a problem. Less than half think their teachers care if they are absent from school. In general, mutual respect is lacking: Only 61% of students feel their teachers respect them, 2 in 5 students report respecting their teachers, and barely 1 in 3 say students respect each other.

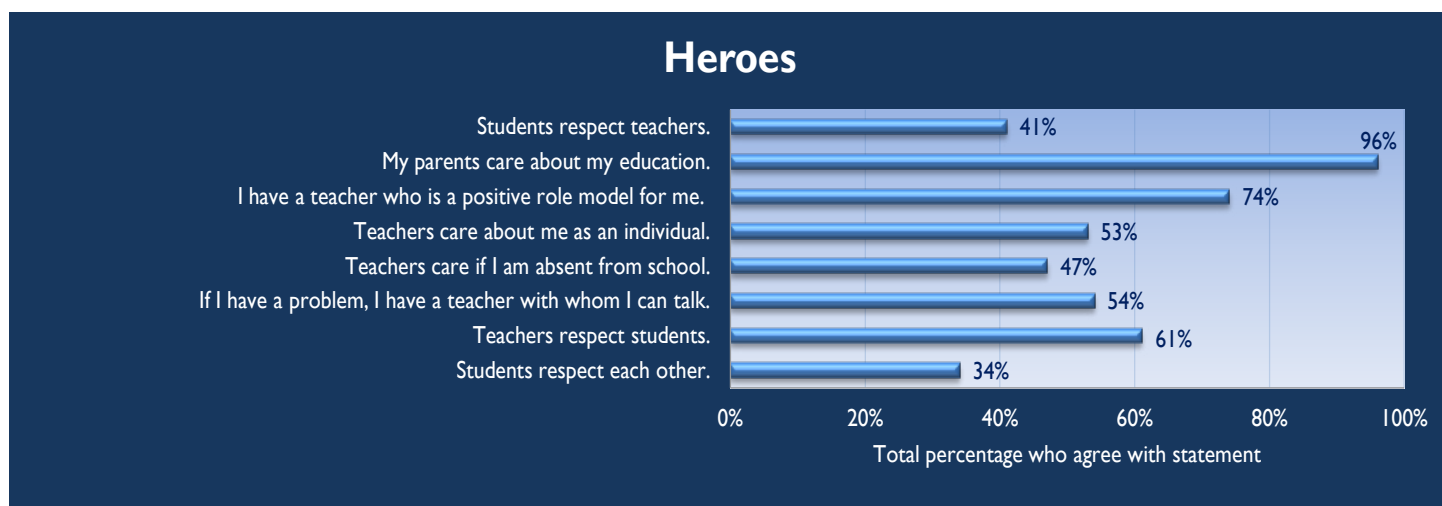


Figure 2. Total agreement with Heroes statements

Discussion

Students’ responses to these statements tell us three critical things. First, while it is encouraging that most students have at least one teacher they see as a positive role model and at least one

whom they can approach with a problem, students' perceptions are much less favorable when asked about the teachers in their school *in general*. This finding may suggest that typically some number of teachers in a given school genuinely serve as heroes to their students, and some number do not; however, the presence of the latter may bring down the students' perceptions of the faculty on the whole.

Second, these results suggest that students do not generally perceive school as an environment of mutual respect. The highest percentage out of the three questions related to respect in our survey was for the students' perceptions that teachers respect them—and that number barely reached 60%. Surely, most teachers truly believe they respect their students, but the extent to which *students perceive* this as true is cause for concern. For a relatively high number of students, that message has clearly not been adequately conveyed ... and here, as throughout this report, perception is reality. Moreover, and no doubt connected in part to the aforementioned finding, students do not report high levels of respect for their teachers. Indeed, it is considerably more difficult for teachers to engage their students in learning when mutual respect is lacking. Equally alarming is the fact that barely a third of students feel their fellow students respect one another. Students, too, are in a position to be supportive of their peers and be role models in the learning environment. In a climate generally lacking respect, the chances of such student-to-student support will be difficult to foster.

Third, on a more uplifting note, the clear preponderance of students believe their parents care about their education. This figure might challenge educators who believe one of the difficulties of teaching is a lack of support and care for education in the home. Though this statistic does not necessarily reflect the degree to which parents are in fact actively involved in their child's education, it is clear that students generally perceive that their parents do value it.

CONDITION 3. SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT

The Condition of Sense of Accomplishment recognizes effort, perseverance, and citizenship as signs of a student's success. Educators have traditionally used a narrow view of accomplishment as it refers to academic achievement, innate ability, or who is "best in the class." Sense of Accomplishment, however, is viewed in terms of personal growth and effort, not just through measurable outcomes and countable successes. Schools can celebrate their students' accomplishments in visible ways. Taking time to recognize and support students' efforts can help motivate them to persevere through difficult tasks, creating an appreciation for hard work and dedication.

Students' Perceptions of Sense of Accomplishment

The importance of getting good grades is not lost on students these days: Nine in 10 agree that it is important. However, this does not always translate into effort toward performing to the best of their ability; three fourths of students say they put forth their best effort in school and 16% give up when schoolwork is difficult. While in absolute terms these figures could be worse, they do suggest that the belief in the importance of good grades is not enough to motivate many students to work as hard as they should to achieve them.

This may in part be explained by the perceived lack of full recognition and encouragement by teachers. Less than two thirds of students say their teachers recognize them when they try their best, less than half report that their teachers let their parents know what they do well, and 1 in 5 say they have never been recognized for something positive at school. At the same time, though levels of recognition of effort and achievement may be less than desirable, about three fourths of students do feel that they are encouraged to practice good citizenship at school and that teachers recognize students who are kind and helpful.

