ask us... STUDENT VOICE IN THE ACT

RESOURCE KIT

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Contents

Introduction

What is the Student Voice Resource Kit?

The Student Voice Resource Kit has been developed by the Youth Coalition of the ACT to provide information, strategies and ideas for improving student voice in schools across the ACT.

This Kit is designed specifically for the local context, informed by the views of students and teachers in ACT schools. Recognising the diversity of schools in the Territory, it is designed to be flexible and easily adapted to suit different schools and their cultures.

How was this Kit developed?

This Kit was developed as part of the 'Student Voice in the ACT' Project (the Project), which 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 combined the ideas and views of students and teachers in the ACT, with what we know about student voice and youth participation from research and experience of established practitioners in Australia and internationally.

The views of students and teachers were sought and collated through the Student Engagement Survey (the Survey) and the Student Voice Forum (the Forum) held in July 2016. The findings have been used to inform the development of this Kit and you will find quotes from both students and teachers throughout.

The full report summarising findings from both the Survey and the Forum is available from the ACT Education Directorate, Catholic Education and the Association of Independent Schools of the ACT.

How do I use this Kit?

This Kit is divided into sections, each with a different focus area providing a range of considerations for schools to make student voice meaningful and effective.

Each section includes a relevant list of resources that are designed to help schools implement and support meaningful student voice activities. All resources included are free and available online.

Some sections also include a list of further readings that offer additional information and in depth analysis of the content included in this Kit.

Guiding Principles

The Guiding Principles were developed using the key findings from the Survey and the Forum.

Student voice:
- leads to improved wellbeing for students, teachers, and the whole school community
- drives student engagement and improves outcomes across all areas
- has the potential to create positive change that benefits the whole school community
- teaches civics and citizenship in a tangible way.

All students:
- have a different perspective and insight into their school environment, culture, and experience
- are invested in their education experience and want to be a part of creating positive change in their school community
- have the opportunity to contribute to their school community
- feel safer and more supported in the school environment when their voice is valued.

All teachers:
- actively listen and respond to students to ensure their needs are being met.

Section 1: Why student voice?

This section provides a definition of what is meant by 'student voice' and why it is important for schools to engage meaningfully with students' voices.

What is student voice?

For this Project, student voice has been defined as *'the individual and collective perspective and actions of young people within the context of learning and education.'* [1] 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.

Over time, in both research and practice, a number of terms have been used to describe the activities that broadly fall under the term 'student voice' as it has been defined here. What we consider 'student voice', may also be referred to as 'student participation', 'student representation' and 'student leadership'.[2]

Why is student voice important?

Supporting meaningful and effective student voice can contribute to many positive outcomes for schools. It has been shown to improve student wellbeing and student engagement, lead to positive change within schools, and promote civic engagement among students.

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

\- Student participant

Student voice leads to improved wellbeing

Research has shown that student voice can have a positive impact on student wellbeing. When students feel their voice is valued, they also feel a greater sense of belonging and have more confidence in their own abilities.[3] [4] [5]

During the Forum, both students and teachers recognised the value of effective student voice in promoting wellbeing. They identified that it fosters a sense of belonging and helps students to feel safe, connected and supported within 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.'*
> - Student participant

Student voice drives student engagement

Student voice can also lead to improved student engagement.[6 7 8 9] When students feel safe, valued and respected, they are more likely to participate constructively within the classroom and have a positive attitude towards their learning. [10]

At the Forum, both students and teachers identified student voice as a driver for improved engagement in the classroom. Teachers felt that providing 'buy in' for students improves student outcomes across all areas because they feel valued, engaged and have a greater sense of belonging.

Student voice can create positive change

Research also highlights the potential of student voice to create positive change within school communities.[11 12] Students have a different perspective on the school environment to adults and can provide valuable insights into their experience of learning, teaching and other school functions.[13 14]

From the Forum, we know that students want to be part of creating positive change in their schools and believe 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.

