



Let Them
Speak!

HOW STUDENT VOICE
CAN TRANSFORM
YOUR SCHOOL

Implementation Guide

Rebecca Coda & Rick Jetter

Let Them Speak!

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**This companion implementation guide for
Let Them Speak! How Student Voice Can Transform Your School
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THE LET THEM SPEAK! PROJECT

Student Voice Implementation Guide

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Why Should I Let Students Speak?

As citizens of the world ...

“We must buck up and allow our students to tell us things that we might take the wrong way or become upset about and then label those things as helpful to our growth, not crippling to our egos.” (p. 54)

....because our future world depends upon THEM!

Q&A



Isn't this Treason? Why should I turn my classroom or program over to students?

It's about transforming teaching and learning and creating a partnership with the students in our community. By better understanding the millions of day-to-day small and large impacts that we can have on our students, both intentionally and inadvertently, we can cause incredible changes to our systems. Requesting communicative feedback from students about the conditions of organizations will breed a healthier and more dynamic community environment. When students know that we are honored to have their feedback, entire school communities and organizations can move forward in new and amazing directions. We have a duty to explicitly teach students about the process of looking at problems from all angles, and it doesn't necessarily mean that we "give everyone everything that they want" at any time. Teachers and organization leaders will always be role models. Our students are always watching us. One of the main differences between being an exceptional educator and being an average educator is choosing to listen to our students. We invite others to argue this point with their colleagues who are not believers in student voice. It is our job to cultivate the naysayers and convert educators with passion and kindness. So, why not go for it!

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When am I supposed to find the time? This will only create more work.

Student voice isn't a program. Student voice is a belief system and a way to connect with students to adapt to their human and learning needs. Students hold essential information that could help ease their student anxieties, as well as pressures on teachers and organizational leaders--during any learning process. The key is making a commitment to extract that information for the greater good of a system, nation, and global community. If we allow our students to reveal what they like, dislike, don't understand, or find frustrating, it will only save time and frustration for everyone working hard within our school systems as we make meaningful adjustments to our programs that will better serve students. Sometimes what we think might be a silly issue within our organizations causes our students incredible anxiety. That anxiety can manifest into ill feelings toward learning and as a result, have an incredible [negative impact] on their achievement. It may save time, in the end, if we shoulder the burden of creating relationship-based interactions, planning lessons, and meeting goals WITH our students. That is a foundational reason why we created this document in the first place.



My biggest fear is losing control and the students already think they are in charge. This will only add fuel to their misbehavior. Why would I give them even more power and have them perceive me as weak?

“Student empowerment is not about teacher domination of the classroom; it is about guiding students, but still allowing them to learn and grow on their own.”--Grace Ghali

One of the most detrimental student “triggers” is disrespect. One of the easiest ways we can empower students is through voice activation. Student voice is meant to be a proactive measure, not a knee-jerk reaction when things don't go well within our organizations. Students can empower us to make an even bigger difference than we are already making if we simply ask for their input and . . .

Let Them Speak!



This sounds great but my district/organization runs such a tight ship and if I am off script in my lesson implementation I may get reprimanded.

Transforming teaching and organizational community practice means taking time to understand what student voice means and why it is important. Learning is an “anytime and anywhere” ideal. If we are to create critical thinking, creativity, and effective collaboration skills with a global citizen mindset, fully understanding student voice will become the way we do business as a capable and responsible global citizen--rather than view it as a program or strategy. Injecting student voice into your already established programming is a way to see if improvements can be made within the constructs of your already established framework or expectations. And, giving students a voice and choice within your system of such strict programming or pacing guides will have lasting effects on your relationship with your students and your students’ relationships with their school or organization.



My colleagues will resent me if I give students any control. How am I supposed to give students a voice when it will cause dysfunction on my team?

Sometimes, adults clog up the system or make learning harder and more complicated than it needs to be. This is why student voice is so vital to solving school-wide and even global challenges. In many cases, it seems like the obvious answer or missing ingredient could be student voice or input; yet we often miss it completely. Incorporating student voice is not easy. It can be uncomfortable and educators have often been too scared to deal with it because accessing student voice has to do with power dynamics. If adults feel that they need to be in control, that they are to have the power because they possess the advanced degrees for teaching and certification, then we are miserably failing our students because schooling is not about the adults. (p. 6).

There are leaders and educators who view students as just that: students (who know their place and need to listen to the professionally certified adults). Then there are leaders and educators who view students as clients, customers of education that their parents (the taxpayers) are purchasing from them. We owe students incredible experiences, or we should be giving our funding sources (the taxpayers and parents) their money back! (p. 8).



My administrators would never go for this. How can I give students a voice if my leadership team is not invested?

Stories evoke emotion. Collecting student narratives move people. Grassroots movements can work. It doesn't have to be a top-down effort to make a positive impact. We must become such a loud and positive grassroots movement of listening to student voice that the community cannot help but notice our schools' improvements. We believe in altering the perceptions of educators no matter what title or position they hold. Adults have different perceptions about education and sometimes those don't match our students' innovative and complex viewpoints. We stress a great deal of importance on collecting student voice artifacts which are, essentially, narratives that consist of their thoughts and ideas, their perceptions, and advice. When others read what students write about, we have found that adults will not turn their backs on genuine, heart-felt insights from our students. And, if they turn their backs on such authentic sentiments from the students that they serve, then shame on them. The leadership problems, of such a system, are deeper than simply believing in student voice. Adult egos drive the decisions and we want to ask you: "Is this a fair and equitable educational model for our students to reside in?"



When does student voice become a movement?

A movement is a collection of small, daily reformations that collectively add up to the way we do business for a longer period of time. The power to create positive change towards fulfilling major [and powerful] global goals is a **movement** and movements are meant to cause REAL change! Grassroots movements begin at the ground level and sometimes begin in isolated communities or within isolated circumstances. Yet, they have the MOST power to ignite and grow, virally. No matter the magnitude of the initial impact on a localized system, every action matters when we are working towards the sustainable development of global happiness.

“Be genuine. Be remarkable. Be worth connecting with.”

-Seth Godin



The Statistics

Only 47% of students think that they have a voice in the decision-making that takes place at their school.

Only 52% of students believe teachers are willing to learn from them.

When students have a voice they are seven times more likely to be academically motivated.

The Truth About Student Voice NAESP Table

<https://www.naesp.org/sites/default/files/StudentVoiceTable.pdf>

Only 78% of students at elementary schools feel engaged.

Only 59% of students at middle schools feel engaged.

Only 60% of students at high school feel engaged.

Only 74% of female students take pride in their school work.

Only 66% of male students take pride in their school work.

Only 44% of students who identify as LGBTQ take pride in their school work.

Only 47% of secondary students feel that what they're learning in class helps them outside of school.

Only 52% of students enjoy coming to school most of the time.

Youth Truth Survey

<http://youthtruthsurvey.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/YouthTruth-Learning-from-Student-Voice-Student-Engagement.pdf>

Only 86% of students say they come to class ready and willing to learn.

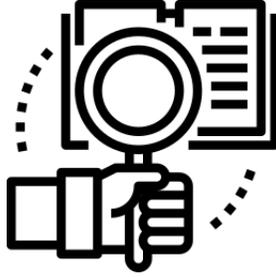
Only 38% of students report that their classes help them understand what is happening in their everyday lives.

Only 57% of students agree that school inspires them to learn.

99% of teachers and 65% of students believe learning can be fun.

The Quaglia Institute

http://quagliainstitute.org/dmsView/School_Voice_Report_2016



The Research

Research shows that student engagement is an important component of a positive school culture and is necessary for driving academic achievement. The first step in understanding and prioritizing student engagement is to measure it somehow. Without such a measurement, educators are limited to lagging indicators like grades and attendance, which are much less useful once the student has stopped turning in assignments or even attending school. Asking [and truly listening to] what students have to say about what engages them as learners is an important tool for understanding where to target school-wide improvements. Anonymous feedback from all students, that is delivered to educators in an efficient, effective, and affordable way [in order to gather insights that make a difference in building a positive and engaging culture of learning] is crucial for sustainable change.

Youth Truth Survey

<http://youthtruthsurvey.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/YouthTruth-Learning-from-Student-Voice-Student-Engagement.pdf>

The progression of over 30 years of research and fieldwork on voice and aspirations has led to the School Voice Model, which represents a dynamic process that allows all stakeholders in the school community to develop their voice in such a way that it is heard, respected, and valued.

