



Student Voice 101



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01

Student Voice Defined & Avoiding Tokenism





What is Student Voice?

The practice of educators intentionally, purposefully, and systematically eliciting student viewpoints on a specific topic for improvement purposes.¹



5 Elements of Student Voice

- 1 Topics in the classroom are relevant to students
- 2 Students have ongoing discussions with adults
- 3 Students are involved in school & district planning & decisions
- 4 Shared power between students & adults on school & district levels
- 5 Students are involved in the actions to address school improvement on school & district levels



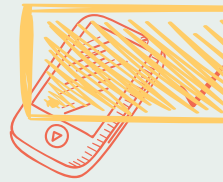
Students need to be able to... **SPEAK**

According to San Diego State University Educational Leadership Professors, Nancy Frey & Douglas Fisher...

“The amount of **talk** that students do is correlated with their **achievement**.”

“When students aren't asked to talk and think, **well-meaning teachers fill the time with their own speaking**.”¹

¹<https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/speaking-volumes>



Tokenism

“With the increased interest in student voice—which is any expression of students about learning, schools, or education—tokenism is bound to happen.

Tokenism happens whenever students are in formal and informal roles only to say they have a voice, instead of purpose, power, and possibility. Without that substance, student voice is little more than loud whisper into a vacuum....

Tokenism actually reinforces adultism by demonstrating adult power and highlighting young people’s ‘inability’ to do work of substance.”

–Adam F.C. Fletcher¹



¹ <https://adamfletcher.net/2013/01/08/51-ways-to-tokenize-student-voice/>



“When you have student voice, you have voices from people who are experiencing education firsthand. The problem is not whether you have their voices or not, but whether you listen and value their voices enough to really consider and act on what they’re saying. If you don’t, now you’ve made it worse.”

LUPE NAVARRO, STUDENT LEADER, EAST SIDE UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT



02

Student Voice
= Collaboration



STOP! IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT!



Student voice does not mean students can say or do whatever they want.



Student voice means there is an authentic & meaningful **partnership** between adults & students, where the goal is to be **intentional** about creating positive change.

Figure 2. Youth-Adult Partnership Promotes Thriving Youth, Programs, and Communities

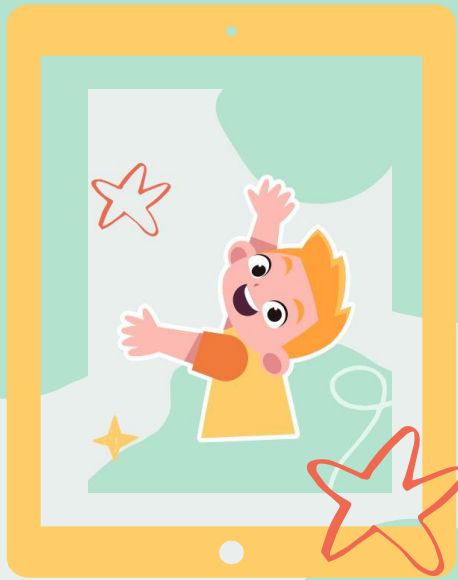


Source: Petrokubi, 2014.

Youth-Adult Partnerships 4 Core Principles:

1. Authentic decision-making
2. Natural mentors
3. Reciprocity
4. Community connectedness

CONSIDER AT YOUR DISTRICT...



- To what degree do youth have the authority to make decisions that matter to **themselves and others**?
- What are some settings in which youth work alongside adults who **share** their interests?
- How do youth and adults **learn from each other**?
- How do we foster a sense of **belonging**?
- How do we help young people feel like they have a role to play in our **community**?

Why invest in youth-adult partnerships?