> *'Having a say gives more meaning and purpose to my education.'*
> - Student participant

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

> *'We know what the school needs and we have a different point of view, our voice could help the school.'*
> - Student participant

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

> *'Some of the most amazing things in schools have come from students' ideas and voices.'*
> - Teacher participant

Student voice promotes civic engagement

Research has also demonstrated that student voice can promote civic engagement among students. When students are contributing and engaged in decision-making processes at school, they develop a greater understanding and appreciation for active citizenship and civic engagement in the community more broadly.[15 16 17]

Teachers at the Forum also highlighted the role that student voice can play in teaching 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?'*
> - Teacher participant

Further reading and viewing

Schools for All Children and Young People: Report of the Expert Panel on Students with Complex Needs and Challenging Behaviour

This report outlines the findings and recommendations of the Expert Panel established by the ACT Minister for Education and Training, Ms Joy Burch, in May 2015 to review policy and practice in all ACT schools in regards to students with complex needs and challenging behaviour. Chapter 5 has a focus on 'Student-Centred Schools' and recommends ACT schools *'actively seek, listen and respond to the views of students.'*

Find it: http://www.education.act.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/856254/Attach-4-Expert-Panel-Report-Web.pdf

Sound, Presence, and Power: "Student Voice" in Educational Research and Reform

This research paper discusses the emergence of the term 'student voice' in educational research and reform. It looks at some of the positive and negative aspects of the term and *'raises questions about how attitudes toward and commitments to student voice work play out.'*

Find it: http://repository.brynmawr.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1011&context=edu_pubs

Imagining an Ideal School for Wellbeing: Locating Student Voice

This research paper explores the significance of actively engaging with students in school about matters that concern them. The data reveals that students identified creative ways that pedagogy, the school environment and relationships could be improved, changed or maintained to assist their wellbeing.

Find it: http://epubs.scu.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2133&context=educ_pubs

Kids, take charge

This talk is from a TEDIndia event in November 2009 by Kiran Sethi, founder of the Riverside School in Ahmedabad, India. In this talk, Kiran discusses how Riverside School students take local issues into their own hands, lead other young people and even educate their own parents with their 'I can' attitude.

Find it: https://www.ted.com/talks/kiran_bir_sethi_teaches_kids_to_take_charge#t-540935

Section 2: Is your school ready?

This section explores the pre-conditions required for student voice activities to be meaningful and effective in schools.

Schools that support meaningful student voice:
- see students as active participants
- listen to students
- are open and willing to change

The resources in this section will assist schools in assessing how student voice is currently working in their school and in identifying areas for improvement.

Is your school ready to see students as active participants?

Much of the research literature on student voice focuses on cultural change and shifting the traditional power imbalance between adults and young people within schools.[18] [19] [20] Such a shift requires adults within the school to see students differently, that is, not as "passive recipients" of education, but rather as "active participants" in their learning.[21] [22] [23] [24]

Engaging in meaningful student voice activities requires a shift in the relationship between teachers and students, *'where staff and students meet one another as equals, as genuine partners in the shared undertaking of making meaning of their work together.'* [25] In this environment, students are valued as partners and are supported to participate in decision-making processes within their school.[26] [27] [28]

> *'[It involves] teachers getting out of the way. Walk[ing] side by side students, not over the top.'*
> - Teacher participant

Is your school ready to listen?

During the 'Student Voice in the ACT' Project, both students and teachers highlighted the importance of having a school culture that supports, encourages, listens and responds to student voice.

> *'Student voice needs to be valued by all, not just some.'*
> - Teacher participant

> *'Not having a culture that genuinely supports student voice - that's a huge barrier.'*
> - Student participant

Much of the negative feedback focused on the lack of transparency in current practice. Both students and teachers reported that the attitudes of school staff can sometimes limit the opportunities for them to have a say. 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.

> *'Even if there are systems in place to take suggestions, the suggestions never seem to be considered or implemented.'*
> - Student participant

Research highlights the vital role that teachers in particular play in cultivating a culture that values and listens to student opinions.[29] However, this is not without *'challenges that some may not be willing to face.'* [30] Schools that want to genuinely engage in student voice activities must be prepared to listen to *all* feedback from students, both positive *and* negative.[31]

Is your school ready for change?