Encouraging students and teachers to have more of a voice in schools and preparing adults and administrators to be genuinely open to listening to, learning from, and leading with those voices in mind is the key to meaningful and sustainable whole school change. As we will see in the Odds Analyses below, having a voice makes positive contributions to self-worth, engagement, and purpose. These factors dramatically improve academic motivation in students and in teachers, positively impacts effort and self-efficacy. A challenge to this, however, is that far too few students and teachers believe that THEY have a voice in their school decision-making system. Just forty-four percent (44%) of students believe students have a voice in decision making. And less than half (48%) of teachers agree that they “have a voice in

decision making at their school.” This sad similarity suggests that systems for pushing information, insights, and opinions “up” through the communication channels in a school are either lacking, ineffective, or unintentionally responsible for helping the masses acquire a voice. In focus groups, an “inner 17 circle” exists when it comes to acquiring teacher voice or a traditional, typically non-representative, student leadership system (e.g., student council) when it comes to activating any type of meaningful student voice participation. The lack of voice among students is corroborated by the fact that only 43% of students feel that adults listen to students’ suggestions. Similarly the percentage of students who believe adults and students work together to make school better (50%), find solutions to school problems (46%), and develop programs that improve the whole school (43%) all which hover at the halfway percentage points. All of these indicators also show a steady student voice and school investment decline from 6th grade to 12th grade. It is no wonder that some students describe school in as “factories,” “I’m just a number, here” or “prisons.” (p. 16-17)

The Quaglia Institute

http://quagliainstitute.org/dmsView/School_Voice_Report_2016

**Any problem, any
issue, any quandary,
or any adversity can
always be solved with
a little student-voice
elbow grease.**

What is Student Voice? What isn't Student Voice?

What is Student Voice?

In its most simplistic form, student voice is the practice of listening to the personal stories and viewpoints in order to improve the quality of student learning experiences.

Casually and organically listening to students on their turfs and writing down their advice or insights is a huge step in the right direction. However, using students' thoughts as tools to solve *real* problems in school, in our communities, and in our world is what can be most powerfully activated as a result of this movement. School reform cannot take place in the absence of student perspective and the opportunity to voice their stake in the change process.

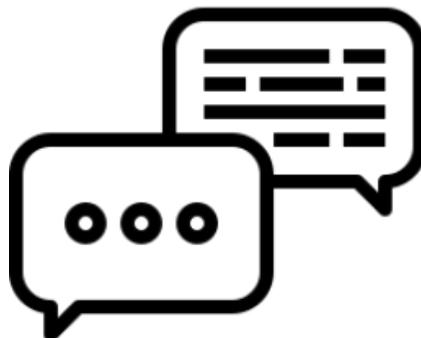
Talking with students about our schools and then working together through obstacles, can help to make our schools better TOGETHER. Being an approachable leader is the entry point into taking action about what kids tell us they need from their schools, teachers, and us.

Fostering an environment in which students are trusted and valued enough to provide feedback about school is essential. When any issue surfaces, and a student articulates a meaningful perspective, we talk about it and have them write down their thoughts [without the formality of structured writing assignments].

A comfort zone can be created for students where their voices are heard, valued, and respected about anything--so long as we teach them that solving a problem or looking at a situation is multidimensional, not acute, swift, or always easy.

Approaches for Fostering Student Voice

- Student perception surveys
 - Written anonymous feedback
 - Asking students for feedback on a lesson
 - Students sitting on the school board
 - Student planning teams
 - Student interview committees
 - Extending a conversation to a written artifact
 - Meeting students on their turf ecosystems in order to discuss what they want to discuss
 - Actively listening to students anytime, anywhere
 - Facilitating a respectful discussion about a problem or conundrum
 - Developing culture
 - Actively teaching diversity
 - Discussing equity
 - Teaching ethics through examples and outcomes
 - Modeling a democracy-based-classroom
 - Offering student choice-boards and menus
 - Student council voice teams
 - Policy and procedural reviews and audits
 - Curriculum planning and delivery
 - Plant management and beautification
 - Community involvement
 - Fundraising ideas
 - Service projects
 - Programming and course elective designs
- ... AND MUCH MUCH MORE!



THE LET THEM SPEAK! PROJECT



What isn't Student Voice Activation?

- *Lord of the Flies* anarchy.
- This is not a formalized writing project.
- This is not a series of uncomfortable forced conversations.
- This is not a movement to help the adults feel better about themselves.
- This is not a partial movement.
- This is not a flavor of the day program or initiative that will disappear.
- Students should not be involved in confidential or personnel issues.



Questions to Ponder

- Do the students at your school or organization willingly share their thoughts and opinions about the happenings within your four walls?
- Are they willing to have an off-the-clock type of conversation with you?
- What if students knew that you were on their turf to ask them a ton of questions about their school and/or community as their advocate to empower their point of views?
- What if they knew you wanted to improve the social dynamics and access to learning in all aspect of their lives?



The Let Them Speak! Project

A Note to Our Facilitators

Thank you for your belief in democracy, equity, and advocacy of students. As a leader of student voice, we believe that YOU are a champion of our future and a gift to global citizenry. Until student voice is taken seriously by everyone as a common practice, becomes a household name, and acts as the underpinning of how we do business, our job will not be completed. As the co-founders of [Pushing Boundaries Consulting, LLC](#) we hold beliefs and high standards for how we facilitate, interact, and advocate for our students in pursuit of a shared partnership that embraces student voice, student choice, and student leadership as a partnership among educators and students. We believe in making our mark on the world by **CREATING UNITY** and **TAKING ACTION** as citizens of the world.

Our purpose extends far beyond schools and organizations to amplify happiness, gratitude & kindness for ALL. We applaud you for embarking on this journey, alongside us, as we push boundaries together, because . . . “our students are counting on US!”

Within this implementation guide, you will find attitudes and dispositions, beliefs, ideas, and examples of activities that will guide the successful launch, implementation, and sustainability of your school or community program within the framework of a student-voice-focused-agenda and comprehensive reform program. We invite you to put your own spin, personalization, and community voice into this project in order to make it your own. And even more selfishly, we hope that you will share your successes with us through video, blogs, vlogs, social media interaction, or through narrative collections written by your students with pen and paper! We are better together and can start chipping away at the [17 Global Goals](#) by demonstrating the many victories of

students and healthy systems being built FOR our students WITH them in a true respect-based partnership.

We encourage you to fully embrace the heart of the ***Let Them Speak! Project*** by not only listening and tackling school and community reform, but to always narrativize the actual words of our students, verbatim. Think of their writing as an informal transcription of their deepest thoughts and ideas, rather than an essay project. As you meet students on THEIR turfs or students meet with other students on THEIR turfs, please always narrativize the issues in THEIR words and read aloud student narratives before bringing solutions to the table. The power of reform is in the emotional impact, emotional responses, and honoring the purpose of THEIR “told” stories through oral and written communications that can be archived so others can learn and grow. Their perceptions matter most!

You can be as involved and organized with the ***Let Them Speak! Project*** as you wish, or it can be organic and as simple as committing time on THEIR turfs by talking with students with a bag of Skittles in hand. See this as a friendly conversational sharing of candy, not bribery to get them to talk with you. In fact, this is how the project started years ago on a playground in North Tonawanda, NY where Rick was an Elementary Principal. While we do not identify with bribing students with sugary sweets, one thing we know for sure is that without checking in with our clients and meeting their needs, we will never fully rise to our highest potential as becoming happy, thriving, successful communities of people producing high academic achievement for all. We must first meet them where they are at. We think audaciously, we believe fervently, and we dream through a global lens with a purpose of equilibrium of world-wide happiness. We are humbled and grateful that you chose to join us on this journey of positive school improvement and grassroots reformation. By downloading this guide, you are one step closer to joining the massive reform that we are hoping for . . . “because our world is counting on US!”

Our Beliefs

Disrupting the Status Quo: We believe that the leaders of student voice are *disruptors*. This is an inadvertent byproduct of becoming a *real* change agent. For many people, change is uncomfortable; utilizing a heuristic approach of treading on the “unknown” seems reckless to some. Changing mindsets requires a deep-rooted understanding and as a leader of student voice, you WILL be disrupting the status quo. And when YOU disrupt the status quo, you will *ruffle feathers*. Knowing that you will face adversity in many forms will prepare you for any backlash from naysayers. Be prepared and know that there WILL BE naysayers--sometimes, perhaps, down the hallway from you, in your very own office or administration building, board of education forum, grade level hallway, or leadership team--and know that we need YOU to stand STRONG! Some naysayers will be vocal naysayers; some will be passive, quiet, and covert. But, nevertheless . . . STAY resilient and strong!

Transparency: As a disruptor, it is even more important to be *transparent*. Transparency breeds *trust*. Transparency is within your realm of control and offers reassurance and predictability. By giving stakeholders and the community a window into the inner workings of a healthy system, vision and goals, trust will demonstrate a sound process that you are adhering to. The greater the *transparency*, the greater the *trust*. And, student voice initiatives will tolerate nothing less but 100% trust from the adults who plant seeds to make this movement come alive in so many areas of the world.

