

# Young people's voices in their education

## Why it matters!



# Aim of this workshop



*To reflect on how we can support our young people in having their voices heard and taken seriously in matters that affect them in school.*





**United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**



All rights in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) apply to all young people without exception. All young people have the right to...

Article 2 (UNCRC)...non-discrimination

**Article 12**...express an opinion and to have that opinion taken into account, in any matter or procedure affecting them, in accordance with his or her age and maturity.

**Article 13**...hold and express opinions and to seek and receive information through any media (*freedom of expression*).

Articles 14... freedom of thought, conscience and religion

Article 15...freedom of assembly from interference or control by the State.



## Article 12-The child's opinion

*The child has the right to  
give their opinion on  
matters that affect them  
and for adults to listen  
and take it seriously.*

*The child shall in  
particular be provided  
with suitable  
opportunities to be heard*

**NATIONAL STRATEGY ON  
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S  
PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING  
2015 – 2020**



# Draft National Implementation Framework for Child Participation



An Roinn Leanai  
agus Gnóthaí Óige  
Department of Children  
and Youth Affairs





*...support organisations in a self-improvement journey towards adopting best practice in giving children and young people a voice in decision-making.*



# Why should young people be involved in decision making about matters that affect them in school?



Young people are actors in their own development with their own rights, not passive recipients.

They have the right to influence decisions that affect them.

Involving young people helps deliver better decisions for them – more relevant and better-informed responses, solutions and outcomes.



# Why should young people be involved in decision making about matters that affect them in school?



It makes us more accountable – by recognising and acting on young people's contributions.



It means that our planning in schools is informed by the real views and perspectives of young people.



Young people benefit from participation – it contributes to their skills, power, confidence, enjoyment.



# Young people are experts in their own experience of schooling

Young people have unique perspectives on learning, teaching and schooling; that their insights warrant not only the attention but also the responses of adults; and that they should be afforded opportunities to actively shape their education.



# Find a partner.....

- On what area(s) of school life could our young people have an opportunity to have their voices heard in school now?
- Whose voices would be heard?
- Who should be listening?
- What difference might it make?

# Benefits of building participation



Improves relationships in school

Changes the experience of 'power' in school.... Sharing responsibility for learning

Builds/improves self confidence and self esteem

Encourages leadership potential and involvement in school activities

Impacts positively on learning and the general experience of/engagement with school

Flynn 2013 & 2014





# Development of active, democratic citizens



Schools are the first places where children experience society in all its facets and their experiences can have a profound influence on their attitudes and behaviour in life.

Andreas Schleicher, OECD 2017

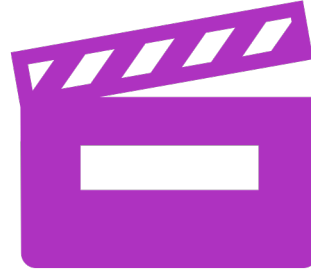


When young people  
are consulted seriously,  
it can make them feel,  
often for the first time,  
that the school and the  
class are...



...to some extent, **their** school  
and **their** class...impacting on  
their sense of belonging and  
attachment.





Why young people's voices matter in education



Having viewed the video, at your table,

- What are the key messages for us in the video?
- What could be the benefits of increased participation for our students?





In our school, decisions are constantly being made that affect young people



# In our school...

- Are young people significantly involved in the making of decisions?
- Which areas see young people most involved?
- Where could our practice improve?

# What voices can we hear in making these decisions?

## Collective

- Whole school
- Year group
- Class group

## Representative

- Class/year representatives
- Student Council
- Special interest groups, e.g. Active School Flag

## Individual

- Informal conversations
- Opportunities for individuals to have their voice heard.



Where do you start and how might you make connections?





## Young People's Participation

### No participation or unethical participation

- In most societies, the majority of young people have little or no opportunity to express their views

### 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.

Each mode of participation offers differing degrees of empowerment and influence, but they are all legitimate and appropriate in different contexts, and can be rights-respecting **provided...**

... they comply with the features of meaningful participation; **space, voice, audience and influence** (Lundy model of participation)

### **SPACE**

Provide a safe and inclusive space for young people to form and express their views

### **Voice**

Provide appropriate information and facilitate the young people to express their views

**THE RIGHT TO EXPRESS VIEWS**

**ARTICLE 12**

**THE RIGHT TO HAVE VIEWS GIVEN DUE WEIGHT**

### **INFLUENCE**

Ensure that young people's views are taken seriously and acted upon, where appropriate

### **AUDIENCE**

Ensure that young people's views are communicated to someone with the responsibility to listen



...and **the nine basic requirements for quality.**



# Participation must always be...

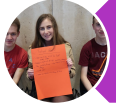
CRC General Comment No. 12, The right of the child to be heard



Transparent and informative



Voluntary



Respectful



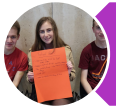
Relevant



Young person-friendly



Inclusive



Supported by training for adults



Safe and sensitive to risk



Accountable



*Where are we on a...*

...continuum of quality participation



Yet to really  
engage

Exceptional



# Now what?

- Why are we where we are on the continuum?
- How could we move up to the next number?
- What can I do?