

Promoting Authentic Student Voice

Featuring the Student Focus
Group "Fishbowl"

Dr. Lucy A. Vezzuto



Promoting Authentic Student Voice (SV)

- ◆ Rationale & benefits
- ◆ Strategies and guidelines to promote SV in classroom & school
- ◆ Experience a student focus group “fishbowl”
- ◆ Assess your school
- ◆ Brainstorm ways to bring SV to your campus

Student Voice: A Youth Development Perspective

Youth development is the on-going process in which young people are engaged in building the skills, attitudes, knowledge and experiences that prepare them for the present and the future.

➤ Karen Pittman, Senior VP International Youth Foundation

Research Supports...

What many educators have always understood intuitively: academic performance is strongly linked to whether students' basic developmental needs are met--- needs such as health, security, respect, and love.

When students basic
developmental needs are met...

they feel more
connected
to school.



A Foundation for Learning

“ ‘School connectedness’ refers to the belief by students that adults in the school care about their learning and about them as individuals.”



Promoting Authentic Student Voice

Is a way to connect students to
school and the adults in school

Students Who Experience School Connectedness...



- Feel They Belong and Are Respected
- Like School & Feel Engaged in Learning

Students Who Experience School Connectedness...



Believe
Teachers Care
About Them
And Their
Learning

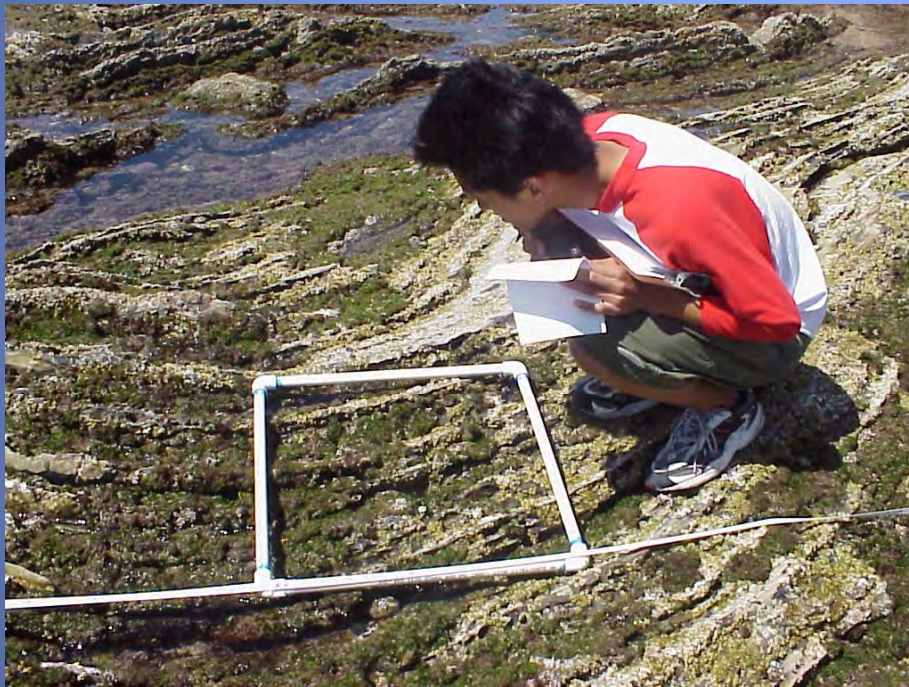
Students Who Experience School Connectedness...



Feel Safe

Have Friends
at School

Students Who Experience School Connectedness...



Believe That
Education
Matters

Believe That
Discipline Is Fair

Students Who Experience School Connectedness...



Have Opportunities to Participate
in Extra Curricular Activities

Robert Blum, Educational Leadership, April 2005

Students Who Experience School Connectedness...



Have a
Voice in
School
Decisions

What Students Need From Us

- A safe, supportive and youth friendly environment
- Promote capacity building
- Be an ally
- Tell the truth
- Be a partner
- Celebrate successes!!

Students have much to tell us
about how best to
reform our schools.

Have we asked our students
how to make their school a
better place to learn?

Student Voice

Ways to involve students
in school decisions that will shape
their lives and
the lives of their peers.



Beginning Practices

Students

- Informally provide input and feedback regarding classroom & school issues
- Participate and have choice in classroom & school projects
- Help with clean up, decorating or posters for school & classroom projects

Beginning

- ◆ Class meetings
- ◆ Select project topic
- ◆ Set goals and monitor learning
- ◆ Vote on school or classroom service projects
- ◆ Bulletin boards and poster campaigns
- ◆ Cooperatively learn with classmates
- ◆ Essay contests with public performance
- ◆ Suggestion box

Intermediate Practices

Students

- have an arena to voice classroom-school concerns
- are engaged in skill-building activities (agenda development, project planning)
- are involved in the evaluation of classroom-school practices

Intermediate

- ◆ Critique classmate's writing
- ◆ Develop rubrics
- ◆ Student focus groups on school issues
- ◆ Collaboratively plan with adults school-wide anti-bullying initiatives
- ◆ Classroom climate survey
- ◆ Develop class compact w/consequences
- ◆ Student-led conferences
- ◆ Select, plan, & do service learning project

Advanced Practices

Students

- voice classroom-school concerns and are encouraged to develop solutions
- serve on school boards and councils to provide a youth voice
- generate ideas and present to administrators, superintendents, school board members

Advanced

- ◆ Students interview teacher candidates
- ◆ Serve on school boards and school councils
- ◆ Create school assessments
- ◆ Participate in appropriate funding decisions
- ◆ Participate in school-wide discipline decisions



Inventory of Adult Attitudes & Behaviors

- ◆ Complete the inventory.
- ◆ Transfer the numbers from each statement to the white boxes on chart.
- ◆ Tally your numbers.
- ◆ Turn to your shoulder partner and discuss your results and what the different styles mean for you as an educator.