Kind Communication: Effective communicators are well-planned, positively screened by a colleague, and *intentional in what they set out to do*. Student voice leaders aim to convert others, but with kindness and while modeling partnership ideals and standards. Solid and thoughtful communication is part of being transparent and it is also linked closely with trust. Considering all points of view prior to sending out invitations, emails, or postings on social media is crucial to fostering such incredibly responsible and professional communications. Disrupting the status quo is difficult enough, as it is, and we must err on the side of kindness and thoughtfulness when communicating school, district, or community happenings. As a voice activator, every word and communication can easily be spun or misinterpreted because everything we say matters. Take that extra minute to run everything in writing by a mentor, administrator, or colleague to ensure the highest level of positive intent, language, and messaging. Take that extra minute to speak to a close confidant about what you want

to say to another colleague or at a meeting. GET feedback and always err on the side of extreme professionalism even when you feel that your naysayers do not value children. Stay calm, collected, and positive at all times.

Everyone Matters: We believe that the most challenging students, parents, or community members may often times be the ones who deserve a voice of understanding early on. As we aim to not “muffle” student voice, we cannot become hypocritical by “muffling” adult voices at the same time. Emotions can easily come into play and as leaders of student voice, we must embrace a disposition of de-escalation, restorative justice, kindness, understanding, and a belief that when people are at their worst, they matter even more because every positive cultivation is a victory waiting to happen. Listening will always prevail over drowning others out. Within an age of social media, this becomes even more delicate to handle and manage. At the heart of our movement, uniting everyone as partners in delivering the highest quality school experience to our students, is what matters most. Unifying anyone at any time is always a win. Unifying students in an integrated platform is also an enormous win.

There is a Gap Between Education & Industry: We must prepare for the global workforce of tomorrow. Our standards, assessments, and frameworks within education do not give our students the fuel that they might need to propel into the workforce with a globally competent mindset. The range of skills demanded in the workplace today transcend further than the experiences students are exposed to within our classrooms. We must listen to the voices of our students and their dreams, hopes, and wishes for the future in order to help bridge the gap between the demands within education and the reality of their future selves. Student voice is THE conduit and open door to bridging the gap, authentically.

It's a Movement: Student voice isn't a program, a curriculum, or a trendy new buzzword on social media or being written about in books. It's a *movement* based on a democratic approach to changing the world for the better. It is the potential [and ultimate] pursuit of happiness for ALL when schools work alongside students to create even BETTER schools because of the adult/student partnership that can be created through such a student voice movement. Student voice has the power to influence how we teach in schools, how we interact within our communities, and how we empower youth to impact our future. It is a relentless dedication to continuously spreading the message that students are not our subordinates, but partners of equity and hope for change and reform. We want all students to live happy lives--not just in the future after graduation, but right now in their present lives.

The Let Them Speak! Project: Facilitators believe that student *plotlines* can be both heard and documented anytime when entering a student’s turf ecosystem. We believe in the power and simplicity of transformational narratives written by students and sharing powerful narratives with stakeholders to initiate deep-rooted and hearty change can be essential to sustained artifact creation that could help other school systems across the globe. We must read the narratives within ***Let Them Speak!*** and routinely examine plotlines in a similar fashion via the pursuit of self-reflection and the desire to eradicate the status quo. More information about the importance of artifact creation can be found here:

<https://medium.com/@richard.allen/disrupted-tv-magazine-3d13fb842392>

Leaders capture these voices in narratives and share them with stakeholders to reform our schools while pushing on the same old ways that we have historically conducted as the usual business of schooling. The project is simple: listen to our students, narrativize their stories to share with colleagues and stakeholder groups, make changes to improve relationships, embrace the experiences & the quality of learning, and co-create a bright and happy future for ALL!



LISTEN ON THEIR TURF



NARRATIVIZE THEIR WORDS



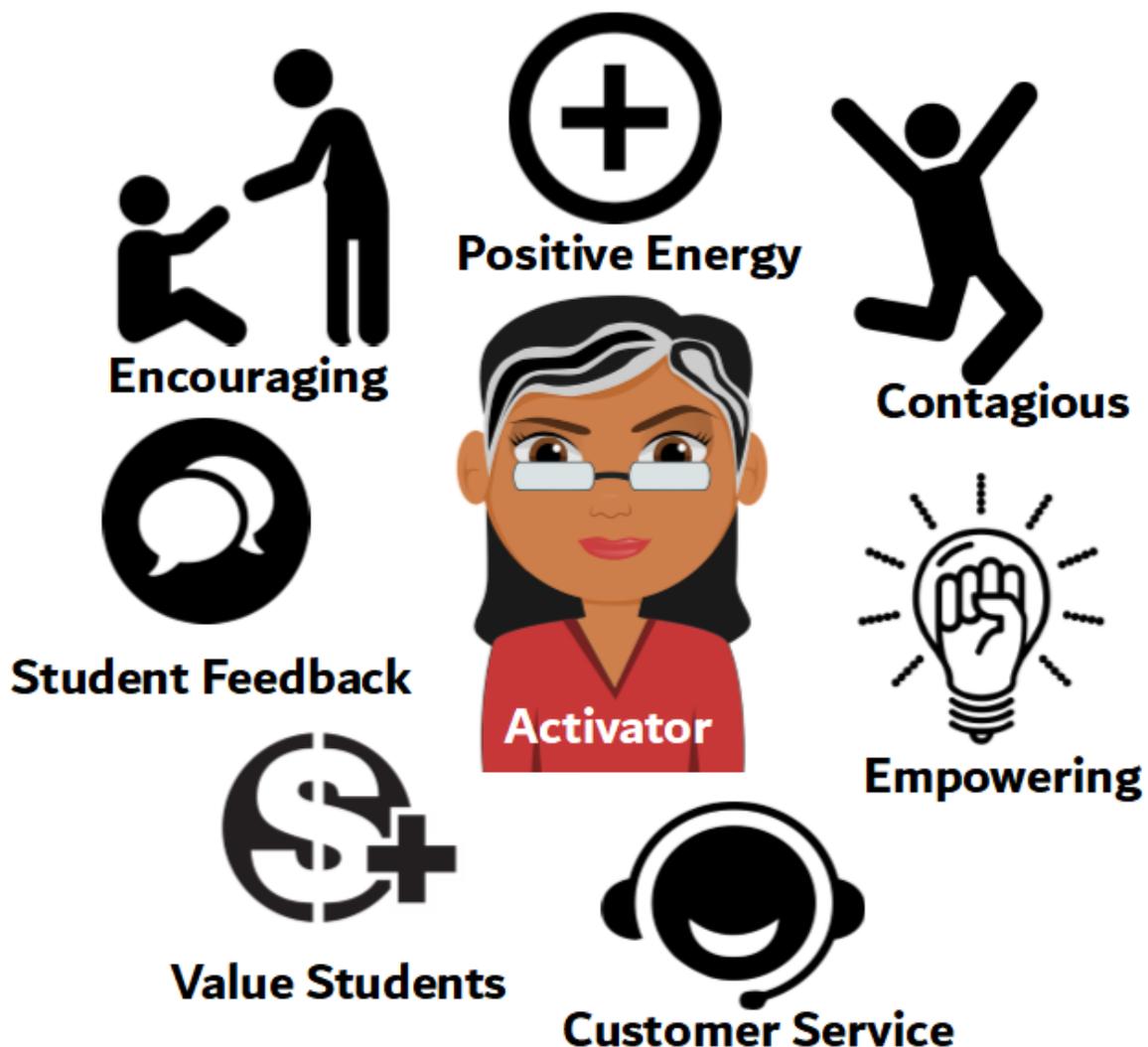
Voice Activators vs. Voice Mufflers

“There are varying opinions when it comes to empowering students as change agents within an educational setting. We contend that some adults muffle student voice while others activate positive change through encouragement. It’s not a matter of teachers being nice, kind, or relevant; it has more to do with how they accept students as stakeholders in teaching. Some educators silence student influence and might even believe adults exclusively hold the expertise in schools. Some view students as full participants in their own education who have the right to voice opinions. Both kinds of adults exist in schools, and unless you are tuned in, it might not be evident. Remember, when power is shared, our worlds can become unlocked.”

(p. 7 Let Them Speak!)