By nature, schools are constantly striving to improve the educational experience for students. What we know from the 'Student Voice in the ACT' Project is that students also want to be a part of creating positive change within their school community.

> *'Our idea could be something that would improve the school amazingly.'*
> - Student participant

> *'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.'*
> - Student participant

Research has demonstrated the positive changes that can come from implementing meaningful student voice in schools.[32] [33] During the Student Voice Forum, teachers also recognised the potential of student voice in creating positive change in their schools.

It is also important to note that what students say will change over time. For schools, student voice is an ongoing commitment to being open and willing to change in response to what students tell them.[34]

> *'[Student voice can] enable cooperative decisions that will facilitate positive whole change for the whole school community.'*
> - Teacher participant

Resources

Student Engagement Conditions Assessment

This is a self-assessment tool for schools to identify areas for improvement in student engagement activities. The tool includes questions that cover the following areas: culture; student involvement; motivation; sustainability; student readiness; adult readiness; evaluation; and, barriers.

Find it: https://soundout.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/SoundOutSECE.pdf

SRC Audit Tool

This is an audit tool for SRCs to reflect on their effectiveness and identify areas for improvement. The tool provides a checklist of the different things that can make an SRC effective or ineffective.

Find it: Represent! An SRC resource kit for students and teachers, pp. 45-9.

http://www.vicsrc.org.au/oldsite/uploads/SRC%20Resource%20Kit%20%20Part%201%20for%20Web.pdf

Further viewing

Reimagining Classrooms: Teachers as Learners and Students as Leaders

This talk is from a TEDxFargo event in October 2015 by Kayla Delzer, a Year 2 teacher in West Fargo, North Dakota, USA. In this talk, Kayla speaks about how to release the power of students in the classroom by giving them ownership of their learning and making it relevant to them.

Find it: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6vVXmwYvgs&t=194s

Section 3: Resourcing student voice in your school

This section explores what supports are needed for student voice initiatives to be effective and meaningful in your school.

Schools that support meaningful student voice:

- make time for student voice
- invest money in student voice

Time emerged as a strong theme for both students and teachers during the 'Student Voice in the ACT' Project.

In the Student Engagement Survey, 32% of primary school respondents indicated having a designated time to talk about their ideas would make sharing their thoughts easier. Similarly, 36% of secondary school respondents felt that space to make suggestions would help them to have a voice within their school.

'...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.'

- Student participant

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

- Student participant

'We need to set aside time for student voice.'

- Teacher participant

When asked about student voice in their school, a number of teachers identified lack of time as one of the main barriers to its effective implementation. A review of the research on student voice reveals this frustration with "not having enough time" is not unique to the ACT. We know from both research and discussions with teachers, that *'the school environment is a busy, bustling, and often time-poor space.'* [35]

Finding time for student voice activities can be challenging for teachers. One research report found that managing different pressures in a classroom, particularly the pressure to fulfil curriculum requirements, can leave little time for student voice.[36]

Invest in student voice

During the Student Voice Forum, teachers also identified the need for financial resources to be made available for student voice initiatives.

'They need funds to carry out ideas.'

- Teacher participant

Allocating financial and other resources to student voice activities demonstrates the school values student voice in a similar way to other activities conducted within the school. This could include providing a core budget to the Student Representative Council (SRC) each year, as well as making funding available to carry out other student voice activities within the school and to implement students' ideas.

Resources

Participation as Curriculum

When student voice is embedded within curriculum, it is not seen as an additional activity that takes up time within a classroom. It becomes an essential tool for teachers and, as a result, students are more invested in their learning (see Section 5 for more information).

This excerpt provides possible strategies, as well as case studies from primary and secondary schools across Australia, for incorporating student voice and participation into the everyday curriculum.

Find it: Student Councils & Beyond, pp. 37-48, http://www.asprinworld. com/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/ SCAB_Part_2_web.329145859.pdf

Resourcing the SRC

This chapter provides information on resourcing the SRC, including how to manage a budget. It includes templates to assist the SRC to plan and manage their own resources.