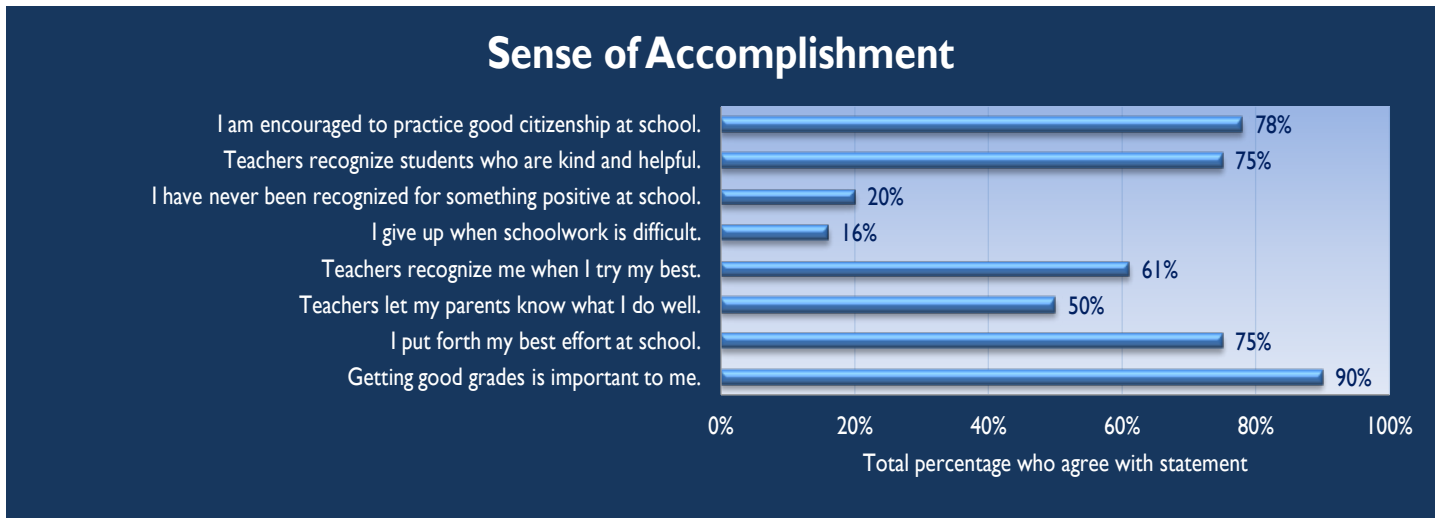


Figure 3. Total agreement with Sense of Accomplishment statements

Discussion

It may not be surprising that the vast majority of students think getting good grades is important. “Good grades” has been a focus of schooling for a very long time. More surprising, however, is the fact that some number of these students who value doing well in school nonetheless fail to put forth their best effort and give up when school is difficult. Certainly, greater teacher encouragement of effort and acknowledgement of achievement would help students who might otherwise slack off or give up to instead persevere and strive to do their best. It would likely also be instructive to ask those students who value good grades, but do not work as hard as they could to achieve them, why it is that they fail to fully engage. Do they attribute good grades to something they have little control over, such as IQ or the teacher’s favoritism, rather than to something they can control such as their level of effort? Do they feel the teacher could be more supportive? Do they believe getting good grades is important simply because other people say it is, but not see school performance as relevant to their own future success?

These findings overall suggest that teachers, while generally praiseworthy in this area, could be more effective in encouraging effort and celebrating accomplishments, not only with the students themselves, but also with their parents. Indeed, such encouragement and celebration ought not only be about grades, but about accomplishments of all kinds, including kindness and citizenship. Ideally, students should be encouraged to maximize effort and be recognized for engaging their unique talents and interests, academic and otherwise.

CONDITION 4. FUN & EXCITEMENT

The Condition of Fun & Excitement is characterized by students being inspired. They are actively engaged and emotionally involved in their schoolwork. Students who exhibit Fun & Excitement are usually self-confident, curious, and prepared; they are willing to meet the challenges of the day. To foster Fun & Excitement in schools, students need to be offered new opportunities, as well as meaningful challenges, that are connected with their individual interests. The first three Conditions—Belonging, Heroes, and Sense of Accomplishment—help establish a learning environment in which students can feel safe to have fun together in learning.

Students’ Perceptions of Fun & Excitement

Fun & Excitement is primarily about students being engaged in their learning. To be actively engaged in learning, students must find it enjoyable and worthwhile. Unfortunately, relatively low numbers of students say this is the case. Barely half of students enjoy being at school and nearly half think school is boring, despite the fact that about 7 in 10 believe learning *can* be fun. Only somewhat more encouraging, nearly 2 out of every 3 students say they like participating in their classes.

The degree to which school is a fun and exciting experience is in part determined by a teacher’s ability and willingness to make it so. Less than two thirds of students perceive their teachers as enjoying working with them, and less than 2 in 5 think their teachers make school an exciting place to learn. These somewhat jaded perceptions of teachers may be further driven by the fact that less than half of students think teachers themselves have fun at school.

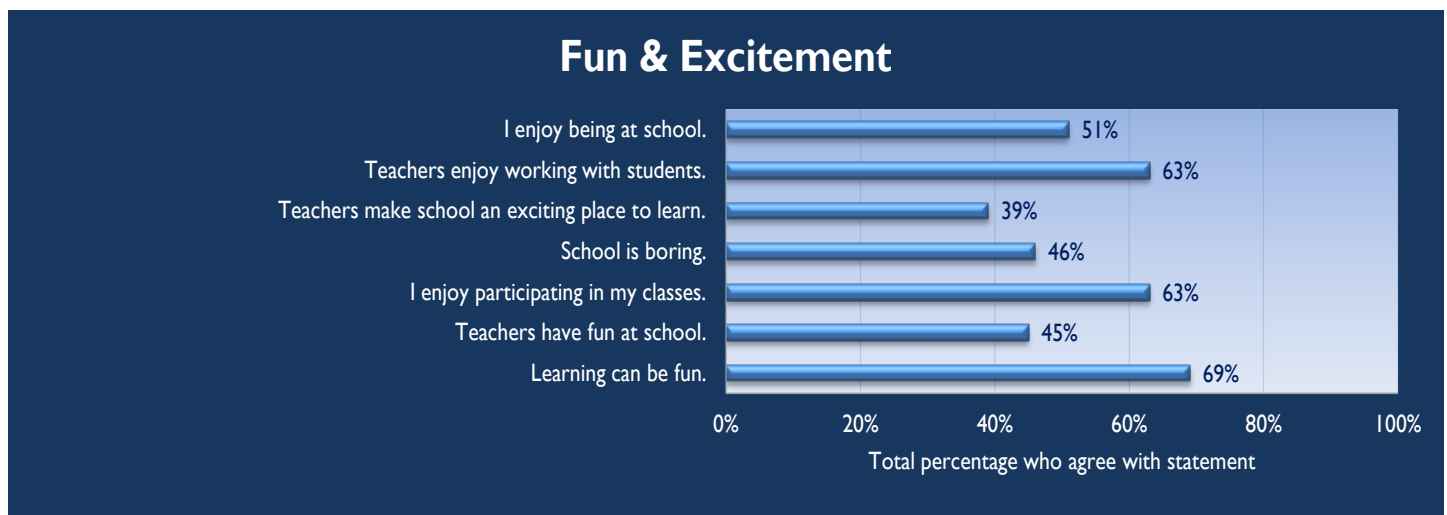


Figure 4. Total agreement with Fun & Excitement statements

Discussion

Consider these two facts together: 1) School is, by definition, supposed to be a place of learning; and 2) More than one third of students who believe learning can be fun are bored at school. These students should be engaged by school, but instead they are getting turned off by it. The

love of learning they can experience in school and carry with them throughout their lives is being undermined. When we search for the causes of why so many young people drop out of school, we might begin with a focus on the unfulfilled promise of their schools inspiring and engaging them.