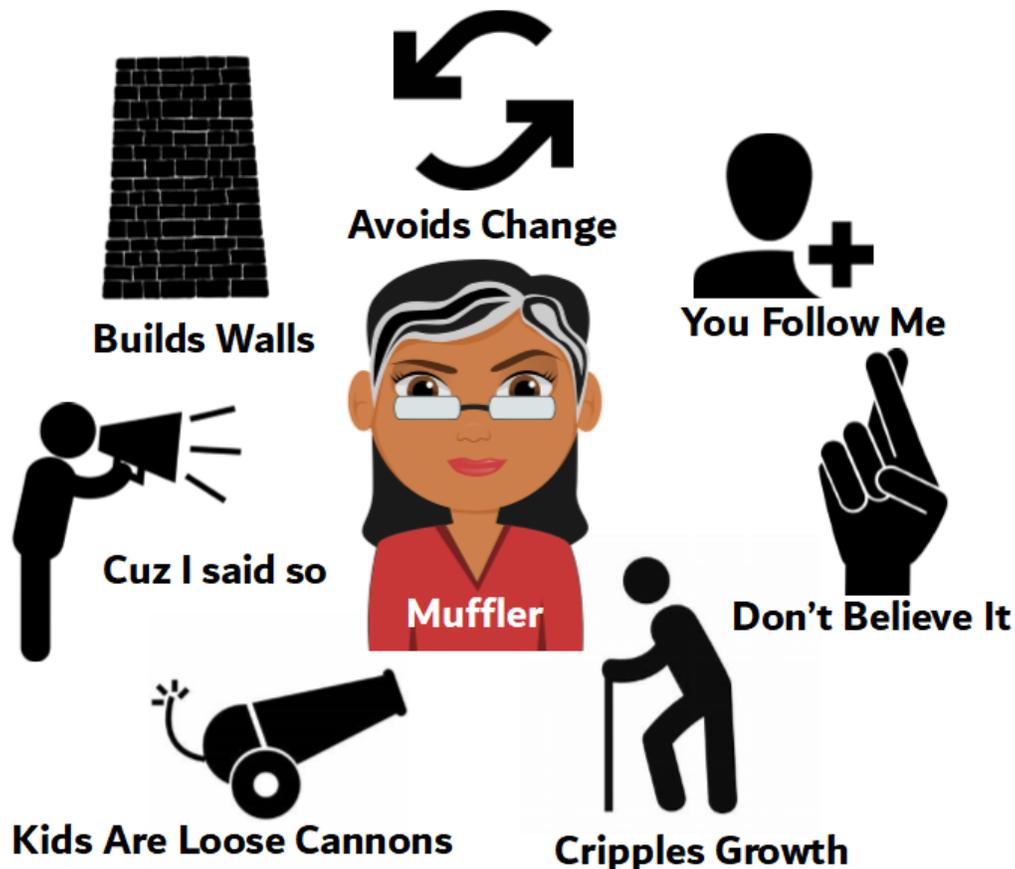
Voice Activators

Voice activators are easy to identify because their energy and excitement are contagious. They make students feel valued and they work hard to help everyone become successful in the classroom. Voice activators believe in encouraging student voice and providing the insights necessary to teach and lead with high-octane-impact. Voice activators believe students deserve good customer service, as educational clients, and believe in altering adult behavior, for the better, based on student feedback. Empowering students, to improve the system, is at the heart and intentions of a voice activator. (p. 8 *Let Them Speak!*)



Voice Mufflers

Voice mufflers are often those teachers and school leaders who don't believe that student voice has the power to improve anything. Or, they say student voice is important, but they cross their fingers, behind their backs, without truly acknowledging it--knowing they really aren't going to do anything about activating student voice. Voice mufflers will go on with their daily business of running their classrooms and schools the way that they want: *the adult way*. Maybe some educators even asked students to speak up about something, but then didn't like what they heard, so they let issues fall by the wayside. Some educators believe that kids are "loose cannons" and simply don't even know what's best for themselves. Others have grown complacent and want to avoid change at all costs, so they're not inclined to listen to student input. This type of "we-know-better-because-we-are-adults" mentality can really stifle our schools. This attitude is crippling because it builds a wall that stifles not only student personality and belonging, but also the school's overall ability to grow. Quite honestly, we think this attitude about our students and schools just plain STINKS! (p.7 *Let Them Speak!*)

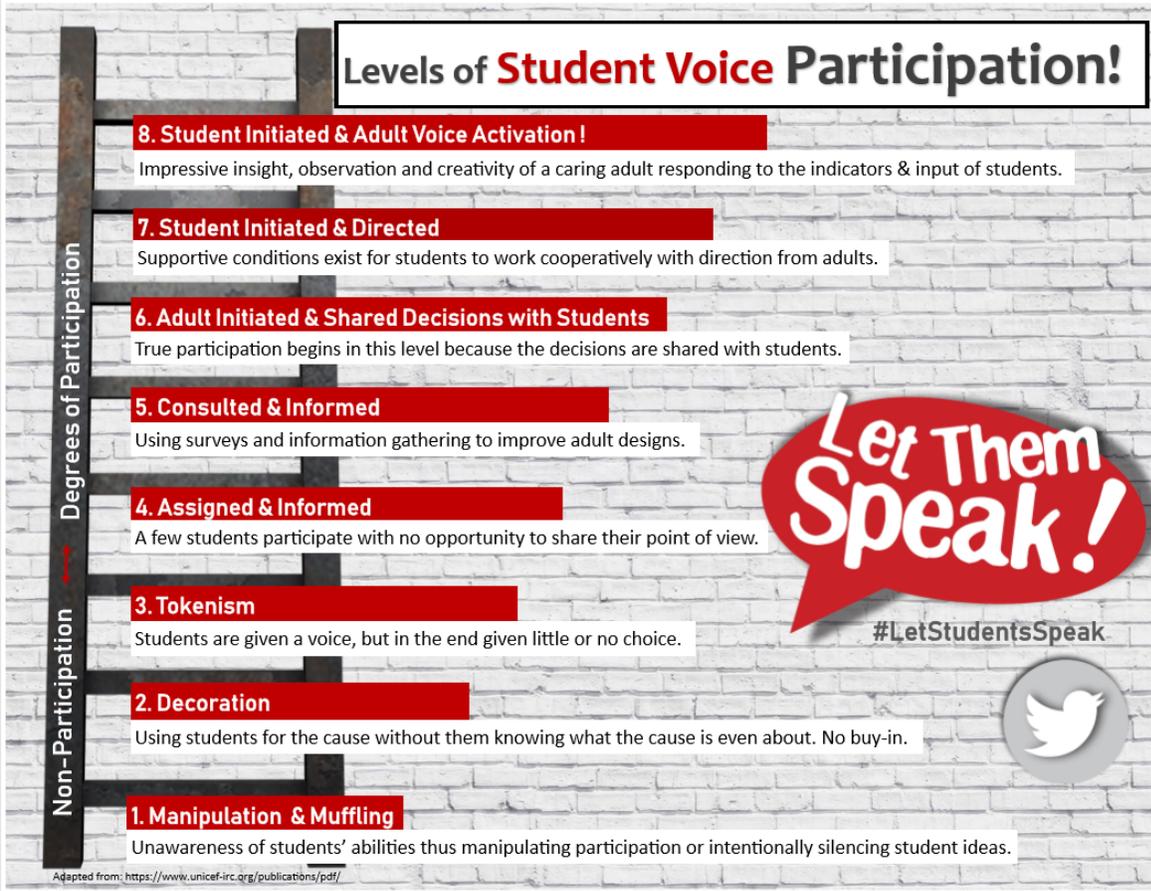


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Levels of Student Voice Participation

We can all find a starting place for implementing student voice. The levels of student voice participation range from non-participation all the way to powerful voice activation. As leaders of our youth, we all stand somewhere on this ladder. This ladder originated in 1969 when Sherry Arnstein published the article, “A Ladder of Citizen Participation.” Her paper was later adapted by UNICEF in 1992 entitled, “Children’s Participation, From Tokenism to Citizenship.”

In 2011, the founder of the Freechild Institute, Adam Fletcher, morphed this concept, yet again, as the Ladder of Youth Voice. One thing is for certain: leaders have been advocating for student voice, choice and rights for decades.



Appendix A

THE LET THEM SPEAK! PROJECT

Student Voice Self-Advocacy Behavioral Continuum

There is a metaphorical dial that can be turned in education from *treason* to *healthy treason*, from oppositional student behavior to self-advocacy, and even from a monarchy to a democratic learning environment. The Self-Advocacy Behavioral Continuum illustrates a range of attitudes and dispositions about adult power and empowering partnerships. Although we are sharing these levels to help self-identify and the levels of adult-student partnerships, it also helps us, as practitioners, to reflect on our own behaviors and set goals or next steps in our own individual and collective pursuits of empowering students to become leaders and advocates for themselves and their peers.

Releasing control can be very scary for adults--especially when they find opposition with students. This continuum is a tool to highlight and influence the correlation between our own behaviors and how adult behaviors impact students. The only way to reach a Level 4 (genuine voice activation) is by establishing an intentional forum to integrate shared-decision making with a focus on empowering students. Until students are respectfully vocal--which is an attribute of a true leader, students will not be taken seriously and, as a result, will become muffled and marginalized by the very adults that they should have a partnership with each day.

