



BEST PRACTICES FOR ELEVATING STUDENT VOICE

June 2022

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INTRODUCTION

Districts strive to promote educational change that will lead to more positive student outcomes, but often lack a crucial component to achieving authentic and long-lasting results: the student voice. Student voice is “the way in which all students have opportunities to participate in and/or influence the education decisions that will shape their lives and the lives of their peers.”¹ It is a key component in helping students feel invested in their own learning and leads to heightened feelings of self-worth and engagement. Increasing student voice is especially important for marginalized student populations such as African American students and students with disabilities, as it encourages underrepresented students to reclaim power through collective action.²

A Hanover Research (Hanover) member district is committed to expanding student voice in ways that increase student engagement and ensure historically underrepresented students have opportunities to advocate for themselves. To support these efforts, the district has partnered with Hanover to explore strategies for encouraging voice among all student groups and involving students in decision-making processes when possible. The following report includes two sections:

- **Section I: Strategies for Encouraging Student Voice and Self-Efficacy** describes methods for elevating student voice and encouraging student participation, as well as strategies for improving self-efficacy through uplifting student voice; and
- **Section II: Student Voice in Decision-Making** presents strategies for incorporating student voice into decision-making processes.

KEY FINDINGS



Schools that value student voice allow students to share their perspectives about their learning environment in meaningful ways. Schools engage with student voice on a spectrum of activities that help students feel heard and that involve influential student leadership. The spectrum highlights the relationship between collaboration with adults and student-led activities; higher levels of collaboration result in more active student engagement. Ideally, schools will engage with student voice intensively, building student leadership capacity for meaningful partnerships where students have the power to identify problems and implement solutions. Incorporating strategies that encourage student participation and voice at higher levels, reflect the diversity of the student body, and reaching as many students as possible will increase student voice and efficacy across the district.



Schools implement multiple strategies to reach the maximum number of students possible and ensure feedback reflects the diversity of the student body. Surveys, newspapers, student inclusion on administrative teams, and participatory action research provide avenues for students to express their concerns and share their voice with school and district leaders. To increase student participation in surveys, encourage student leaders to communicate the importance of responding to the surveys and how students’ opinions will be used to improve the school. Youth Participatory Action Research is an especially powerful tool for uplifting marginalized student voices as it requires critical reflection of the system, helping marginalized students develop the necessary tools for being active participants.

¹ “Consider Student Voices: Striving to Understand Student Experiences to Support Learning and Growth.” Indexes; Offices. Regional Educational Laboratory Program (REL): Pacific, Regional Educational Laboratory Program (REL): Pacific. https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/blogs/blog19_consider-student-voices.asp

² “Elevating Student Voice in Education.” Center for American Progress, August 2019. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/elevating-student-voice-education/> [2] “Student Voice and School Leadership,” Op. cit., p. 14.



When schools create environments that incorporate student voice in meaningful ways, student sense of belonging and self-efficacy increase, fostering a more engaged student body. Giving students the space to express themselves, to participate in changing their school climate, and to witness how the process functions and how their opinions influence decisions encourage more positive interactions among students and teachers and higher academic achievement.



Student voice committees, student advisory groups, and student seats on district boards of education provide crucial opportunities for districts to facilitate and incorporate student voice in important decision-making and policy implementation processes. Elevating student government bodies to those with real authority, such as allowing them to lead initiatives that increase student engagement and improve school climate, empowers students to influence important decisions for their schools and their futures. Including students in administrative leadership teams opens opportunities for students to influence change as well.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our findings, Hanover suggests that districts consider the following recommendations:



Adopt a student bill of rights that voices students' perspectives on values to uphold in their learning environments. Instituting a framework that incentivizes student voice, such as a student bill of rights, can be instrumental in communicating that student voice is welcome, valued, and prioritized. Hanover can support districts in conducting a student perception and satisfaction survey to identify priorities and inform next steps in developing a student bill of rights.



Develop Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) initiatives that encourage students to research systemic issues within their school communities and identify solutions . YPAR enables the students who are living the issues to become active participants in researching and identifying solutions. It further supports the development of inquiry and evaluation skills and promotes students' sociopolitical development and psychological empowerment that can lead to action. The research project should include a set a recommendations that students can present to decision-making leaders such as administrators and school boards.