Students' perceptions of their teachers' engagement in the learning process are equally striking. Apparently, teachers are not modeling enjoyment in being at school, and all too often they are perceived as not enjoying working with students. Again, independent of whether or not teachers themselves believe they enjoy working with their students, the students' perception is their reality. Certainly, these percentages should be an area of professional concern for all educators; fortunately, the fix may be as simple as teachers more readily conveying why most of them got into the profession in the first place: their passion for working with young people.

It should be noted that Fun & Excitement in today's schools is not intended to imply that students should be merely laughing and playing instead of studying and learning. It is about students becoming so engaged in what they are learning that they stop watching the clock and looking out the window. These findings lead us to ask: How can schools foster this experience throughout the curriculum? Once again, we suggest starting by asking the students.

A Deeper Look ...

Of the 69% of students who agree with the statement “Learning can be fun,” more than one third of them are nonetheless bored at school.

CONDITION 5. CURIOSITY & CREATIVITY

The Condition of Curiosity & Creativity is characterized by inquisitiveness, eagerness, a strong desire to learn new or interesting things, and a desire to satisfy the mind with new discoveries. Curiosity triggers students to ask “Why?” while creativity gives them the initiative to ask “Why not?” The intensity of Curiosity & Creativity tends to diminish over time due to the habituating effects of the environment. To sustain student motivation, schools can devote extra attention to creating learning environments that promote questioning and creative exploration.

Students' Perceptions of Curiosity & Creativity

When the Condition of Curiosity & Creativity is properly fostered, students are encouraged to experience the joy of exploring new ideas. Nearly 8 in 10 students say they enjoy learning new things, which is encouraging. Somewhat less encouraging are the findings that fewer (7 in 10) report learning new things that are interesting to them at school, and barely 6 in 10 say school inspires them to learn.

There are a number of ways that Curiosity & Creativity can be developed. Among them are demonstrating the relevance of the material being learned and encouraging collaboration and inquisitiveness. With these in mind, the findings regarding Curiosity & Creativity in the classroom are mixed. On the positive side, three quarters of students report that their teachers present lessons in different ways, and 7 in 10 enjoy working on projects with other students. Roughly two

thirds of students feel comfortable asking questions in class and feel they are encouraged to be creative in school. However, even though nearly 8 in 10 feel that what they learn in school will benefit their future, just 43% say their classes help them understand what is currently happening in their everyday lives.

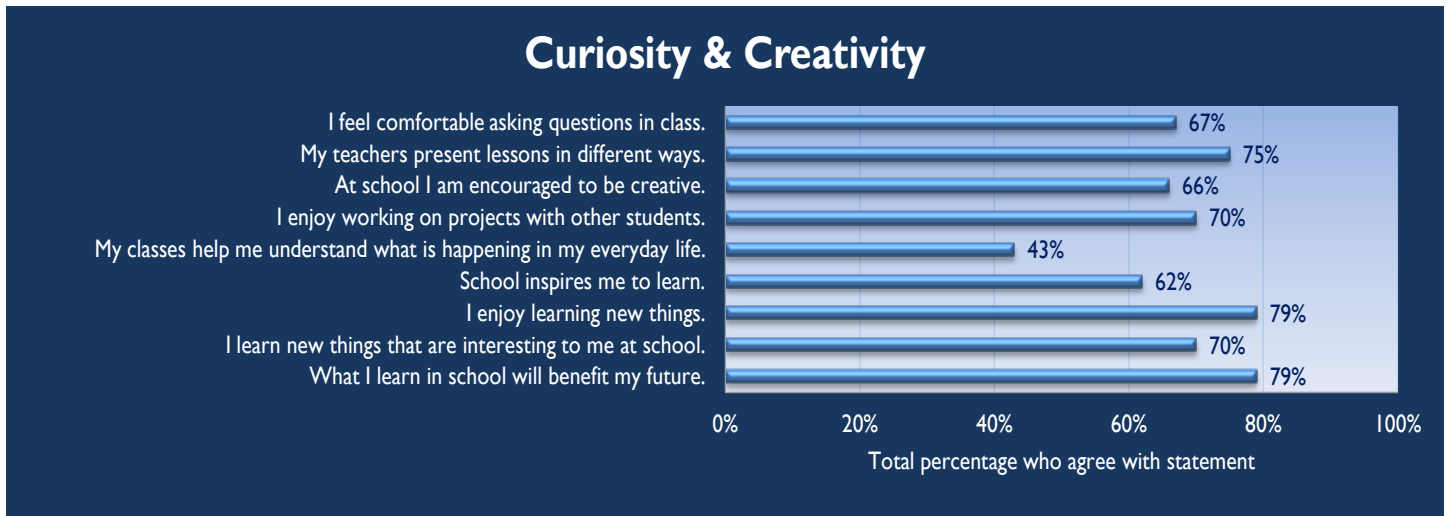


Figure 5. Total agreement with Curiosity & Creativity statements

Discussion

Curiosity and creativity are among the newly touted 21st Century Skills that are being discussed and promoted in nearly all schools. Some have suggested that adequately assessing these skills is a difficult task—perhaps because they do not readily lend themselves to standardized testing—yet we can take some comfort from these data in that they show students generally believe the development of both skills is encouraged in their schools: Most of the statements about Curiosity & Creativity show agreement in the two-thirds to three-quarters range.

