



Student Voice in the ACT Project Final Report

March 2017

www.youthcoalition.net

Executive Summary

Student Voice in the ACT is a Youth Coalition of the ACT project funded by the ACT Education Directorate and supported by Catholic Education and the Association of Independent Schools ACT. The project aims to provide school leadership teams and teachers with a resource for how they can better listen, take into account, and act on the opinions of children and young people.

The project sought the views of primary and secondary school students through an online survey and a forum. The project engaged with more than 3600 students from 66 schools. This report includes a summary of the key findings from both the survey and the forum.

The next step in the project is to develop resources for schools using the key findings from the survey and the forum combined what we know from research and the experience of established practitioners both in Australia and internationally.

Key Findings

The project found that student voice is important to both students and teachers. In particular, both groups feel that student voice has the potential to bring about positive change within a school community and can have a positive impact on student wellbeing and engagement. They believe effective student voice can drive student engagement and improve outcomes across all areas because students feel valued and a sense of belonging.

While most schools in the ACT have some mechanisms for student voice in place, both students and teachers agreed that there is significant room for improvement in implementing effective student voice in their schools.

Teachers reported that student voice can be challenging for schools and tokenistic at times. They identified resourcing, particularly staffing capacity, as a significant barrier to effective student voice, as well as issues with current mechanisms, such as the Student Representative Council (SRC) model, and a lack of support from school staff.

Students also raised issues with the SRC model. However, those who are involved in student bodies like the SRC, or have other leadership roles in their school, are more likely to be positive about their opinions and ideas being listened to compared to those who are not.

Students recognised that some of their peers lack the confidence and find it difficult to voice their opinions in front of their peers. Students also reported a lack of support from teachers and other school staff as a significant barrier to having a voice within their schools.

Both students and teachers identified a number of improvements that could make student voice more effective in their schools. They suggested making time for student voice activities, improving communication between students and school staff, as well as more support from teachers, could go a long way to creating a school environment that supports effective student voice.

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1. Background

In January 2016, the ACT Education Directorate (the Directorate) began a three-year program of system reform, the Schools for All Program. The Program was established to progress work related to the 2015 report, *Schools for All Children and Young People: Report of the Expert Panel on Students with Complex Needs and Challenging Behaviour*.¹

As part of the Schools for All Program, the Youth Coalition of the ACT (the Youth Coalition) was engaged by the Directorate to facilitate a project about student voice in the ACT. The project relates specifically to Recommendation 6.2 of the *Schools for All* report:

*'That ETD, CE, and each Independent School, develop and promote tools to assist all schools to meaningfully and regularly consult with all students about (a) their experiences at school; (b) decisions that affect them at school; and (c) the operation of the school.'*²

1.1 What is student voice?

Student voice can be defined as *'the individual and collective perspective and actions of young people within the context of learning and education.'*³ It can include formal mechanisms of student participation such as Student Representative Councils (SRCs), as well as any informal activities that involve students providing input into decision-making processes within their school.

1.2 Student voice in the ACT

The 'Student Voice in the ACT' Project (the Project) aimed to provide school leadership teams and teachers with ideas on how they can better listen, take into account, and act on the opinions of children and young people within their school.

The Project looked to combine the ideas and views of students in the ACT with the research and evidence base around student voice and youth participation.

1.2 Cross Sectoral Committee

A Cross Sectoral Committee was established to oversee the project. The Committee included representatives from the ACT Education Directorate, Catholic Education, the Association of Independent Schools of the ACT and the Youth Coalition.

¹ ACT Government Education Directorate, 2017, *Schools for All Program*, available online at http://www.education.act.gov.au/school_education/schools-for-all, accessed 3 September 2016.

² Shaddock, et. al., 2015, *Schools for All Children and Young People: Report of the Expert Panel on Students with Complex Needs and Challenging Behaviour*, available online at http://www.education.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/856254/Attach-4-Expert-Panel-Report-Web.pdf, accessed 3 September 2016.

³ Sound Out, 2015, *Intro to Student Voice*, available online at <https://soundout.org/intro-to-student-voice/>, accessed 20 March 2017.

1.3 The Youth Coalition of the ACT

The Youth Coalition is the peak youth affairs body in the ACT. As a membership based organisation, the Youth Coalition is responsible for representing and promoting the rights, interests and wellbeing of the estimated 78,000 young Canberrans aged 12-25 years and those who work with them.

1.3 Project Outline

The Project included the following activities:

Student Engagement Survey

Students from all ACT schools were invited to participate in an online survey about student voice in their school. A summary of results from the Student Engagement Survey (the Survey) are included in section 2 of this report.

The Student Voice Forum

The *Ask Us* Student Voice Forum (the Forum) brought together primary and secondary school students from across the Catholic, Independent and Government sectors to discuss student voice in ACT school. The Forum also included a separate program for teacher participants. The Forum program was informed by the questions asked in the Survey. A summary of findings from the Forum are included in sections 3 and 4 of this report.

Student Voice Resource Kit

Following this report, a Student Voice Resource Kit (the Resource Kit) will be developed for schools to improve their practice around student voice.

During the planning phase of the project, a desktop review of the literature on student voice was completed. The Resource Kit will combine this literature review with the results of the Student Engagement Survey and the findings from the Forum. An outline of what will be included in the Resource Kit can be found in section 5 of this report.

1.4 Project Engagement

The Project aimed to engage with all primary schools, high schools and colleges from across the Catholic, Independent and Government sectors in the ACT. More than 3,600 students from 66 schools participated.

2. The Student Engagement Survey

To support student participants to prepare for attendance at the Forum, the Youth Coalition, in consultation with the Cross Sectoral Committee, developed a Student Engagement Survey. In recognition of the difference in context and environment between primary and secondary school settings, separate surveys for primary and secondary school students were developed.

For survey questions, see Appendix A.

Schools were provided their own unique link to the survey, allowing a short report to be produced for each school. Schools with both primary and secondary school students were provided separate survey links for the two cohorts. Individual school results will be provided to the contact teachers and student participants in 2017, but will not be shared publicly.

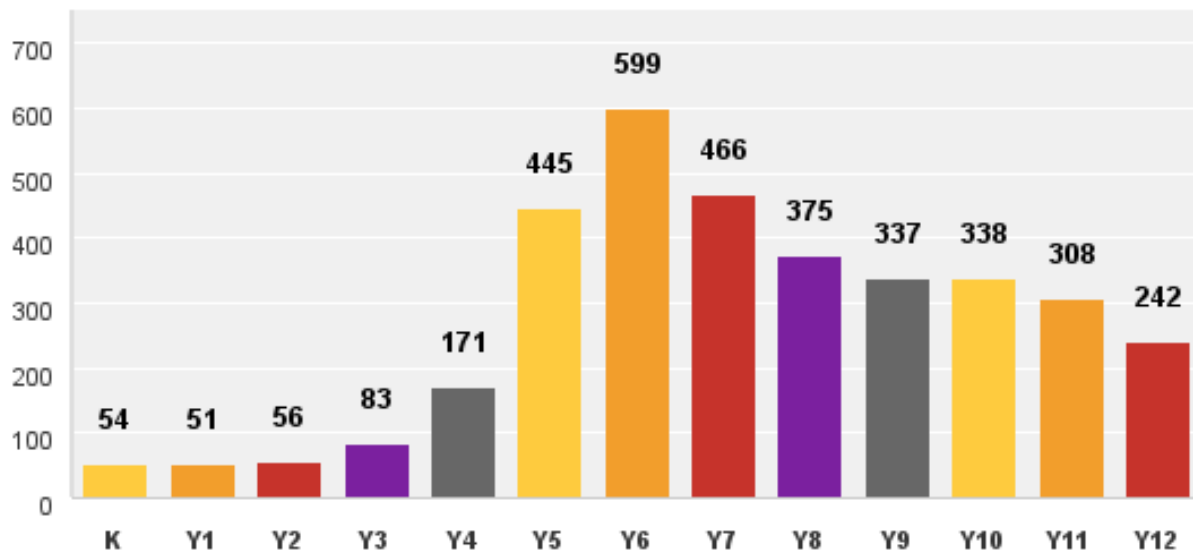
This section provides a summary of the key findings from the Student Engagement Survey.

2.1 Survey respondents

A total of 3,525 students responded to the Student Engagement Survey, with 44 schools participating. The largest number of respondents were students in years 5-8.

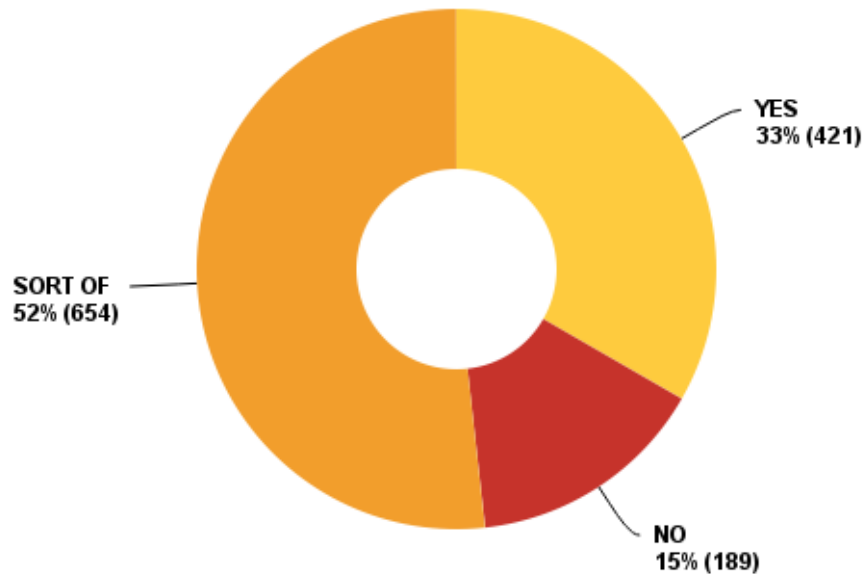
For a full list of the schools that participated, see Appendix B.