Let Them Speak! **Student Voice Self-Advocacy Behavioral Continuum**

TREASON ←-----→ HEALTHY TREASON

	LEVEL 1: Adult Power (no student voice exists)	LEVEL 2: Adult Control (asks for student voice, but doesn't utilize)	LEVEL 3: Adult and Student Relationship (seeks student voice, but only chooses what to include)	LEVEL 4: Adult and Student Partnership (a shared decision-making forum where adult leadership empowers student leadership)
	Voice Muffling			Voice Activating
Student Emotional Responses	Oppositional and angry or sad disposition.	Dismissive & compliant disposition.	Wondering and anticipating with disappointment disposition.	Understanding & mature disposition.
Student Actions	Defiant, mocking, rebellious, temper-laden responses & interactions.	Visible irritation & physical disengagement.	Hopefully constructive interactions with peers & adults.	Respectfully vocal, practical, mutual listener, astute, problem-solving actions.
Student Beliefs	Closed to progress. Sees system as adult driven and negligent of student interests or perceptions.	Skeptical of adult motives. Sees system as already established & decided.	Ponders great ideas hoping that they will be implemented and creates relevant positive change.	Embraces adult leadership as risk-takers knowing their own needs, desires, or perceptions will be considered.
Student Approaches	Aggressive and acute. Disrespectful in manner.	Respectful, but conservatively a disbeliever.	Provides input and authentically contributes for change without knowing outcome.	Self-induced self-advocacy based on authentic democratic school processes of student voice.

←----- OPPOSITIONAL |-----→ SELF-ADVOCACY

Appendix

The Student Perspective

Within each level on the *Student Voice Self-Advocacy Behavioral Continuum* are four attributes that collectively define each level. These attributes must all be in play in order to “level up” to greatness. Students are covertly assessing the level of adult power within each learning environment in order to determine whether or not student partnerships and empowerment exist. As adult leaders, we must intentionally examine our students’ emotional responses, actions, beliefs, and approaches in order to determine our efficacy as leaders.



Student Emotional Responses

There is a wide range of emotional responses and dispositions that students produce as a response to the level of partnerships and relationships that have been established.



Student Actions

Depending on the degree of student empowerment and partnerships, students display a wide-range of actions in response to their level of self-advocacy.



Student Beliefs

The perspective of our students and their beliefs play a monumental role in the level of opposition or self-advocacy that they display. The more that adults are seen as risk-takers, embracing student ideas, the greater chance there is for a balanced partnership between student and adult.



Student Approaches

The approach that students take can be negatively aggressive and acute in nature because of a disbelief in their leaders. Or, students can be resilient self-advocates authentically seeking to meet their own needs through a democratic process of student voice initiation.

Student Voice Level 1: Adult Power



Voice muffling not only still exists today, but it is oftentimes better masked or even hidden and ignored more so than it was years ago. As humans strive to be more politically correct in the modern age, aggressive behaviors can be perceived or viewed as *flawed*, so voice muffling has taken a more passive posture in the 21st Century for many adults. But, the same goes for students. Militant delivery can be very scary. Adult power, where no student voice exists, will be evident at this level. Here, you will visually see students display an oppositional, angry, and/or sad disposition as an emotional response to not getting something that they want. Students may also act defiant, mocking, rebellious, & temper-laden as a response to adult interactions which are demeaning. And, rightly so. Without using their words, they view the system as adult driven and negligent of student interests or perceptions. In response to not feeling respected as a student, students may approach interactions both aggressively and acutely disrespectful.

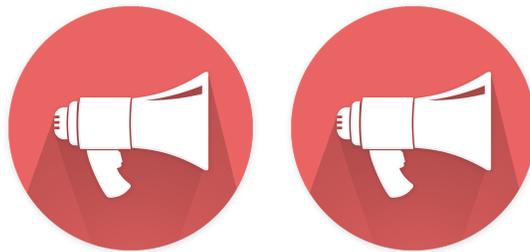
Examples to watch and listen for in adults:

- Teacher has an authoritarian “Because I said so” approach to instruction.
- Consequences posted in the room include punitive language.
- Teacher is the sage-on-the-stage in lecture mode with limited interactions.
- Detention, demerits, and consequences are frequent.
- Relationships and positive interactions are lacking or even missing.
- Students are not active participants in their learning and rarely volunteer or respond when asked a question about their own learning.
- There is no evidence of differentiation or the individualization of learning.
- Attempts to hide the true feelings or intentions to hold on to power might also be a strategy in order to pacify supervisors.

Examples to watch and listen for in students:

1. Students place their heads down on their desks and disengage in learning.
2. Students continually are “out of their seats,” causing distractions.
3. Loud noises are used purposely--so it audibly displays defiance or negligence.
4. Talking over the teacher exists as a regular student practice.

Student Voice Level 2: Adult Control



Voice muffling still exists today. Adult control is still in place but the teacher/leader is actively seeking student voice; yet, that teacher or leader really doesn't utilize it or know what to do with it. In this level, you will see students acting dismissive or compliant as an emotional response to this type of environment. You may see irritation and disengagement, but not overtly being actively defiant. Students see the system as already established and decided on and, therefore, are skeptically cemented about adult motives being self-serving motives. They want to believe that the adult is attempting to empower students, but nothing ever comes to fruition--on purpose. Students approach things respectfully, but deep down, they disbelieve that they really have a voice based on the outcomes of Level 2 being the same as Level 1.

Examples to watch and listen for in adults:

- Teacher makes promises without delivering results or following through with updates or status quo reports.
- Student input is actively surveyed, but without purpose, direction, or vision.
- Observable features elicit a talk-the-talk mentality without a walk-the-walk actionable result.

Examples to watch and listen for in students :

1. Student tries to offer or supply input or data for adult requests, but questions the system.
2. Cooperation might be evident, but respect is not evident.
3. Students talk behind the backs of adults because they see false claims and empty promises.
4. Perception of the system, as adult driven, makes little progress towards convincing students that a partnership exists between a student and adult learner.

Student Voice Level 3: Adult and Student Relationship



Voice muffling still exists. It is evident that the adult is student-driven and seeking a partnership through student voice, and the adult poses inquiries and listens, but in the end, the adult still chooses the direction and path for instruction and interactions. Students at this level watch, listen, hope and anticipate with wonder but often times are disappointed. This level differs from Level 2 in one major facet: Level 3 has a greater trust level of student interaction and adult cooperation ultimately remains broken in the end. At times, the adult takes student recommendations and ideas into consideration, but other times, it does not. Irregularity and inconsistency keeps students guessing. Student actions are positive and hopeful as they interact with adults and peers in a cordial and constructive manner. This level is laden with the hope and trust of respected educators and because the adult who is asking for any kind of input in some manner is also revered in some way, but listening and considering changes as a regular and active practice never truly surfaces. Consider this phase a “mirage.”

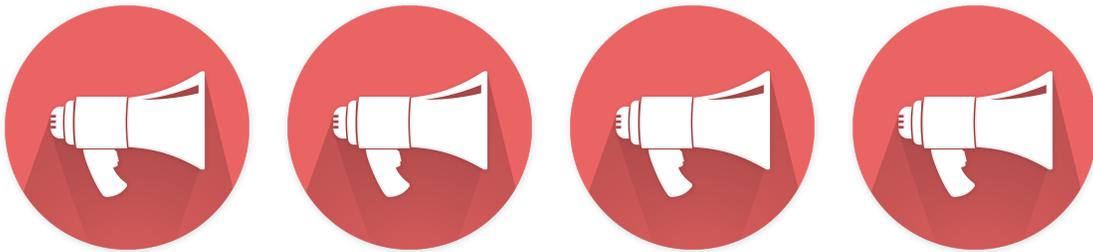
Examples to watch and listen for in adults:

- Teacher appears to have a strong relationship with students.
- Cooperation and respect is observable, but outcomes are still lacking.

Examples to watch and listen for in students :

- Student appears to have a strong relationship with teachers.
- Student might desire to please the teacher with offering input because of a cordial relationship.
- Student may end up in an emotional circle wondering what the teacher will do next.
- Wonder and hope results in constantly asking for follow-up questions for checking the status on a voice-activated initiative or project.

Student Voice Level 4: Adult and Student Partnership



Voice activation truly takes place! Adult and students are partners in shared decision-making where adult leadership empowers student leadership. Students have full control over their emotions by showing understanding and mature dispositions. Their actions can be viewed as vocally respectful, practical, actively listening, and solution-focused on the results that are demonstrative of problem-solving actions. Students believe their own needs, desires, and perceptions will be considered and as a result, students are willing to take risks. Students approach situations with self-initiated self-advocacy knowing that there is an authentic democratic process in place that empowers them to safely commit the perceived and actual “healthy treason” that enables systems to change for the better.

Examples to watch and listen for in adults:

- Teacher has an authentic input/outcome cycle that acts side-by-side with student interests.
- Seeking resolution and brainstorming ideas is collective and collaborative.
- Leadership training and mentorship exists.
- Models for students to actively participate are also assessed by both adults and students.

Examples to watch and listen for in students :

- Students manage voice mufflers within their own peer to peer ranks and actively recruit voice activators.
- Student democratic models act as ecosystems and mirrors of instructional and leadership mini-systems that work within the overall system of schooling.