Still, schools certainly have room for improvement in this Condition, in particular in their capacities to inspire learning and more effectively connect what they are learning to students’ everyday lives. To foster genuine learning—and many of the skills being called for in the 21st century—students must have the chance to be creative while they are learning. Affording students the opportunity to be creative is likely to help establish a learning environment that is inspiring to students. Further, students must feel safe and be engaged enough in their learning to ask “Why?” and “Why not?”—to this end, teachers can help create environments in which all students feel comfortable asking questions. Perhaps by asking these questions, students will better connect how the material is relevant to them personally. The notion of relevance could be even further enhanced through additional efforts by teachers and school leaders to integrate a variety of their students’ cultural traditions into their lessons and the school environment.

CONDITION 6. SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE

The Condition of Spirit of Adventure is characterized by a student's ability to take on positive, healthy challenges at school and home, with family and friends. Students experience the Spirit of Adventure when they tackle something new without the fear of failure or success. When schools promote healthy decision making and healthy risk taking, students can become more confident and resilient. Students with the Spirit of Adventure see life as full of opportunities worth exploring for their own sake.

Students' Perceptions of Spirit of Adventure

Spirit of Adventure is about trying new things. It is about students moving out of the paralysis of their panic zones or the complacency of their comfort zones into their challenge zone. This is not easy for most people, and the survey results suggest that in many ways this holds true for middle and high school students as well. While significant majorities of students report that they want to do their best in school and push themselves to that end, barely over one third report that they like challenging assignments. Moreover, more than 1 in 4 students admit they are afraid to try something if they think they may fail. Even when they achieve academically, students are not always interested in sharing this success with their friends: Only 3 in 5 say they are excited to tell their friends when they get good grades.

Spirit of Adventure is fostered when students feel supported when they try new things. Support can come from many sources, including teachers and other students. About a third of students believe teachers help them learn from their mistakes, though less than half say their fellow students are generally supportive of each other.



Figure 6. Total agreement with Spirit of Adventure statements

Discussion

Whether students have the courage to move beyond their panic or comfort zone into their challenge zone depends on overcoming fear, anxiety, and complacency. As the data show, more than a quarter of all students are reluctant to try things if they think they might fail, and not many

more are interested in taking on challenging assignments. These figures should be of concern to every educator. If students are not willing to challenge themselves—academically, socially, personally—how will they learn and grow as individuals? It must be just as safe for students to have a Spirit of Adventure and *not* succeed as it is for them *to* succeed when they take a healthy risk.

Less obvious, though no less worrisome, are the students who are afraid to challenge themselves because they might *succeed*. For these students, having a Spirit of Adventure means potentially threatening their social network—their sense of Belonging—which may be a powerful deterrent to success. The fact that just over half of the students surveyed are excited to tell their friends when they get good grades underscores this point. If students are to reach their highest potential, schools must find ways to make it safe for all students to take on personal challenges in the contexts of both potential failure and potential success.

Finally, the findings that less than two thirds of students believe teachers help them learn from their mistakes and less than half believe students are generally supportive of each other suggest that, all too often, students steer clear of trying new things because they fear they will not be supported if they fail. School environments in which students understand failure as a necessary part of the learning process and are confident their teachers and fellow students will support them when they do fail, will be environments in which a Spirit of Adventure flourishes.

CONDITION 7. LEADERSHIP & RESPONSIBILITY

The Condition of Leadership & Responsibility means students are able to express their ideas and are willing to accept the consequences of their actions. It cultivates accountability for the classroom environment and school community. Fostering leadership empowers students to make just and appropriate decisions and to take pride in their actions. Schools which promote this Condition teach and expect their students to be good decision makers. They provide legitimate decision-making opportunities, seek student input, and expect students to be accountable for their actions and words. Students are trusted to make the right decisions and are recognized for doing so.

Students' Perceptions of Leadership & Responsibility

The Condition of Leadership & Responsibility is twofold: Students must develop decision-making skills and have meaningful leadership opportunities. These capacities form the foundation for being responsible leaders who make a difference in their schools and communities. To this end, encouragingly, 7 in 10 students believe they are good decision makers, and about three quarters see themselves as leaders. It is also encouraging that more than 7 in 10 students report that teachers in their school encourage them to make decisions.

At the same time, many other aspects of the school environment that might be conducive to the development of Leadership & Responsibility do not seem typically to be in place. Less than half of students feel that they have a voice in decision making in their schools or know the goals their schools are working on, and just half of students believe that teachers are willing to learn from them. Of equal concern, slightly over one third of students think other students see them as a leader.



Figure 7. Total agreement with Leadership & Responsibility statements

Discussion

The findings here reveal that although many students see themselves as leaders and good decision makers, this self-perception does not necessarily translate into opportunities to contribute these skills and their voices in their schools. This is most apparent in the fact that while a strong majority of students see themselves as leaders, just over one third of them believe other students see them as leaders. For students' Leadership & Responsibility to thrive, their sense of leadership cannot remain a merely internal phenomenon; students must manifest leadership in actions that are recognized by their peers and their communities, beginning at their school.

This discrepancy may be in part explained by the findings about decision making and leadership opportunities in their schools. While 7 in 10 students say they see themselves as good decision makers, less than half say they are aware of the goals their school community is working on, and even fewer feel they have a voice in decision making at their school. This reflects the need to pair students' confidence in their own decision making skills with meaningful opportunities to share their ideas and play a meaningful role in creating change at school. One important step in this direction might be opening clear channels of communication between school leaders and the student body about the school's goals, accompanied by an invitation from the adults in the school for the students to help achieve them. Indeed, the more opportunities teachers and school administrators provide students to express their voice and be genuinely involved in the decision making process, the more likely students are to feel engaged and empowered to create change.

A Deeper Look ...

Students who do not think their schools provide opportunities to express their voices are *more than twice as likely* to say they are bored in school and *nearly three times as likely* not to enjoy being in school.

Further opportunities to foster Leadership & Responsibility in students exist in teachers' everyday interactions with them. With only half of students reporting that teachers are willing to learn from students, clearly teachers taking time on a daily basis to listen to and learn from students would provide them many opportunities to know their voices are heard.

CONDITION 8. CONFIDENCE TO TAKE ACTION

Confidence to Take Action is the extent to which students believe in themselves. It encourages them to dream about their future while being motivated to set goals in the present. This Condition is at the heart of what educators ultimately strive for: instilling in their students a confidence in and expectation of success. Confidence to Take Action is characterized by a positive and healthy outlook on life and by looking inward rather than outward for approval. Schools can help build their students' Confidence to Take Action by providing support, celebrating diversity, and encouraging independent thinking. By enhancing the quality of academic and personal growth, schools empower students to become active and involved members of their learning community.