Form a student voice committee to encourage participation in decision making processes. Participants in student voice committees engage in activities such as interviewing fellow students and teachers to identify ways to improve school culture and climate, conducting interviews with various stakeholders, and facilitating townhall discussions. Also, invite these students to participate in influential groups such as advisory boards and leadership teams to provide students with opportunities to share their opinions and encourage student engagement in affecting change in their schools.

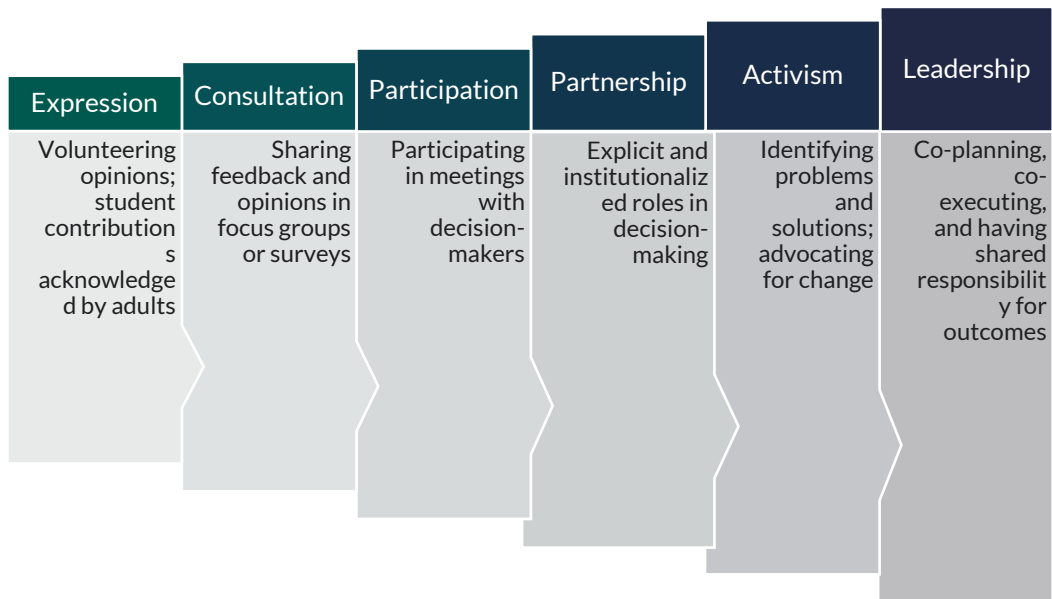
SECTION I: STRATEGIES FOR ENCOURAGING STUDENT VOICE

In this section, Hanover discusses methods for encouraging student voice, especially for marginalized students, and how student voice relates to student self-efficacy.

FACILITATING STUDENT VOICE

Creating an environment that emphasizes student voice allows students to develop civic habits essential to democracy, curricular improvements, stronger teacher-student relationships, and more resilient students.³ Schools that value student voice provide students with opportunities to share their perspectives about their learning environment with educators, allowing them to participate in and influence decisions that will affect themselves and their peers.⁴ The Center for American Progress presents levels of student engagement as a spectrum, from “being heard” to “leadership,” that incorporates the three-level guide, displayed in Figure 1.1 below. Within the “being heard” level, including student voice involves allowing students to share their opinions on school issues, whereas, at the intermediate level, students collaborate with adult educators to identify and address school problems and reforms.⁵ Ideally, schools will engage student voice at the “leadership” level, building capacity for student leadership and allowing students to take the lead in researching problems and implementing solutions.⁶ The spectrum highlights the relationship between collaboration with adults and student-led activities, showing that higher levels of collaboration result in more active student engagement.⁷

Figure 1.1: Levels of Student Voice



Source: Center for American Progress⁸

³ “Student Voice and School Leadership,” Op. cit., pp. 13–14.

⁴ Fernandez, M.-P., S. Doan, and E.D. Steiner. “Use, Capture, and Value of Student Voice in Schools: Findings from the 2021 Learn Together Surveys.” RAND Corporation, 2021. p. 1. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR827-4.html

⁵ “Student Voice and School Leadership,” Op. cit., p. 12.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ “Elevating Student Voice in Education,” Op. cit.