2.1.1 Student Engagement Survey Participants by Year

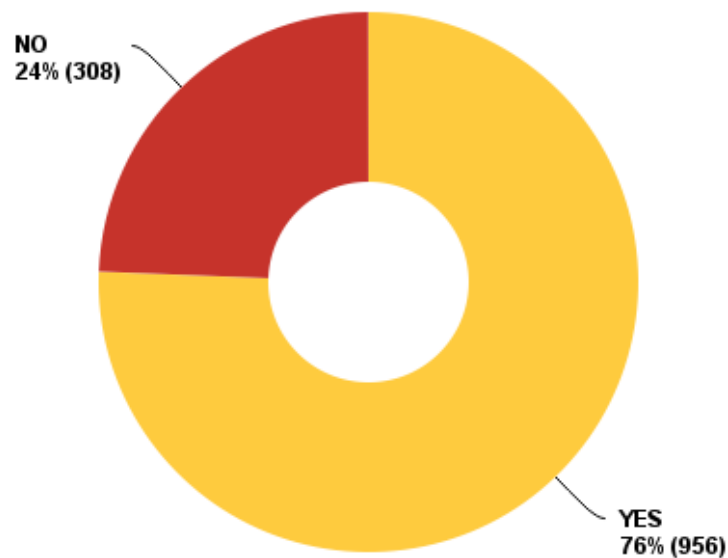


2.2 Primary school students

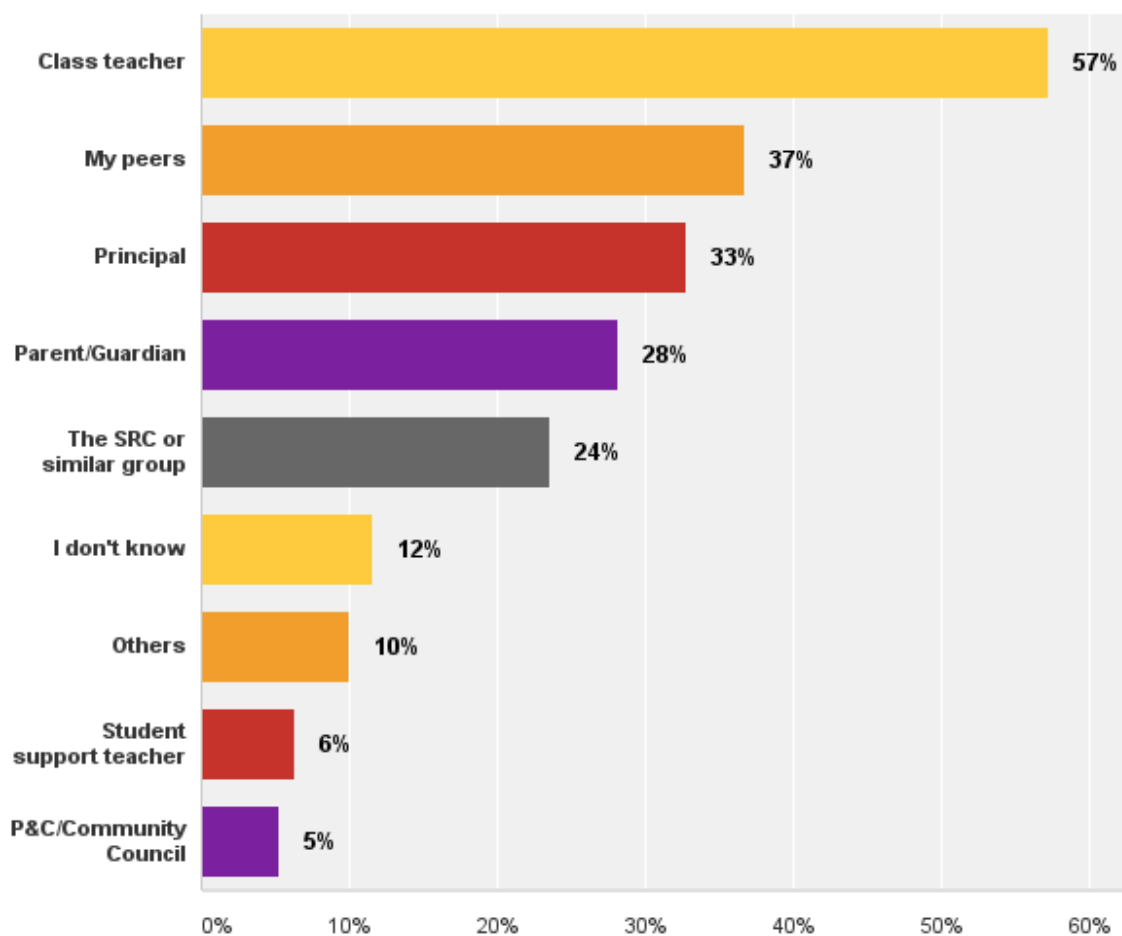
2.2.1 Do you feel you have an opportunity to have input into some of the decisions made within your school?



2.2.2 Do you feel student opinions within your school are valued by teachers?



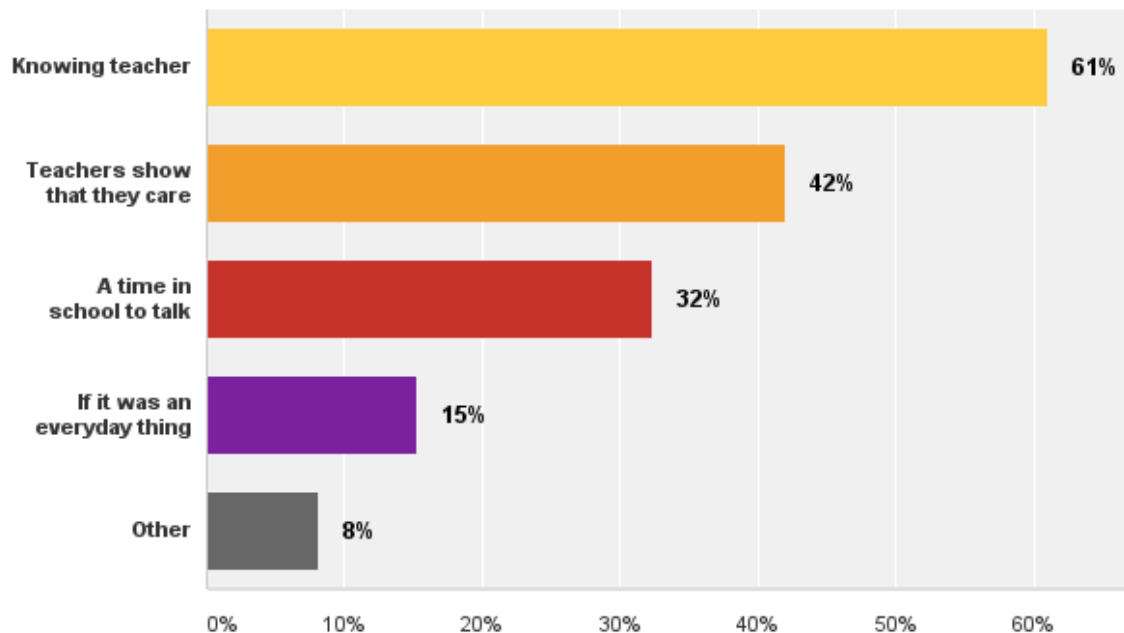
2.2.3 Who do you talk to if you have any ideas about improving things within your school?



Other people or groups identified in the comments section included student leaders, other family members (such as siblings, aunts, uncles, grandparents), other school staff (such as Assistant Principals, Coordinators) and after school program staff.

There were also a number of comments that suggested some students do not feel comfortable telling anyone about their ideas.

2.2.4 What things do you think help students feel more comfortable about having a say or putting forward ideas for improvement in school?



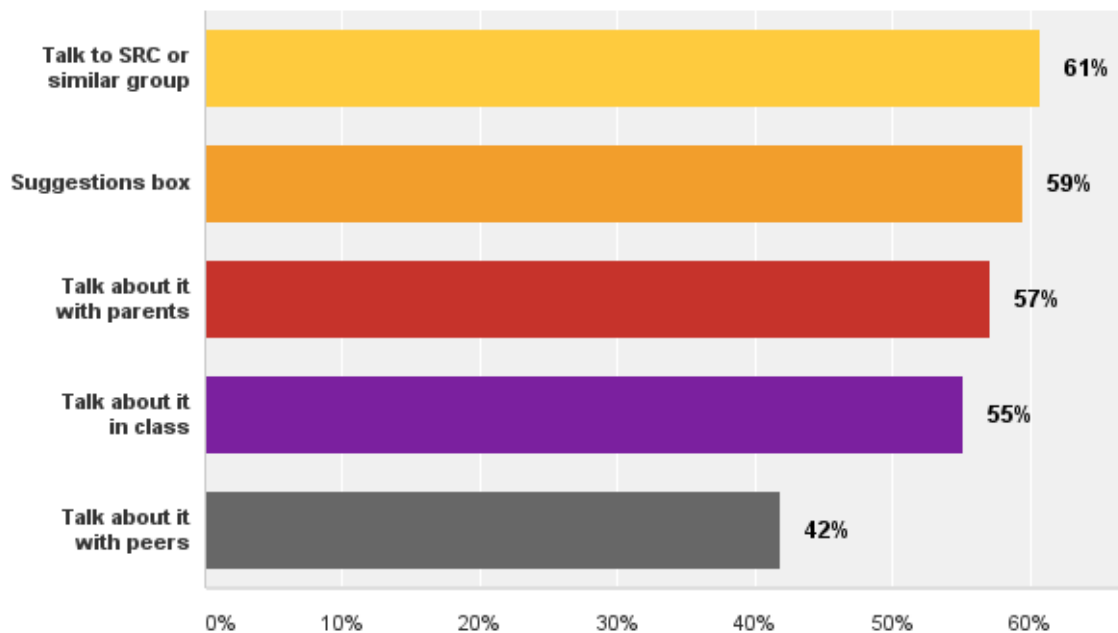
Other things identified in the comments include the buddy system, being able to provide feedback anonymously (e.g. suggestion box) and regular classroom discussions.

‘A day each year to write a letter to the principal about changes to the school.’

‘If we did it on paper then that way the teachers can come to us so we aren't embarrassed about it.’

‘Sometimes when students take something to someone (staff member) about a problem, they like to see action not just people thinking about the idea and doing nothing.’

2.2.5 How could you have your say on changes in school? Which do you think would be most effective?

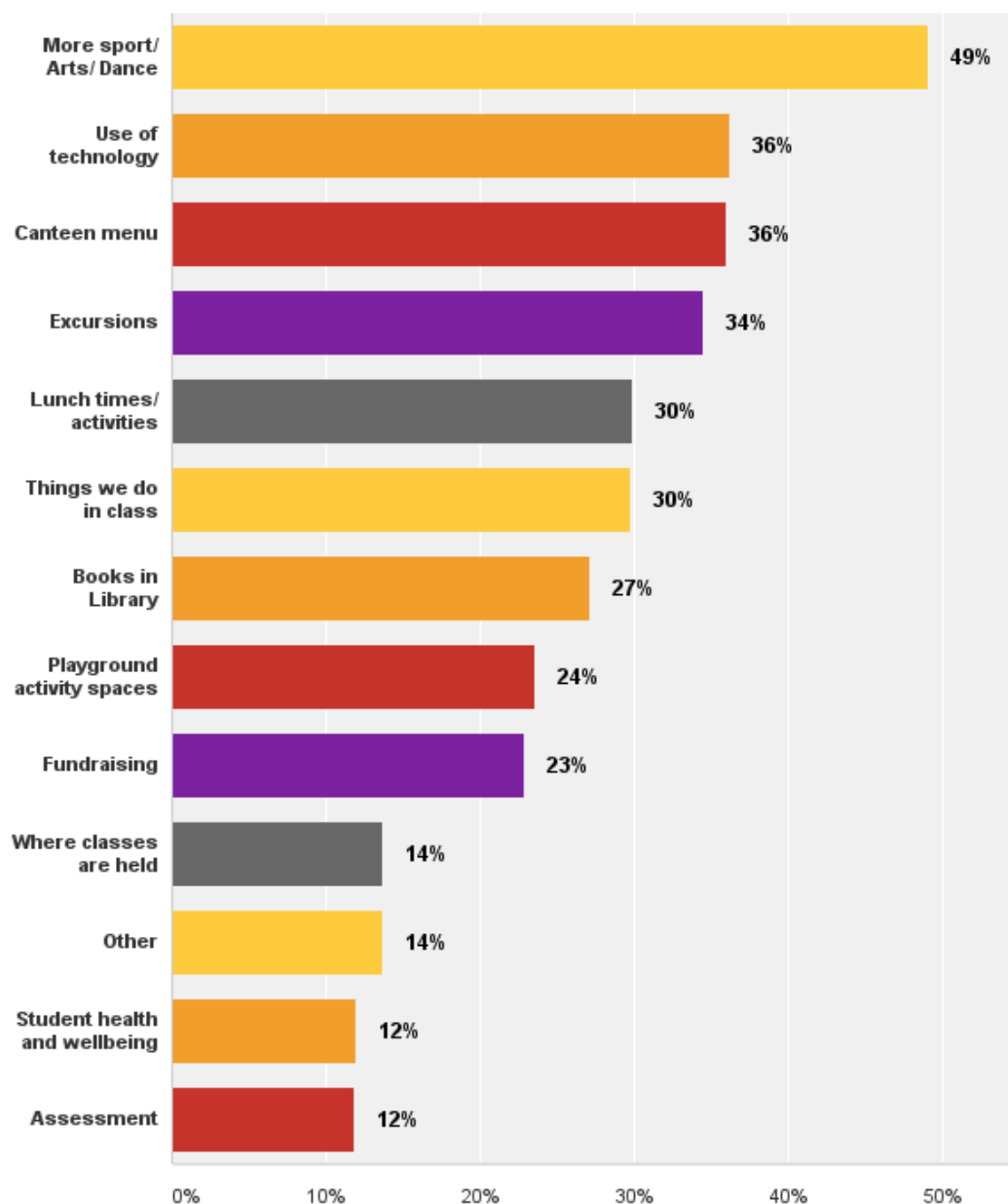


Other methods identified in the comments section included talking to the Principal, regular surveys of all students, regular class meetings and discussions at school assemblies.

