

An Audit of School Practices around: Student Voice, Agency and Participation

- *What does 'student voice, agency and participation' mean in practice?*
- *What are you already doing in these areas?*
- *What should be your priorities for your next steps?*



What, Who and Why?

Teachers, students and schools can use this audit to look at what is already happening in your school about **student voice, agency and participation**. It can help you to:

- understand what these terms mean in practice;
- recognise and celebrate the things that you are already doing;
- work out where things can be improved and where to start.

The audit is divided into three sections: 'voice', 'agency' and 'participation in decision-making'. It is also split into *classroom* and *whole school* practices. These groups are broad and there can be lots of overlap between them. (For more detail, see the article 'Student Voice, Agency and Participation' in *Connect* 229, February 2018: pp 22-25.)

We know that things happen differently across different classrooms and schools. So that it can be useful for you, when you're completing the classroom sections of the audit, it might be helpful to think of your own classroom – or one specific subject – rather than all of the school's classrooms.

What Now?

When you have finished the audit, you'll need to look at your answers and see what they mean. If several people have answered the audit, you could **compare** your answers and see where you **agree** and **disagree**. Then ask '**why?**' This could start a conversation that helps to understand what is actually happening in your school: where your **strengths** are, and what you can **develop further**.

If you have done the audit by yourself, look at the pattern of your answers. **What practices are most important to you? Which of these are you already doing?** In that case, **how can you make sure you continue these and do them better?** **Which of these important practices are not happening much? How can you work to develop some of these?** Remember that it is hard to work on lots of things at once, so you might want to start with the ones that are most important – and most possible.

(You can also calculate a **score** for each practice. For '**how often**', score these as +2, +1, 0, -1 and -2; then for '**how important**', score these as 3, 2 and 1. Multiply these together and write the **score** [from +6 to -6] against each example. The larger positive scores are the practices that you think are important and that are happening a lot; the larger negative scores are the important practices that are **not** happening as often as they should.)

Completing the Audit

You can work through the whole audit, but it's long! You might choose just one area (eg 'student voice - in the classroom') to focus on. Or you could use this in a staff or student meeting, with groups each completing a different part of the audit and then sharing results.

Make sure you seek out other perspectives, for example both teachers and students; or people of different genders, year levels or backgrounds.

First, think about **how often** each activity happens in your classroom or school: does it happen '**always**', '**often**', '**sometimes**', '**seldom**' or '**never**'. Then secondly, think about **how important** it is to you that this activity **should** happen in your classroom or school: '**high**', '**medium**' or '**low**'.

If you don't know what something means or it's not relevant to you, feel free to skip that item.

Good luck!

Student Voice, Agency and Participation: Before you start the audit: Personal Readiness

How important is this?

Practice	Yes	Unsure	No	High	Medium	Low
P1: I know the individual views and interests of the students in my classroom						
P2: I am interested to hear the views of <i>all</i> students						
P3: I am willing to respond to student feedback and views, and to try new ways of doing something in my classroom and school						
P4: I actively engage with students and build positive relationships						
P5: I treat all students with the same respect with which I treat adults						
P6: I <i>recognise</i> the value of student voice, agency and participation						
P7: I would <i>like</i> to share the value of student voice, agency and participation with students, staff members and leadership at my school						
P8: I am <i>confident and prepared</i> to share the value of student voice, agency and participation with others						
P9: All staff at the school already understand the value of student voice, agency and participation						
P10: Parents and carers understand and support the value of student voice, agency and participation						

Further individual reflection:

How do students know that I am listening to their views, ideas and suggestions?

What are some of the barriers that stop me from listening to students' voices?

1. Student Voice – in the Classroom

How often does this happen?

How important is this?

<i>Practice</i>

<i>Always</i>	<i>Often</i>	<i>Some-times</i>	<i>Seldom</i>	<i>Never</i>
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<i>High</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Low</i>
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Discussing:

1.01 Teachers and students have important conversations in our classroom
1.02 Students talk about how they learn
1.03 Students talk about how they are taught in the classroom
1.04 Students and teachers discuss learning and teaching in our classroom
1.05 There is specific time within the classroom for students to provide feedback on learning and teaching

Asking:

1.06 Teachers ask students for their views on learning and teaching (including teacher-run surveys)
1.07 Students investigate learning and teaching (eg student-run surveys, Students as Researchers)
1.08 Students analyse the information from surveys around learning and teaching
1.09 Students know the results of the surveys they do on teaching and learning
1.10 Students are asked about other matters related to their education & community

Presenting all voices:

1.11 Students talk about classroom rules and expectations
1.12 Students lead tours around their classroom (learning walks) in which they reflect on how learning happens
1.13 Students lead conferences with parents/carers and teachers about their individual learning
1.14 Conscious steps are taken to encourage all students to express their views
1.15 All the voices and views that exist in the classroom are actually heard

Being listened to:

1.16 Teachers welcome feedback from students
1.17 Teachers listen to what students say
1.18 Students' results on tests and assignments influence how learning and teaching happens
1.19 Students' views influence how learning and teaching happens
1.20 Teachers learn from their students

2. Student Agency – in the Classroom

How often does this happen?

How important is this?