Find it: Represent! An SRC resource kit for students and teachers, pp. 119-124,

http://www.vicsrc.org.au/oldsite/ uploads/SRC%20Resource%20Kit%20 %20Part%204%20for%20Web.pdf

Section 4: Making student voice meaningful

This section includes information and resources that will help schools build a positive culture around student voice.

Clarifying expectation, purpose and scope

Before engaging in student voice activities it is important that schools are clear about the purpose of involving students and the expected outcome.

At the Forum, teachers 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.'

- Teacher participant

Supporting student voice at all levels

At the Forum, 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.

'Whether you're a teacher, principal, school counsellor, coach, librarian, school board member, parent, teacher aide, district staff, or any of the countless other roles adults have throughout the education system, you have opportunities and a responsibility to engage student voice.' [37]

Learning skills for student voice

It is important that students have the necessary skills to effectively voice their ideas and opinions. During the Forum, both students and teachers identified the need for specific training to enable students to participate meaningfully.

Most of the teachers identified they had received little or no training in implementing or supporting student voice activities. They believed training would help to build a positive school culture around student voice.

Schools that are serious about supporting meaningful and effective student voice will provide *'student voice training for educators, school board members, administrators, school personnel and students to provide opportunities to develop awareness and build skills, and to provide information and resources.'* [38]

'We should learn to do research and make proposals.'

- Student participant

'[We] need to give students a frame of reference and teach about using their voice in the appropriate way.'

- Teacher participant

'We need to educate staff.'

- Teacher participant

Closing the feedback loop

Much of the research on student voice emphasises the importance of providing feedback to students.[39] [40] Students at the Forum also stressed the need for teachers to follow through when they raise ideas and to close the feedback loop by letting them know the outcome. Feedback was particularly important when their ideas could not be implemented.

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

- Student participant

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

'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.'

- Student participant

Providing feedback and validating students is not about automatically agreeing or always supporting their ideas. It is about engaging with their ideas and opinions and responding with authenticity and sincerity.[41]

Resources

Connect

Connect is an independent online publication that documents and supports examples of active student participation in primary and secondary schools. It provides practical examples of and resources for student participation in school governance, classroom/curriculum decision making and implementation, and community initiatives and action.

Find it: http://www.asprinworld.com/Connect1/

Building a Culture of Participation Handbook

This Handbook focuses on how to listen to children and young people so that their views bring about change. It includes information on creating appropriate environments in which children and young people can be involved in meaningful ways.

Find it: http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/17522/1/Handbook%20-%20Building%20a%20Culture%20of%20Participation.pdf

Planning great stuff for young people

This online article is designed for adults who are planning to have young people involved in a project, group, event or activity. It includes a planning framework that may assist schools in defining purpose, needs, aims and objectives of student voice activities.

Find it: http://yerp.yacvic.org.au/build-skills/involve-young-people/planning-great-stuff-for-young-people

Adults Must Engage Student Voice

This online article includes ideas and examples for everyday activities that adults can do to support, empower, and involve students throughout the education system.

Find it: https://soundout.org/adults-must-engage-student-voice/

'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.'

- Student participant

Training the Student Council

This section includes information on a variety of training approaches that can be used with primary and secondary school SRCs. It includes templates, ideas for activities and worksheets that can be adapted by schools and their SRCs.

Find it: Student Councils & Beyond, pp. 71-94, http://www.asprinworld.com/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/SCAB_Part_4_web.329145944.pdf

How meetings work

This online article is designed to help young people understand and plan for meetings. It includes information on writing an agenda, running a meeting and taking minutes. This resource would be suitable for both students who are on the SRC and student representatives on school committees or councils.

Find it: http://yerp.yacvic.org.au/build-skills/for-young-people/how-meetings-work

9 student voice indicators

This list of 9 indicators were identified by students in Ontario, Canada at a student forum on student engagement. The indicators describe the qualities of a school that engages students and ensures all voices are heard.

Find it: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/students/speakup/9IndicatorsEn.pdf

Section 5: Mechanisms for student voice

This section explores the different mechanisms for student voice within schools. The first part discusses the student council model that is commonly used in the ACT. The second part looks at other opportunities and mechanisms for incorporating student voice at the whole of school level.