'I would like a suggestions box because people get scared about having an opinion, so to have a box nobody knows who put what in.'

'Having a few teachers who will listen to you and are open to new ideas from students.'

2.2.6 What would you like the opportunity to have a say about in your school?

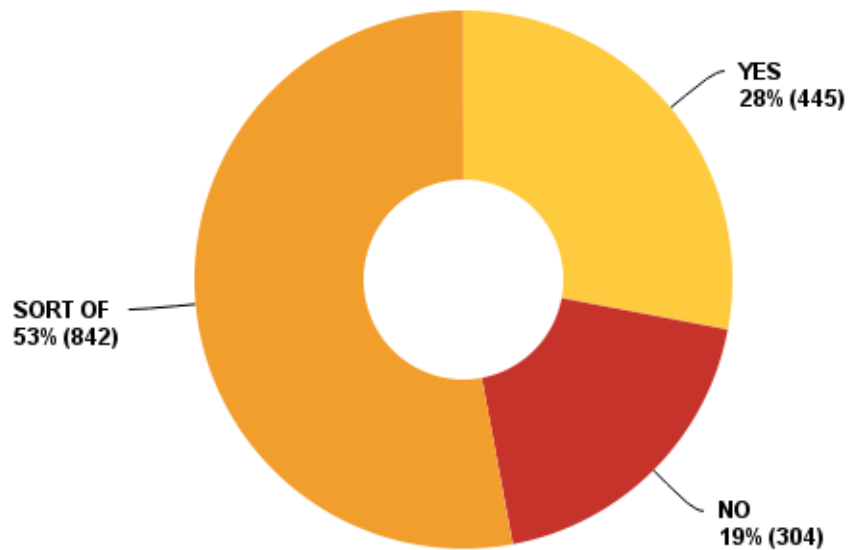


Other issues identified in the comments section included uniforms, bullying, homework, games and camp.

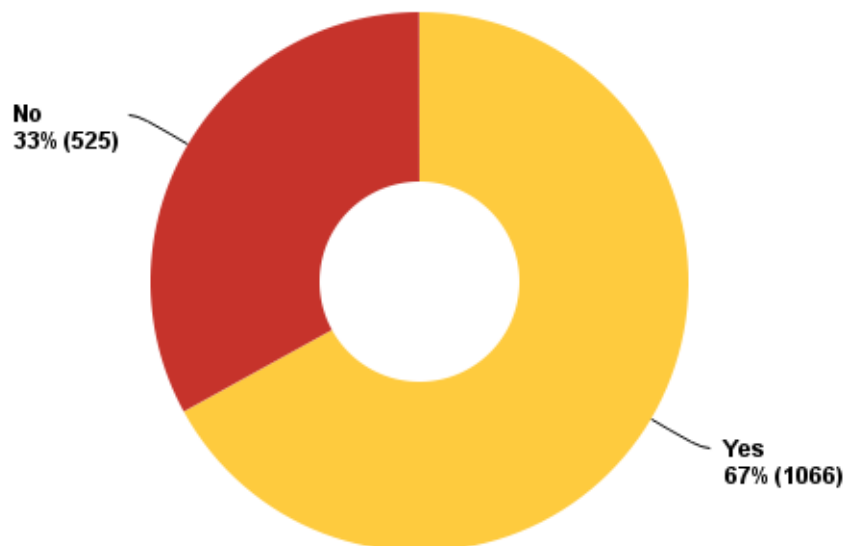
‘Keeping the canteen, more SRC meetings, people talking nicer and not judging others for what they say.’

2.3 Secondary school students

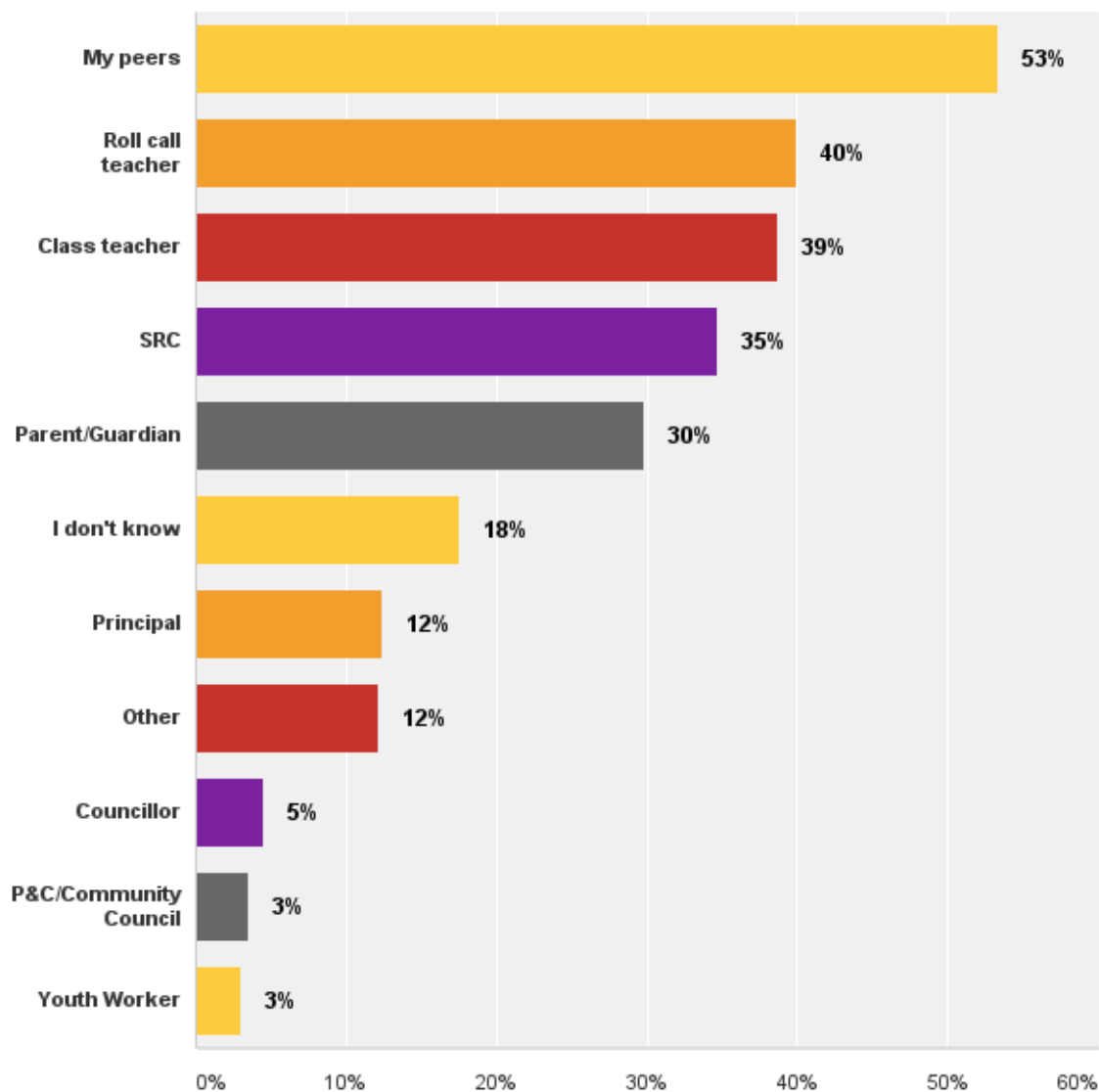
2.3.1 Do you feel you have an opportunity to have input into some of the decisions made within your school?



2.3.2 Do you feel student opinions within your school are valued by teachers?

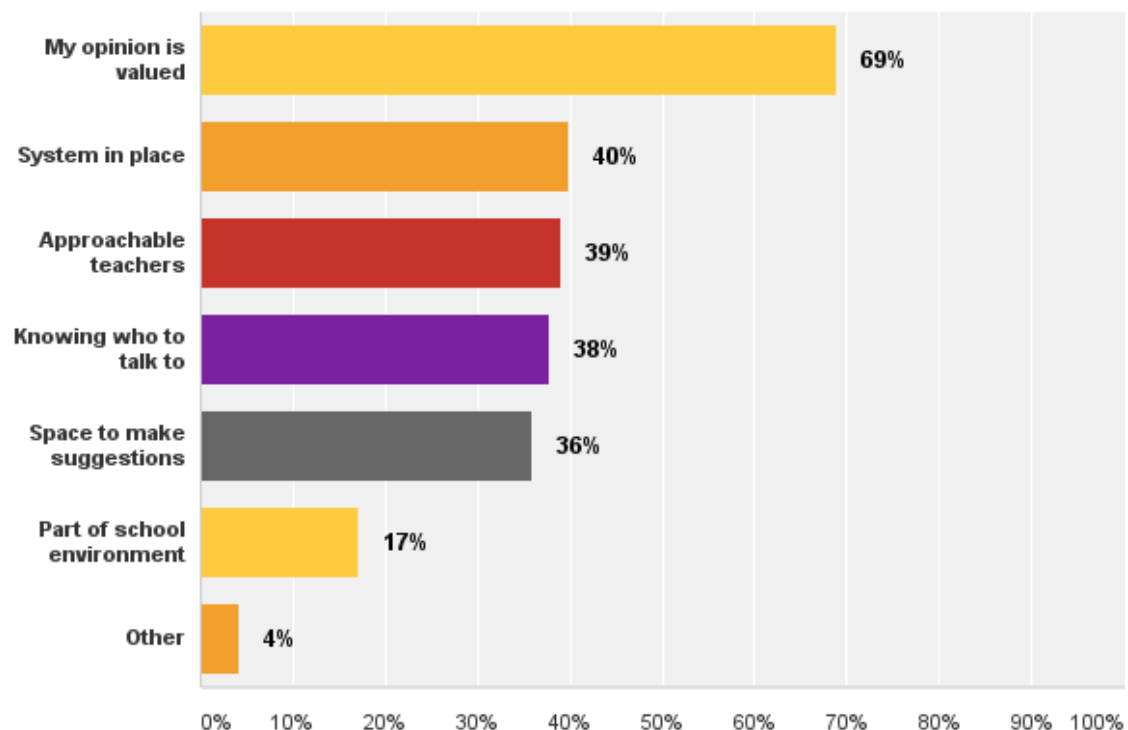


2.3.3 Who do you talk to within your school about changes you'd like to explore?



Most of the other people identified in the comments section are specific school staff, such as the Year Coordinator, House Coordinator, Pastoral Care Coordinator, Dean of Students, Assistant Principal, Performing Arts Teacher, Woodwork Teacher, Careers Advisor.

2.3.4 What things would help you to have a voice within your school?



A number of the comments suggest that some students feel student voice is not working well in their school.

‘Teachers showing that they actually listen, not just pretending then not following up on our ideas.’

