



Student Voice: An Essential Ingredient for School and District Improvement

WASA Fall Conference
October 2, 2022



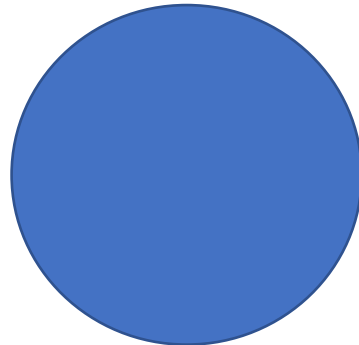
Introductions



Introduce your self at your table

- ☐ You name
- ☐ Your role
- ☐ Tell your team about something good that is happening for the students in your district.

5 minutes



Learning Intentions for This Evening

Understand what student voice is and why is it essential?

Outline what it looks like when you systemize student voice.

Unpack cross-cutting strategies to elevate and respond to student voice in your classrooms, schools, and district.

Recenter our leadership within the hope and moral imperative of the work we do as educators on behalf of our children.

Our Current Reality

Post-pandemic students are:

- ✓ More outspoken and willing to share their perspectives on their schooling
- ✓ Better positioned to provide insights into how to mitigate some of our biggest challenges
- ✓ In a time of increased division and false narratives about schools, student voice can provide a path towards coming together and common ground



Our Current Reality

Post-pandemic students are grappling with:

- ✓ An increased need for mental health
- ✓ Feelings of disconnect and diminished stamina to engage or "play the game of school"
- ✓ Increased academic learning gaps across every demographic and the widening of gaps between students of color and their peers
- ✓ Narratives and cultural conflict that are weakening cross cultural connections within schools

Who is best positioned to have insights into how to address these challenges?



Research on Student Voice as a Way to Strengthen Learning and Belonging

***Systematically** integrate students in peer conversations and leadership opportunities around climate (e.g., student action conferences, student council, peer mediation, restorative circles). Students should be empowered to contribute perspectives and make decisions on school climate efforts as these stakeholders are most familiar with the social and emotional challenges students face.*

SYSTEMATIZING CLIMATES THAT ELEVATE STUDENT VOICE AND A SENSE OF SAFETY AND BELONGING

Hanover Research, February 2022

FOUR BENEFITS (4 B'S) OF EMBEDDING EQUITY FOR OUR SCHOLARS

- Create a Deep Sense of **BELONGING**
- Demonstrate a **BELIEF** in the Limitless Potential for EVERY Scholar
- Removal of **BARRIERS**
- **BROADCASTING** Scholar Voice

Research on Districts That Succeed--University of Chicago Consortium on School Research...

1. School and district organization drives improvement, and individual initiatives are unlikely to work in isolation.
2. Puts a premium on organizational **structures** and **systems** that work together to improve student learning and overall success.



What is Student Voice?

"An array of activities that bring students to the table to share their insights and opinions in the classroom, school, and across the district. These insights and opinions are not only listened to but acted upon for the improvement of educational outcomes". *The Scholar First Inc., 2022*

"Authentic student input or leadership in instruction, school structures, or education policies that can promote meaningful change in educational systems, practice, and/or policy."
Benner, Jeffrey & Brown, 2019

Defining Voice

Record the
ideas that
linger.