The 'Student Council' Model

Formal student organisations are one of the most common ways that schools activate student voice. Depending on the school, these organisations can be known by different names, including student councils, student forums and student parliaments. They all serve the same basic function, to *'represent the interests and needs of students within the school.'* [42] In this Resource Kit, the term student representative council (SRC) will be used.

At the Forum, feedback from students on SRCs was mixed – while some students felt their SRC was effective, others were not so convinced. Students who felt their SRC was effective were able to identify clear processes and accountability, and provided examples of things the SRC 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.'

- Student participant

Students who felt their SRC was ineffective raised concerns about communication between the SRC and the broader student body, the role of teachers responsible for the SRC, the SRC not being connected to the school's decision making processes, the lack of purpose and vision for the SRC, and a general lack of support and resources.

'Our SRC has bad communication with non SRC members.'

- Student participant

Research on the SRC model reveals that these challenges are not unique to ACT schools. SRCs are often described as tokenistic, elitist, trivial, unconnected and ineffective.[43] As discussed in Section 2, this may be the result of schools not being prepared to engage in meaningful student voice activities. It does not mean, however, that we should abandon the model. At the Forum, students who attended schools without an SRC felt there was little opportunity for them to voice their ideas and engage in school decision making.

Schools that are serious about making student voice meaningful will *'continue to discover ways to extend the role of student organisations so they are a vital part of the school's overall decision-making structure.'*[44]

'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.'

- Student participant

Other mechanisms for student voice

SRCs are not the only mechanism for activating student voice within schools. There are a number of other approaches being used, both in Australia and overseas. Some involve direct student representation on school committees, while others are about students leading change within their schools.

During the Project, a number of students reflected that they would like the opportunity to engage and communicate directly with teachers and school decision makers, particularly the Principal.

This section of the Resource Kit expands on the following approaches to student voice:

- Formal representation on school committees
- Student Action Teams

Note: Student voice can also be used by classroom teachers to enrich the learning experience of students. Ideas for facilitating student voice at the classroom level are discussed in the next section of the Resource Kit.

Formal representation on school committees

Formal representation on school committees or councils is designed is to facilitate student participation in decisions that impact the whole school.

While direct representation provides a mechanism for student voice, research has shown that student representatives sometimes have negative experiences on school committees. This is often due to a lack of support and training, as well as difficult to follow procedures, that limit their ability to participate fully.[45]

Student Action Teams

Student Action Teams were first established in primary and secondary schools in Victoria. They involve teams of students who, as part of their school curriculum, research a school or community issue that they care passionately about, develop a plan and take action to address the issue.[46] They are based on similar principles to project-based learning, *'which asserts that students learn best by experiencing and solving real-world problems.'* [47]

Student Action Teams provide a mechanism for students to deal with issues that are relevant and important to them, as well as influence and change their school and local community. Students feel they are learning useful and practical skills, and can see the outcomes of their work that goes *'over and above individuals' own learning and beyond the classroom.'* [48]

Resources

Represent! An SRC resource kit for students and teachers

This is a comprehensive resource for students and teachers containing information to help build effective and diverse SRCs and support student voice in schools. It includes examples, training activities, handouts, templates and resources designed to support SRCs.

Find it: http://www.vicsrc.org.au/resources/represent

Inclusive Committee Procedures

This article includes ideas about changing committee procedures to encourage the active participation of students. These will benefit all members of meetings, not just students.

Find it: Student Councils & Beyond, p. 51, http://www.asprinworld.com/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/SCAB_Part_2_web.329145859.pdf

Student Action Teams Manual

This Manual provides information and worksheets to assist schools in planning and implementing Student Action Teams. It is designed to be flexible to allow for a variety of school contexts and situations.

Find it: https://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/curricman/middleyear/StudentActionTeamsManual2003.pdf

Resources for Student Action Teams

This webpage includes links to further research, information and useful resources for Student Action Teams.