Students' Perceptions of Confidence to Take Action

Confidence to Take Action is the capstone of the Aspirations Framework; indeed, it is a primary objective of any school to provide students with enough belief in themselves to set goals for the future and take steps in the present to reach those goals. By and large, students report fairly high agreement with the items that indicate this Condition.

Specifically, regarding goal setting and the future, more than 8 in 10 students report that they think it is important to set high goals and to work hard to reach their goals, and that they know the kind of person they want to become. The vast majority of students further believe in their ability to be successful, are excited about their futures, and believe going to college is important.

A smaller percentage (69%) believe they can make a difference in the world.

Two of these findings suggest schools may be able to do more to foster students' Confidence to Take Action. Less than three quarters of students report that their teachers believe in them and expect them to be successful, and 7 in 10 believe their current school is preparing them well for the future.





Figure 8. Total agreement with Confidence to Take Action statements

Discussion

There is a difference between dreaming about the future and taking the steps needed to reach those dreams. Confidence to Take Action is defined by the successful integration of these two processes, as is demonstrated by the majority of students in our sample: 82% of students think it is important to set high goals, 83% work hard to reach their goals, and about three quarters report both at the same time.

Though in general the figures for this Condition are relatively high, we believe all schools should strive to fully develop the aspirations of *all* students and are left wondering why a few of these figures are not higher. Nearly 2 in 10 students do not agree that it is important to set high goals or work hard to reach their goals, and over a quarter fail to report both. Why? Nearly a third of students do not believe they can make a difference in the world. How can this be? Educators must further ask why 3 in 10 students do not report that they see a clear connection between school and the future they imagine for themselves. One explanation might be that not all students envision futures that benefit from scholastic efforts ... yet nearly 9 in 10 students believe going to college is important for their future. Asking the students directly why these findings are the case may be quite illuminating.

Certainly, one issue highlighted by the data is that not all students feel that their teachers believe in them and expect them to be successful—more than one quarter of them fail to report this is the case (and, again, their perception is their reality). Teachers can and should play a key role in helping students believe in themselves and their abilities to reach their goals; if students do not perceive that teachers believe in them, they will very likely have greater difficulty believing in themselves.

TRENDS ACROSS GRADE LEVELS

Though the data were collected at one time point for each student over one academic year and thus do not represent what happens to individual students as they progress from sixth grade through 12th grade, we can nonetheless glean important insights by investigating the trends for each statement across the grade levels. While the results described in the previous sections provide important information about how, in general, many aspects of the 8 Conditions are in need of concerted attention, breaking down the figures by grade level and depicting these results as trends across the grades helps determine how best to target improvement efforts.

Not every statement in each Condition shows significant change across the grade levels; indeed, for many of the statements the percent agreement figures are quite consistent from grade to grade, suggesting that no particular grade level requires more attention than any of the others for the concept represented by that statement. However, within each Condition there is at least one statement that exhibits significant trends across the grade levels, and for some Conditions there are multiple statements which exhibit significant trends. In these cases, trends take one of two forms: linear and nonlinear. That is, some trends show general increases or decreases across the grade levels (i.e., a linear trend), while others show trends that start off declining in the middle school grades, but either flatten out or start inclining in the high school grades (i.e., a nonlinear trend). Statistical procedures were used to determine whether one or both of these types of trends significantly occur for each statement, as reported in the sections to follow.²

Condition 1. Belonging

For Belonging, two items show significant downward trends that extended in a mostly linear fashion from middle school through high school. One of these trends is encouraging: As the grade levels progress, the degree to which students perceive bullying as a problem at their school drops. It is, however, discouraging that school pride on average declines through the middle and high school years. Two other items, “Teachers make an effort to get to know me” and “Teachers care about my problems and feelings,” both of which tap into perceptions of connectedness with teachers, show nonlinear trends, with significant downward trends in the middle school years, but a leveling off in the high school years.

These trends suggest a couple of important conclusions. First, while it is a positive sign that perceptions of the prevalence of bullying drop significantly across grade levels, it is quite disconcerting that more than half of sixth graders believe bullying is a problem in their school. Indeed, it is still quite problematic that more than one third of 12th graders believe bullying remains a problem. Ongoing efforts to address bullying are necessary at all grade levels, but these findings suggest that they are especially important in the middle school years.

² Trends were determined to be significant by a statistical technique known as regression analysis, wherein the slope of the line connecting the total agreement scores across the grades was steep enough to be considered both statistically and practically significant according to commonly accepted research standards.

Second, there were significant declines in school pride from grade level to grade level (outside of a minor jump from eighth to ninth grade, likely a function of the excitement and hopefulness of entering a new school in the transition from middle to high school). This may suggest that as students progress into higher grades, they increasingly believe that their schools are not places they want to be, and perhaps that do not value them being there.

Third, the efforts teachers make to get to know their students better and exhibit their genuine concern for them may be especially important in the middle school years. Indeed, it may be the case that when middle school teachers do not adequately connect with their students early on, these students carry with them a predisposition in the subsequent grades to think their new teachers are also unlikely to care about them as much as they should. While a teacher that a student connects with in an upper grade may be able to overcome this predisposition, we should be mindful of how early experiences with the teacher-student relationship may shape subsequent encounters.

Condition 2. Heroes

For the Condition of Heroes, only one of the items shows an average downward trend across all grade levels: “Teachers respect students.” This trend was strongest across the early middle school years, which aligns with the previous results for Belonging, suggesting that students’ perceptions of teachers become gradually more negative in middle school. It is indeed disturbing that about three quarters of sixth graders believe their teachers respect them, but by 10th grade that figure is barely above half.

Many of the trends for Heroes are downward in the middle school years, and either flatten or even begin to work their way back upward in the high school years. Analyses of these trends show that two items (“Students respect teachers” and “Teachers care about me as an individual”) show declines through the middle school years and a leveling off in high school. Two other items (“I have a teacher who is a positive role model for me” and “If I have a problem, I have a teacher with whom I can talk”) show downward trends in middle school, but upward trends in high school. The downward trends in middle school across all four items provide further evidence for the importance of teachers making extra efforts to build relationships with their students in the middle school years.