Inventory Results

Style #

1 Students as objects

2 Students as recipients

3 Students as resources

Student Focus Group Guidelines

- ◆ Preparation
- ◆ Three parts
- ◆ Roles
- ◆ Agreements
- ◆ Environment
- ◆ CA Healthy Kids Survey data on Connectedness
- ◆ Follow Up:
Collaborative
Planning

Youth Focus Group

Thank You Tewinkle Middle
School Students



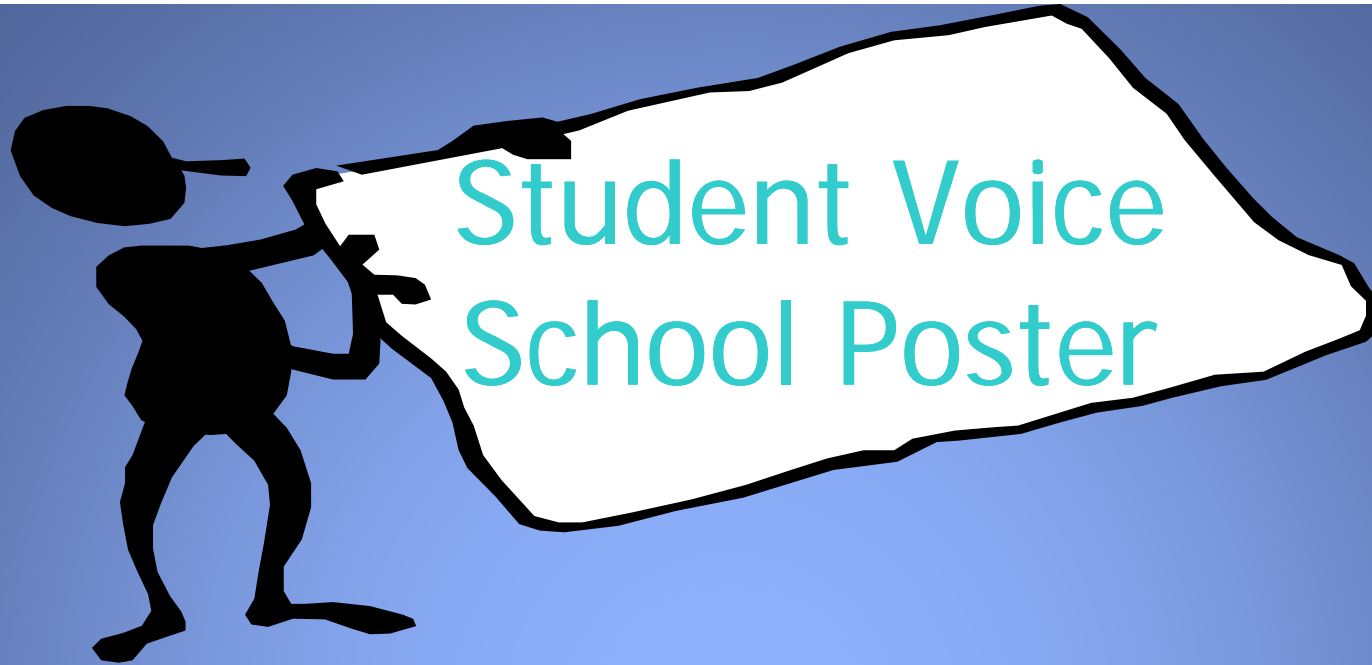


After Focus Group

- ✓ What comments or thoughts do you have about listening to the students?
- ✓ Any acknowledgements or appreciations?

Assess Your School

- ◆ Read “Voice” article marking ideas that resonate with you
- ◆ Individually rate your school
- ◆ Timed Round Robin: comment on one item in the article
- ◆ Discuss your school ratings, question by question, making sure each person shares their rating



- ◆ What already occurs at our school to promote student voice?
- ◆ What might we consider starting to promote student voice at our school?



Gallery Walk

Take post-it notes to leave comments and questions on the other schools' charts.

Select References

- ◆ Dana L. Mitra. *The Significance of Students: Can Increasing “student voice” in Schools Lead to Gains in Youth Development?* Teachers College Record Vol 106. Number 4. April 2004. pp.651-688.
- ◆ Bonnie Benard. Resilience & Youth Development Module. California Healthy Kids Survey. Adapted from Student-Led Focus Group Self-Study Toolkit, Laboratory Network Program, 2000.
- ◆ Dana L. Mitra. Amplifying Student Voice. *Educational Leadership*. November 2008, Volume 66 . Number 3. ASCD.