Find it: http://www.asprinworld.com/student_action_teams/%E2%80%A2_resources_for_student_action_teams

Further reading

DesignInSchools Delivering Outcomes for People and People as Outcomes

This paper details the DesignInSchools project, a partnership between Macquarie Primary School and Design Managers Australia. Students were engaged as the design team for the project, which focused on solving a real world problem: improving the school's car park experience. This paper explores some of the key themes that emerged during the project, including methodology parallels between inquiry-based learning and design, and that real context leads to real learning.

Find it: http://designmanagers.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/DesignInSchools_Educator-Designer-Paper_2017_sml.pdf

Section 6: Student voice in the classroom

Student voice in the classroom is just as important as student voice at the whole of school level. This section explores how student voice can be used in classrooms and provides resources for teachers to improve their practice and ensure student voice activities are meaningful.

The role of classroom teachers

In the Student Engagement Survey, classroom teachers were identified as a primary point of contact for students wanting to voice their opinions – they were the top pick for primary school students (57%) and were the third choice for secondary school students (39%), not far behind peers and roll call teachers.

At the Forum, students were asked about what they would like to have a say about within their school. Teaching methods and curriculum all featured in responses from both primary and secondary school students.

'[I want to] have a say in what types of methods our teachers use to present information (powerpoint, video, reading).'
- Student participant

'I would like to have a say in homework tasks and ideas.'
- Student participant

Research has shown that positive student-teacher relationships and supportive classroom environments are essential for student voice to be meaningful.[49] [50] Teachers at the Forum recognised the value of building student voice into their everyday practice.

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.

'As a teacher it helps me to gauge where each student sees themselves and how I can support them.'
- Teacher participant

'A successful approach to student voice does not have to be complex; it can be embedded every day in the classroom, simply and informally. Individually, children see and feel the benefit of their teachers listening to them, collaborating with them, and encouraging them to act as leaders in their own learning. This has a positive impact on their engagement, motivation, and personal development as learners.' [51]

Student voice in curriculum and pedagogy

Research has shown that when student voice is embedded in curriculum development and pedagogy, students are more engaged in their learning.[52] [53]

'Teachers can design more compelling curricula and pedagogical approaches if they take into consideration students' experiences and perspectives and use those to make what is taught more accessible to students.' [54]

'Even within centrally determined curriculum, schools have discovered and developed opportunities for negotiation of learning methods; in other less constrained courses, the curriculum partnerships between teachers and students have involved joint responsibility for setting goals, canvassing needs and background, identifying appropriate content, devising learning methods and putting appropriate collaborative assessment and evaluation measures in place.' [55]

Students as researchers and co-researchers

'Students as researchers' and 'students as co-researchers' are two models of student voice that can be implemented at the classroom level.

Students as researchers

In the 'students as researchers' model, students identify issues for investigation and teachers support students to develop skills and carry out the research. Students may choose to investigate issues to do with their education and learning, for example, teaching methodologies, the use of technology in the classroom,[56] but research projects could also focus on broader community issues, such as the environment, community safety and youth homelessness.[57]

Students as co-researchers

In the 'students as co-researchers' model, teachers identify issues for investigation and engage students as fellow researchers. In this model, it is important that teachers and students are learning and researching together, side by side. Teachers can gain just as much out of this process as the students. Again, research topics may relate to education and learning, as well as focusing on broader community issues.[58]

Circle time and restorative practices

Circle Time is an activity grounded in restorative practices, which refer to approaches that build community, repair harm and restore relationships typically in the wake of conflict.[59] It involves the class group meeting *'in a circle to speak, listen, interact, enhance relationships and share concerns.'*[60]

Circle Time can be used in the classroom setting for a range of purposes. It can help to:

- teach social skills and build relationships.
- facilitate dialogue and discussion about issues in the classroom and community.
- solve problems.
- review curriculum.
- reflect on learnings.
- resolve an issue that has affected the classroom.[61]

Resources

Participation as Curriculum

This excerpt provides possible strategies, as well as case studies from primary and secondary schools across Australia, for incorporating student voice and participation into the everyday curriculum.