⁸ Figure text taken verbatim with modifications from Ibid.

Student Voice, a nonprofit dedicated to amplifying students' voices and advocating for student-driven solutions, developed a student bill of rights after soliciting opinions from students across the country.⁹ Instilling these rights can ensure students feel heard, respected, and valued by their school system. Figure 1.2 lists the nine rights students expect districts to guarantee to all students.

Figure 1.2: Student Bill of Rights

Access & Affordability	All students have the right to an affordable and equitable education.
Civic Participation	All students have the right to engage with their community and expect their schools to treat them with the rights of citizens.
Influence Decisions	All students have the right to shape decisions and institutions that will affect their future.
Deeper Learning	All students have the right to an education tailored to their individual needs and that prepares them for life beyond high school.
Diversity & Inclusivity	All students have the right to learn in an environment that doesn't discriminate against them and reflects the variety of backgrounds in the student body.
Due Process	All students have the right to understand existing rules in their school and the opportunity to address unfair treatment.
Free Expression	All students have the right to express themselves within an educational context.
Modern Technology	All students have the right to access modern technology to use for their education.
Positive School Climate	All students have the right to feel mentally, physically, and emotionally safe in school.

Source: Student Voice¹⁰

Supporting student voice allows students to become “agents of change in partnership with adults.”¹¹ **Strategies for incorporating student ideas and opinions must engage students in different ways to reach as many students as possible and allow them to share their diverse opinions.**¹² Student surveys serve as a formative tool for teachers and administrators to gather various student perspectives on topics such as school climate, student behavior, and rigor of instruction.¹³ To improve student survey participation rates, teachers and administrations can encourage students to communicate with their peers on the importance of taking the survey and provide context for providing survey data.¹⁴ Figure 1.3 provides additional methods for collecting data and improving student response rates.

⁹ “Student Bill of Rights.” Student Voice. <https://www.stuvoice.org/student-bill-of-rights>

¹⁰ Figure text taken verbatim with modifications from Ibid.




¹¹ “Elevate Student Voice.” CASEL Schoolguide. <https://schoolguide.casel.org/focus-area-3/school/elevate-student-voice/>

¹² “Elevating Student Voice in Education,” Op. cit.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ “School Climate Improvement Action Guide for Working with Students.” National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environment. pp. 4–5.

Figure 1.3: Supporting the Collection and Use of Reliable Data

 What are the keys to increasing survey participation? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider asking a small group of students to review or test the student survey you plan to use. This input can provide a realistic estimate on how long the survey will take to complete and if there are questions that are difficult to answer or not appropriate for certain grade levels. Use the input from the student pilot test to refine the survey implementation process. Ask your core group of students to communicate with their peers about the importance of taking the surveys seriously. They could go from classroom to classroom or present to the whole school in an assembly and share why the data are important, how they can help their school improve, and how to take the survey. Allow students to conduct focus groups or interviews with peers and staff to provide context for interpreting survey data. Include students on a team of people reviewing and reporting on the data. Students can have their own data team or be part of a larger team with adults, but they should be involved in some way in interpreting the data and sharing results with the school community. 	
 What does this look like when done successfully? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Piloting your survey instrument with students and using data from the pilot test to improve the survey process. You should be using a valid and reliable survey, so do not change the items. However, you can change the time allocated for the survey, the age group you give it to, and the logistics based on student input. Having students communicate about the importance of data collection. Having students assist in collecting data from peers and staff. Including students in the process of reflecting on and using data for improvement. They may have critical insights to share about the data that can be useful in future planning. 	 What do you want to avoid? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changing individual survey items based on student feedback, thus impacting the validity and reliability of the survey. Asking students to share their answers on the pilot survey. They should remain anonymous and be used only for testing the process and comprehension, not gathering input on school climate. Downplaying the importance of students in communicating with their peers about capturing good data on school climate. Excluding students from the reflection and data use conversations.

