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.”

National Training and Technical Assistance Center for Drug Prevention and School Safety Program Coordinators
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

Robert Blum, Educational Leadership, April 2005
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.

Strategies and Practices

Beginning  Advanced
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