Find it: Student Councils & Beyond, pp. 37-48, http://www.asprinworld.com/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/SCAB_Part_2_web.329145859.pdf

Classroom Meetings

This section includes ideas, strategies and case studies to support the facilitation of effective and democratic classroom meetings.

Find it: Student Councils & Beyond, pp. 95-102, http://www.asprinworld.com/yahoo_site_admin/assets/docs/SCAB_appendix_1_web.329150006.pdf

Participation in Practice

This section includes information, ideas, examples and questions to consider when engaging in consultation with young people. It covers the importance of developing positive relationships to ensure meaningful participation.

Find it: http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/17522/1/Handbook%20-%20Building%20a%20Culture%20of%20Participation.pdf, pp. 41-54

Strategies for Meaningful Student Involvement

This online article includes information, resources and examples of six strategies to engage students meaningfully in their education. The strategies are students as: education researchers, school planners; classroom teachers; learning evaluators; systemic decision makers; and, education advocates.

Find it: https://soundout.org/types-of-meaningful-student-involvement/

Classroom Circles – Building Positive Relationships

This document provides information about using classroom circles to build positive relationships. It includes a list of resources, including books and classroom manuals, to support teachers to implement effective circles in their classroom.

Find it: http://www.rpiassn.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/2015_Armstrong_Classroom-circles-building-positive-relationships.pdf

Teaching Restorative Practices with Classroom Circles

This manual supports the teaching of restorative practices and skills within the classroom. It describes how to hold restorative circles and contains a step-by-step guide for circles that build community, teach restorative concepts and skills and resole conflict when it arises.

Find it: http://www.healthiersf.org/RestorativePractices/Resources/documents/RP%20Curriculum%20and%20Scripts%20and%20PowePoints/Classroom%20Curriculum/Teaching%20Restorative%20Practices%20in%20the%20Classroom%207%20lesson%20Curriculum.pdf

Section 7: Student voice for all

This section explores the importance of engaging all students in student voice. The resources in this section focus on supporting students who may be socially excluded, disengaged or disengaging to participate meaningfully in student voice activities.

The potential to change trajectories

Research shows that student voice can lead to improved student engagement.[62] [63] [64] [65] This means that student voice, if implemented meaningfully, has the potential to change trajectories for students who are disengaged or disengaging from school.[66]

'Students may experience difficulties at school for a variety of reasons and there are likely to be multiple, intersecting issues which impact on their lives and make it difficult to remain engaged in education.' [67]

There are specific groups of young people that are more likely to experience barriers to their educational engagement. This includes, but is not limited to, students who:
- have a disability.
- identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.
- are from a culturally and linguistically diverse background.
- are experiencing mental illness.[68]

Student voice provides schools with the opportunity to understand why some students disengage and what they could do to help them stay at school.[69]

Engaging all students

One of the common criticisms of student voice initiatives is that they only involve a small number of articulate and already engaged students.[70] [71]

At the Forum, students identified that it is often only the students who are naturally confident who have their voices heard. They suggested that not all students are comfortable voicing their opinions in front of their peers and stressed the importance of all students feeling comfortable being involved in student voice activities.

'Being fearful of others' reactions to your honest opinion.'

- Student participant

Engaging all students in student voice means *'actively involving the whole student body, particularly the full range of students who are not otherwise involved or experiencing success.'* [72] Both teachers and students suggested that being able to provide feedback and share ideas anonymously could assist those with less confidence to get involved. This could take the form of a suggestion box in the classroom or even online-based student voice activities.

Some teachers also 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.

'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.'

- Student participant

'[I would like] a day each year to write a letter to the principal about changes to the school.'

- Student participant

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

- Teacher participant

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

- Teacher participant

Promoting diversity, inclusion and engagement

Students at the Forum were clear 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.'

- Student participant

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

- Student participant

As discussed in Section 2, schools that want to genuinely engage in student voice activities must be prepared to listen to *all* feedback from *all* students. This means listening and engaging with a diverse range of perspectives and needs.[73]

Resources

How to really support young people

This online article is designed for adults who are supporting young people to participate in a project, activity, meeting or program. It provides information on how to support diverse groups to get involved, how to remove barriers that may exist and how to create a safe, comfortable and welcoming space.