01

Social Justice



02

**Strengthens
Democratic
Society**





03

**Engagement,
sense of
purpose &
retention**



CONVENTIONAL SCHOOL CULTURE


	Youth development/youth–adult partnership approaches	Conventional “school culture”
Group size and ratio of adults to youth	Mitra (2009a, 2009b) suggests the ideal size is 10–15 youth working with one or two (or more) adults.	One adult teacher typically works with a class of 30 students.
Relationships 	Adults and young people are <u>partners</u> , with different expertises. All partners are not “equal” as in identical, but everyone has something to contribute.	Teacher is the authority; students are directed by the teacher.
Youth culture/youth issues	Viewed as a fundamental component of the youth–adult partnership—and the adults need to be interested in and sensitive to youth culture and youth issues and value these as resources for the joint work of the group.	At best, youth culture and youth issues are integrated into curriculum and teaching in order to make learning relevant and engaging for students. At worst, youth culture and youth issues are seen as interfering with the “real work” of teaching and learning the curriculum.
Core purpose 	Developing students’ capabilities, knowledge and experience in the context of a project where students are leaders and change makers (addressing problems within their schools, or addressing the challenge of getting “student voice” into educational decision making, or addressing some other social justice or community or youth-related challenge).	Teaching students through the curriculum.

Watch out for Adultism!



Adultism describes the systems of privileged attitudes and behaviors that adults have over those of young people.¹





“Adultism is driven by behaviors and attitudes that are based on the **assumption that adults are better** than young people and therefore entitles them to act upon or on behalf of young people without their agreement.”¹



Adultism Shows Up Here...

- **internalized adultism**, which is the way we are all affected by adultism,
- **institutionalized adultism**, which is the way we use laws, rules, and policies to inflict and sustain adultism, and,
- **Cultural adultism**, which is the way all adults affect adultism, either consciously or otherwise.²

¹True Colors United

²Freechild Institute



“**imagine** if we
treated students as
people whose
opinion **mattered.**”

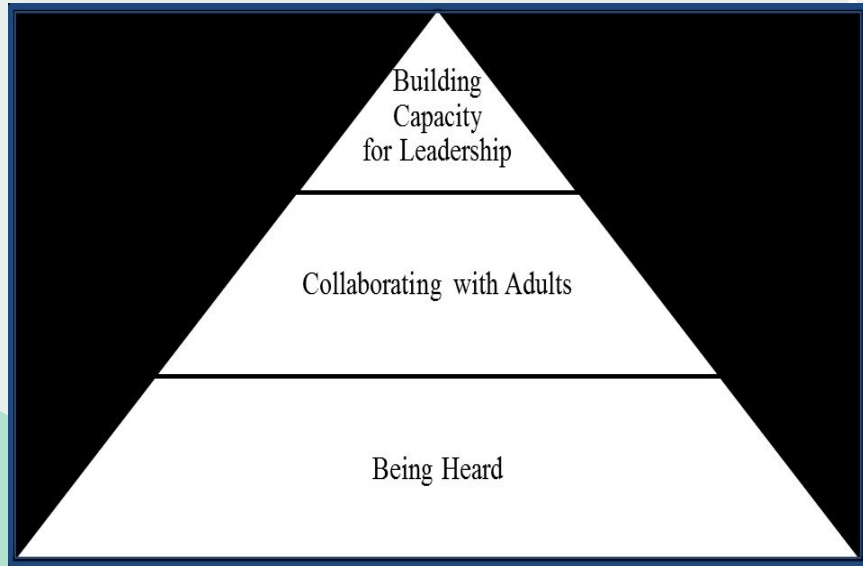
-Michael Fullan (1991)



What Research Says



Mitra & Gross' (2009) "Pyramid of Student Voice"



"Being heard" = School personnel acknowledging youth have unique & important perspectives

"Collaborating with adults" = Students & staff working together to improve their school through action

"Building capacity for leadership" = Youth partner with adults & are provided opportunities for civic development
Systemically sharing leadership with youth opens up opportunities to re-engage disenfranchised youth

As civic capacity & student voice integration increases, schools become more equitable¹

¹Mitra, D. L., & Gross, S. J. (2009). Increasing student voice in high school reform: Building partnerships, improving outcomes. Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 37(4), 522-543.

