

Listening



How do we listen to students?

When we think about 'student voice', we pay a lot of attention to the ways in which we can increase the capability and willingness of students to speak up - how we 'amplify' student voice. However, equally important is to think about how we increase the capability and willingness of teachers and others to **hear, listen, and act** in response to those voices.

When *Connect* asked schools some time ago to write about "ways in which students' voices are heard in your school", we received lots of detailed examples of the ways in which schools supported their students to present individual and collective voices (through Student Councils and so on); but we received **NO** examples of the ways in which adults and others heard and listened to those voices.

This resource aims to start a conversation about **listening**. We'd love to hear your feedback, as you use it to reflect on your own practices, and as you use it with other staff and students.

This is a first draft of a tool for teachers (and others) about how we are aware of, listen to and respond to students' voices and agency. It could also be used by student representatives to reflect on how they also are aware of, listen to and respond to other students.

*There are two 'levels' for using the tool: within the classroom, and within the overall school. Most people will choose **one** of these to respond to, depending on where you are working.*

The structure of the tool is simple: it is a series of prompts, in response to which you are encouraged to write down some dot points. There are no correct or incorrect answers.

1. Awareness

- **recognising that many students' voices exist and that there are various ways in which they are expressed**

2. Listening

- **being willing and able to listen to all students' voices and to acknowledge that they have important things to say**

3. Responding

- **acknowledging what students are saying; clarifying, discussing and agreeing or disagreeing**

4. Acting & Changing

- **being willing and able to act and change in response to students' voices - and to work with them on changes**

Why?



1. Awareness

Why is it important to be **aware** of student voices?

Yellow rectangular box for response.

2. Listening

Why is it important to **listen** to and **understand** student voices?

Yellow rectangular box for response.

3. Responding

Why is it important to **engage** with and **respond** to student voices?

Yellow rectangular box for response.

4. Acting & Changing

Why is it important to **act** and **change** in response to the student voices I'm listening to?

Yellow rectangular box for response.

Stage 1: How am I aware of students' voices?

This is about my *awareness* of students' voices in my classroom and across the school – the range and form of them.

In my classroom:

Across my school:

What student voices exist in my classroom/school?
Where and when am I aware of students' voices?

Whose voices am I aware of in my classroom/school?
Whose voices *don't* I hear?

How are these voices being *expressed*?
Eg what forms of verbal and *non-verbal* voices (including behaviour) exist?

What *stops* me from being aware of students' voices?

Stage 2: How do I *listen to students' voices*?

This is about my *willingness* to listen to the content and style of students' voices in my classroom and school, and about my *understanding* of what students are saying.

In my classroom:

Across my school:

What **topics/issues** are these students' voices communicating about in my classroom and school?

What are these students' voices actually **'saying'** about the classroom and school? (including non-verbal statements)

What do I **understand** about what I am listening to?
What **don't** I understand about what I am listening to?
Why?

Whose voices am I listening to in my classroom and school?
Whose voices am I **ignoring** in my classroom and school?
Why?

Stage 3: How do I respond to students' voices?

This is about my *engagement* with what I am listening to from students in my classroom and school.

In my classroom:

Across my school:

How do I *let students know* that I'm listening to them?
How do I *acknowledge* what I'm hearing?

How do I ask for *clarification* about things that aren't clear?

How do I provide *reasons* or *arguments* to students in response?
How do I do this respectfully, with logic and evidence, and continue listening to students?

How do I enter into *discussions* (dialogue) with students about what I am listening to?

Stage 4: How do I act and change because of students' voices?

This is about my *willingness* to *change* our classroom and school practices in response to what I am listening to.

In my classroom:

Across my school:

How do I acknowledge the need and possibilities for *change* in my classroom and school?

How do I *initiate changes* to my/our practices?

How do I *collaborate* with students (and others) to make *shared decisions about changes* to our classroom and school practices?

How do I/we *reflect* on the processes and outcomes of changes to our classroom and school practices?