5 minutes



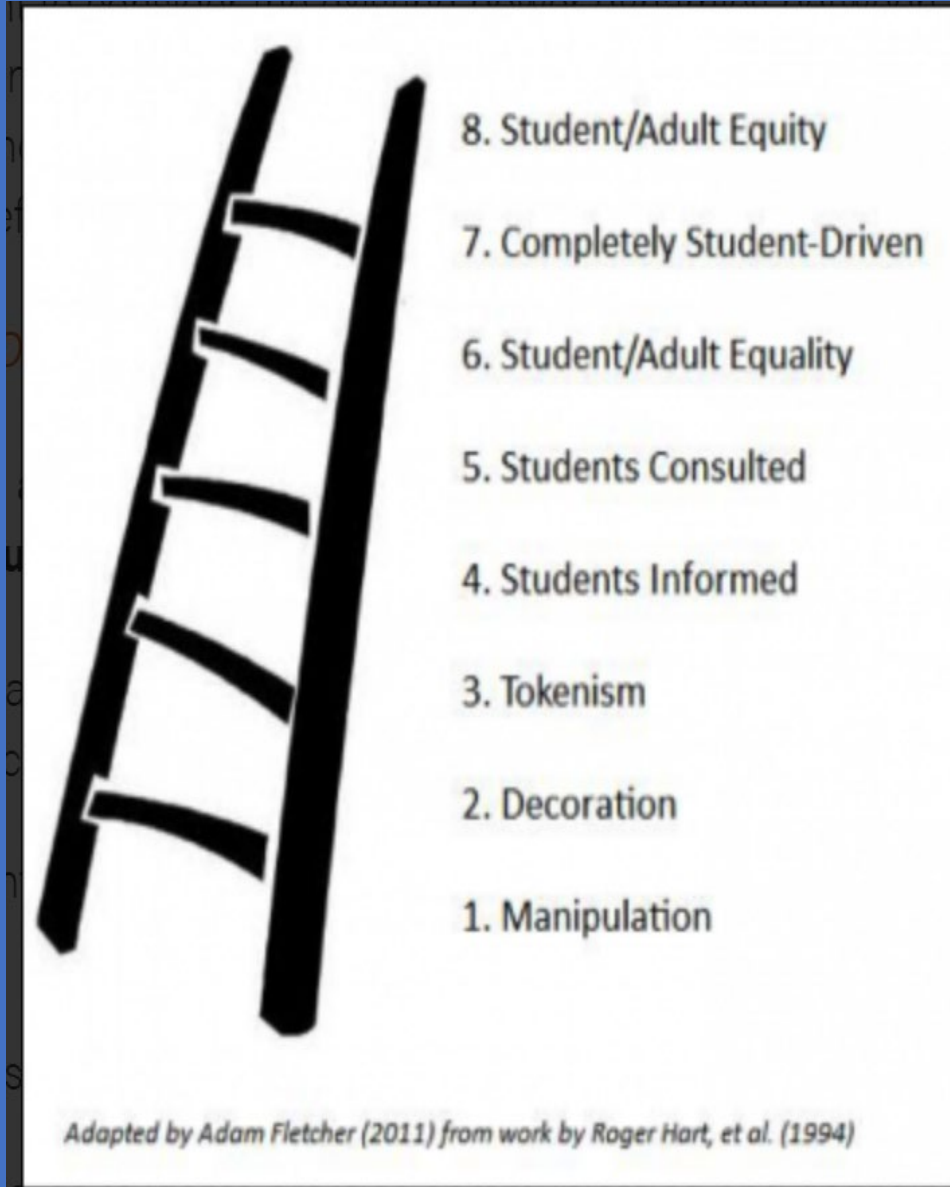
Adam Fletcher's Levels of Voice



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

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

The Ladder of Meaningful Voice



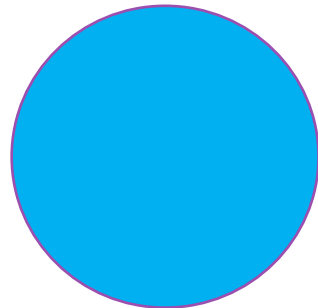
8. A school in which students are a part of the leadership team, determining curriculum, calendars, policy, etc.
7. Groups of students coming together to change the name of a school.
6. Students participating in professional development with teachers and co-constructing what success will look like in the classroom.
5. Students seen as the expert and their insights will be a key driver for the outcome. The design of classroom spaces.
4. Students are surveyed about their learning styles or interests.
3. Students are asked for input only to say they were asked and often the adults have a different outcome in mind and ignore student opinions.
2. Having students present as a symbol to say they were there, but with no real opportunity or interest in their input.
1. Identifying a few student leaders to coerce students into doing something with threats of poor grades, etc.

