



Unleashing the Power of Partnership for Learning

Student Voice:

Building Youth-Adult Partnerships for School Change

“Fostering student voice – empowering youth to express their opinions and influence their educational experiences so that they feel they have a stake in the outcomes is one of the most powerful tools schools have to increase learning.”

Toshalis & Nakkula, Students at the Center, 2012

Proficiency-Based Learning Conference June 2, 2015

Participants will...

- explore **why** student voice and partnership are essential to change efforts
- assess where your school is on the youth partnership continuum
- learn about three current youth-adult Partnership Vermont change efforts
- be introduced tools and strategies available to elevate student voice and build youth-adult partnerships
- relate learning to your own school communities, identifying next steps to increase student involvement in change

AGENDA

Welcome and Youth-Adult Partnership Quote Marketplace Activity
(Activity link: [Quote Marketplace Activity Overview](#), pages 16-21)

Windows into why elevating youth voice in a partnership matters

Where is My School on the “Ladder of Youth Voice” Continuum?
(Ladder link: [Ladder of Youth Voice](#))

Three Vermont examples of elevating youth voice and partnership
Communicating School Redesign (<http://shapingourfuturetogether.org/>)
Youth & Adults Transforming Schools Together (<http://www.yatst.com>)
Learning & the Brain: Mindset, Metacognition & Motivation
(Gaining fluency in the language of learning) ([Learning & the Brain](#))

Youth perspective of why changing from a grading systems makes sense (CVU)

What Does it Take to Build and Sustain Youth-Adult Partnership?

General Q & A

Your next step??

“Motivation to engage wholeheartedly in a task is reinforced when people feel they have had some choice in selecting the task/and or understand its rationale. Children, as well as adults, are more likely to resist an activity that holds little meaning or relevance for them or they feel was arbitrarily imposed. It has been my experience that if most members of a school community perceive that they have limited input into what transpires in that community, the motivation to teach and to learn will be compromised.”

Robert Brooks, 200

LEARNING & THE BRAIN

Shared Responsibility

Shared responsibility lies at the interface of rigor, relevance and strong student-teacher relationships. This fourth R brings integrity to the other three key attributes of engaging learning. Two findings within current research highlight the importance of students and teachers sharing responsibility in learning. First, it is critical that the learner takes an active role in the learning process. The phrase “the person who is doing the work is the person who is learning” best captures this neurologically validated fact. The students become more active as they assume increased responsibility for learning and the teacher’s role shifts to that of guide. Second, effective learning depends on the individual’s understanding his or her own learning process. Once the ability to reflect on one’s own learning is mastered, the teacher and student can then continually shape the learning context based on these insights. This is referred to as “meta-cognition” or “visible learning,” which sparks both engagement and content mastery. The nature of learning requires a dynamic partnership where students and teachers engage in a continuous loop of reflection and co-construction. This fourth R becomes the way to optimize rigor, relevance and strong student-teacher relationships.



Learning must be active

Shared responsibility requires a partnership in learning, moving the role of students along a continuum from passive to active participants in their education. When students become active participants in their learning, research has affirmed that their brains are better able to process, retain, and transfer their learning to new situations (National Research Council, 2000; Recanzone et al. 1992, 1993; Ruytjens et al. 2006; Weinberger 2008; Winer & Schreiner, 2011). “In the brain, the mental manipulation required to construct understanding fuels the neuroplasticity that yields durable, long-term memory” (Willis, 2014).

The act of struggling to solve a problem is directly related to the amount that is learned and its durability (Brown, Roediger & McDaniel, 2014). When students share responsibility in their learning, they are more likely to perform better academically, have a more positive self-concept, sustain better relationships with their peers, have a greater sense of responsibility, and demonstrate higher rates of college graduation (Zelden & Collura, 2010).

Learning is enhanced through meta-cognition, or the ability to reflect on one’s own learning within a student-teacher partnership.

Researcher John Hattie (2012) conducted an extensive meta-analysis of key variables affecting learning and concluded that “the remarkable feature of the evidence is that the biggest effects on student learning occur when teachers become

learners of their own teaching, and when students become their own teachers” (Hattie, 2012). Others describe this capacity of being a “learner of learning” as meta-cognition.

When students develop the skills to predict and self-assess their learning on an on-going basis, teachers can be highly effective guides or “activators,” continually calibrating the level of challenge and relevance based on their strong relationship to the learner. “It is the feedback to the teacher about what students can and cannot do that is more powerful than feedback to the students, and it necessitates a different way of interacting and respecting students” (Hattie, 2009). Current research highlights the importance of active learning by means of an ongoing student teacher partnership (National Research Council, 2000).

Motivation is increased through learner-directed goal setting, coupled with continuous and timely feedback within a student-teacher partnership.

A positive physiologic response to learning is created when learning includes learner-directed goal setting and continuous student-teacher feedback, in the context of a learning partnership. Dopamine is triggered when individuals receive feedback that they are en route to attaining a goal and when they successfully reach that goal (Willis, 2014). This produces an experience of pleasure, reduced stress, and increased motivation and perseverance. A commitment to partnership in learning builds a positive association with learning through this continuous activation of the dopamine reward system, seeding a life-long desire and capacity for learning.