Adult Perceptions of Student Voice Advocacy Behavioral Continuum

Adults are either voice mufflers or they are voice activators. Although there are varying levels of voice muffling, there is only one level of activating. Student voice activation is either present or it isn't and this is determined by adult behaviors, not student behaviors. To truly implement a democratic learning environment, an adult to student partnership must be present through adult emotional responses adult actions, adult beliefs and adult approaches actively sharing in decision-making where adult leadership ultimately empowers student leadership. It may be easier to place the blame on students not responding or students who can't be trusted, but ultimately, student voice activation lies in adult behaviors, not students' responses to such adult behaviors.

 **Adult Perceptions of Student Voice Advocacy Behavioral Continuum**

TREASON ← → HEALTHY TREASON

	LEVEL 1: Adult Power (no student voice exists)	LEVEL 2: Adult Control (asks for student voice, but doesn't utilize)	LEVEL 3: Adult and Student Relationship (seeks student voice, but only chooses what to include)	LEVEL 4: Adult and Student Partnership (a shared decision-making forum where adult leadership empowers student leadership)
	Voice Muffler			Voice Activator
Adult Emotional Responses	Egocentric, aloof, and closed-minded.	Deceptive, sneaky, and controlling.	Active, but skeptical.	Forward thinking and opposed to the status-quo model of education.
Adult Actions	Silencing, marginalizing, and dousing.	Looks for community blessing of doing good-will without implementing a true partnership with students.	Uses communication tools, but is ultimately passive with follow-through.	Supportive, constructive, and willing to take on issues from any constituent group.
Adult Beliefs	Closed to progress. Sees system as adult driven and views student interests or perceptions as only by-products of the system when students "don't like" something.	If students believe that they are partners, it will decrease motivation for schooling and turn power over from adult to child.	The goal of student input is helpful until it comes down to adult decision-making and final outcomes which should always be adult driven.	Believes that students are clients and will work hard to ensure happiness and forward progress in education by establishing a partnership with students.
Adult Approaches	Aggressive and acute. Authority is the main vehicle for students who should conform to and comply with the system.	Covert, undefined, and without communication or follow-through.	Student surveys, questionnaires, and data collection is utilized without sharing results with the community. Privatization sustains final adult decisions.	Seeks student voice and choice as valuable (human) data points for comprehensive planning throughout the entire school year, not just when identified by adults.

Appendix C

The Adult Perspective

Within each level on the *Adult Perceptions of Student Voice Advocacy Behavioral Continuum* are four attributes that collectively define each level. These attributes must all be in play to “level up.” Adults display these noticeable attributes that play a distinct role in their level of voice activation. As adult leaders, we must intentionally self-reflect and examine our own emotional responses, actions, beliefs, and approaches in order to determine our efficacy as student voice activators.

 <p>Adult Emotional Responses</p> <p>There are a wide range of emotional responses and dispositions that leaders produce that are in direct correlation to the intentional opposition of the status quo. Emotional responses do not deter adults of the task at hand which is to model the partnership that is to be grown and nurtured between adult and student.</p>	 <p>Adult Actions</p> <p>Adults should be supportive, constructive, and willing to counteract nay-sayers in a peaceful and mindful manner in order to grow the capacity of the organization.</p>
 <p>Adult Beliefs</p> <p>Adults believe that there is power in growing partnerships with students. Silo mentalities or adult assigned responsibilities do not have to merely exist as adult-only responsibilities. A collective investment in reforming the educational system is a cooperative responsibility.</p>	 <p>Adult Approaches</p> <p>Partnerships create healthy steps and data points for the entire system to emerge as a truly functional system of adult and student progress. Learning is viewed as social and shared rather than individual and isolated.</p>

Adult Perceptions Level 1: Adult Power



Voice muffling exists in its most blatant obvious form. At the far left end of the continuum, adults may respond emotionally as egocentric, aloof and closed-minded. Student voice isn't even on the radar because the adult world revolves around having power and control and keeping kids safely "in line." Actions that you may see from adults at this level are actively silencing or shushing a crowd, marginalizing and dousing ideas or student attempts at involvement. Adults do not believe in change and are closed to progress. They may view the system as adult driven and view student interests or perceptions as only by-products of the system just because they "don't like" something. They believe their input isn't valid or meaningful. In this harsh adult world where no student voice exists, adults may approach learning aggressively and acutely. Authority is the main vehicle for getting students to conform and comply with the system.

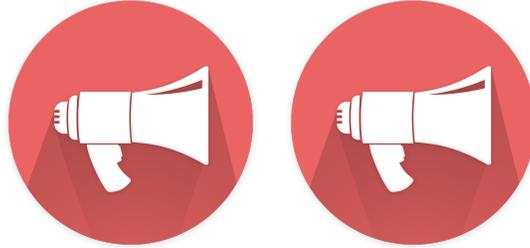
Examples to watch and listen for in adults:

- Adults are not shy about letting students know that they are in charge.
- Directives are given to students and they await conformity.
- "Structure" is used as a way to describe their behavior instead of "control" or "power" which is the underlying motive.

Examples to watch and listen for in students:

- Students become turned off and/or used to the adult system so they may not buck the system in order to simply play the game of school and complete it as quickly as possible without conflict.
- Students become regretful and resentful.
- Students might feel like third world citizens.

Adult Perceptions Level 2: Adult Control



Voice muffling still overtly exists even though there is a weak attempt to ask for it. In this level, adults are still very much in control because although they may have an inkling that student voice is empowering, and they even ask students for their input, they still do not utilize it or reform education in any gradiose or deliberate way. Adult emotional responses are deceptive because they are asking one thing and doing another so this still comes across as sneaky and controlling.

Examples to watch and listen for in adults:

- Adults provide excuses for the lack of follow through.
- Student input may be garnered, but an “I forgot” mentality becomes a deceptive way to postpone progress.
- Adults may desire to blend in to the system of forward thinking, so they appear to be all about student partnerships; yet, they do not truly feel this way.

Examples to watch and listen for in students :

- Students get their hopes up only to be let down.
- A feeling of following up with the adults--in hopes of garnering progress will soon become exhaustive and static.
- A feeling of giving up pervades this level.

Adult Perceptions Level 3: Adult and Student Relationship



Voice muffling still exists. It is evident that the adult is student-driven and seeking a partnership through student voice and the adult poses inquiries and listens, but in the end, the adult still chooses the ultimate decision-making for both instruction and student interactions. Students at this level watch, listen, hope, and anticipate with wonder, but often times are disappointed similar to Level 2. At times, the adult takes student recommendations and ideas into consideration, but other times does not. Student actions are positive and hopeful as they interact with adults and peers in a cordial and constructive manner. This level is laden with hope because the adult is asking, listening, and considering changes as a regular and active practice, but inconsistency detracts from becoming a full partnership.

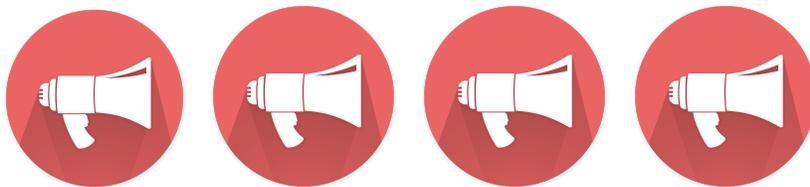
Examples to watch and listen for in adults:

- The adult appears as if they will walk the walk, but decisions to include students are too inconsistent.
- Tools, such as surveys, are used, but privatization of tool analysis becomes a secret adult observation and communication tool.
- Adults mean well but remain skeptical.

Examples to watch and listen for in students :

- Students may take upon leadership roles but are hindered with strict guidelines.
- Students wonder why there are positive elements of the existence of a potential partnership, but receive mixed messages for follow through or reasons for the lack of follow through are not readily shared with students.
- Adults may be receiving negative community backlash and, as a result, students may seek answers without any closure to a specific task or initiative.

Adult Perceptions Level 4: Adult and Student Partnership



Voice activation readily occurs! Adults and students are partners in shared decision-making where adult leadership empowers student leadership. Students have full control over their emotions by showing an understanding of the goal cycle. They also embody a mature disposition. Their actions can be viewed as vocally respectful, practical, active, and bringing solutions to the table that are demonstrative of problem-solving actions. Students believe their own needs, desires, and perceptions will be considered, and as a result, are willing to take more risks in creating a better system. Students approach situations with self-initiated self-advocacy knowing that there is an authentic democratic process in place that empowers them to safely commit healthy treason instead of a negative overpowering of adult-driven-systems.

Examples to watch and listen for in adults:

- Adults model leadership and invite students to create ecosystems that carry out positive leadership functions that are then utilized as a total system from all constituents.
- Adults view student voice as a process, not a series of data points that are only exclusively collected by themselves.
- Systems are created for both students and adults to form inquiry-based habits.