RAND Corporation's (2021) COVID Student Voice Study



RAND study showed that **HALF** of teachers & school leaders admitted to placing **less emphasis on integrating any student voice during the pandemic**, even if they had done so prior, & that opportunities for capturing student voice during virtual learning was highly diminished.¹



The need for schools to implement & elevate student voice has become more critical since the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹Fernandez, Maria-Paz, Sy Doan, and Elizabeth D. Steiner, Use, Capture, and Value of Student Voice in Schools: Findings from the 2021 Learn Together Surveys. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2021.

https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA827-4.html.

04

Why Student Voice
is important for
Homeless Students



This is a statewide problem

Per CDE (DataQuest), in the 2021–2022 school year in California...

46.1%

Of all school-aged **homeless** children were **chronically absent**.

73.3%

Of **homeless** high school seniors **graduated**.

5.6%

Of **homeless** students were **suspended**, compared to only 3.2% of all students.

So, How Can
Student Voice
initiatives Help?



Student voice.....



- **Increases student engagement, lowering rates of chronic absenteeism & high school dropout rates.¹**
- **Gives homeless youth a sense of agency over their personal lives & educational futures.**
- **Increases academic motivation. Students who believe they have a voice in school are 7x more likely to be academically motivated.²**




¹Mitra, D. L., & Gross, S. J. (2009). Increasing student voice in high school reform: Building partnerships, improving outcomes.
²quagliainstitute.org/dmsView/School_Voice_Report_2016



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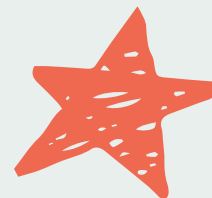
How Student Voice is Trauma-informed





**“Without youth,
school reform
efforts are limited
to adults’
understandings of
what counts as
equity.”**

–Great Lakes Equity Center

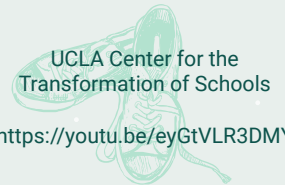


**“Encouraging
students’ voice and
choice is essential for
students living with
adversity, as it allows
them to be empowered
and have control in
matters that are
relevant to their lives.”**

–Association for Supervision &
Curriculum Development



The Power of Student Voice



UCLA Center for the
Transformation of Schools

<https://youtu.be/eyGtVLR3DMY>



Student Voice= EMPOWERMENT



- Trauma-informed schools **empower** students with trauma to share their thoughts & experiences with school policy makers, administrators, and teachers.
- The empowerment process can impact students by:
 - ◆ **promoting individual and social development,**
 - ◆ **demonstrating the importance of student rights,**
 - ◆ **promoting youth connection,**
 - ◆ **increasing confidence, and**
 - ◆ **enhancing decision-making skills**
- ❖ Using an empowerment perspective to address problems within the school means:
 - **Creating opportunities for collaboration with students.**
 - **Encouraging students to identify what problems exists.**
 - **Including youth voice in creating solutions and taking action.¹**

¹<https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/speaking-volumes>

06

Student Voice Project Examples



Student Voice Idea Menu Quick Guides can be found at www.kern.org/hip

The Student Voice Idea

MENU!

LOW EFFORT IDEAS

WORRY BOX

Using a feedback AKA "worry" box is a simple way to get student feedback. Students can anonymously submit ideas or concerns they have. It is important to make sure the feedback is all read, assessed & acknowledged. The feedback can be used to make small or large changes on campus.

PARTNER WITH THE PTA

This is low effort because the effort would be put in by the PTA instead of school staff. Students can work with the PTA to plan events & trainings for teachers and their peers. Students can help the PTA determine what needs other students have & help them plan events or activities to help with those needs.

LUNCH WITH THE PRINCIPAL

Students from diverse groups (such as foster/homeless) are periodically invited to lunch with the principal, where they can casually discuss any feedback or experiences they have had on campus. The principal will need to "complete the feedback loop" with the students following the lunch.