Student motivation and engagement are enhanced with increased levels of responsibility and control over their learning.

Students are more likely to be motivated and engaged in an activity when they feel they have a voice in how the activity is carried out and how it concludes (Eccles & Wigfield 2002; Hinton et al. 2012). Intrinsic motivation is fostered when students share in the responsibility of co-creating their educational experience. “Fostering student voice—empowering youth to express their opinions and influence their educational experiences so that they feel they have a stake in the outcomes—is one of the most powerful tools schools have to increase learning.” This important finding arose from an extensive literature review conducted by Toshalis and Nakkula (2012) to identify ways to increase motivation and engagement.

SOURCES

Brown, P, Roediger, H, and McDaniel, M. (2014). *Make it stick: the science of successful learning*. The Belknap Press of Harvard University press. Cambridge, MA.

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Relationship

Strong student-teacher relationships exist, leading to learning tailored to the individual's goals. The teacher serves as guide and facilitator, rather than "the expert."

Rigor

High expectations for all leads to challenging curriculum. This helps students master content that is complex, ambiguous, provocative and challenging.

Relevance

Connections are made between course content and previous learning, learners' lives and their goals.

Shared Responsibility

Students and teachers both actively participate in the learning process and share in decision making.

Ladder of Youth Voice

By Adam Fletcher

For a long time, the only formal position every young person held in society was that of young person. That **has changed**. Today, young people increasingly have more important positions, including that of decision-makers, planners, researchers, and more. The following *Ladder of Youth Voice* was created to encourage youth and adults to examine *why* and *how* young people participate throughout communities. Think of specific activities youth are involved in, and measure them against this tool.

It is important to recognize that the Ladder is not meant to represent the whole community at once. Instead, it represents each specific instance of youth voice. That means that rather than say a whole classroom is rung 4, several youth could be experiencing that they are at that rung while others are experiencing that they're at rung 6. For a long time, determining which rung a young person is at was left to perception and position: If an adult believed the youth on their committee were at rung 6, and the youth believed they were at rung 8, they simply agreed to disagree. The

following rubric can help provide a clearer explanation of what youth voice looks like.

Ladder of Youth Voice



8. Youth/Adult Equity
7. Completely Youth-Driven
6. Youth/Adult Equality
5. Youth Consulted
4. Youth Informed
3. Tokenism
2. Decoration
1. Manipulation

Adapted by Adam Fletcher (2011) from work by Roger Hart, et al. (1994)

Youth Voice Rubric

By Adam Fletcher

| Description | Challenge | Reward |
|---|--|---|
| 1. Adults manipulate youth | Youth forced to attend without regard to interest. | Experience of involving youth and rational for continuing activities. |
| 2. Adults use youth to decorate their activities | The presence of youth is treated as all that is necessary without reinforcing active involvement. | A tangible outcome demonstrating thinking about youth voice. |
| 3. Adults tokenize youth | Young people are used inconsequentially by adults to reinforce the perception that youth are involved. | Validates youth attendance without requiring the work to go beyond that. |
| 4. Youth inform adults | Adults do not <i>have</i> to let youth impact their decisions. | Youth can impact adult-driven decisions or activities. |
| 5. Adults actively consult youth while they're involved | Youth only have the authority that adults grant them, and are subject to adult approval. | Youth can substantially transform adults' opinions, ideas, and actions. |
| 6. Youth are fully equal with adults while they're involved. This is a 50/50 split of authority, obligation, and commitment. | There isn't recognition for the specific developmental needs or representation opportunities for youth. Without receiving that recognition youth lose interest and may become disengaged quickly. | Youth can experience full power and authority, as well as the experience of forming basic youth/adult partnerships. |
| 7. young person-driven activities do not include adults in positions of authority; rather, they are they to support youth in passive roles. | Youth operate in a vacuous situation where the impact of their larger community isn't recognized by them. young person-driven activities may not be seen with the validity of co-led activities, either. | Developing complete ownership of their learning allows youth to drive the educational experience with a lot of effectiveness. Youth experience the potential of their direct actions upon themselves, their peers, and their larger community |
| 8. Youth have full equity with adults. This may be a 40/60 split, or 20/80 split when it's appropriate. All are recognized for their impact and ownership of the outcomes. | Requires conscious commitment by all participants to overcoming all barriers. | Creating structures to support differences can establish safe, supportive learning environments, ultimately recreating the climate and culture in communities. |

Roger Hart, a sociologist for UNICEF who originally developed the Ladder, intended the first three rungs to represent forms of *non*-participation. However, while the first rung generally represents the nature of all youth voice in communities with the threat of “attend or fail”, there are more roles for youth than ever before throughout the education system. Rungs 6, 7, and 8 generally represent “young person/adult partnerships”, or intentional arrangements designed to foster authentic youth engagement in communities.

Today, youth are increasingly engaged as researchers, planners, teachers, evaluators, decision-makers, and advocates. With this knowledge in mind, the rungs of the Ladder can help youth and adults identify how youth are currently involved in communities, and give them goals to aspire towards.

Paradigm Shift

Changing Youth Mental Models