Examples to watch and listen for in students :

- Students model leadership and invite adults to create ecosystems that carry out positive leadership functions that are then utilized as a total system from all constituents.
- Students feel valued as both a receiver of information and a sender of information for calling on system improvements.



Preparing For Your First Meeting

Administrator or Leader Support & Buy-In

First and foremost, you will want to have the buy-in and support from your administrative team, leadership/management group, and/or school board. In order to facilitate a school-wide program, formalized organization of students, or club that initiates a movement, you will highly benefit from the full support of your administrative team if they are on board. Adult leadership in this area must reside at Level 4 and cannot be compromised at a later time. Fortright discussions need to exist at the onset of the early stages of planning so the system does not experience any type of adult-driven atrophy or retreat. Seeking their guidance and leadership will assist the system in following all district policies and procedures that may be unique to your district. With such a leadership partnership, you will find yourself leaning on them for sound advice when it comes to effectively creating an adult-student partnership where adult leadership empowers student leadership.

Jumpstart Your Own Let Them Speak! Academy

Program Implementation Meetings

Below you will find a series of lessons that can be implemented within a 30-60 minute setting with your student voice leadership team. These are samples and ideas to act as a catalyst that will support your vision and mission. There is no right or wrong scope and sequence and making adaptations and insertions will only add relevance and personalization to your school-wide implementation model. We hope that you will adapt this series as your students add voice and relevance to these activities. You know your school and organization better than us and your adjustments and additions along with actively listening to your students will create a relevant program for your school or organization.

Each lesson is to begin with a reflection from the action-oriented challenge from the previous lesson. Although the lessons can be implemented independently, they scaffold a process and are built on a progression of activities that build trusting relationships. They were designed to focus on relationship building through relevant connections and creating a global perspective as a reason for our “why”.

As lessons progress, you will find yourself rolling up your sleeves and diving into more challenging school, community & global issues. Each lesson includes the following components:

Materials

A list of recommended materials that you may need to prepare for the lesson will be included

Essential Question(s)

Overarching driving questions become catalytic-agents that drive focus, purpose and relevance to a greater goal than self.

Learning Outcomes

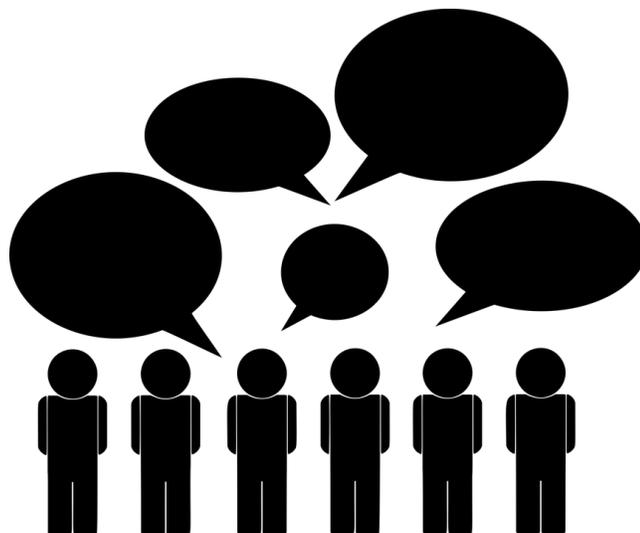
Laserlike focus on a targeted outcome will drive results. Students should have a clear understanding of what they should know and be able to do by the end of each session. It is best practice to not only post these learning outcomes but to discuss them with students before, during, and after learning as a reflection of their accomplishments and next steps.

Activities

Each lesson may include a variety of activities: social games, short videos, group tasks, organizers, short excerpts, role-playing, analyzing scenarios, tech integrated applications, along with other modalities. These activities are culminating to an overall outcome of creating student partnerships.

Action-Oriented Challenges

We believe in application and transfer into the real world. While we hope our students are learning theory and information, connecting socially and emotionally, and building relationships as a group, we also believe that we must practice being global competent citizens. We believe in action. We believe in transfer. We believe in mastery of skills and goals. Each of our challenges are action oriented and require students to practice a behavior, complete a task, practice a skill, or collect specific information.



THE LET THEM SPEAK! PROJECT

Lesson 1: Academy Introduction

Building Group Dynamics

Materials Needed:

- Poster Paper
- Markers
- Laptops for Google Doc Access (Optional)

Essential Questions:

- What is student voice? What isn't student voice?
- How should we interact with one another?

Learning Outcome:

- Participants will define student voice.
- Participants will develop a social contract for interacting as a leadership team.

Activities:

1. **Name game:** Each person must come up with an adjective that describes who they are and the letter to the adjective must use the same letter as the beginning letter of their name. Have everyone sit in a circle to ensure everyone can see each person. For example, Reflective Rebecca, or Responsible Rick. Each person will take about 30 seconds to share their name and their adjective. After each person has shared, do a whip around. Choose someone to begin. The first person will state their name with their adjective, the next person must restate the first person's name and adjective, the third person will state the first two and add theirs, this will continue until the last and final person restates everyone and adds their own.

- Discuss the power of names and the importance of knowing people more deeply.
- You may consider asking questions like:

How does it make you feel when someone asks you your name and/or uses it in the closing of a conversation? "It was great talking to you today, Rebecca. I loved learning more about who you are, Rick."

Why is your name important to you?

Why is important to be **intentional** about using names while engaging in conversations?

Challenge your students to use each others names while working together as a team member of your Student Voice Academy.

2. **Establishing Social Norms:** Share with your students that anytime a new group of people unite for a purpose or gather as a group, it is inevitable that there will always be conflict to some degree. What is most important is that you have a plan for disagreement or wrong doings. Split the students into four different groups. Give each group one question. Set a timer for 3-5 minutes and have them brainstorm on chart paper or create a Google Doc that includes all 4 of the following questions that each group can contribute to simultaneously.

Pose Question(s):

1. How do you want to be treated by the adults in the leadership academy?
2. How do you think adults want to be treated by you?
3. How do you want to be treated by each other in the leadership academy?
4. How do you want to be treated when adversity and conflict comes into play?

Give each group an opportunity to share. As students are sharing, you may want to guide them by categorizing and combining like-minded ideas. As you move from one group to the next, you will find an overlap with many of the same ideas. By the time you complete the final question, you will have a list of actions, attitudes, and mindsets that will become the social contract that is binding by all participants. You can either write those on a piece of chart paper and have each person physically sign it, or you can print out the document and have each person sign their respective sheet. This is a totally comprehensive commitment for all AND this becomes a reference when disagreements arise and becomes especially important as you talk about confidential or difficult topics that only allow student minimal information as per our guidelines about what student voice IS and ISN'T..

3. **Student Voice Brainstorm:** Use poster paper or a Google Doc and crowdsource their definition of student voice. Flush out their ideas. Share the examples of what student voice is and what student voice is not from this implementation guide. Make sure to emphasize that this is not about candy bars in the vending machines or outlandish requests, but that the focus must remain on changes to improve the quality of learning. If it doesn't meet that criteria, then it isn't an issue that would warrant a high level of consideration, time, and focus. The purpose of this team is to provide high quality customer service that increases their impact and transfers their learning into real world applications.
4. **Introduce the Let Them Speak! Project:** As the teacher, share your story of how you came across the project and what it means to you. Share why you want to take an adult leadership role in activating student voice at your school.

Action Oriented Challenge:

The Quiet Ones: Challenge your participants to find at least one quiet student this week and ask one of the 6 questions below. Come back prepared to share how that person responded. (You can pose one question to all, or let students choose which question to focus on).

1. What don't we, as educators, understand about you, the students, at this school?
2. What is something that you wish we could do better?
3. What have we failed to recognize about you or your experiences as a student at our school?
4. Is there anything that upsets you about our school that we should fix, rethink, eliminate, or no longer ignore?
5. What do you value the most about your learning experiences at our school?
6. How do you feel the night before coming to school on a new day, after a weekend, or after a holiday or summer vacation?

Lesson 2: Student Voice Matters

Adding Value to the World

Materials Needed:

Copies of the Student Voice Pledge (enough for each participant)

Essential Question:

Why is student voice important in education?

What is the importance of a pledge?

Learning Outcome:

- Participants will cite the ***Let Them Speak!*** Pledge.
- Participants will discuss why student voice is important.

Activities:

1. **Action Oriented Challenge Reflection:** Give each participant the opportunity to share their experiences by asking a question to a student who is quiet or reserved. List all topics or reforms that are brought up about your school. Ask them to keep confidentiality by not naming names of students and not naming names of teachers, but rather talk about the issues or challenges they face as a result of their total school experience. Rank the issues in order of most severe to least severe for impacting learning. Choose one challenge or topic and discuss possible solutions.
2. **Recite the Let Them Speak! Pledge:** Share the Let Them Speak! Pledge. Begin by reading it aloud to your scholars. Let them know that each and every time you meet that you will begin by reading the pledge together in unison. There is power in repetition; there is power in oral language; and what you feed your mind is what you become.