Interestingly, the two items that show improvement in the high school years are ones that reflect connectedness with *individual* teachers. It seems that once students’ perceptions of teachers *in general* start to decline, it may be very difficult to reverse their thinking about teachers *in general*; however, students may be somewhat more likely to find *particular* teachers with whom they connect in the high school years, and thus may become more open to the idea that *particular* teachers can be role models and trusted advisors. This speaks to the powerful impact any teacher can have on a student, and suggests that if more teachers strived to authentically connect to students, their overall perceptions of teachers in general would be likely to improve. To this end, a school staff may want to consider how to be more generally available in specific ways (e.g., having lunch with students, attending cocurricular events, etc.) as a way of leveraging positive, particular connections to improve the overall sense of respect and care between teachers and students.

Condition 3. Sense of Accomplishment

For Sense of Accomplishment, three of the eight items show significant downward trends across the grade levels. Students perceive less encouragement of citizenship across the grades, with a decline that appears to be more prominent in the middle school years; however, at each grade level, the figures for this item are relatively high, never dropping below 70%.

More troubling is the decline in reported school effort across the grades, the rate of which appears to be relatively consistent from grade to grade. In sixth grade, 86% of students report that they put forth their best effort; by 12th grade, this figure has dropped by almost 20%, landing at 67%.

The most precipitous drop across the grade levels is for the item “Teachers let my parents know what I do well.” Seventy percent of sixth graders agree that this is the case, but by 12th grade, barely half that number agree. To a degree, this may reflect a normative transition across secondary education, when the responsibility for students’ learning is expected to shift from their parents to themselves as they mature. That notwithstanding, communication between teachers and parents at all levels of education is important for building strong systems of support for students. Moreover, students should be provided plenty of opportunities to celebrate their academic successes both at school and at home, which is more likely to occur when accomplishments are shared between teachers and parents.



Condition 4. Fun & Excitement

For Fun & Excitement, significant declines can be found for three items spanning the middle school years and into 10th grade, leveling off in the remaining high school years. All three of these items have to do with the students' perceptions of teachers in general. Specifically, from sixth through 10th grades, there is a fairly constant decline in the degree to which students perceive teachers as enjoying working with them, making school exciting, and having fun while at school. These findings further highlight the importance of teachers, especially in middle and early high school, making an extra effort to engage students and show them their passion for the profession.

Perhaps in part due to the declines in perceptions of teachers' enjoyment of being in school affecting their own enjoyment, students report higher levels of boredom in school with each year from sixth through 10th grade. More than half of students in 10th grade through 12th grade are bored in school. It is clear that at all grade levels, teachers and school leaders must do a more effective job of engaging their students; but how best to maximize efforts to this end? These findings suggest that a narrative may begin to form in the middle school years that school is a boring place to be, starting a downward engagement spiral that is difficult to reverse. Efforts to stave off the formation of such a narrative and infuse schools with a greater sense of fun and excitement may thus be particularly efficacious in the middle school years.

A Deeper Look ...

In sixth grade, barely 1 in 3 students think school is boring; by 10th grade, 53% do ... and this is among those who haven't dropped out already.

Condition 5. Curiosity & Creativity

For Curiosity & Creativity, five of the nine items show relatively consistent downward trends from sixth grade through 10th grade, with a leveling off for most of them in the remaining high school years. Across these middle and early high school years, students perceive their schools as increasingly less encouraging of creativity and less inspiring of their learning. These data may lend credence to the argument that in our current era of high-stakes standardized testing and increased emphasis on rote memorization, opportunities for creativity and deep learning are fewer and farther between. This is especially disconcerting at a time when business and community leaders are calling for greater attention to creativity, innovation, curiosity, and critical thinking as essential to the future success of individuals and our country. At every level, from national policy to classroom practice, we must seriously examine the unintentional harm to these skills and habits of mind being done by the effort to measure the more traditional skills of literacy and numeracy in such standardized, simplistic, and highly pressurized ways.

Additionally, students seem to enjoy working on projects with other students less with each year of secondary schooling. It is difficult to say whether this decline reflects lesser enjoyment derived from group projects in the higher grades, or fewer opportunities to engage in them. Given the essential role of communication and collaboration skills in the 21st century, it would certainly be important to better understand why this is the case. As before, we suggest asking the students directly why they think it is, and also inquire about ideas for how to improve the situation.

Of particular concern are the declining trends from sixth through 10th grades in the two items in this Condition which tap into the perceived relevance of school: “My classes help me understand what is happening in my everyday life” and “What I learn in school will benefit my future.” By the time students are in 10th grade, one quarter of them do not see school as benefiting their future, and nearly two thirds do not feel their classes are relevant to their daily lives. In the context of these data, perhaps the earlier findings showing declines in student engagement across these years should not be so surprising; it is certainly harder to remain engaged by something when it is thought to be of little benefit or consequence either in the present or in the future.

Condition 6. Spirit of Adventure

For Spirit of Adventure, only two of the seven items showed downward trends across the grade levels. One is the only item under this Condition that addresses students’ perceptions of teachers, specifically whether they are perceived as helping students learn from their mistakes. In sixth grade, more than three quarters of students feel their teachers are supportive in this way; by 10th grade, only 57% report they are, a drop of over 20 percentage points. We submit two (among many) possible explanations for this. One is that teachers need to more effectively convey their willingness to help across all grades, most especially in the high school years. Alternatively, this trend may reflect schools’ decreasing tolerance for mistakes and increasing preference for “right” answers, despite the fact that learning is an outcome in both instances—being correct *and* making mistakes.

The other item showing a declining trend under this Condition is “I am excited to tell my friends when I get good grades.” In sixth grade, more than 7 in 10 students agree with this statement; in 12th grade, barely half do. Why is this? Is it because students don’t value getting good grades in high school? As we saw under Sense of Accomplishment, the vast majority of students at every grade level believe getting good grades is important, so this is likely not the answer. Perhaps

the reason is because that, as they mature, students have a heightened self-consciousness that their friends will judge them if they talk about their academic successes—they may be labeled a “nerd ” a “bragger,” or a “school boy.” Again, the most effective way to find out is to ask the students themselves. Equipped with that information, we can work with students to make school a place where it is “cool” to be successful.