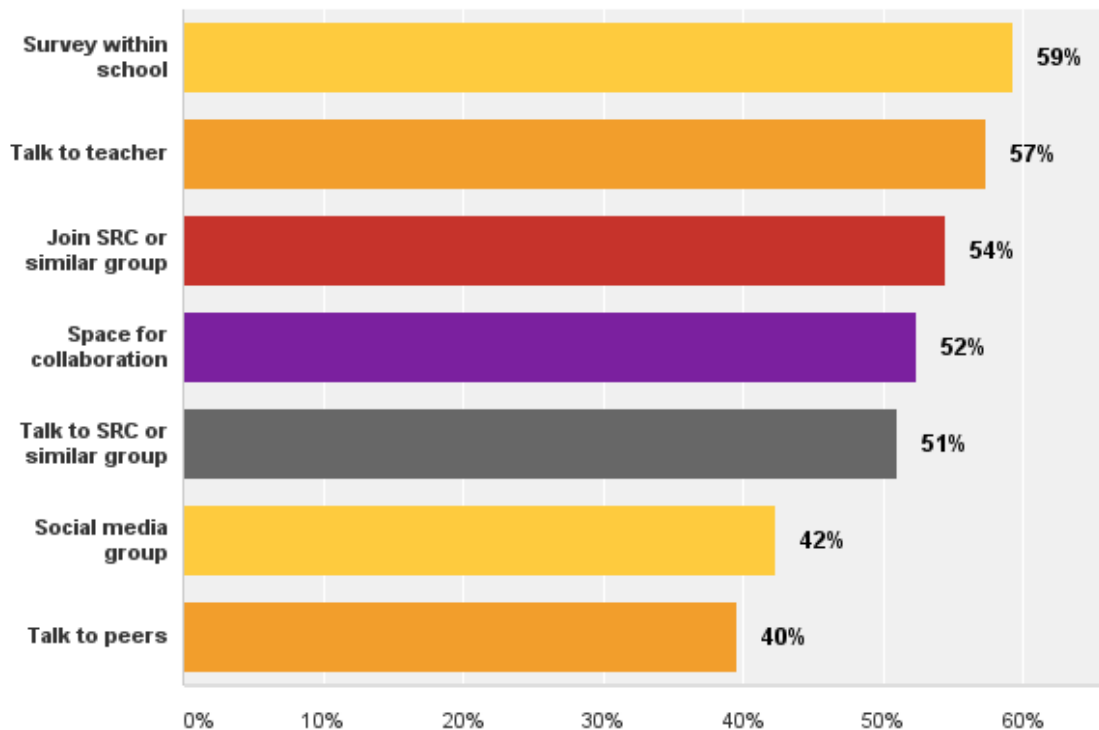
‘Having an SRC that I felt actually tried to change/do something.’

‘Teachers to actually take us seriously. For them to treat us equally and not like 5 year olds.’

‘I did this once with the suggestion box. I was ignored. Thanks guys...’

‘Even if there are systems in place to take suggestions, the suggestions never seem to be considered or implemented.’

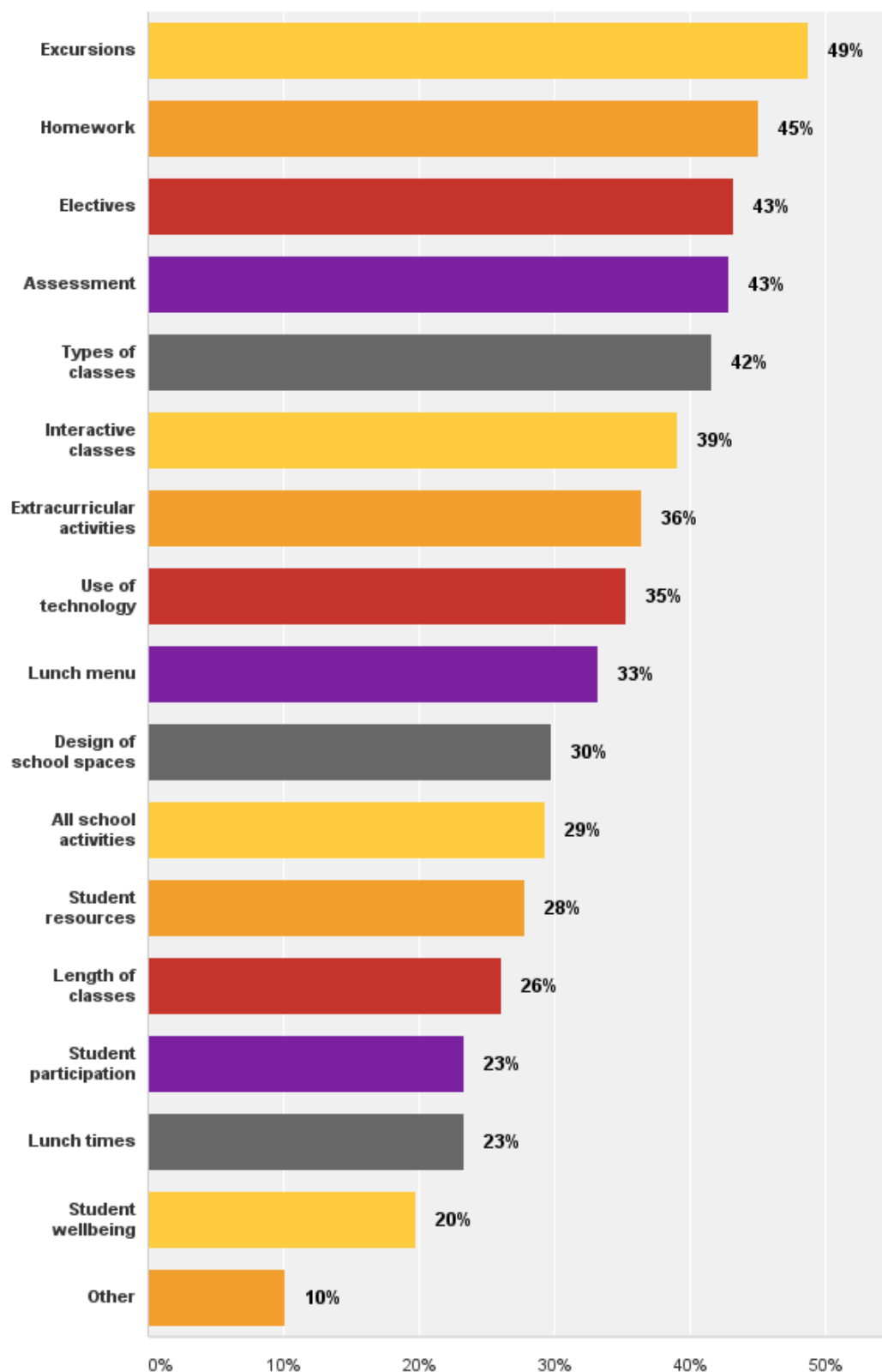
2.3.5 How could you raise your voice within your school? Which do you think would be most effective?



‘Having a teacher specifically for concerns about other teachers is useless, no matter what any teacher says they will always place more trust with a teacher than a student. A student who is vocal and elected by their fellow students is needed, they need to be trusted and put an unusual amount of faith in students rather than teachers.’

‘For things that would take up time, it would be best for extra time to be given to them rather than students having to sacrifice break times in order to have their voices heard. Having student voice activities during break times would also discourage students from going.’

2.3.6 What things would you like the opportunity to have a say on in your school?



3. The Forum

3.1 Introduction

The *Ask Us* Student Voice Forum (the Forum) was held at the Hedley Beare Centre for Teaching and Learning on 28 July 2016 from 9am to 2.30 pm.

All schools in the ACT, from across the Government, Catholic and Independent sectors, were invited to participate through members of the Cross Sectoral Committee. The program included separate age appropriate sessions for primary and secondary student participants, as well as a short specific program for teachers.

During the Forum, participants explored a range discussion questions, including:

- What do students want to have a say about within their school community?
- Are there any barriers to students providing feedback? What things work well in supporting students to have a voice in their school community?
- What do students value most about their school? What ideas do students have for improving their educational experiences?
- How can we support all students to have a voice in decision making about their education?

For full program of the Forum, see Appendix C.



3.2 Attendance

The Forum was attended by approximately 130 ACT students and 40 ACT teachers from 60 primary and secondary schools. This included:

- 80 Primary Students
- 40 Secondary Students
- 5 Student Facilitators.

For a full list of the schools that attended, see Appendix D.

3.3 Student Participants

Schools were invited to nominate two students to represent their school and participate in the Forum. Schools that operated K-10 or K-12 were invited to nominate four students (two primary and two secondary).

Schools were encouraged to nominate students with diverse experiences, including those who may not already be actively engaged with school decision making, the SRC, or in other leadership positions. Information about the Forum was also sent to school based youth workers and other school contacts within the Youth Coalition's networks, as well as a number of community based youth support service providers.

3.4 Student Facilitators

Schools were also invited to nominate one or more students to facilitate small group discussions at the Forum. The Youth Coalition host a training / briefing session for student facilitators before the Forum that was focussed on facilitation skills, tips, tricks and pitfalls.

On the day of the Forum, student facilitators were supported by Youth Coalition staff to facilitate focus groups of approximately 10 students. At the end of each breakout session, facilitators took a few minutes to note key ideas and themes raised in that session, and anything else raised that stood out to them.

3.5 Contact / Participant Teachers

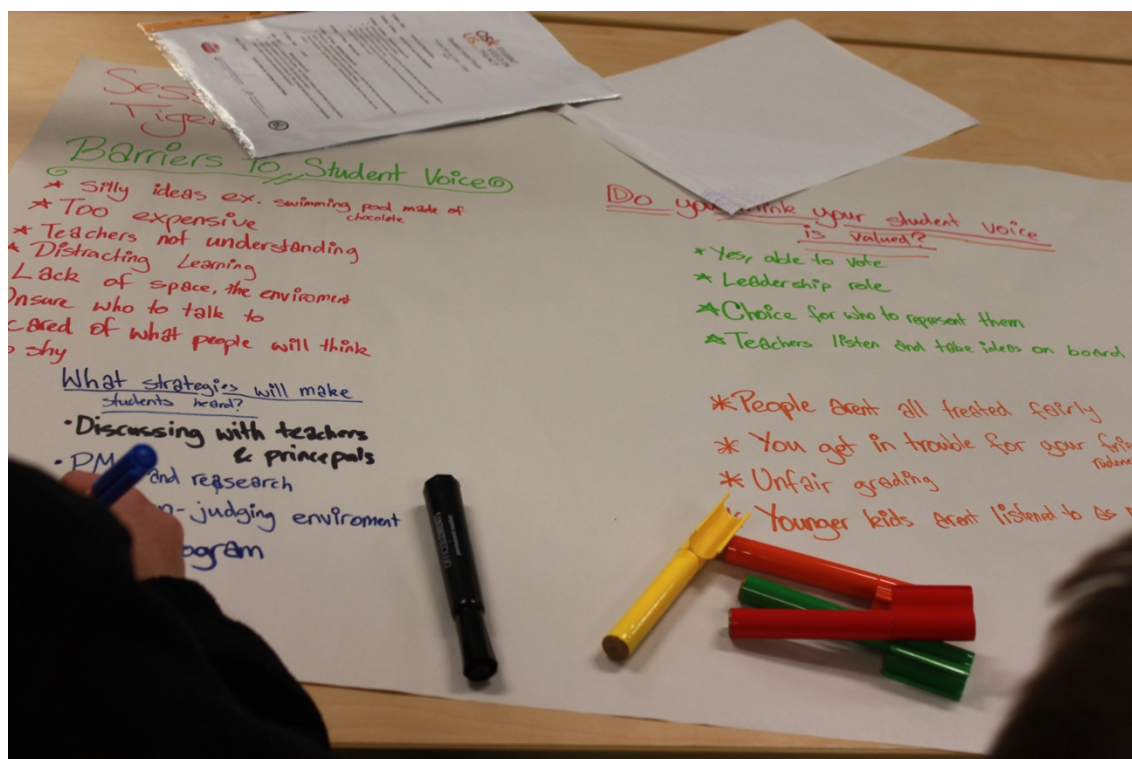
Schools were invited to nominate a contact teacher for the Student Voice Project. Contact teachers were most commonly the teacher who attended the Forum with students.

There was a short specific program for teachers who attended the Forum. The teachers program focussed on increasing knowledge of best practice and principles in youth participation and student voice. The teachers explored most of the same questions the students covered, and, in addition, also looked at the principles of youth participation and student voice, as well as existing resources to support practice in Australia.

