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# Current Conditions

## Your Aspiration Communication

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“Life is either a daring adventure or nothing.” --Helen Keller

Teaching a classroom of diverse students is a challenge. For example, we know some students love to read aloud in class; so much so that they count the number of paragraphs during an oral reading assignment, hoping there will be enough for them to have a turn. Others are counting trying to decide the right time to ask to go to the bathroom to get out of the assignment. In between are students silently rehearsing, only half attentive to the others. How do we design classroom assignments that appropriately challenge all learners, pulling some from their comfort zones and others from their panic zone? How do we provide an environment where it is safe to fail or to succeed?



### **CONDITION OF THE MONTH: SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE**

The ability to take on positive, healthy challenges at school or home, with family and friends.

#### 5 Strategies for Promoting Spirit of Adventure

- ✓ Have students share how various assignments make them feel—comfortable, panicked, or challenged.
- ✓ Find out what fears your students have overcome.
- ✓ Share with your students a recent challenge you have undertaken.
- ✓ Provide a variety of assessment options and allow your students to select one they are challenged by.
- ✓ Conduct a week’s worth of classes with a method outside your comfort zone—let your students know you are doing this.

#### 2007 My Voice© Surveys

##### **For Consideration and Conversation**

On the *My Voice© Survey*, seventy-three percent (73%) of high school students agreed with the statement "I push myself to do better academically." One out of four (24%) reported that they are afraid to try something if they think they may fail.

- ◆ How does fear affect your students’ ability to push themselves to improve?
- ◆ What strategies have you found most effective for putting students at ease with assignments they find difficult?

*E-mail your Spirit of Adventure stories, thoughts, or ideas to [qisa@qisa.org](mailto:qisa@qisa.org)*

# Aspirations in Action

## An Adventure in Community Care

Taking a risk and stepping out your comfort zone means different things to different people.

Educators can expand opportunities for students to take healthy risks by considering the community around them. For a group of fourth and fifth graders in Winterport, Maine exhibiting *Spirit of Adventure* includes volunteering at a local food pantry. The volunteer activity actually



evolved from an on-going leadership project. Everyday students at the Smith school collect unused milk and food items. These items are then donated to local food pantries. Although the act of collecting milk involved lots of effort and work, it did not actually challenge the students to think differently or think beyond the action itself to the

people being served. To help the students fully participate in a learning process that challenged their thinking as well as their effort, Maureen Ferriter, the school guidance counselor, arranged for students and interested adult volunteers to help at a pantry. The volunteer service included sorting groceries, as well as serving food.

The students discovered that getting involved in community service and immersing themselves in social issues can be intimidating, strange, and confusing. Stepping out of their everyday routines and stepping into an unfamiliar world in their own backyard was healthy risk taking. Students were challenged to think about how and why people end up hungry and to empathize with the children they saw receiving a hot meal. A lesson worth learning!