Practice

Always Often Some-times Seldom Never

High Medium Low

Individual learning:

2.01 Students have time and opportunity to direct their own learning								
2.02 Students individually choose learning topics from a teacher-generated set								
2.03 Students create their own personal learning topics								
2.04 Students have Individual Learning Plans with learning goals and objectives								
2.05 Students create their Learning Plans with advice from teachers								

Group learning:

2.06 All students are actively engaged in learning in their classroom								
2.07 Students and teachers work together to design lesson plans for the class								
2.08 Students discuss curriculum directions and processes as a group, and set learning expectations for the class								
2.09 Students lead class lessons								
2.10 Students explicitly learn about teamwork, initiative, and how to speak up, take action and participate								

Roles and representatives:

2.11 Students have specific roles of responsibility in the classroom								
2.12 Students are technology leaders in the classroom								
2.13 Students democratically appoint representatives for roles within and outside the classroom (eg Student Council Representatives)								
2.14 Support is provided for student representatives (eg time to consult with and report to whole class)								
2.15 Students are members of classroom Student Action Teams (investigating and acting on issues identified by students)								

Real world learning:

2.16 Students produce 'real world' outcomes from their learning, which are seen outside the classroom (eg making media; resources etc)								
2.17 Students write for the school newsletter and local papers or present on local radio etc about their learning								
2.18 Students work with external community organisations around issues of shared common interest or concern								

4. Student Voice – in the Whole School

How often does this happen?

How important is this?

Practice	How often does this happen?					How important is this?		
	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	High	Medium	Low
Representation:								
4.01 There are many ways in which students' views are heard in the school								
4.02 Teachers report students' views from their classes to the broader school community								
4.03 There is an active student representative organisation (SRC, JSC, Student Voice Team etc) in the school								
4.04 The Student Council is broadly representative and inclusive								
4.05 Student representatives are aware of, acknowledge and represent the diversity of the student population								
Listening:								
4.06 Student representatives listen to and collect views from other students								
4.07 Teachers organise student forums to discuss, collect and present student views								
4.08 Students organise student forums to discuss, collect and present student views								
4.09 The school conducts whole school student attitude surveys								
4.10 There are school-wide Students as Researchers initiatives in which students research and present views on topics								
Presenting:								
4.11 The Student Council reports to students about its activities and progress								
4.12 Student representatives present the views of students to teachers and leadership								
4.13 Teachers, leadership and others ask the Student Council for students' views								
4.14 Students take others (teachers, parents, visitors, other students) on walks ('learning walks') around their school to discuss how the school operates								
4.15 Students, through the Student Council or other means, provide feedback on curriculum, learning and teaching, assessment etc								
Being heard:								
4.16 The Student Council is listened to by students								
4.17 The Student Council is listened to by teachers, leadership and other stakeholders								
4.18 Students informally advise on staff selection (eg meeting with applicants, trial lessons)								
4.19 Students meet with and advise the school Leadership Team								
4.20 Students' views are included in the school newsletter								

5. Student Agency – in the Whole School

How often does this happen?

How important is this?

Practice	<i>How often does this happen?</i>					<i>How important is this?</i>		
	Always	Often	Some-times	Seldom	Never	High	Medium	Low
Groups: 5.01 There are various active student organisations (eg environmental groups, social justice clubs etc) within the school								
5.02 The Student Council meets regularly and is an effective organisation								
5.03 Student Action Teams (SATs) operate in the school around issues identified by students and/or the school								
5.04 Student groups involve links with other students, staff, families/carers and community agencies								
5.05 Support and training is provided for the Student Council and other student groups								
Action by students:								
5.06 Student teams research and evaluate learning and teaching								
5.07 Students analyse, discuss and present the results of Student Attitude Surveys								
5.08 Students conduct classroom observations eg of learning and teaching, relationships etc								
5.09 Students teach/tutor other students (peer or cross-age)								
5.10 Students facilitate and lead school assemblies								
Impact:								
5.11 The Student Council considers and leads action on important issues								
5.12 Student groups (SRCs/JSCs/SATs) influence what happens in the school								
5.13 Students contribute to or maintain the school website								
5.14 Students prepare and produce the school newsletter								
5.15 Students are employed by the school in various roles								



Student Agency

6. Student Participation in Decision-Making – in the Whole School

Practice	How often does this happen?					How important is this?		
	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	High	Medium	Low
6.01 Students are members of the School Council/Board								
6.02 Students elect their representatives to the School Council/Board								
6.03 Students are represented on Curriculum Planning Committees								
6.04 Students are represented on other school committees								
6.05 The Student Council reports directly to school leadership and decision-making structures								
6.06 Students and staff work together to review issues of curriculum, learning and teaching, and assessment								
6.07 Students lead teacher professional development around issues identified by students (eg through a <i>Teach the Teacher</i> program)								
6.08 Students and staff jointly create school rules and policies								
6.09 Student representatives are part of the selection processes for teachers (eg on a selection committee)								

7. Student Voice, Agency and Participation in Decision-Making – School Policies and Leadership

Practice	How often does this happen?					How important is this?		
	Always	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	High	Medium	Low
7.01 The school has an explicit policy around Student Voice, Agency and Participation								
7.02 Practices of student voice, agency and participation are discussed as a school priority								
7.03 Teachers participate in Professional Learning around student voice, agency and participation								
7.04 Leadership at the school requires staff to demonstrate support for student voice, agency and participation practices in their classrooms								
7.05 Leadership provides feedback and support to staff about classroom practices in student voice, agency and participation								
7.06 Support for student voice, agency and participation is explicitly included in a range of staff job descriptions								
7.07 A designated position for support of student voice, agency and participation exists within the school								
7.08 The Student Council is supported by a teacher/staff member with a time allocation								