VIRTUAL TOWN HALLS

Virtual town halls can be hosted for students to discuss topics that are important to them, concerns they have & ideas they have for school improvement purposes. This format is less formal. Hosting a series of town halls at various times is helpful; they can accommodate students with different schedules.

The Student Voice Idea

MENU!

MEDIUM EFFORT IDEAS

ADULT PD

Students provide professional development training to educators. Examples include students teaching educators about foster/homeless youth needs, creating a positive school climate & using student voice to make systemic change.

FOCUS GROUPS

Invite students from diverse groups to share their feedback & educational experiences. Use the qualitative data from the focus groups to evaluate necessary program, school site & district changes.

PHOTOJOURNALISM

Students are given cameras to take photos that are representative of what they feel is going well and what needs improvement on campus or in the community. The photojournalism projects can then be shared with administration or stakeholders to start a conversation about change.

STUDENT SURVEYS

Give all students in the school surveys on how heard they feel by teachers and administration. Make sure all survey data is compared. Use the student feedback to make informed data-driven decisions at the administrative level of what changes need to be made on campuses.



The Student Voice Idea

MENU!

HIGH EFFORT IDEAS

STUDENT-LED CONFERENCES

The students are present & have authority to make important decisions about the conference. An adult supporter will help facilitate the planning discussions with the students. Students present their ideas & shape the conference agenda. The conference is focused on what students believe the attendees need to know.

YOUTH ADVISORY BOARDS

Youth Advisory Boards are similar to student councils; however, the participants are from a specific subpopulation (i.e. homeless students, foster youth, probation youth, etc.). YABs communicate with administrators & make formal recommendations for change based on their own lived experiences.

STUDENT COUNCIL

Create a student council, but make sure that students from all diverse groups are included, as they are often excluded from student councils. Student councils can work with administrators to assess school programs & make recommendations for change. Student council can help teach students about democratic processes; presidents & vice president positions can be held by students on the council.

VOTING STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE ON SCHOOL BOARD

The president/chair of a student council/ YAB can serve as a voting student representative on a school board. They can take the feedback from the council/board & provide that to the school board members. It is important that the student rep has voting privileges, so they are given the same shared authority as other board members.



NOTE: This is not an exhaustive list of all student voice initiatives that can be implemented at school sites/districts. This is just a small sample of possible student voice projects.

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More student voice ideas to utilize in 7th-12th grade classrooms



Pathways of Engagement

Allows students to move through the course in a “choose- your- own- adventure” style. Having different options allows students to be more in charge of their learning path.

Choice of Lens

Students choose the perspective from which they want to view the week’s topic.

Choice of Grade

- Students choose the grade they want & participate accordingly.
- There are A, B, C, etc. assignment options. Students are expected to be successful at the C, but are given time to tackle harder parts of these assignments to complete B level and A level parts of the assignment. Students can choose how much work and time they want to invest in their education.



Choice of Extras

Students receive opportunities to receive extra credit or perks.

Flexible Deadlines

- Allowing students to have “flexible” assignment deadlines may help them succeed.
- This strategy is especially helpful for students dealing with trauma/ multiple responsibilities, such as foster students who must attend therapy & visitations.

More student voice ideas to utilize in 7th-12th grade classrooms

Giving a Lecture

Creating a lesson plan or lecture for a day may allow students to deliver content in different ways that make sense to them.

Topic Choice

Students decide what topics (based on their interests and experiences) to explore within the context of the theories and concepts of the course.

Student-led Discussion Groups

- Discussion groups where students are co-facilitators to engage student discussion. Students ask questions in their discussions and the co-facilitators answer the questions, make comments, and ask questions.

Drop Lowest Score

Giving students the option to drop their lowest assignment will give them flexibility in the course and allow them to recover if they have a “life event” come up.

Examples of Student Voice in K-6 Classrooms

01

Begin class with a welcoming ritual

Students share “What’s on your mind?” to allow them to release their current thoughts & be present.

