

Increasing Student Voice in District 90

Committee of the Whole
Meeting – December 7, 2021



Goals of Increasing Student Voice

- ◆ Increasing understanding about students' actual experiences in District 90
- ◆ Ensuring that varied student perspectives are considered in decision-making
- ◆ Fostering student leadership and improving skills for civic involvement
- ◆ Reminding adults about the importance of valuing students' priorities and putting their needs at the center
- ◆ Others?

Symbolic vs. Transformative Student Voice

- ◆ Symbolic Student Voice (SSV) – student leaders who are already winning in the current structures and policies, engage exclusively in youth facing leadership activities while young people are excluded from structural decision making
- ◆ Transformative Student Voice (TSV) – student leaders, who may or may not already be winning at the structures currently in place, participate in school policy discussions and help transform school structures to be more equitable and representative

Source: Ginnie Logan, Ph.D. - *Critical Civic Inquiry Research Team*

Common Pitfalls - Student Voice

- ◇ Adulthood – adults are perceived to be the keepers of all truth
- ◇ Tokenism – involvement of students for show, no actual influence applies
- ◇ Decoration – student engagement is window dressing to affirm adult decisions
- ◇ Design Barriers – student voice is dampened by structural impediments that hinder authentic participation in decision-making realms
- ◇ Others?

Hart's Ladder of youth participation

| | Quality of Participation | | Participation in school or classroom evaluation | Participation in school or classroom decisions |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|---|--|
| Participatory | 8 | Youth-led initiative, decisions made in partnership with adults | Students lead evaluation & research into classroom or school needs from beginning to end. Share findings with adults. | Young people initiative new classes, lessons, projects, or policies. Adults are involved in a supportive role. Decisions and follow-through youth-led but done in partnership with adults |
| | 7 | Youth-led, Youth-directed, Youth-centered decision making | | |
| Advisory | 6 | Adult decisions, shared with students. Joint decisions. | Students evaluate data with adults. | Students have leadership groups in the school such as an SVC that propose solutions to school issues. |
| | 5 | Adult decisions, informed by youth voices & perspectives. | Students/adults review outcomes together, identify needs and solutions together. | Decisions made by adults include students perspective - students are informed about how their input will be used, and are informed of the outcomes |
| | 4 | Adult decisions - youth assigned & informed how/why they are involved | Adults develop evaluation /assessment tools with student input | Students give advice on lessons and content quality, classroom rules, instructional decisions |
| Non-Participatory | 3 | Tokenism: participation for show - youth have little or no influence on activities or decisions | | Causes or priorities are determined by adults, and adults make all the decisions. |
| | 2 | Decoration: young people help implement adults' initiatives | Students are asked for their perspective. They are surveyed or polled. But their opinions or ideas are ignored. | Student representatives are asked to take part in an event or have a role on a committee, council, or advisory board - but, they are not given decision-making role. Students are included, but lack support in sharing their perspective and ideas, or those of other students they represent. |
| | 1 | Manipulation - youth support adult initiatives framed as a result of youth inspiration, but they are not | | Students are asked to take part in an event. |

Important Caveats

- ❖ It is important not to put stakeholders in the position of having to advocate for decisions without ensuring that they have adequate information in advance, or to serve as "representatives" for other members of the stakeholder group.
- ❖ The relative value of both lived experience and formal expertise in decision-making should be considered and weighed in context of the problems(s) being considered/addressed (i.e. technical or adaptive challenges).

Prior D90 Examples of Student Voice

- ◆ Student Participation – District 90 Strategic Planning Teams
- ◆ Student Membership – Pandemic “Return to Learn” Committees: Social Emotional Advisory Panel (SEAP), Remote Learning Action Team (RLAT)
- ◆ Student Climate/Perception Surveys – Education for the Future (EFF), 5 Essentials, IAB Inclusiveness Survey
- ◆ Student Participation – IAB “Student Experience Panel”
- ◆ Equity Network Team Student Involvement – Empathy Interviews/Student Member

New Efforts to Increase D90 Student Voice

- ◆ PERTS Copilot/Elevate – learning platform enabling teachers to get rapid feedback from students about how they are experiencing key classroom learning conditions (pilot)
- ◆ Student Membership on Essential District Committees – including Inclusiveness Advisory Board (IAB), Board of Education Equity, Communication, and Education Committees
- ◆ District 90 Student Focus Groups - voluntary option for students in grades 7 and 8 to provide feedback about school district issues (planned for Q3)
- ◆ RMS Oral Communications Course (Social justice focus)

For Further Reading/References

- ❖ Chicago Public Schools - Social Science and Civic Engagement/Educating for Democracy. 2020. *Student Voice: 360 Degree Classroom, School, Community Guide*.
- ❖ Hart, R. A. 2013. *Children's Participation: The Theory and Practice of Involving Young Citizens in Community Development and Environmental Care*. Routledge.
- ❖ Logan, Ginnie. 2019. *Student Voice – Transformative or Symbolic?* Students at the Center HUB. Boulder, CO: University of Colorado Critical Civic Inquiry Research Team.
- ❖ Mandouit, L. 2018. Using Student Feedback to Improve Teaching. *Educational Action Research*, 26(5).
- ❖ Mitra, D. 2006. Increasing Student Voice and Moving Towards Youth Leadership. *The Prevention Researcher*, 13(1).
- ❖ Toshalis, Eric & Michael Nakkula. 2012. *Motivation, Engagement, and Student Voice: The Students at the Center Series*. Boston, MA: Jobs for the Future.

Thank You!

QUESTIONS?