Reflection: Where on the ladder are your student voice efforts?

REFLECTION...

What is resonating? What structures and systems are implicated in the learning so far? Table discussion.

10 minutes



WHY STUDENT VOICE MATTERS

We have built and rebuilt school systems over and over and not once consulted with the people they are intended to serve--our students.



Authentic Student Voice Will..



Increase student engagement in learning



Make visible the unseen experience of marginalized students



Encourage collaboration between students and their teachers



Create and maintain a positive environment and culture



Build respectful relationships, connections, and belonging



Provide real and lasting answers to how to reach and teach our students!

Best Practice of Utilizing Voice



Formal and Informal Context for Voice

Classroom

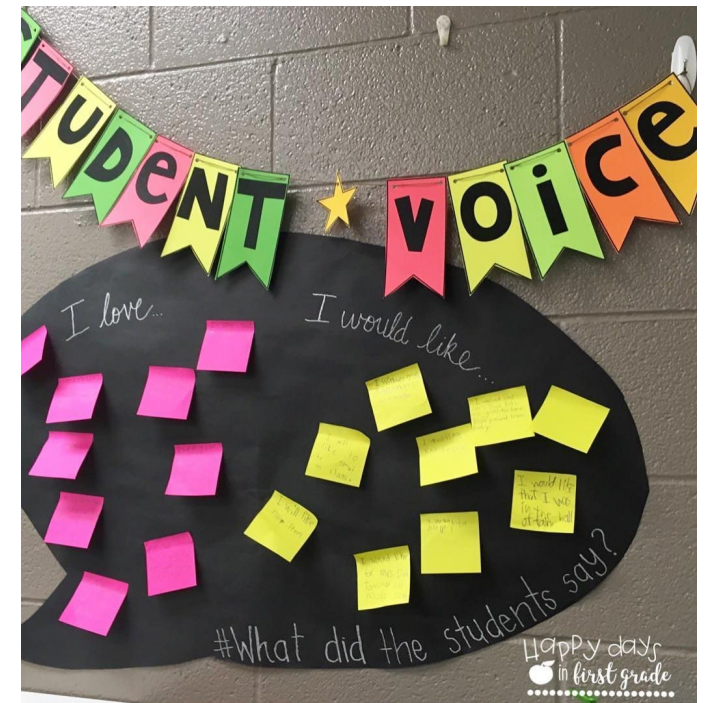
School

District

VOICE IN THE CLASSROOM...SHARE YOUR INSIGHTS

At your table, discuss the classroom practices that you are utilizing in your system. Make sure all voices are heard.

7 minutes



CLASSROOM

Formal Develop a student informed vision for success for the classroom (norms)

Student observation and reflection on lessons/instruction

The use of tools to support student self-assessment, formative assessment, student-led conferencing, and other strategies that support learning

