



# Voice at WHOLE-SCHOOL LEVEL

## Voice at a whole school level

### Introductory staff session

Staff and school management might take an opportunity to consider one or more of the following:

- View and discuss staff presentation *Young people's voices in their education; why it matters!*
- Identify and discuss the different areas of school life where the voices of young people and their participation in consultations and planning would be valuable.
- Watch the introductory video on the home page and consider what might be the benefits of developing a culture of voice in our school and where might we start.

### Young people can be involved at different levels in school self-review or other decision-making initiatives

Young people can participate in activities, processes and decision-making in broadly three different ways<sup>1</sup>:

#### Consultative participation

- adult initiated;
- adult led and managed
- lacking possibility for young people to control outcomes
- recognizing the added value that young people's perspective, knowledge and experience can contribute.

#### Collaborative Participation

- adult initiated;
- involving partnership with young people
- enabling young people to influence or challenge both process and outcome;
- allowing for increasing levels of self-directed action by young people over a period of time.

#### Young Person-led Participation

- the issues of concern being identified by young people themselves
- adults serving as facilitators rather than leaders
- Young people controlling the process and the outcomes.

It is important not to perceive them in terms of a hierarchy of preference. Each form of participation offers differing degrees of empowerment and influence, but they are all legitimate and appropriate in different contexts. In this context, any activity should comply with the features of the Lundy model of participation (space, voice, audience and influence).

<sup>1</sup> Lansdown G & O'Kane C (2014) A Toolkit for Monitoring and Evaluating Children's Participation, Save the Children et al, London

- **Consultative participation** takes place when adults seek young people’s views in order to build knowledge and understanding of their lives and experience. It can be used to reach out to a wide range of young people, and tends to be the most commonly used approach to participation. Consultative participation does not allow for sharing or transferring decision-making responsibility to young people themselves. However, it does recognise that they have knowledge, experience and perspectives that need to inform adult decision-making.
- **Collaborative participation** affords a greater degree of partnership between adults and young people, with the opportunity for active engagement at any stage of a decision, initiative or project. Collaborative participation might include involvement of young people in designing and undertaking research, policy development, peer education, participation in conferences, or in representation on boards or committees. Collaborative participation provides opportunity for shared decision making with adults, and for young people to influence both the process and the outcomes in any given programme.
- **Young person-led participation** takes place where young people are able to create the space and opportunity to initiate their own agendas. This kind of participation tends to involve smaller numbers since, as with adults, in any population, only a minority are likely to be motivated to become actively engaged. Young person-led participation affords greater empowerment and allows for a greater degree of influence, for example, through the establishment and management of their own interest groups, or identification of problems within schools that they wish to address.

## Audit tool to be used with class groups, year groups or whole school to better understand the student experience.

These activities are designed to initiate/progress students' participation with purpose at whole school level. Students' experiences, opinions and suggestions about whole-school matters such as policy development, SSE related matters, whole school initiatives such as Green School Flag can inform planning which is inclusive and respectful of the young people's perspectives

### What next?

Each school is best placed to decide what level they will progress voice at whole school level.

#### 1. Consultative participation

1.

- Students complete *Young people's voice in whole school decision making* audit tool
- Findings are collated by staff and presented to staff meeting
- Staff discuss the findings from the completion

2.

- Staff prioritise and agree areas for improvement/development
- Time line and responsibilities are agreed
- Young people are informed about the outcomes/findings from the consultation and the next steps planned to enhance voice at whole school level.

The audit tool can be administered in hardcopy or may be presented as a Google form. The latter approach allows the findings to be collated quickly and efficiently. The findings can be shared with staff providing insights into student perceptions of their level of agency in school.

## 2. Collaborative Participation...young people work in partnership with staff to progress participation with purpose at whole-school level.

Prior to the staff meeting, young people complete the Young people's voice in whole school decision making audit tool. Consider asking staff members to complete the same audit tool as students. Plan to discuss the similarities and differences with a representative group of students and teachers in advance of the staff meeting.

1.

- Students complete *Young people's voice in whole school decision making* audit tool
- Findings are collated by staff and young people
- Young people design presentation of findings and suggestions for next steps for staff and school management.

2.

- Staff complete and reflect on the same audit tool.
- Young people make a presentation to staff meeting about consultation including insights on the differences and similarities between young people and teacher perspectives.
- Teachers and young people reflect on outcomes.

3.

- Staff and young people prioritise and agree areas for improvement/development
- Timeline and role/responsibilities are agreed. Young people are encouraged to lead on some aspects
- All participants agree how the student body will be informed about outcomes and the planned next steps.

### 3. Young person-led participation...young people select and lead initiatives that they have identified.

1.

- Student representatives participate in a workshop designed to reflect on different aspects of school life and where and how young people's experience of school life could be improved.
- Young people decide which area to prioritise/how this might be done
- Young people complete the Student initiated projects- a template

2.

