

National Catholic Center *for* Student Aspirations

Assumption College

Rationale: Aspirations and Catholic Schools

Jacob had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

--Genesis 28:12

Grounded in Assumption College's mission to prepare men and women of competence, character and Christian compassion, the National Catholic Center for Student Aspirations (NCCSA) is dedicated to the continued growth and deepening significance of Catholic education and schooling. By improving teaching and learning environments in order for students to reach their dreams and lifelong aspirations, the NCCSA extends the college's desire for its students to "Learn. Achieve. Contribute." into the wider educational community.

Dreams, both sleeping and waking, have figured prominently in the story of people of faith. From the dream of Abraham and Sarah to establish a family in a new land who would worship one God to the dream of Joseph and Mary of Nazareth to consider being part of a new understanding of God's presence—the aspirations of God's people have shaped our beliefs and our culture. The people of God continue to aspire towards God's reign. Until that time of profound peace, freedom, and justice for all, we remain a pilgrim people. Ever on the way, education is central to who we are and are becoming.

All education, secular as well as religious, is ultimately a transcendent activity. People are led out of themselves into higher and still higher viewpoints and ways of being. Aspiration—the desire to understand, to know, to do, and to be more than we are—is the driving force of all learning. An essential feature of student aspirations is the ability to dream about the future and have the confidence to act in the present to achieve those dreams.

The National Catholic Center for Student Aspirations studies and promotes the conditions in schools that promote student aspirations. In particular, the NCCSA relies on a body of research that has identified Eight Conditions—Belonging, Heroes, Sense of Accomplishment, Fun & Excitement, Curiosity & Creativity, Spirit of Adventure, Leadership & Responsibility, and Confidence to Take Action—that cultivate aspirations in schools. Working with teachers, administrators, students, and parents the NCCSA helps schools learn about the Eight Condition and develop plans for school change guided by the Eight Conditions.

Central to NCCSA's work is the voice of students. The NCCSA is committed to the belief that for learning to be meaningful to students, students must have a meaningful say in what goes on in their schools. The NCCSA is committed to assisting schools in providing all the participants of education with a voice.