Ask for and use student feedback in designing instruction

Continually integrate student backgrounds and home lives in the lesson

Informal Opinion writing

Choice in literature, projects, research

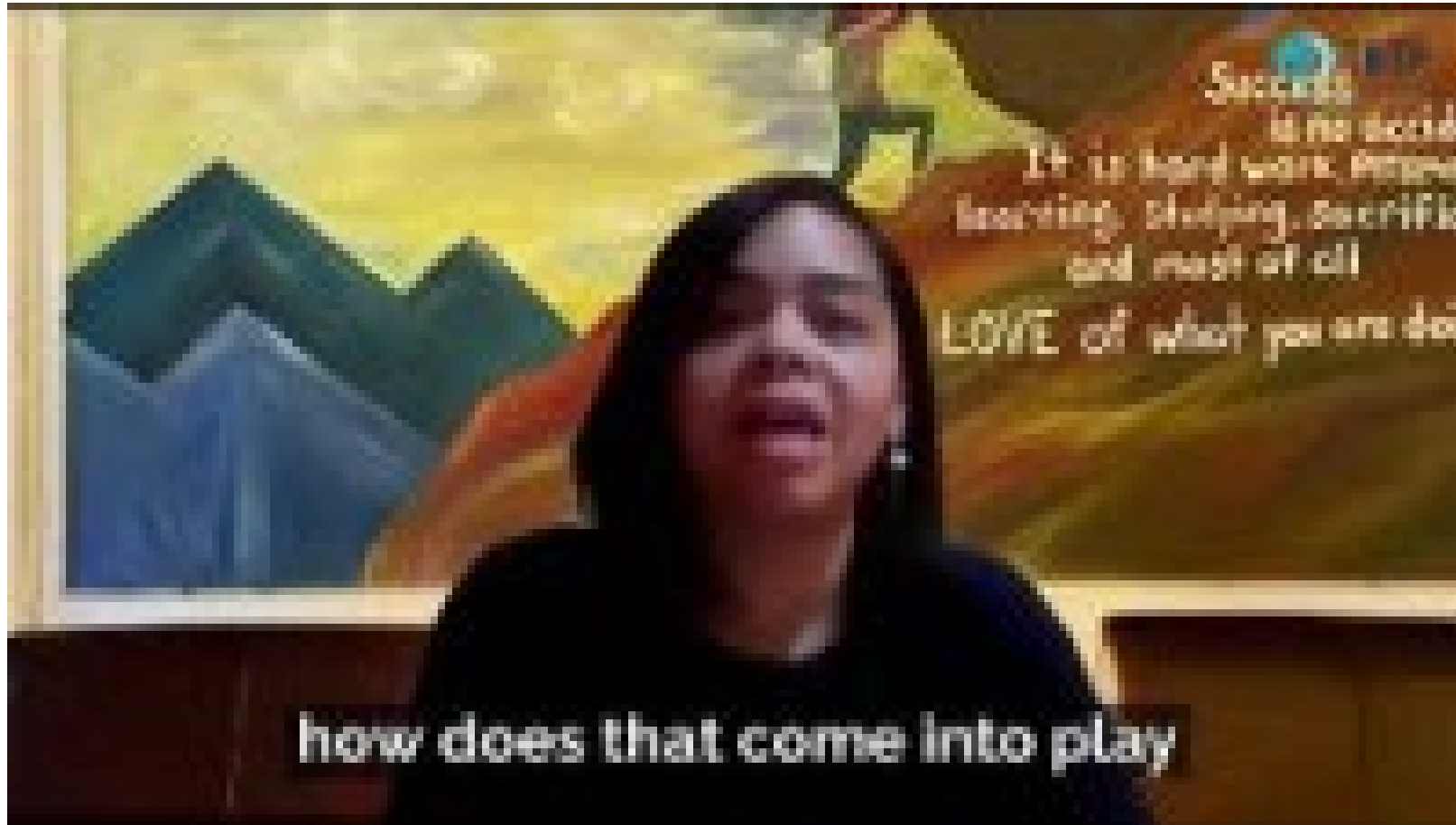
Vision walls, dreams boards, student work in hallways



The Intersection Between Voice and Belonging...



Student Voice in Literacy to Strengthen Belonging and Academic Excellence

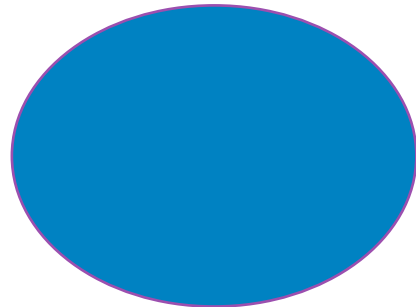


Voice in Our Schools...Share Your Insights



At your table, discuss the school-based voice practices that you are utilizing in your system.