- Young people present their plan to school management and agree next steps including goals, timelines, and responsibilities
- Young people present the plan to the whole staff, invite feedback and discuss ways in which the staff might support the process
- Young people present the plan to other key stakeholders

## Teachers can also complete the audit tool

### Consultative participation

- a. Teachers complete the audit tool individually and then reflect on the outcomes using these prompts
- Circle what surprised you? Caused you concern?
  - What aspect(s) of young people's participation is the school doing well?
  - What aspects(s) could be improved?

Teachers review young people's feedback from the audit tool and reflect on it using the same questions as above.

- b. In groups of three/four colleagues, consider your responses.
- Agree what the school is doing well and one/two ideas for improvement
  - Agree one area of voice at whole-school level for particular attention. How might this area be addressed, by whom and when
- c. Share the group's ideas with one other group and agree possible next steps.
- Which area of existing practice could be improved and how?
  - Which area needs particular attention?
  - How can this happen?
  - Record suggestions on a flip chart

- d. Display findings on the walls. Provide opportunity for staff to consider the different ideas. School management and interested teachers undertake to review ideas, consider next steps and report back to staff.
- e. Plans to provide feedback to young people on the outcomes of the meeting should be considered. Young people should be involved in deciding next steps. Staff update young people on the next steps in the process.

## Collaborative participation

### STAFF MEETING

- a. Teachers complete the young people's voice in whole school decision making audit tool individually and then reflect on the outcomes using these prompts
  - Circle what surprised you? Caused you concern?
  - What area(s) of young people's participation is the school doing well?
  - What area(s) should be improved?
- b. Young people present the main findings from students who have also completed the same audit tool. The presentation should include some ideas for improvement/ further development.
  - Which area of existing practice could be improved and how?
  - Which area needs particular attention?
  - How can this happen?
- c. In groups of three/four colleagues, consider the responses to the audit and to the young people's presentation.
  - Agree what the school is doing well and one/two ideas for improvement
  - Agree one area of voice at whole-school level for particular attention.
  - How might this area be addressed, by whom and when. Young people could be asked to sit in on some of these conversations
- d. Q and A session with young people to follow.
- e. In groups, agree one area for improvement, how and when this will be completed.
- f. School management/ voice leaders undertake to review ideas, consider next steps and report back to staff.
- g. Representative group of young people is requested to update wider student body on the process underway and thank them for their feedback. This could be done as part of tutor group or assemblies.

# Young people's voice in whole school decision making

This audit tool<sup>2</sup> can be completed by young people and/or teachers. The findings will be used to plan improvements for voice in whole-school decision making.

Practice	HOW OFTEN DOES THIS HAPPEN?					HOW IMPORTANT IS THIS?		
	ALWAYS	OFTEN	SOME-TIMES	SELDOM	NEVER	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
<b>PRACTICE</b>								
4.1 The school has an explicit policy around young people's voice								
4.2 Practices of voice are discussed as a school priority								
4.3 Teachers participate in professional learning around voice								
4.4 The Student Council is supported by a teacher/staff member with a time allocation.								
4.5 There are active student groups in our school.								
<b>REPRESENTATION</b>								
4.6 There are many ways in which young people's views are heard in this school								
4.7 Teachers report young people's views from their classes to the broader school community								
4.8 The Student Council is representative and inclusive								

2 This audit tool was initially developed by Roger Holdsworth and others in Victoria, Australia in 2018-19, and published in the **Connect** journal. It is used here with their permission.



	HOW OFTEN DOES THIS HAPPEN?					HOW IMPORTANT IS THIS?		
	ALWAYS	OFTEN	SOME-TIMES	SELDOM	NEVER	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
4.9 The Student Council reports to the wider student body about its activities and progress								
<b>LISTENING</b>								
4.10 Student representatives listen to and collect views and ideas from other young people								
4.11 Teachers organise forums to discuss, collect, and present young people's views								
4.12 The school and/or student representatives conduct whole-school surveys, e.g. relating to young people's wellbeing, teaching and learning, policy development.								
<b>PRESENTING</b>								
4.13 Student representatives present the views of young people to teachers and leadership								
4.14 Teachers, leadership and others ask the Student Council for young people's views								
4.17 Students take others (teachers, parents, visitors, other students) on walks around their school to discuss how the school operates								
4.16 Students, through the Student Council or other means, provide feedback on curriculum, learning and teaching, assessment, etc.								

	HOW OFTEN DOES THIS HAPPEN?					HOW IMPORTANT IS THIS?		
	ALWAYS	OFTEN	SOME-TIMES	SELDOM	NEVER	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW
BEING HEARD								
4.17 The Student Council is listened to by students								
4.18 The Student Council/Student Groups are listened to by teachers, leadership and other stakeholders								
4.19 Young people's views are included in the school newsletter/website								