02

Be consistent

Offer many ways for students to use their voices, like:

- Speaking in front of class and/or writing on the board
- Writing for an audience outside of the classroom
- Having choices regarding what they are working on

03

Ask for Feedback & Use it

Feedback informs instruction & centers learning around their needs. This helps show students their voices have power.

04

Show You Care

Ask students about their lives beyond the classroom & create connections/ trust with students. This will help students feel more comfortable speaking their truths.¹

¹<https://www.edutopia.org/article/simple-ways-promote-student-voice-classroom>

K-6 School Wide Examples of Utilizing Student Voice

01

Create a Student Council

Make sure the student council is **diverse**. Incorporate homeless youth.

02

Partner with PTA

Allow students to help plan school wide events, alongside parent volunteers.

Allow students to present to the PTA about what they are learning in the classroom.

03

Use a Feedback Box

Place a feedback box in an area all students can access. Allow students to write suggestions on pieces of paper & submit them to the box anonymously. Be intentional about making changes based on feedback.

04

Create a Student Voice Team

Include adults & students from campus to discuss things that are going well & where there is room for improvement. Make a plan **together**.

Student Voice ideas at the District Level

Hire a Student Voice Coordinator

- Washoe County School District in Reno, NV has a “Student Voice Coordinator” paid staff position.
- This role ensures that “student voice” is utilized by LEAs to help make school sites more trauma-informed.

Put a Student on Your School Board!

- Students on school boards is 1 way to give youth decision making power.
- However, it is critical the student on the board has voting privileges.
- It is recommended that the student represents subgroups that are not usually heard (i.e. homeless)

Hold Student Town Halls

- Listen to the feedback from students in a public forum.
- Ensure that homeless students are specifically invited to these.

Student Voice ideas at the District Level



Student Surveys

Youth Advisory Boards

Hire Adult Supporters
that Will Promote
AUTHENTIC Student Voice

Student Voice through Art



Give Students
Decision-Making
Authority

Host Focus Groups with
Homeless Students

Create a Student
Governing Board!



Creating Your Roadmap

Student Voice Project Start-Up Plan

Learn

A

Choose A
Project

B

Develop Your
Project

C

Conduct

D

Take Action

E

Begin With An Idea!

Select a Student Voice Project that benefits **homeless students:**

1. Can select from *Student Voice Idea Menu* of *low-medium-high* effort ideas.
2. Utilize your local LEA data regarding academics, attendance and school climate to determine what project may be most appropriate.

The Student Voice Idea

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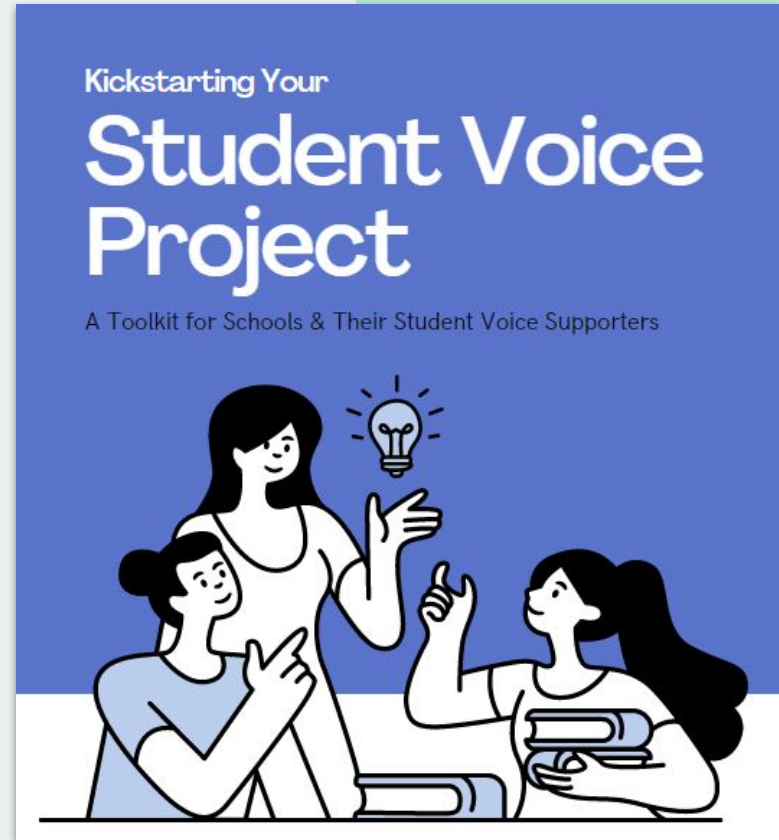
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Outline Your Project