7 minutes



SCHOOL

Formal Student advisory groups with scheduled areas of focus, walkthroughs, school goals, etc.

Student insights consistently surveyed and acted upon

Students on school improvement teams or professional development teams

Students on hiring teams

Students are integrated in discipline committees to gain insights into the student experience

Informal Student clubs

Wall art/writing

Student panels



"You don't act black."

"But, you sound white."

"Can I touch
your hair?"

"You're lucky there's
affirmative action."

"You're pretty
in an exotic way."

"You don't
dress ghetto."



showtime

Student Voice as Catalyst for Hope and Efficacy





DISTRICT

Formal

Superintendent and board advisory

Student voice is an essential data point in school and district improvement

New construction design committee
Student recognition of staff at board meetings

Hiring committees for all school administrators and identified district administrators

Informal

District wide club events like talent shows to showcase common causes

District wide student convenings

District wide student surveys on belonging, challenge, support, and instructional effectiveness



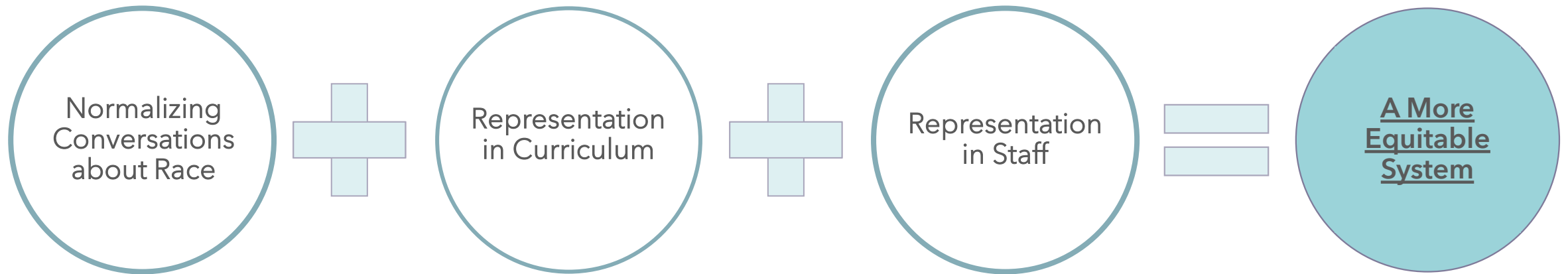
Scholar Voice as a Counternarrative to Shift Thinking



Scholar Voice & The Imperative of Equity



Scholar Voice & Scholar Vision for a More Equitable System



Position Student Insights and Voice and Influence on Policy



provi
admin
super
PAC



Scholar Representatives serve on the school board and provide reports at each board meeting.



Engaging Scholars in Real and Meaningful Issues



Scholars are engaged to provide feedback on everything, including:

- Strategic plan
- School climate survey results
- School construction
- Hiring teams
- School year calendar

Scholar Advisory By Month for All Principals

September

- Panorama Data Dive
- Scholar Engagement Lookfors

October

- SIP Review – School Goals and Signature Strategies
- SLC from Scholar Lens

November

- iReady Data Dive by Ethnicity
- Cultural Calendar Input

December

- Scholar Panel – Sense of Belonging

January

- Reflection – Classroom Engagement Data
- Classroom Walkthroughs

February

- iReady Data Dive by Ethnicity
- SLCs from Scholar Lens

March

- Data Dive to Progress Monitor School Goals
- Spring Testing – Scholar Boost

April

- Classroom Walkthroughs – Scholar Engagement

May

- Sense of Belonging Reflection- Where Are Powerful Moments

June

- Scholar Insight Sessions
- Data Dive Final Progress Monitoring



BELONGING

Evergreen School District and Superintendent John Boyd

Student Voice as a Key Lever in Visioning



What are 2-3 things that teachers and other adults in your school do that make you feel like you **belong**?