Let Them Speak! Pledge

I deserve to be happy. I am important. I add value to my family, my school and the world. I pledge to use my voice when things don't seem right. I am committed to trusting, learning & growing each and every day. I am a learner & thinker. I make a difference. I matter. Most of all, I deserve **SUCCESS & HAPPINESS!**



Appendix D

Ask the following questions to your students:

- Do you think that all students at our school/class believe these words? Why? Why not?
- What does it mean to say a pledge?

3. Watch the YouTube video: [Why is Student Voice Important in Education?](#)

Pose the following Question(s):

- How can our student voice academy make a difference for our school?
- Do you believe that every adult and student at our school can relate to this video? Why or Why not?

Action Oriented Challenge:

Challenge each scholar to ponder and bring back the pledge organizer by completing each of the following phrases:

- I am good at...
- People like me because...
- I contribute meaningfully by...

THE LET THEM SPEAK! PROJECT

Lesson 3: Living a Happy Life

Everyone Deserves THEIR Version of “Happiness”

Materials Needed:

- Laptop for typing and printing a letter
- Laptop for creating an electronic poster

Essential Question:

- What makes a good life?
- Why do different things make different people happy?

Learning Outcome:

- Participants will create an electronic poster using pictures to show THEIR version of a happy life.

Activities:

1. **Recite the Let Them Speak! Pledge:** In unison, read the pledge together. Select several students to share one of their three pledge highlights. I am good at.... People like me because... I contribute meaningfully by.... (Keep records and rotate the order of which students you call on to ensure classroom equality and equity).
2. **Action Oriented Challenge Reflection:** Decide where you want to keep the hard copies that each student has completed. They may want them to be private in a folder or notebook, or might feel comfortable with their responses posted on a wall. Use a “talking stick” and allow each person to share one or all of their answers to any of the questions. You will want to visit these periodically to remind your students of their purpose and contribution to the world!
3. **Website Walk:** Pose the question, *“What Makes a Good Life?”* Share the website www.reenvisioned.org.

Once we know our shared dreams, the possibilities are limitless. Have students click on **A NEW CONVERSATION**, and have them surf this site by reading examples that their peers have already shared regarding what makes a good life.

Pose the following questions:

- Why do you think it is important for us to pose this question?
 - Why do people visualize drastically different lifestyles and happenings that bring joy and happiness to their lives?
 - What makes a good life for you? Explain your future self.
4. **Happy Life Vision Board:** If students can visualize their own happiness, then it is more likely to become a reality for them. Have students create a visual representation of what their ultimate happy life looks like as an adult. They can be as simple or as intricately complex as they want. This is THEIR version of their own “happy.”

Action Oriented Challenge:

Challenge your scholars to find three people in order to ask them “What do you believe makes a good life for you? You may jot down your students’ ideas or come ready to share their ideas at your next lesson meeting.

Lesson 4: Gratitude Brain Chemicals that Matter

Materials Needed:

Technology for video projection

Essential Question:

What impact does gratitude have on humans?

Learning Outcome:

- Participants will share information about one influencer in their life.
- Participants will watch a video and learn about the power of gratitude.

Activities:

1. **Recite the Let Them Speak! Pledge:** In unison, read the pledge together. Select several students to share one of their three pledge highlights. I am good at.... People like me because... I contribute meaningfully by.... (Keep records and rotate which students you call on to ensure equality and equity).
2. **Action Oriented Challenge Reflection:** Ask your scholars what they learned about people when they asked them what makes a happy life? Draw similarities, differences, and guide the conversation to include the ideals about how we all have different backgrounds, different expectations, and different dreams. What may be uninteresting to one person may be a dream to another.
3. **Visualize an Influencer:** Have your scholars close their eyes and visualize somebody influential in their lives. Have them open their eyes and at once have each scholar say the person's name that they visualized. Next, with a partner, have your students share everything that they are willing to share about that person and how that person has influenced their lives.
4. **Watch [An Experiment in Gratitude](#) | The Science of Happiness:** Have your scholars close their eyes and visualize somebody influential in their lives. In partners, share everything you know about that person and how they have influenced you.

Action Oriented Challenge:

Write a letter or call or text the person who has influenced you the most. Specifically tell your students to describe what their person has done to make a difference in their lives and how they would like them to continue supporting them. A word of caution: there is a possibility that the person most influential is no longer alive. Share that they can still either write a letter or journal entry to them, or choose another person that has made a difference who is still with them today. Either mode and method is acceptable and appropriate. It gives our students the vehicle to remember a loved one.

Lesson 5: Kindness is Contagious

All it Takes is One “Drop”

Materials Needed:

Read the picture book *One Drop of Kindness* by Jeff Kubiak.

Essential Question:

- Why is it important to share our hearts with people?
- How can we influence the people who REALLY need kindness?

Learning Outcomes:

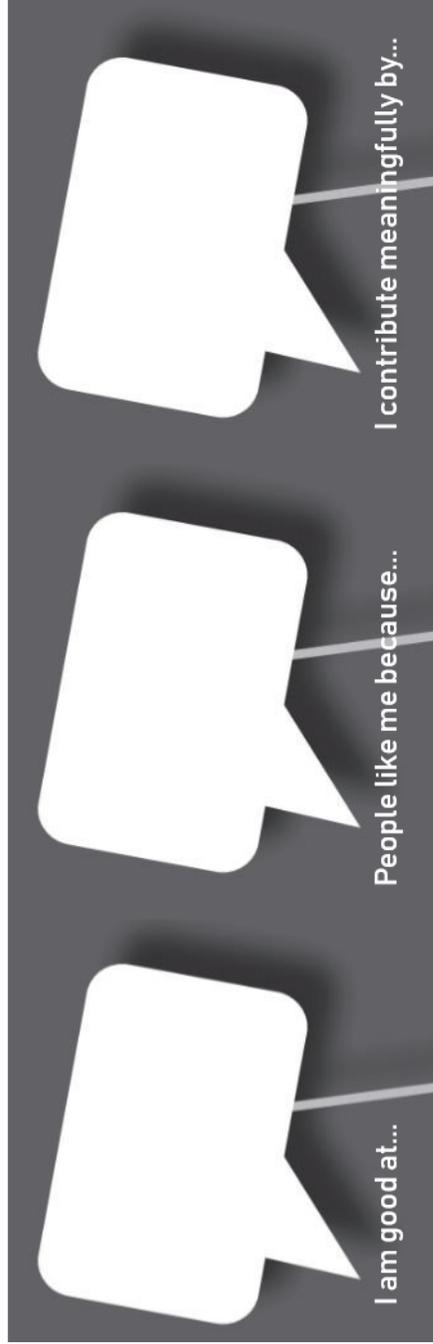
- Participants will read *One Drop of Kindness*.
- Participants will brainstorm ways to spread kindness in their school or organization.
- Participants will reflect and connect with Gus, the main character, in order to draw connections and conclusions about the way people feel and how our actions matter.

Activities:

1. **Recite the Let Them Speak! Pledge:** In unison, read the pledge together. Select several students to share one of their three pledge highlights. I am good at.... People like me because... I contribute meaningfully by.... (Keep records and rotate which students you call on to ensure equality and equity).
2. **Action Oriented Challenge Reflection:** Pull up the “Pose a question responses.”
3. **Read *One Drop of Kindness*:** Some of the deepest meanings, analogies, and connections can be drawn from picture books at any age. Even though this book is a picture book, the lesson and moral has the power to draw connections and meanings for any student or participant in any organization.

Pledge

I deserve to be happy. I am important. I add value to my family, my school and the world. I pledge to use my voice when things don't seem right. I am committed to trusting, learning & growing each and every day. I am a learner & thinker. I make a difference. I matter. Most of all, I deserve **SUCCESS & HAPPINESS!**



THE LET THEM SPEAK! PROJECT

These questions and beliefs are a contribution by Dr. Amy Fast retrieved from Twitter @fastcrayon

Additional Resources

List of Videos to Share on Social Media and with Stakeholders

Dear Teacher: Heartfelt Advice for Teachers from Students

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITMLzXzgB_s

Student: #IWishMyTeacherKnew campaign is 'making a difference'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oiD7nvS3DzY>

Dear Teacher

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BR3tlhBwz-k>

BEFORE YOU GO TO SCHOOL, WATCH THIS || WHAT IS SCHOOL FOR?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_PsLRgEYf9E

Too Quick To Judge (Touching Short-Film)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fzn_AKN67ol

An Experiment in Gratitude | The Science of Happiness

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHv6vTKD6lg>

SPECIAL DisruptED TV - A Panel On Student Voice with Ed Torres from The Mitre Corporation

<https://vimeo.com/256724196>