1. Project Background
2. Scope of Project
3. Required Resources
4. Student Involvement
5. Monitoring & Evaluation Plan
6. Youth Involvement
7. Project Summary




Available on www.kern.org/hip under the “Student Voice Evaluation Tools” tab

1. Project Background

What's the Big Picture?

- Provide some context about the project. What is the vision of your project?
- How do you want the lives of your students and your school to be different because of youth involved in your project?
- Explain why you have chosen to respond to this set of issues with student voice strategies.



PROJECT BACKGROUND - THE BIG PICTURE

Provide some context about the project. What is the vision of your project? What is the ultimate impact you hope to have on your students, schools, and community? How do you want the lives of your students and your school to be different because of youth involved in your project? Explain why you have chosen to respond to this set of issues with student voice strategies. Here are some guiding questions to help you get started.

What is the problem that you are trying to solve or the question(s) that you are trying to answer? You may need to do some background research first to find out more about it.

List efforts currently being conducted or have been that address the issue(s) you identified.	List tools already in place to assess student experiences & perspectives?


What is working that you want to keep?

How will utilizing student voice in this area have positive impact on your issue(s)?

2. Scope of Project

What Will You Do?

- Describe the "what" & "how" of the project.
- Give an overview of the activities involved.
- Be specific, but don't get lost in detail.



SCOPE OF PROJECT - WHAT WILL YOU DO?

What do you want to do? In this section, describe the "what" and "how" of the project. Give an overview of the activities involved. Be specific, but don't get lost in detail.

Project Name:

Project Description

How would you describe your project? What will you do? Does it build upon other programs? Briefly outline your project, including what steps you will take to complete your project. If you are not yet certain, describe what the project needs to address.

When	With Whom
When does the project need to be completed? Will this be an ongoing or seasonal project?	Who is the target audience? Who will be involved in the process?

Project Objectives

3. Required Resources

What Will You Need?

- List resources & support (external & internal) you will need to complete the project.
- Be as realistic & detailed as possible.
- Can include:
 - ★ People
 - ★ Training/TA for students & staff
 - ★ Space-physical & virtual
 - ★ Supplies
 - ★ Data
 - ★ Expertise from others
 - ★ Focus group & survey questions
 - ★ Food
 - ★ Student incentives
 - ★ Transportation
 - ★ Community partners
 - ★ Funding
 - ★ Project/event promotion
 - ★ Google drives or websites




RESOURCES: WHAT WILL YOU NEED

Write down what resources (external and internal) and support you will need to complete the project. These can include people, training or technical assistance, space, supplies, data, expertise needed from others, food, incentives, transportation, community partnerships, funding, and project/event promotion. Be as realistic and detailed as possible.

Space	Partnerships	Facilitator(s)
Where will this work take place? In a physical or virtual space? Or across a number settings & contexts within your school?	What partners will you invite to help with project (School programs, community agencies, families, etc.)?	Who are your adult facilitators? Will they need training? Are they experienced working with target youth population(s)?
Funding	Equipment & Tech Needs	Materials & Supplies
How much money could you anticipate budgeting for this project?	What special equipment & technology needs will you need (e.g., AV equipment, software)?	What materials & supplies will you need (e.g., notepads, pens, student survey results, etc.)?
Other Required Resources		


4. Student Involvement

- How will you gather diverse student views & opinions?
- What is your recruitment plan & what role will they play?
- How will you engage students continuously throughout project?
 - Offer incentives?
 - Provide them training?
- ★ How will you close the feedback loop? How will students know their voice has been heard?