Find it: http://yerp.yacvic.org.au/build-skills/involve-young-people/how-to-really-support-young-people

Involving Youth in Planning for Their Education, Treatment and Services

This document covers information on common questions about youth participation in education, care, treatment, or service planning.

Find it: https://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/pdf/pbAMP-YouthParticipationResearchSummary.pdf

MindMatters: Relationships and Belonging

'Relationships and Belonging' is a module of the MindMatters program, a mental health initiative for secondary schools that aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people. This module includes resources to assist schools ensure that diversity is acknowledged and reflected within the school environment, and build a positive school community that values belonging, inclusion and active student participation.

Find it: https://www.mindmatters.edu.au/explore-modules/relationships-and-belonging

KidsMatter Primary: Positive School Community

'Positive School Community' is a component of the KidsMatter Primary program, a flexible, whole-school approach to children's mental health and wellbeing for primary schools. This component provides a suite of resources to support schools to develop a positive school community in which *'every face has a place, every voice is valued, and everyone has something to contribute.'*

Find it: http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/primary/resources-your-journey/c1-positive-school-community/resources

KidsMatter: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Resources

This webpage brings together KidsMatter resources about the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across KidsMatter Primary, KidsMatter Early Childhood, KidsMatter Families and KidsMatter Health & Community.

Find it: http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/atsi-resources

Gulanga Good Practice Guides

These good practice guides provide information on topics that aim to assist organisations implement and embed good practice when working and engaging with Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, particularly within the ACT and region.

Find it: https://www.actcoss.org.au/publications/capacity-building-resource/gulanga-good-practice-guides

Engage Respectfully with Young People from Refugee Backgrounds

This training material is designed to facilitate the develop of the competencies required for people working or intending to work with young people from refugee backgrounds.

Find it: http://www.myan.org.au/resources-and-publications/121/

Voice of Children with Disability

This website presents a set of resources for supporting the involvement of children with disability in research, as well as consultation, policy and service development, monitoring and evaluation. It includes a suite of guides and tools for inclusive research practices and basic communication tips for working with children with disability.

Find it: http://www.voicesofchildrenwithdisability.com/tools/

Further reading and viewing

What if students control their own learning?

This talk is from a TEDxMelbourne event in October 2014 by Peter Hutton, principal at Templestowe College in Victoria. In this talk, Peter discusses the way the College embraces student voice and encourages students to drive their own learning and manage their own education.

Find it: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nMxqEkg3wQ0

Preventing Youth Disengagement and Promoting Engagement

This paper explores the problem of youth disengagement and looks to solutions across policy and practice. It argues that young people who feel valued, who are provided with opportunities to participate and have the skills and capacity to participate and feel connected to family, friends and their community, are less likely to experience disengagement.

Find it: https://www.aracy.org.au/publications-resources/command/download_file/id/120/filename/Preventing_Youth_Disengagement_and_Promoting_Engagement.pdf

Creating engaging schools for all children and young people: what works?

This report showcases positive practice examples of engaging schools, documenting the ways which leading schools engage children and young people. It finds that engaging schools are welcoming, culturally safe, inclusive and enjoyable.

Find it: http://vcoss.org.au/document/creating-engaging-schools-for-all-children-and-young-people/

What form(s) of pedagogy are necessary for increasing the engagement of Aboriginal school students?

This thesis draws on the voice and standpoint of Aboriginal students to examine which form(s) of pedagogy are necessary for increasing their engagement in the classroom. Research practices were grounded within Aboriginal cultural understandings and asked students what best engages them in their schooling.

Find it: http://ogma.newcastle.edu.au:8080/vital/access/manager/Repository/uon:24339

Belonging and Connection of School Students with Disability

This paper explores a series of approaches and strategies which may help build belonging and connections for students with disability in schools. It includes a discussion of supporting students with disability to 'have a voice' in daily school life, outlining that creative strategies might be necessary to ensure their contributions are valued and their voice is equivalent in volume and significance to other students.

Find it: http://www.cyda.org.au/inclusion-in-education

Further reading and viewing

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