



When We Listen, They Thrive!

WASA Fall Conference
October 3, 2022



Session Goals



- Create a space to listen deeply to students across the state as they share essential insights on school and district improvement
- Showcase and learn from school leaders across the state as they build expertise in the authentic use of student voice
- Reflect on your own system and the implications for your work as champions of student voice

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-group communities within schools

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



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". *Campbell, 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*



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.

As you listen to our superintendent panel, focus on the structures and systems that are being used. We know that it is key to focus on structures and systems if we are to build lasting change and impact every scholar at every school.

Bringing Our Students Into Our Space Today...

District leaders convened a diverse (e.g., ability, racially, grade levels, linguistically, social-emotionally, programmatically, gender and other dimensions of difference) group of students. We videotaped their responses to the following questions:

- What 2-3 things do teachers and other staff do to ensure you belong?
- What are things that prevent belonging?
- Describe the ideal classroom that is supporting your learning?
- What specific things hinder your ability to learn?

We will listen to their responses all throughout the day in between the superintendent/district student voice features.