Source: National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments¹⁵

Other ways to encourage student voice include student participation in journalism at school, such as contributing to school newspapers and magazines, and providing a platform to expose issues, interview sources, share stories, and express opinions.¹⁶ Figure 1.4 lists additional ways schools can foster a sense of identity, agency, community, and belonging that can elevate all students' voices.

¹⁵ Figure text taken verbatim with modifications from Ibid.

¹⁶ "Elevating Student Voice in Education," Op. cit.

Figure 1.4: Strategies for Elevating Student Voice

STRATEGIES	ADULT SUPPORT
<p>Gather Student Perspectives. Student surveys can help to better understand students’ perspectives on schoolwide SEL implementation, school climate, academic engagement, adult-student relationships, and other important components of their school experiences. Continuing the conversation through focus groups or interviews can help staff to contextualize survey data and answer questions that emerge from survey data. Go further by involving young people themselves in the process of research and analysis, a strategy called youth participatory action research (YPAR).</p>	<p>Elevating student voice isn’t just about hearing from young people. It is about sharing power and ownership and being transparent about the process as well as the results. Make it clear that you hear their feedback and share what you plan to do about it. Let students know how they can help or be part of the planning process. With your students, develop a survey (or adapt this sample) to better understand their perceptions of school climate, student support, and creating a sense of belonging.</p>
<p>Recruit student members for the SEL team and other leadership teams. Students need to have an authentic voice in decision-making about school events and policies that impact them, and adults need their voice in order to co-create equitable learning environments. Student representation on the school’s SEL team, school improvement, or equity and diversity teams can be of great value to both the school and the students. While all voices are important, it is especially critical to hear from those who may feel disconnected from school, as their experiences can provide a critical perspective on how to continuously improve a learning environment that supports all students, not just those who are already thriving.</p>	<p>Listen to youth. For some, it may be a shift to listen actively while resisting the urge to show students the “right way.” Prepare adult team members to receive student input in a way that is respectful and encouraging, particularly when student feedback is critical or delivered in unconventional ways. In addition, provide students with opportunities to practice leadership skills such as public speaking and meeting facilitation. See further guidance on supporting student team members in this tool.</p>
<p>Encourage student-led advocacy. Students can work with their peers around issues they care about. They can do this through clubs and activities such as a student voice committee, gay-straight alliance (GSA), peer jury, student council, or youth advisory committee. Students also need outlets to react to current events in their school, community, or country. Finding a productive way to exercise their voice (e.g., awareness campaigns, peaceful protests) is an ideal opportunity for them to develop new skills and have an impact.</p>	<p>Based on a clear understanding of their concerns, help students develop the skills they need to lead, including public speaking, planning meetings, and marketing to organize and engage their peers.</p>
<p>Build student-centered classrooms. Creating environments where students drive learning helps to develop problem-solving skills and prepares students for lifelong success. Schools can place students at the center of their learning by including them in decision-making about the why, what, and how of their learning experiences—shaping learning activities, making choices, and evaluating their own progress.</p>	<p>Support teachers to use strategies such as interactive pedagogy, classroom community building, and project-based learning to keep students at the center of learning. Establish classroom leadership roles on a rotating basis so all students have an opportunity to guide projects and classroom activities. Introduce narrative feedback as a way for students to assess their own performance and continue learning until they master a particular subject or skill.</p>
<p>Involve students in teaching about SEL. In some schools, students facilitate learning around SEL or related subjects based on their interests or the needs of the school. Students may partner with another student or teacher to co-teach their peers or other grade levels. Student-led SEL can include students leading activities such as mindfulness, advisory lessons, discussions, or community-building circles. Students may also want to use social</p>	<p>Prepare students to lead SEL activities by introducing them to the content, giving them options about what they want to present or facilitate, providing talking points, and engaging students in role playing or rehearsing how content will be delivered.</p>

STRATEGIES	ADULT SUPPORT
media as a mechanism to inform and educate their peers about SEL.	
Establish <u>student-led conferences</u>. The opportunity to prepare for and conduct their own conferences about academic, social, and emotional progress with their parents or guardians gives students a sense of ownership of the learning process and cultivates skills in communication and self-awareness (Berger et al, 2014).	Help students prepare to lead conferences by having them gather work samples to review, write a reflection on their strengths and challenges, and set goals for the next quarter. Support the student in this conference by shifting from a directive role (e.g., “do it this way”) to a consulting role (“let’s develop a plan for improvement together”).