3.6 Recording the outcomes

A number of strategies were used to record ideas, thoughts and conversations:

- Group participants wrote notes on butcher's paper during discussions
- At the end of each breakout group session all participants were invited to capture any other thoughts via sticky notes on central ideas boards
- During the breaks each group facilitator wrote notes on what had been discussed in their session and any aspects that had stood out to them
- Student facilitators reflected on the discussions as part of the Forum closing session
- Youth Coalition staff debriefed with the student facilitators at the conclusion of the Forum
- Youth Coalition staff held a reflection session following the Forum.



4. Forum Findings

This section is a summary and collection of the key themes, ideas and issues that came out of the Forum. Direct quotes from the notes and recordings of the activities and group discussions have been used throughout.

4.1 What is student voice?

A number of common themes emerged from discussions with both students and teachers about the definition of student voice. They agreed effective student voice was participatory, inclusive and equitable, as well as collaborative.

Participatory

Participants recognised student voice as any activity that supports students to express their opinions about their school, to talk about any changes they would like to make in their school and to 'have a say' in decisions that are being made in their school.

'A student's voice to me is a student going up to the principal or a teacher and giving them an idea, then them telling you if you can do it or not.'

'It's when we get to have a say about things that affect us not only from the teacher's point of view.'

Inclusive and equitable

Participants felt that student voice is effective when the opportunity to 'have a say' is available to all students.

'Student voice means that every student has a say in the school community, not only leaders and the people that run the school.'

'Equal representation matters because if you don't have a voice, you have no say, and you get treated unfairly!'

Collaborative

Participants viewed student voice as a collaborative process between the student body, the teachers and the school.

'Cooperation with teachers and people.'

'Student voice is about building relationships so that we can share our ideas. It is about being able to have input on our education...'

4.2 Why is student voice important?

Both the students and teachers at the Forum felt that student voice was important for their school community. In particular, both groups identified that student voice can have a positive impact on student wellbeing and engagement.

4.2.1 Student Participants

The following themes emerged from discussions with both primary and secondary school students:

Students should get a say

Student participants felt it was important that all students have the opportunity to contribute to their school community.

‘Every decision affects students.’

‘Because the school is for students.’

‘Students are the people in school, learning and creating culture, and therefore should get a say in what happens in schools.’

‘Having the opportunity to change your school life is important because you will spend most of your time there.’

Students have a different perspective

Students recognised they have a different perspective and insight into their school environment, culture, and experience compared to the adults in their school community. They believe that they are well placed to help the school understand issues that are affecting them. Student voice provides them with the opportunity to assist staff to identify things that might be needed and to raise emerging issues or gaps.

‘We know what the school needs and we have a different point of view - our voice could help the school.’

‘Teachers need to listen because they can’t see students’ perspectives.’

Students want to contribute

The students at the Forum were clearly invested in their educational experience and wanted to be a part of creating positive change in their school community. They felt effective student voice would allow them to raise issues when they arise, contribute to solutions and affect change within their school.

'A student's say may benefit everyone's learning, we have ideas that can affect the school dramatically and change our peer's lives too.'

'Students have a very imaginative mind and have good ideas so should be able to tell teachers what they think should happen.'

'Because the school will be better, because it impacts on our education. Having a say gives more meaning and purpose to my education.'

'Our idea could be something that would improve the school amazingly.'

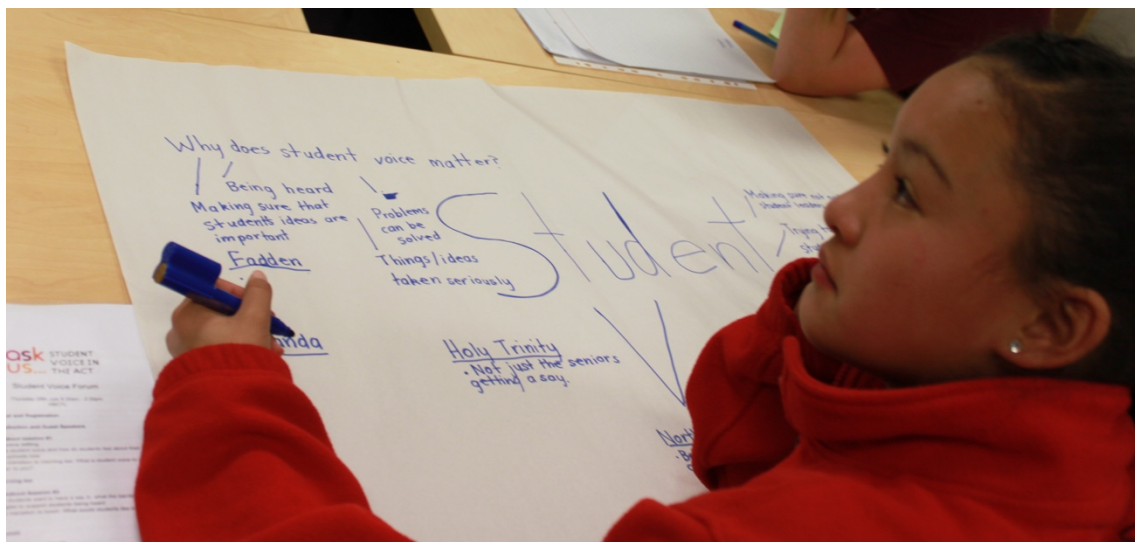
Student voice leads to improved wellbeing

Students recognised that when schools actively listen and respond to their ideas, thoughts and needs, it can lead to improved wellbeing for them and their peers, as well as teachers and the whole school community. They identified that effective student voice fosters a sense of belonging and helps students to feel supported by, and connected with their school community.

'Being heard matters because the standard of our work is better when the morale and attitude is good. People enjoy learning more when they know that they're fully supported.'

'Making kids more comfortable with school decisions helps keep everyone happy in the way our school runs, so students can feel like they belong because they can make a difference.'

'I feel good when I have a voice...'



4.2.2 Teacher Participants

The following themes emerged from discussions with teachers:

Listening to students is a teacher's business

Teacher participants acknowledged that students are central to their profession and that they need to be listening to students to ensure their needs are being met.

'Kids matter, they are our focus and purpose for being there.'

'Students are the reason why we are in a job in the first place.'

'It's our business.'

Student voice drives student engagement and motivation

Teachers felt that providing 'buy in' for students can improve student outcomes across all areas because they feel valued, engaged & have a greater sense of belonging.

'When students have a greater (valued) voice they are more engaged in their school and in their learning.'

'Learning/connections can be so much deeper when students feel that they have more ownership.'

'It's all about the relationships, belonging, trust, and feeling valued.'

Student voice leads to positive change for school community

Teachers identified that student voice has the potential to create change that would benefit the whole school community.

'To enable cooperative decisions that will facilitate positive whole change for the whole school community.'

'To make a better place for both teachers and students.'

'Some of the most amazing things in schools have come from students' ideas and voices.'

Student voice teaches essential skills

Teachers reported that student voice activities teach civics and citizenship in a tangible, practical way. They recognised that building communities for the future requires encouraging students to participate in their community and learning that their voice is valued.

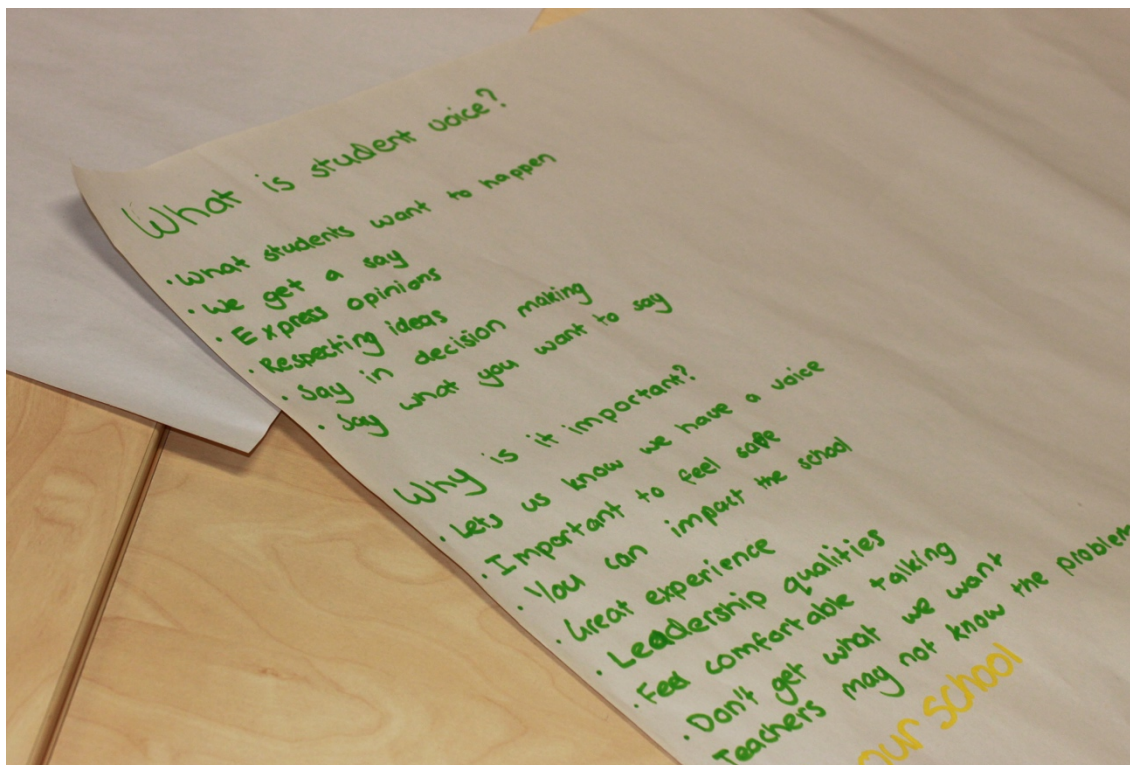
‘How can we expect students to become active citizens if we don’t give them the opportunity to use their voice in school?’

Student voice creates safe school environments

Teachers identified that students who feel their voice is valued by the school, also feel safer and more supported in the school environment.

‘Students who know what’s going on are happier and feel more secure at school.’

‘As a teacher it helps me to gauge where each student sees themselves and how I can support them.’



4.3 What are schools doing now? Is it working?

While most schools have mechanisms for student voice in place, both students and teachers agreed that there is significant room for improvement in implementing effective student voice in ACT schools.

Teachers reported that student voice can be challenging for schools, suggesting that it can be tokenistic at times. However, there was a mixed response from student participants. Those who are involved in student bodies, such as the Student Representative Council (SRC), or have other leadership roles in their school were more likely to be positive about their opinions and ideas being listened to compared to those who are not.

‘We have a student body (SRC) in a way. You can talk about it and get it through them IF they think it is a problem that might be becoming bigger.’

At the Forum, communication was identified as a key aspect of student voice. Both student and teacher participants identified a range of ways in which schools communicate with students about decisions they might need to make, or have made. These included:

- The PA system
- Runners
- Teachers
- Year coordinators
- Student notices
- Newsletters
- House groups
- Year assemblies
- Clubs and communities class
- AST prep class
- Whole school assemblies
- Counsellors & youth workers
- Careers advisors
- Student services
- Committees with specific purposes
- Student reps on the board
- SRC / Student body
- Surveys
- Year group meetings



4.3.1 Primary School Student Participants

Primary school students were generally positive about how student voice works in their school.

They identified the following mechanisms currently used in their schools to listen to students:

- Leadership group / School captains / House representatives
- SRC / Student body
- Year 5 team working with the Year 6 team
- Class meetings
- Voting
- Leadership day
- Surveys
- Ideas box
- Student forums

Student participants were also asked who they would talk to about making change in their school. Primary school students identified:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| • Teachers | • Class ministers for each class |
| • Principals | • Government |
| • Vice Principals | • House captains |
| • Classroom teachers | • Sport teacher |
| • SRC / Student leaders | • Parents & Citizens (P&C) / Parents & Friends (P&F) |
| • Year 6 students | • Math teacher / Math coordinator |
| • Parents | • Canteen manager |
| • Other students | |
| • Librarian | |

Primary school students reported that they felt things work well when they:

- Have formal opportunities to speak and be heard, such as school parliament, or other student bodies
- Have opportunities at both a class and school level to experiment and trial ideas or activities, and teachers let them do it
- Are invited to give feedback that is listened to.