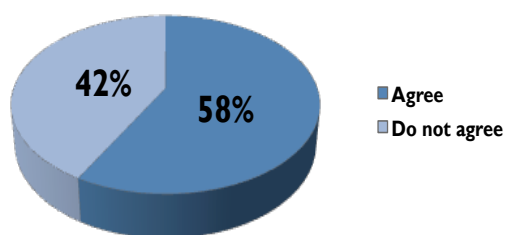


Condition 7. Leadership & Responsibility

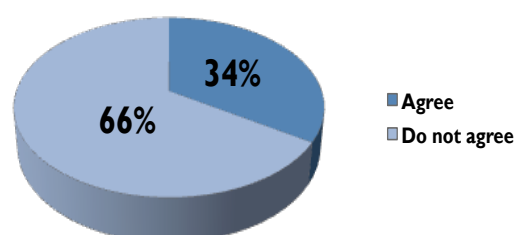
For Leadership & Responsibility, three items show general declines across the grade levels. Specifically, as the grade levels increase, students feel they have less of a voice in decision making and that their teachers are less willing to learn from them, suggesting schools may not be adequately receptive to students' voices and ideas. Additionally, students report knowing the goals their schools are working on at declining rates across grade levels. For each statement, agreement drops from about 60% at the beginning of middle school to around 40% through most of high school. One might expect the opposite, that as students mature and develop critical thinking and decision making capacities, teachers and school leaders would entrust them even more to contribute their ideas and knowledge, and students would in turn be even more interested in their schools' goals.

We believe these results may also contribute to the declines we saw across the other Conditions around students' engagement and pride in their schools; when students don't feel their opinions are valued and aren't given opportunities to express their voices, they are likely to feel alienated and unappreciated. These data suggest not only that students' voices need to be heard, but that in the high school years in particular, concentrated efforts should be made by teachers and school leaders to provide genuine opportunities to offer a listening ear and afford students meaningful opportunities to make decisions.

Agreement with the statement "Students have a voice in decision making at school" in 6th grade



Agreement with the statement "Students have a voice in decision making at school" in 12th grade



Condition 8. Confidence to Take Action

For Confidence to Take Action, only one item shows a significant downward trend across the grade levels: "School is preparing me well for my future." Over 80% of sixth graders believe this to be true, while barely above 60% of 12th graders agree. This trend is rather disturbing and proves to be similar to the downward trends found in the two Curiosity & Creativity items that signify perceived relevance of school. These results suggest that the further into their education students go, the less likely they are to believe that schools are doing the job they expect and need them to do. Once more, we find evidence that may help to explain why students become more likely to be disengaged, and more likely to drop out, as they move through the grades. Educators should ask themselves, if with each grade through which students progress they lose just a little more faith that their schools are adequately preparing them for their futures, why should they expect students to show up at all?

GENDER DIFFERENCES: Grades 6-12

Though a few notable gender differences appear in the *My Voice* national data, the broader conclusion is that, in general, gender should not be viewed as a particularly meaningful factor in how educators foster the 8 Conditions. Specifically, there are only two items for which males and females' percentages differ by a statistically and practically significant amount, both in favor of females. Eighty percent of females report that they put forth their best effort at school, whereas only 70% of males report they do. Additionally, 67% females say they are excited to tell their friends when they get good grades, while only 54% of males report doing so.

Though broad conclusions should not be drawn from only a small number of significant results, these results may hint that fewer males than females experience school as a place which excites and engages them enough to put forth their best effort and share their academic successes with their friends. As the Aspirations Framework suggests, students who are not engaged in their learning are less likely to do well and reach their fullest potential. It may therefore be particularly important when talking to students about why they do not report higher engagement in school, to pay extra attention to males' responses and strive to better understand ways in which they might be engaged differently than females in the school setting.

A Deeper Look ...
Of the 63 statements on the *My Voice* Survey, 61 of them did not show practically significant gender differences.



CONCLUSION

The *My Voice* National Student Report (Grades 6-12) reveals both encouraging and discouraging findings around each of the 8 Conditions That Make a Difference. While schools should take time to celebrate and learn from their accomplishments, they must simultaneously commit to making improvements in all areas. By listening, respecting, and responding to the voices of students, educators can create learning environments that will allow students to reach their fullest potential.

The 8 Conditions that support student aspirations and engagement—*Belonging, Heroes, Sense of Accomplishment, Fun & Excitement, Curiosity & Creativity, Spirit of Adventure, Leadership & Responsibility, and Confidence to Take Action*—need to be in place if schools are to foster students' ability to set and reach their goals. Yet, as the survey findings reveal, these Conditions are neither fully nor deeply integrated into our nation's schools. Moreover, many of the most important indicators of the Conditions show downward trends from early middle school into high school. Based on our findings in this report, along with our extensive work in schools across the country, we believe we may be seeing some evidence of an increasing reality that the inherited modes of doing school (e.g., grade-specific instruction, academic tracking, unidirectional knowledge transfer from teacher to student) may not adequately suit or serve the current generation of students. Thus, students' disaffection with school may be less about particular schools and particular teachers, and more about the structural underpinnings of an outdated educational system. At least this much is certain: If schools are to be places in which teaching and learning thrive and all students are meaningfully engaged, the realities of students' experiences in school must change. Listening to their voices can and should be the first step.

As educators dedicated to positive reform in today's schools, it is our responsibility to explore in depth these *My Voice* data so that we can fully understand and appreciate how students perceive their learning environments. In doing so, we will gain insight into students' fears, frustrations, hopes, and dreams. Only then can we honor and validate student voice, and be better prepared to make necessary changes in the teaching and learning environment—changes that ensure all schools promote all students' self-worth, active engagement in the learning process, and sense of purpose.

Table of Results for all My Voice Statements: Total Agreement, Agreement by Gender, and Agreement by Grade Level