Source: Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning¹⁷

YOUTH PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

Youth participatory action research (YPAR) allows students to conduct in-depth analyses of oppressive issues in their school or community and develop solutions for addressing them.¹⁸ YPAR trains young people to conduct systemic research to improve their lives, communities, and institutions meant to serve them, such as schools.¹⁹ Students who conduct YPAR are participant researchers, meaning they have lived experiences with the topic they are researching, ensuring it is a topic they feel connected to.²⁰ YPAR allows students to experience collaborative research opportunities with other students, teachers, and community members to explore topics such as access to healthy food and the school-to-prison pipeline.²¹ As a youth-focused, community-based social justice research approach, YPAR is especially powerful at uplifting the voices of underrepresented students because it requires adults and students to reflect critically on systemic factors that create and maintain oppression, giving marginalized students the tools they need to challenge injustice in their lives.²² YPAR can²³

- **Redefine** who has the expertise to produce knowledge for our world — not just professional adult researchers but young people who are living the issues they are studying;
- **Provide** skills in inquiry, evidence, and presentation that are important to young people’s development as students and agents of positive change in schools and communities;
- **Generate** findings that provide insights into issues faced by young people that they themselves experience, as well as the resources that matter in helping solve those issues;
- **Promote** young people’s sociopolitical development and psychological empowerment such that they understand the root causes of problems facing their communities and have the skills and motivation to take action; and
- **Evaluate** programs, policies, and practices that affect young people.

¹⁷ Figure text, including links, taken verbatim with modifications from “Elevate Student Voice,” Op. cit.

¹⁸ “Elevating Student Voice in Education,” Op. cit.

¹⁹ “Learn About YPAR,” YPAR Hub. <http://yparhub.berkeley.edu/learn-about-ypar/>

²⁰ “Youth Participatory Action Research,” Maine Youth Action Network. p. 2.

²¹ “Elevating Student Voice in Education,” Op. cit.

²² “Learn About YPAR,” Op. cit. [2] Griffin, C.B. “Youth Participatory Action Research as an Intervention to Promote a Pathway for Economic Mobility: Pilot Data from the YouthRISE Summer Program.” *Center for the Study of Economic Mobility | Winston-Salem State University*, Spring 2021. p. 1. [2] Abraczinskas, M. et al. “Preventing Bullying and Improving School Climate Through Integrating Youth Participatory Action Research Into School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports: An Illustration Using a Multiple Case Study Approach.” *Journal of Prevention and Health Promotion*, June 2022. p. 3. <https://doi.org/10.1177/26320770221092148>