‘I think that our parliament system is okay. Some things go through, some don’t.’

‘It is working well because the teachers let us try things and they listen to us.’

However, not all schools have the same opportunities. Some students also reported that their school:

- Did not have any formal student body or other feedback mechanisms
- Were unclear about who in their school they could talk to about an idea
- Did not feel that their teachers were interested in what they had to say.

‘It’s a problem that we don’t have a student body. I think it’s important so you have someone to talk to if you have an idea.’

‘We need to make teachers listen more.’

4.3.2 Secondary School Participants

Secondary school students identified the following mechanisms currently used in their schools to listen to students:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • SRC | • Class talks / School talks |
| • Year group / Multi year groups | • Buddies |
| • School captains | • Transition mentors |
| • Year coordinators | • Senior tutors |
| • SLG, PCC | • Trusted teachers |
| • Leadership classes | • Counsellors |
| • Student forum | • Protocols and informal bodies |

When asked who they would talk to about making change in their school, secondary school students identified:

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| • Teachers | • Peers |
| • Roll group | • Youth worker |
| • Counsellor | • Careers advisor |
| • Year coordinator | • General social groups |
| • SRC | • Academy heads |
| • Mental health AM | • House heads |
| • School board | • Nurse |
| • Safe schools | • Librarian |
| • P&C / P&F | • Family |
| • Executive | • Senior students |

They spoke mostly about SRCs or equivalent student bodies, indicating that student council style models are still the predominant mechanism offered to secondary students to have input into their school.

Feedback about the effectiveness of SRCs was mixed and can be characterised into the following groups of students:

- Members of the SRC / student body who feel it is effective
- Members of the SRC / student body who do not feel it is effective
- Non-members of the SRC / student body.

Members of the SRC / student body who feel it is effective

Students involved in their SRC / student body who feel it is effective were able to identify clear processes and accountability, and provided examples of things the SRC / student body had accomplished or had a positive impact on within their school within the last 6-18 months.

‘I think that our SRC is effective because from each class, issues are brought up to the meetings and discussed, put on a google document and the principal / teachers can access it to solve the issue.’

‘My school has an effective student voice, in which ideas go to the student body and if opened by them, will possibly go on to the P&F, then to the coordinators, then the Principal.’

Examples of activities or issues the SRC / student body had been able to address or influence included:

- Canteen food
- Timetable changes
- Radio on Fridays
- Jumpers / Uniform
- Elective classes
- Socials
- Leadership program

These students also reported that their SRC had been involved in organising or running school events such as socials and fundraisers.

Members of the SRC / student body who do not feel it is effective

Students involved in their SRC / student body who do not feel it is effective mostly spoke to issues about the SRC / student body not being connected to the school's decision making processes, lack of support and resources, and the need for clarity regarding roles, decision making, and purpose.

‘Yes, we have an SRC, but a teacher runs it and they say they will talk to the other teachers but I don't feel they do.’

‘Our student body is controlled by the teachers so not much of the student voice is represented properly.’

Non-members of the SRC / student body

Students who were not members of their SRC / student body indicated that they are not effective as a mechanism to ensure all students have a voice within their school. Communication between members of SRC and the rest of the student body appears to be a common issue.

‘Our SRC has bad communication with non SRC members.’

‘The SRC is not for the students, they are just there and are against change.’

‘The SRC needs to act on ideas and listen to other students.’

4.3.3 Teacher Participants

Many of the teacher participants had responsibility for supporting the SRC or equivalent in their school. Most identified they had received little or no training with regard to implementing or supporting youth participation or student voice best practice.

‘I’m new to my school and I’ve been given the SRC, I’m not really sure what I’m doing.’

Discussion amongst the teachers agreed that student voice can be challenging for schools. Student involvement in strategic planning, and having a sense of genuine impact within the school is rare. Student voice needs to be encouraged and fostered within ACT schools, and may require change to some mindsets.

‘Youth participation in schools is challenging for some, so it can be a little tokenistic but it is shifting (slowly!).’



4.4 What stops students having effective input into school decision making?

Both students and teachers identified a number of barriers to student voice in their schools. Barriers ranged from issues with current mechanisms, such as the SRC model, to a lack of support from teachers.

4.4.1 Student Participants

Issues with SRC model

There was a mixed response from secondary school student participants about the effectiveness of the SRC model (see section 4.3.2). For students who felt the SRC was ineffective, they had concerns about the lack of communication with the broader student body and the role of the teacher responsible for the SRC.

‘In our SRC only a few students get the chance to have a say, there is expectation of them talking to everyone else and passing things on but they don’t really know how to do that.’

‘Not everyone’s voice is heard.’

‘It doesn’t really work because a teacher runs the SRC, but they don’t have any time to think about the ideas.’

Despite these concerns about the SRC model, no SRC was likely to mean a lack of any opportunity for students to engage in school development and decision making.

‘A huge barrier is that often there is no student council.’

Lack of confidence

Students identified that it is often only the students who are naturally confident who have their voices heard and recognised that not all students would be comfortable voicing their opinions. It is important that all students feel comfortable being involved in student voice activities.

‘Being too shy. Solution: Representatives. Suggestion box. Finding ways to build confidence.’

‘Being fearful of others’ reactions to your honest opinion.’

‘The idea that no one will care about your point of view and what you believe in.’

Lack of support

Students reported that it is sometimes the attitudes of school staff that limit opportunities for them to have a say. They identified the importance of having a school culture that supports and encourages student voice.

‘Teachers need more passion/enthusiasm.’

'What stops us? Not being given an opportunity to speak your mind freely - for one thing.'

'Not having a culture that genuinely supports student voice - that's a huge barrier.'

Students also gave feedback about the impact of some teachers being unapproachable, prone to bias or favouritism, or having little respect for students offering their opinions.

'Partiality and favouritism: Teachers only listen to some people's opinions.'

'Teachers often do nothing or you might get in trouble.'

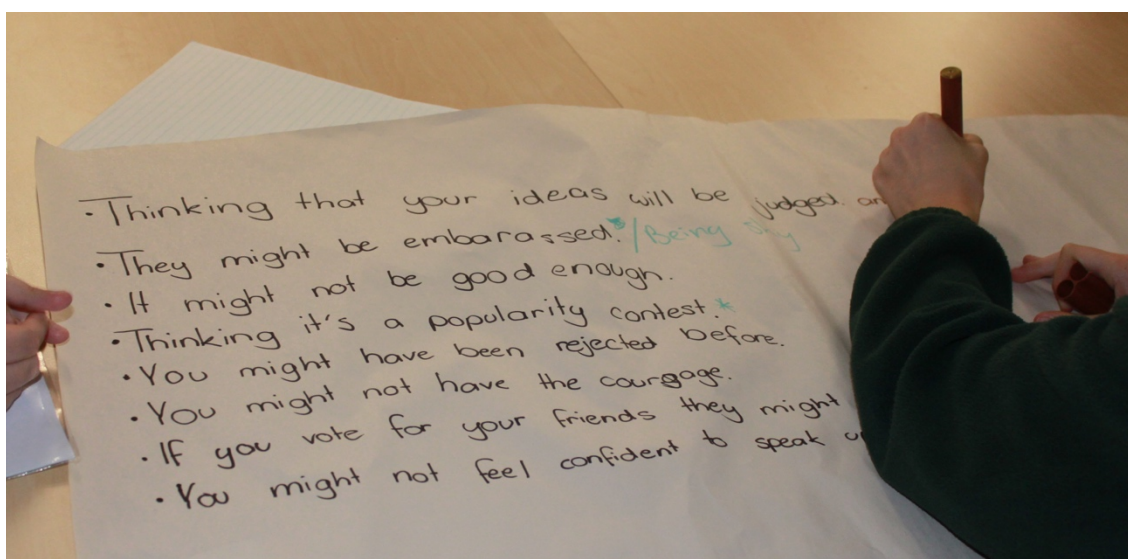
'Unapproachable teachers.'

Students also reported feeling let down by teachers who had not passed their ideas on to the Principal or other decision makers. They highlighted the importance of building good student-teacher relationships to improve student voice in their school.

'Many students feel let down by teachers who had not passed their ideas onto the Principal or other decision makers, even when this was clearly their job or part of their role.'

'Student teacher relationships. Solution: Have a comfortable discussion. Less strict teachers. Student-teacher activities to improve relationships.'

'You might not feel confident enough to speak up to teachers. Solution: Build student-teacher relationships.'



4.4.2 Teacher Participants

Lack of resources

Teachers identified lack of resources, particularly staffing capacity, as prohibitive to effective student participation. A number of teachers raised 'time' and 'money' as barriers to student voice in their school.

'Funds to carry out ideas.'

For schools that were unable to attend the Forum, the main barrier to participation was that they were unable to release a staff member to supervise students.

Models / mechanisms for student voice

Teachers acknowledged the need for effective models / mechanisms to support and facilitate student voice. They highlighted the importance of clarifying what is expected of students, why they are engaging with student opinion and ideas, and where there might be any limits to what the school is able to hear or accommodate.

'We must avoid tokenistic activities, the scope must be clear, and the model needs to respond to the need and the ideas.'

'There may be a lack of awareness of what they can have a voice in.'

'Students' idea of student voice is closed and limited.'

Lack of support

Teachers reported that a lack of support across the school systems, from school staff and from other stakeholders is a major barrier to effective student voice. They identified that other adults within the local school community, such as parents, P&Cs / P&Fs, and Community Councils, could help or hinder student voice activities.

'Adults can sometimes hinder the student voice by trying to solve their student problems.'

'Not having a culture that genuinely supports student voice.'

'Should we address that the P&C aren't more involved in student voice?'

Teachers felt that both the public and private education systems had a role to play in creating systems and curriculum that enables teachers to work in more inclusive and participatory ways with students.

4.5 What would help students have effective input into school decision making?

Students and teachers identified a number of improvements that could make student voice more effective in their schools. Some of the common themes included making time for student voice activities, increased communication between students and school staff, as well as more support from teachers.

4.5.1 Student Participants

Opportunity to participate anonymously

A number of students stressed the importance of being able to provide feedback and share ideas anonymously. This could be a suggestion box in the classroom or even online-based student voice activities.

‘What stops us? Thinking that your ideas might be judged: What about anonymous ideas?’

‘A suggestion box in the classroom for people who don’t like sharing their opinions.’

More time for student voice

Students identified the need to set aside time specifically for student voice activities.

‘Time to talk to teachers about issues.’

‘Making time for students’ ideas at school.’

‘Teachers and principal allowing time for students.’

Support from teachers

Students recognised the importance of having teachers’ who can support their participation. They highlighted the need for teachers to follow through with ideas raised and to close the feedback loop by letting them know the outcome. Feedback was particularly important when their ideas could not be implemented.

‘Have a teacher on board.’

‘Teachers need to take action right away and follow through.’

‘Receiving feedback from teachers about our ideas to have them valued.’

Opportunity to communicate with school decision makers

Students discussed the importance of communication in student voice activities. They suggested implementing mechanisms that would allow students to directly communicate with teachers and school decision makers, particularly the Principal.

‘Build communication and relationships between students and teachers.’

‘More students in student/teacher meetings.’

‘Students should go straight to the source: The Principal.’

‘Having a system to contact and make appointments with teachers/principals.’

Learn skills to participate

A number of students reflected that they may need specific training or learning around effectively voicing their ideas and opinions. They also suggested that older students could help younger students develop skills in this area through a mentorship or buddy program.

‘We should learn to do research and make proposals.’

Improve SRC

There was a lot of discussion about the SRC model and potential improvements. A number of students suggested surveys could be one way the SRC could be more representative of all students.