STUDENT INVOLVEMENT		
 <p>Successful student voice efforts begin with careful consideration of how best to reach a diverse group of young people, how they should be involved, and what support will help them make a real contribution. Authentic student voice reaches its potential only when there are adults who are willing and able to be real partners with youth. Your staff will also gain a greater understanding of youth development, improved skills in engaging youth, and a stronger motivation and commitment to working with young people.</p>		
Identifying Students	Recruiting Students	Preparing Students
Which student groups need to be heard in order to best address our research objective and guiding question(s)?	How many students will be part of your project? How will they be invited to participate? What outreach strategies will best reach specific student groups?	What information, training & support will they need to fully participate & succeed? What will be done to make sure youth "buy in" to project?
Student Roles		Student Incentives
What is the role of students in your project? Will they be participants, lead activities or trainings, help with design process or be part of evaluation team?		What incentives can you offer students for participating (e.g., community service hours, food, college spirit wear)?
Reporting Back to Students		
How will they be kept in the loop? How will they know their voice has been heard? It's important that youth participants feel good about their role & the project's result. Are youth satisfied with the quality of the project's process & results?		

5. Monitoring & Evaluation Plan

- How will document what you are doing & measure your outcomes? **Surveys, focus groups, interviews, school data, etc.**
 - **Process measures:** # of events, student attendance, # policies adopted.
 - **Outcome measures:** Academic progress, attendance & suspension rates.
- How will you share results?
- How will you monitor the quality & improve your program?
- How will you involve students in evaluation & use of results?
 - Design survey questions, collect & analyze data, present results.

MONITORING & EVALUATION PLAN		
 <p>How will document what you are doing and measure your outcomes? How will you monitor the quality? Ongoing evaluation and monitoring of your student voice project are essential because they provide information to the staff implementing the program as well as the youth and school partners. Another important step in student voice is monitoring and co-evaluating your programs and services with youth. They can help you gather information about what's working and what's not and share your findings with others.</p>		
Program Outcomes	Performance Criteria	Evaluation Methods
What are your project's goals or outcomes? What changes do you hope the project will make on your youth & school?	How will you know the project's goals have been reached?	How will these results/outcomes be measured? What will be your measures, how will they be collected & how often?
Data Sources		Youth Involved In Evaluation
How can these measures or indicators be tracked? Surveys, focus groups, CDE data, SIS data, interviews, etc.?		How will youth contribute to project evaluation (collect data, create survey questions, analyze results, share results with peers & admin).
Feedback		Monitor Project Quality
How & where will your results be reported? Who will you share your findings with to ensure your students' viewpoints are hear & acted upon?		How will you monitor the quality of your project? How will you regularly assess results & adjust processes accordingly to improve project?

7. Project Summary

Putting it All Together

Now that you have generated some ideas and prioritized action items, it's time to develop an action plan.

An action plan provides a clear picture of the entire student voice project, its goals, & how all activities fit together to achieve those goals.



OVERVIEW: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Now that you have generated some ideas and prioritized action items, it's time to develop an action plan. An action plan provides a clear picture of the entire student voice project, its goals, and how all activities fit together to achieve those goals.

Project Name:

Briefly Describe Your Project		Target Students
Questions You Want Answered	What Goals Do You Want To Achieve	Who Do You Need To Help Your Project
Project's Funding Sources	Project's Potential Barriers	How Will Know It Has Been Successful
Your Next 5 Action Steps	Start Date	Help from KCSOS?
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		



Need more individual coaching on Student Voice basics?

Email:

FosterEdCoordinator@kern.org

Check out www.kern.org/hip for
more advanced Student Voice
trainings.