BELONGING	Total	Male	Female	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th
School is a welcoming and friendly place.	66%	66%	66%	73%	67%	63%	66%	63%	65%	66%
I feel accepted for who I am at school.	74%	76%	72%	78%	74%	72%	73%	72%	74%	75%
Teachers make an effort to get to know me.	56%	58%	54%	70%	61%	56%	51%	48%	49%	54%
I have difficulty fitting in at school.	17%	17%	17%	22%	19%	17%	16%	16%	14%	14%
Teachers care about my problems and feelings.	49%	48%	50%	64%	54%	47%	43%	41%	43%	47%
I am proud of my school.	55%	54%	56%	68%	58%	50%	57%	48%	48%	49%
I am a valued member of my school community.	47%	46%	47%	55%	49%	46%	42%	41%	44%	47%
I think bullying is a problem at my school.	45%	42%	48%	54%	51%	47%	42%	41%	37%	36%
HEROES	Total	Male	Female	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th
Students respect teachers.	41%	44%	39%	51%	42%	39%	36%	35%	39%	43%
My parents care about my education.	96%	95%	96%	97%	97%	96%	95%	94%	94%	93%
I have a teacher who is a positive role model for me.	74%	71%	77%	79%	72%	69%	69%	71%	77%	80%
Teachers care about me as an individual.	53%	53%	54%	64%	55%	52%	48%	46%	50%	56%
Teachers care if I am absent from school.	47%	46%	47%	55%	48%	44%	44%	42%	44%	48%
If I have a problem, I have a teacher with whom I can talk.	54%	52%	56%	62%	54%	52%	48%	49%	55%	59%
Teachers respect students.	61%	60%	61%	74%	65%	58%	57%	53%	55%	57%
Students respect each other.	34%	37%	30%	39%	33%	32%	33%	30%	33%	35%
SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT	Total	Male	Female	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th
I am encouraged to practice good citizenship at school.	78%	76%	80%	86%	82%	78%	75%	73%	74%	74%
Teachers recognize students who are kind and helpful.	75%	75%	75%	82%	76%	73%	72%	71%	73%	75%
I have never been recognized for something positive at school.	20%	22%	19%	22%	20%	19%	22%	21%	20%	20%
I give up when schoolwork is difficult.	16%	17%	16%	12%	14%	16%	19%	20%	20%	17%
Teachers recognize me when I try my best.	61%	61%	62%	70%	64%	60%	59%	56%	59%	60%
Teachers let my parents know what I do well.	50%	52%	49%	70%	59%	51%	45%	40%	39%	37%
I put forth my best effort at school.	75%	70%	80%	86%	81%	76%	73%	70%	68%	67%
Getting good grades is important to me.	90%	86%	93%	94%	91%	89%	89%	87%	87%	86%
FUN & EXCITEMENT	Total	Male	Female	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th
I enjoy being at school.	51%	47%	55%	58%	52%	48%	52%	47%	48%	48%
Teachers enjoy working with students.	63%	63%	63%	74%	65%	60%	59%	56%	60%	63%
Teachers make school an exciting place to learn.	39%	40%	39%	56%	44%	37%	35%	30%	33%	36%
School is boring.	46%	50%	41%	34%	42%	47%	47%	53%	53%	50%
I enjoy participating in my classes.	63%	62%	65%	73%	66%	61%	61%	58%	60%	63%
Teachers have fun at school.	45%	46%	44%	55%	48%	45%	42%	38%	40%	44%
Learning can be fun.	69%	66%	73%	73%	67%	65%	67%	68%	72%	76%

CURIOSITY & CREATIVITY	Total	Male	Female	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th
I feel comfortable asking questions in class.	67%	69%	64%	69%	67%	65%	64%	64%	67%	71%
My teachers present lessons in different ways.	75%	75%	75%	84%	79%	74%	73%	70%	71%	72%
At school I am encouraged to be creative.	66%	63%	68%	78%	71%	66%	63%	58%	59%	60%
I enjoy working on projects with other students.	70%	70%	71%	77%	75%	73%	69%	66%	65%	64%
My classes help me understand what is happening in my everyday life.	43%	44%	42%	56%	49%	43%	40%	37%	37%	38%
School inspires me to learn.	62%	59%	66%	74%	65%	60%	60%	56%	57%	57%
I enjoy learning new things.	79%	77%	81%	81%	77%	75%	77%	78%	82%	83%
I learn new things that are interesting to me at school.	70%	69%	73%	79%	72%	68%	69%	67%	68%	68%
What I learn in school will benefit my future.	79%	77%	81%	87%	83%	79%	78%	74%	73%	73%
SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE	Total	Male	Female	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th
I like challenging assignments.	39%	37%	40%	44%	38%	36%	34%	35%	40%	45%
I push myself to do better academically.	82%	78%	85%	87%	84%	82%	81%	79%	79%	78%
Students are supportive of each other.	42%	42%	43%	48%	42%	41%	41%	39%	41%	44%
I am afraid to try something if I think I may fail.	27%	24%	29%	28%	27%	26%	30%	28%	25%	22%
Teachers help me learn from my mistakes.	64%	65%	64%	78%	69%	64%	60%	57%	58%	59%
I want to do my best at school.	87%	83%	92%	93%	90%	87%	87%	86%	85%	82%
I am excited to tell my friends when I get good grades.	60%	54%	67%	71%	65%	60%	58%	57%	55%	51%
LEADERSHIP & RESPONSIBILITY	Total	Male	Female	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th
Students have a voice in decision making at school.	44%	43%	44%	58%	49%	43%	44%	36%	36%	34%
I see myself as a leader.	65%	65%	65%	66%	63%	64%	64%	64%	67%	68%
Other students see me as a leader.	37%	36%	38%	36%	34%	36%	36%	37%	40%	43%
Teachers encourage students to make decisions.	71%	70%	72%	78%	73%	70%	70%	67%	68%	69%
Teachers are willing to learn from students.	50%	49%	50%	63%	55%	49%	46%	41%	43%	44%
I am a good decision maker.	70%	69%	70%	70%	68%	68%	68%	69%	72%	73%
I know the goals my school is working on this year.	48%	47%	48%	60%	53%	48%	43%	40%	42%	40%
CONFIDENCE TO TAKE ACTION	Total	Male	Female	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th
I believe I can be successful.	93%	93%	94%	94%	93%	93%	93%	92%	94%	94%
I believe I can make a difference in this world.	69%	66%	72%	70%	66%	67%	68%	69%	71%	73%
Teachers believe in me and expect me to be successful.	74%	73%	76%	81%	76%	74%	71%	70%	72%	73%
Going to college is important for my future.	89%	86%	92%	91%	91%	89%	89%	87%	89%	87%
I work hard to reach my goals.	83%	80%	86%	89%	85%	82%	82%	80%	81%	81%
I am excited about my future.	84%	81%	87%	86%	84%	83%	83%	81%	84%	86%
I think it is important to set high goals.	82%	79%	85%	85%	82%	80%	82%	81%	83%	83%
I know the kind of person I want to become.	79%	77%	82%	81%	78%	78%	78%	78%	81%	82%
School is preparing me well for my future.	70%	68%	72%	81%	75%	70%	70%	64%	63%	61%

QUAGLIA INSTITUTE FOR STUDENT ASPIRATIONS

29 FALMOUTH STREET
PORTLAND, ME 04103

WWW.QISA.ORG



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