‘Teachers need to help SRC out more and make ideas happen.’

‘SRC members chosen by students rather than teachers.’



4.5.2 Teacher Participants

Professional development for staff

Teachers identified the need for school staff to have specific training around how to support student voice in their school. They believed training would also help to build a positive school culture around student voice.

‘Develop an awareness and understanding of what is meant by student voice.’

‘We need to educate staff.’

‘Bridging the gap between different teachers’ positions on student voice.’

‘Goodwill exists, hampered by lack of knowledge.’

Support from teachers

Teachers recognised the important role they play in supporting students to have input into school decisions. They emphasised the need to make time for student voice activities and to be open to students’ ideas.

‘Teachers getting out of the way. Walk side by side students, not over the top.’

‘We need to be flexible and open to change.’

‘Need to set aside time for student voice.’

‘Look at how teachers can incorporate student voice more into their lessons.’

Communication with students

Teachers discussed the importance of following through on commitments made to students and of taking the time to explain decisions that have been made. Being transparent was also seen as an important way to build trust in the relationship between the students and staff.

‘Need to explain decisions made so students have a better understanding.’

‘Communication needs to be followed through.’

‘Visibility and transparency of process are important components of student voice.’

Support from Principal

Teachers believed the Principal was the staff member that could have the biggest impact on building a strong culture of student voice within their school.

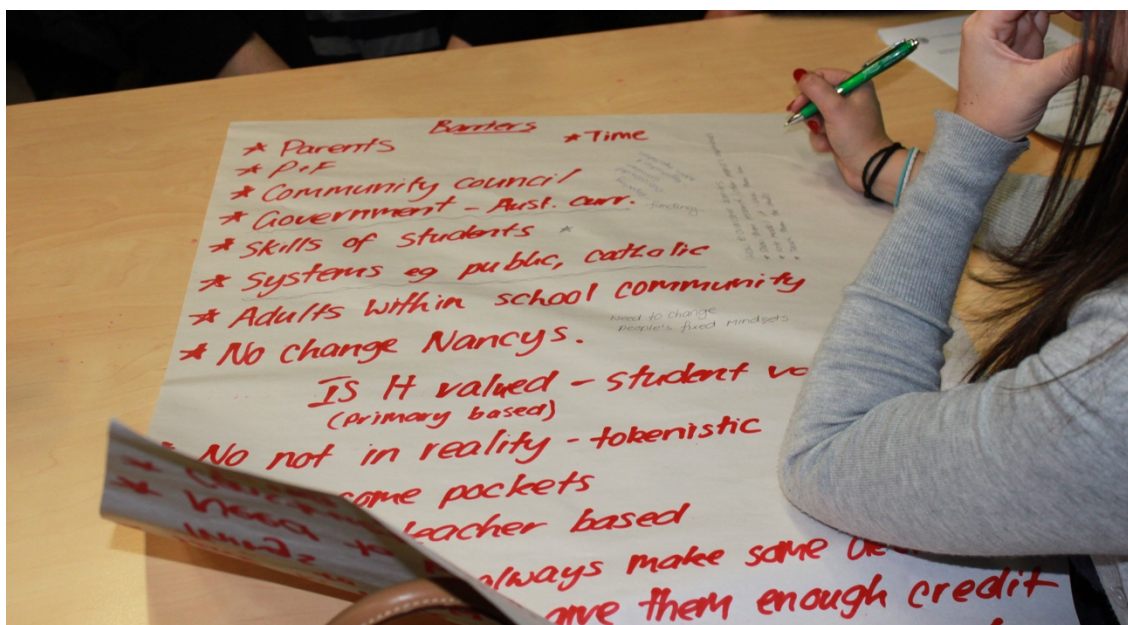
'Effective student voice needs to come from the top.'

'Executives need to open up, be available, be approachable.'

One group even developed a list of characteristics of what good practice for Principals might look like:

An Appropriate Principal:

- Uses assembly to acknowledge SRC's role
- Dedicates time for student voice
- Surveys all the stakeholders
- Trusts students to dedicate the time themselves
- Gets input from teachers about who is suited for the job
- Separates class behaviour & student voice behaviour
- Dedicates time and deep conversation to issues
- Publishes results / celebrates wins
- Supports peer role modelling
- Creates engagement.



Value of student voice

Teachers highlighted the need for student voice to be valued at all levels of the staffing structure and the importance of demonstrating to students that their voice is valued.

‘Student voice needs to be valued by all, not just some.’

‘Student voice needs to be valued at all levels.’

‘We need to be taking student voice seriously.’

Give more students a go

Some teachers suggested that schools should not be limiting the number of students they cultivate as leaders, and should be developing these skills in all students. They discussed creating more opportunities for students to engage, participate and share their ideas.

‘We need to look beyond just the SRC and student leaders.’

‘How can you tap into all diversities to give them a voice? Surveys, meetings, small group discussions, feedback box.’

Teach students skills to participate

Teachers also recognised that students need to develop specific skills in order to express their ideas effectively.

‘Need to give students a frame of reference and teach about using their voice in the appropriate way.’

‘Explicitly teach skills of how to communicate proposals.’

‘Initiating a strategy that develops the knowledge and skills associated with student voice from K-6.’



4.6 What do students want to have a say about in their school?

Forum participants looked at the preliminary findings of the Student Engagement Survey and were invited to discuss the results. Students identified what things they would like to have a say about in their school, while the teachers were asked to reflect on what they believed students were interested in.

4.6.1 Primary School Participants

Primary school participants were interested in having input around a range of aspects of their education experience, including:

- Teachers / teaching
- Curriculum
- Activities
- Timetabling
- School environment
- Student health and wellbeing
- Class / homework
- Uniform
- School resources
- Student leadership & participation
- Assessment
- School culture

‘Students also want to talk about the teachers we get and how they do things.’

‘We need a bigger playground and more room.’

‘Personally, I think students should have a say in where lessons are held.’

‘Wearing our own jumpers because the school jumpers aren’t warm enough.’

‘What fundraiser money is put towards.’



4.6.2 Secondary School Participants

Secondary school participants in the forum also had a range of things they were interested in contributing to, including:

- Teachers / teaching
- Curriculum
- Activities
- Timetabling
- School environment
- Student health and wellbeing
- Class / homework
- Uniform
- School resources
- Student leadership & participation
- Assessment
- Employment / further education pathways

‘Have a say in what types of methods our teachers use to present information (powerpoint, video, reading).’

‘We want to have a say in the design of school spaces and uses.’

‘Times; early starts, late finishes, all day school & customisable timetables.’

‘Mental health courses to be implemented in schools.’

‘We want a say in what our assignments are. BSSS may state there must be an oral, but we can choose the topic or question.’

4.6.3 Teacher Participants

Teachers reflections on what they thought students wanted to have a say about fell broadly under the same themes as the students:

- Teachers / teaching
- Curriculum
- Activities
- Timetabling
- School environment
- Student health and wellbeing
- Class / homework
- School resources
- Student leadership & participation

‘Wellbeing, including peer relationships and how to address bullying.’

‘How teachers respond to students.’

‘More choice in how the classroom works.’

‘More power and autonomy in the classroom.’

5. What Next? Developing a Student Voice Resource Kit

The next step is to look at the results of the Student Engagement Survey together with the findings from the Forum to develop a Student Voice Resource Kit for ACT schools to improve their practice around student voice. The Resource Kit will focus on:

- The importance of student voice
- The key factors that really make it work
- The information students and staff need to know, and the skills they need to develop to do it well.

The Resource Kit will also include findings from the desktop review of literature on student voice that was completed as part of the planning phase of the Project. This review combines what we know from research with the experience of established practitioners both in Australia and internationally.

It will be designed specifically for the ACT context and informed by the views of the students that participated in the Survey and the Forum. Recognising the diversity of schools in the ACT, the Resource Kit will be flexible and will provide schools with information, strategies and ideas that can easily adapted to suit their school context and culture.

5.1 Guiding Principles

5.1.1 For Students

- All students should have the opportunity to contribute to their school community.
- Students have a different perspective and insight into their school environment, culture, and experience.
- Students are invested in their education experience and want to be a part of creating positive change in their school community.
- Actively listening and responding to the ideas, thoughts and needs of students leads to improved wellbeing for students, teachers, and the whole school community.

5.1.2 For Teachers

- Students are central to the profession of teaching and teachers need to listen to students to ensure their needs are being met.
- Student voice drives student engagement and improves their outcomes across all areas because they feel valued, engaged and a sense of belonging.
- Student voice has the potential to create positive change that would benefit the whole school community.
- Student voice activities teach civics and citizenship in a tangible, practical way.
- Students who feel their voice is valued by their school, also feel safer and more supported in the school environment.

5.2 Key Issues

5.2.1 Getting started

For schools to engage with students effectively they need to be able to articulate why they are engaging with students, what they expect of them, and where there might be any limits to what the school is able to hear or accommodate.

Recommended section for Student Voice Resource Kit

- Section 1: Self-evaluation – simple framework for schools to determine how student voice is currently working in their school and to identify areas for improvement.
- Section 2: Getting started – clarifying expectations, purpose and scope; negotiating how stakeholders will work together.

5.2.2 Resources

Teachers identified a lack of resources, particularly staffing capacity, as prohibitive to effective student participation. Schools need to think about what resources they can allocate to student voice before they do it, and review this regularly.

Recommended sections for Student Voice Resource Kit

- Section 3: Demonstrating the value of student voice – what is the return on investment?
- Section 4: Resources – what does it take to engage effectively?

5.2.3 Opportunities to contribute

Students identified a number of barriers to effective student voice, including issues with current mechanisms, such as the SRC model, and communication from school staff around decisions.

Recommended sections for Student Voice Resource Kit

- Section 5: Mechanisms for student voice – information about different models (including, but not limited to, formal student bodies), pros and cons of different models and suitability for different school settings, and resource requirements.
- Section 6: In the classroom – practical strategies and ideas for teachers to implement effective student voice at the classroom level.
- Section 7: Closing the feedback loop – responding to and engaging with students' ideas, concerns, and acknowledgements.

5.2.4 Learning and skills development

Both students and teachers identified the need to develop their skills and practice in student voice and participation.

Recommended section for Student Voice Resource Kit

Section 8: Effective student voice – practical ideas and exercises for both students and teachers; what skills are needed for students to have their voices heard?

5.2.5 Social inclusion

Both students and teachers recognised the challenge of providing the opportunity for all students to have their voices heard, especially for those students who lack confidence or are disengaged.

Recommended sections for Student Voice Resource Kit

Section 9: Student voice for all – strategies to engage with students who may be socially excluded, disengaged or disengaging.

Section 10: Engaging with parents – what role might parents / carers play in supporting student voice in schools?

5.3 Resource Kit Evaluation

It is important that the Resource Kit remain relevant and useful for schools into the future. Once schools have had sufficient time to use the Resource Kit and implement strategies for student voice in their school, the Cross Sectoral Committee recommend that it be evaluated.

Appendix A: Student Engagement Survey Questions

Primary School Student Survey

1. What year are you in?
2. Do you feel you have an opportunity to have input into some of the decisions made within your school?
3. Do you think the opinions of students about your school are valued by teachers?
4. Who do you talk to if you have any ideas about improving things within your school?
 - a. Class teacher
 - b. Principal
 - c. Student support teacher
 - d. I don't know
 - e. My peers (other students)
 - f. Talk to the Student Representative Council (SRC), or similar group
 - g. My parent(s) / guardian(s)
 - h. P&C / P&F / Community Council
 - i. Any other people you talk to about changes?
5. What would you like to have an opportunity to have a say about in your school?
 - a. Lunch times / Lunch time activities
 - b. Canteen menu
 - c. More sport / arts / drama, etc.
 - d. Where classes are held (inside / outside)
 - e. Fundraising
 - f. Things we do in class
 - g. Excursions
 - h. Books in library
 - i. Playground activity spaces
 - j. Student health and wellbeing
 - k. Use of technology
 - l. Assessment
 - m. What else would you like to have a say in?
6. What things do you think help students feel more comfortable about having a say in school, or putting forward ideas for improvement in school?
 - a. Knowing which teacher I can talk to
 - b. Having a time in school where we can talk about change
 - c. My teachers showing me that they care about my opinion on changes
 - d. If it was an everyday part of school?
 - e. Other (please specify)

7. How could you have your say on changes in school? Which do you think would be most effective? Please indicate level of effectiveness for each option (not effective, a little effective, fairly effective, most effective):
 - a. Talk about it in class
 - b. Talk about it with my peers
 - c. Have a suggestions box
 - d. Talk about it with my parents (P&C / P&F / Community Council)
 - e. Talk to the Student Representative Council (SRC), or similar group
 - f. Can you think of any other ways?
8. Do you have anything else to say about having a voice within your school?