- Greet me; acknowledge me
- Help me when I need it
- Listen to me and don't show judgment
- Encourage me
- Get to know me/build a relationship



what are things that make you feel like you
do not belong?

- Being laughed at
- Being ignored
- Racism/being treated differently because of my race
- When everyone else understands how to do the work and I don't
- Being yelled at



what things help you **learn** best?

- Teacher actually likes what they are teaching
- Teacher is patient with me
- Teacher gives examples & explains until I understand
- Teacher accommodates different learning styles
- No distractions in class



what things make it hard for you to learn?

- When I am scared to ask questions
- Teachers forcing one way of learning
- When teachers are vague with directions for assignments/ don't explain well
- Homework does not help me learn
- When class is not engaging/interesting/fun

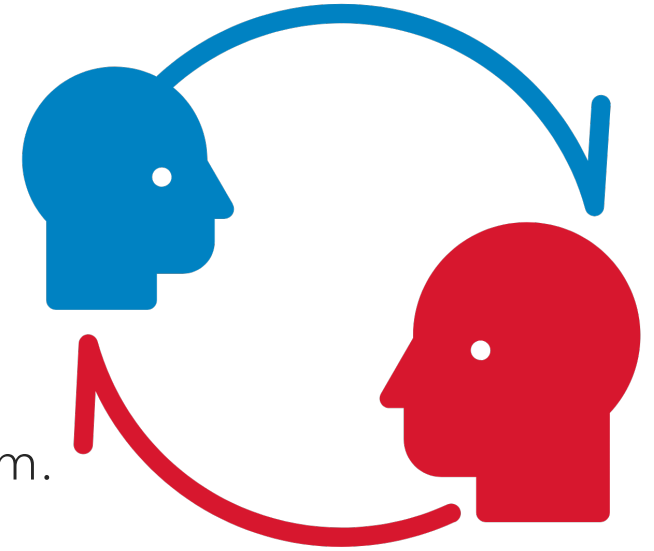


UNPACKING AN ARTICLE...

There are two different articles at your table.

Read the article, and highlight the following:

- ✓ Our systems is doing this...
- ✓ This is an idea that would strengthen voice in our system.
- ✓ One idea that will shape my thinking and action tomorrow is...
- ✓ Now, stand up and find another person who has a different article and share your responses. (15 minutes)



Barriers to Student Voice

- Belief systems that minimize or even negate the power and impact of student insights
- Lack of a systems approach, using random and scattered approaches
- Not following up on or responding to what students share
- Being threatened by the truths students have to share

Best Practices to Mitigate the Barriers

- Apply a systems approach to ensure a coherent strategy to listen to and respond to voice
- Ensure you have diverse voices at the table to get a “full accounting” of the student experience
- Respond to what you hear
- Amplify and leverage scholar perspectives in all aspects of the school and district
- Model with student how to share their perspective



Systematically
integrate students in
peer conversations
and leadership
opportunities around
climate

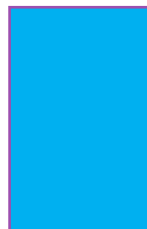
Hanover Research, 2022

REFLECTION ON CHART PAPER

I Used to Think.	I Now Think.

- ☐ Reflect and jot down your thinking to this prompt.
- ☐ Chart
- ☐ Table Share Out

20 minutes



Scholar Voice

If there were no students, there
would be no

principals, teachers, office
managers, bus drivers,
counselors, psychologists,
custodians, board members...

We are only HERE, because
they are here. We must LISTEN
to THEM!



TOMORROW'S LEARNING



- We will have the opportunity to listen to Washington State students as they share compelling insights about belonging and learning.
- We will hear from seven different districts as they outline the approaches they have taken to systemically listen and act upon student insights.
- We will reflect upon our individual and collective next steps.