Secondary School Student Survey

1. What year are you in?
2. Do you feel you have an opportunity to have input into some of the decisions made within your school?
3. Do you feel student opinions within your school are valued by teachers?
4. Who do you talk to within your school about changes you would like to explore?
 - a. Principal
 - b. Youth Worker
 - c. School counsellor
 - d. Roll call (Pastoral care / Home group) teacher
 - e. Class teacher
 - f. I don't know
 - g. Student Representative Council (SRC), or similar group
 - h. My peers
 - i. Parent(s) / Guardian(s)
 - j. P&C / P&F / Community Council
 - k. Other (please specify)
5. What things would you like to have an opportunity to have a say on within your school?
 - a. Length of classes
 - b. Student participation
 - c. Lunch menu
 - d. Homework
 - e. Types of classes
 - f. Making class more interactive
 - g. Lunch times
 - h. Excursions
 - i. Extracurricular activities, i.e. outside of school (sports, art, drama, dances, etc.)
 - j. Electives
 - k. Whole school activities, i.e. school lunch, school dance, etc.
 - l. Assessment

- m. Use of technology
 - n. Design of school spaces
 - o. Additional supports / Student wellbeing
 - p. Available student resources
 - q. Other (please specify)
6. What things would help you to have a voice within your school?
- a. My teachers being approachable
 - b. Knowing that my opinion is being taken seriously and is being considered
 - c. Having a space to make suggestions within my school
 - d. Having a system in place within the school that assures my voice is heard
 - e. Knowing who to talk to within the school about my concerns
 - f. If it was a part of my school environment
 - g. Other (please specify)
7. How could you raise your voice within your school? Which do you think would be most effective? Please indicate level of effectiveness for each option (not effective, a little effective, fairly effective, most effective):
- a. Create a space for student collaboration and discussion
 - b. Have a survey within the school
 - c. Nominate a teacher to talk to about student concerns
 - d. Talk to my peers about what I want to change
 - e. Create a chat group on social media to voice our concerns
 - f. Become involved in the SRC, or similar group
 - g. Talk to the SRC, or similar group, about my concerns and ideas
 - h. Other (please specify)
8. Do you have anything else to say about student voice within schools?

Appendix B: List of schools that participated in Student Engagement Survey

Government:

- Ainslie School
- Ainslie North Primary School
- Alfred Deakin High School
- Aranda Primary School
- Belconnen High School
- Canberra College
- Charles Weston School
- Cranleigh School
- Erindale College
- Harrison School
- Hawker Primary School
- Lanyon High School
- Lyneham High School
- Macgregor Primary School
- Neville Bonner Primary School
- Telopea Park School
- Theodore Primary School
- Wanniassa Hills Primary School
- Wanniassa School
- Weetangera Primary School
- The Woden School
- Yarralumla Primary School

Catholic:

- Holy Family Primary School, Gowrie
- Holy Trinity Primary School, Curtin
- Merici College, Braddon
- St Bede's Primary School, Red Hill
- St Benedict's Primary School, Narrabundah

- St Clare of Assisi Primary School, Conder
- St Clare's College, Griffith
- St Francis Xavier College, Florey
- St John the Apostle Primary School, Florey
- St Joseph's Primary School, O'Connor
- St Mary Mackillop College (Isabella Plains Campus)
- St Mary Mackillop College (Wanniassa Campus)
- St Matthew's Primary School, Page
- St Monica's Primary School, Evatt
- St Thomas Aquinas Primary School, West Belconnen
- Sts Peter & Paul Primary School, Garran

Independent:

- Blue Gum Community School, Hackett
- Brindabella Christian College, Lyneham
- Emmaus Christian School, Dickson
- Canberra Girls Grammar School, Deakin
- Islamic School of Canberra, Weston
- Orana Steiner School, Weston
- St Edmund's College Canberra, Griffith

Appendix C: Forum Program

8:30am - 9:00am *Arrival and Registration*

- Performance by musicians from Gudan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation's Band

9:00am - 9:30am *Introduction and Guest Speakers*

- *Introductory Address:* Shane Rattenbury, Minister for Education
- *Guest Speakers:* Principals shared how student voice has had a positive impact in their school community

9:35am - 10:45am *Breakout session #1*

- Introductions and scene setting
- *Student Discussion:* What is student voice? How do students feel about their opportunities to have a say in their schools now?
- *Teacher Discussion:* Youth participation & student voice
- *Ideas Board (in transition to morning tea):* What is student voice to you? Why does student voice matter to you?

10:45am - 11:15am *Morning tea*

11:15am - 12:15pm *Breakout Session #2*

- *Discussion:* What do students want to have a say about in their school? What are the barriers to students being heard? What strategies support students being heard?
- *Ideas Board (in transition to lunch):* What would students like to have a say in at school?

12:15pm - 1:00pm *Lunch*

1:00pm - 2:00pm *Breakout session #3*

- *Discussion:* Why should decision makers listen to young people? What support systems in schools help students be heard?
- *Ideas Board (in transition to wrap up):* Why should teachers and school leadership teams listen to students about school decisions?

2:00pm - 2:30pm *Forum wrap up, summary & next steps*

Appendix D: List of schools that attended the Forum

Government:

- Ainslie School
- Alfred Deakin High School
- Aranda Primary School
- Arawang Primary School
- Belconnen High School
- Bonython Primary School
- Calwell High School
- Canberra College
- Canberra High School
- Caroline Chisholm School
- Charnwood-Dunlop School
- Dickson College
- Erindale College
- Fadden Primary School
- Gungahlin College
- Harrison School
- Hughes Primary School
- Kingsford Smith School
- Lanyon High School
- Lyneham High School
- Lyneham Primary School
- Macgregor Primary School
- Majura Primary School
- Melba Copland Secondary School
- Mount Rogers Primary School
- Telopea Park School
- Theodore Primary School
- Torrens Primary School
- Wanniassa School
- Weetangera Primary School
- The Woden School

Catholic:

- Good Shepherd Primary School, Amaroo

- Holy Family Primary School, Gowrie
- Holy Trinity Primary School, Curtin
- Merici College, Braddon
- St Anthony's Parish Primary School, Wanniassa
- St Bede's Primary School, Red Hill
- St Benedict's Primary School, Narrabundah
- St Clare of Assisi Primary School, Conder
- St Clare's College, Griffith
- St Francis Xavier College, Florey
- St Francis of Assisi Primary School, Calwell
- St John the Apostle Primary School, Florey
- St Joseph's Primary School, O'Connor
- St Mary Mackillop College (Wanniassa Campus)
- St Matthew's Primary School, Page
- St Michael's Primary School, Kaleen
- St Monica's Primary School, Evatt
- St Thomas Aquinas Primary School, West Belconnen
- Sts Peter and Paul Primary School, Garran

Independent:

- Daramalan College, Dickson
- Canberra Girls Grammar School, Deakin
- Islamic School of Canberra, Weston
- Orana Steiner School, Weston
- St Edmund's College Canberra, Griffith

Appendix E: Forum Feedback

What did participants like?

Meeting people and finding out what was happening in other schools:

‘Great to find out what was happening in other places. Opened up my thinking about what is possible in schools.’

Discussions / group work:

‘I liked that we thought as a group, and not as individuals. We got to have a say in what happened and we had fun.’

‘Today advised me that students have these amazing ideas which could make our education way better, we only need to speak.’

Everybody got to have a say:

‘It was open and inviting, and allowed for everyone’s opinions to be voiced.’

‘We got to share our thoughts without being judged.’

‘I like that we actually got to think about what we could do to improve our schools.’

Forum structure:

‘The concept of everything, and how it was presented and explained.’

‘I loved the way the student groups were facilitated by young people.’

What didn’t participants like?

Presentations at the start of the forum:

‘The speeches at the start were a bit boring.’

Amount of food:

‘Very crowded in the morning, food ran out quick!’

Length of day:

‘I found sometimes I was getting bored, needed more engagement.’

‘I don’t think it needs to be as long next time.’

- Group sessions

‘When in groups we were only introduced to those specific people, not more people.’

‘The groups we got split up into.’

- Teacher program

‘As a teacher, I would have appreciated a chance to observe a little of the student workshops.’

What would participants do differently if they were running the Forum?

- Catering

‘More food, cake, snacks, set out enough tables and chairs.’

‘Snacks on the tables we work at.’

- Shorter presentations at start of the forum

‘Less Principal speakers. We’re students for goodness sake! NO ONE likes the Principal’s address’

- Add more physical activities

‘Have somewhere to run around during lunch and in the morning.’

‘Do a big game or something at the end.’

- Include more people

‘I would allow 4 people from every school.’

‘Maybe see if a couple of younger students could come so we could get their point of view.’

- More on student voice

‘I would give broader questions and then allow for the conversation to branch off, them, creating new questions and topics. There is just so much to talk about.’

‘Follow up - Another forum?’

Other:

'If there was enough lead up time, provide some reading material around student voice, but not too much.'

'I really wanted an opportunity to talk to the head of Education.'

What will participants take back to their schools about student voice?

'The need to look for more opportunities to involve students in real decision making.'

'I will take back the idea of having a box for ideas and ways to improve our school to put in our school office.'

'Everything passed on by the Principal speakers and the students in my group: Students sitting in on teacher employment processes, changing the SRC, getting to know which teachers to approach.'

'The ideas from other schools, and how we can plan our proposals and make our voice heard.'

'The idea to have a student rep present at staff meetings to keep students in the loop.'

'Students to lead the student survey.'

'Let's begin the conversation. Use the 2 representatives to feedback & get kids to do the survey.'

'Student voice in the curriculum - Discuss with school leadership team - How do we get everyone on board?'

'Make sure I include my peers and other students in SRC projects.'

'After conversing with other students on the side and with the government lady with the camera, I will definitely be taking back the idea of having a group of trained mental health ambassadors.'

'Inter-year group relationships.'

'Input into assessment, more involvement in learning.'

'Changing one assembly to a Q&A forum.'

'Suggestion box, and the way other schools run their SRC.'

‘Get more / all staff actively engaged with the benefits of working collaboratively with the SRC!’

‘Year 6 Parliament - Asking for student voice in educational choice! (it rhymes).’

‘Roger Hart’s ladder of participation.’

What did the facilitator’s say?

‘It was a fantastic experience, particularly for the student facilitators, who are really keen to be involved in any projects like this again.’

‘The energy and enthusiasm of the students was amazing, people were really open and had lots of good insight about what is good and what can improve in their school.’

‘Great to see the mingling and reflection over lunchtime of what ideas students could take back to their school. Mixing up students from different schools and school sectors worked really well - the students really liked that opportunity.’

‘The questions were more specific for the second session - that got students really involved in telling their stories.’

‘Different mediums - forms, post its, butchers paper, textas, kept things moving.’

‘Small groups, breaking up into two or three to discuss then coming back to larger group of 8-10 worked well.’

‘Some groups had mixed ages - which had some challenges. Older students facilitating and helping lead discussions with younger students made it work better.’

‘The post it notes and discussion walls worked well as reflection exercises.’