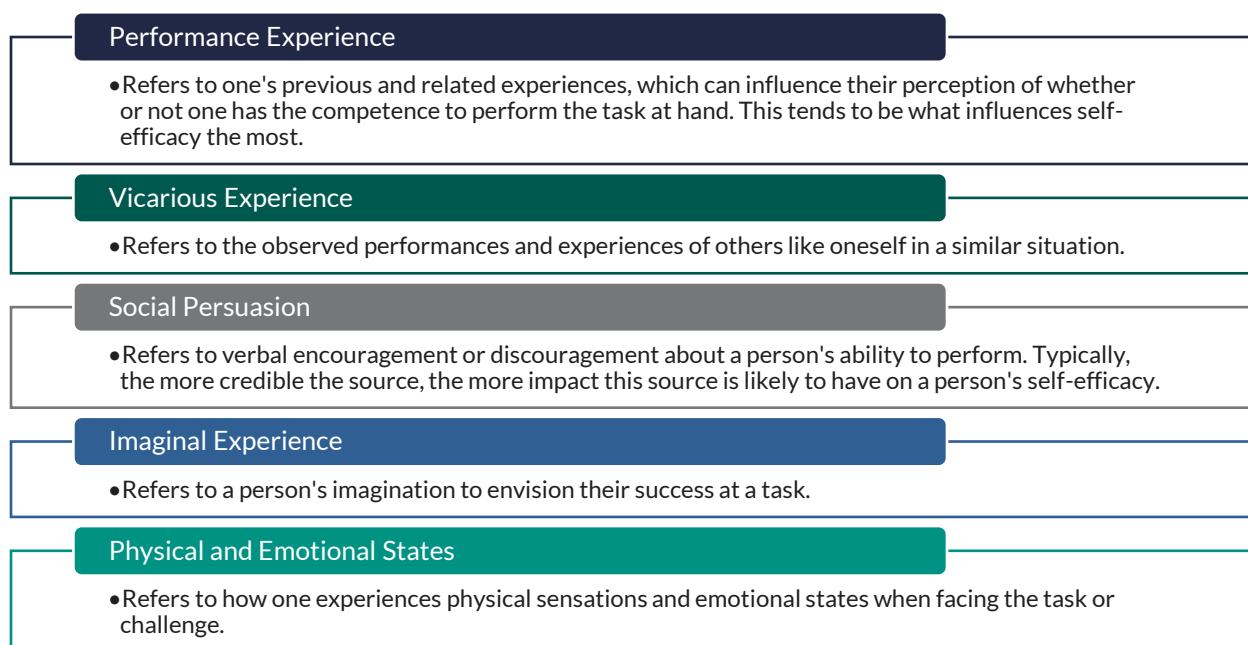
²³ Bulleted text taken verbatim with modifications from “Learn About YPAR,” Op. cit.

Research projects can last from several months to a year.²⁴ At the end of the process, students develop recommendations for social change that they can present to decision-making bodies, such as school and district administrators or the school board.²⁵ For more information on YPAR, including lessons on team building and community support, please visit the YPAR Hub [here](#).

STUDENT VOICE AND SELF-EFFICACY

Self-efficacy is the “belief that we can achieve a desired goal through our actions.”²⁶ **Students with a strong sense of self-efficacy recover quickly from setbacks and are more likely to take responsibility for failures, empowering students to challenge themselves with difficult tasks and set high goals.**²⁷ Encouraging self-efficacy requires focusing on students’ mastery of content but also depends on a student’s sense of identity, which can be influenced by students’ various experiences.²⁸ Figure 1.5 lists the five factors that influence self-efficacy.

Figure 1.5: Factors that Influence Self-Efficacy



Source: Transforming Education²⁹

Amplifying student voice in meaningful ways, such as giving students space to express their concerns or listening to their rationales about what they’re learning, improves students’ perceptions of their abilities and encourages higher self-efficacy.³⁰ Strategies, such as establishing specific, short-term goals that students view as both challenging and attainable and comparing students’ progress to the goals set for them

²⁴ “Elevating Student Voice in Education,” Op. cit.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ “Building a Culture of Self-Efficacy.” Harvard Graduate School of Education, September 2018. <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/18/09/building-culture-self-efficacy>

²⁷ “Self-Efficacy: Helping Students Believe in Themselves.” Teach the Earth. <https://serc.carleton.edu/NAGTWorkshops/affective/efficacy.html>

²⁸ “Building a Culture of Self-Efficacy,” Op. cit.

²⁹ Figure text taken verbatim with modifications from “Self-Efficacy Toolkit.” Transforming Education. <https://transformingeducation.org/resources/self-efficacy-toolkit/>

³⁰ “Deepening Student Voice and Empowerment.” ASCD, April 2018. <https://www.ascd.org/blogs/deepening-student-voice-and-empowerment>

rather than to other students, encourage more positive self-evaluations of one's capabilities and higher academic achievement.³¹ More efficacious students set higher goals and expectations for the future.³² Figure 1.6 lists additional strategies for promoting and improving self-efficacy in students.

Figure 1.6: Strategies for Building Self-Efficacy

Choose Task Difficulty Wisely	If tasks are too difficult or too dull, students may lose interest or avoid them for fear of failure. Moderately difficult tasks that are interesting and engaging are the ones that build self-confidence and increase attention in students
Use Peer Role Models	Sometimes, it is easier for students to relate to people of their age or close in age. Watching a friend work hard and come up with a solution may encourage them to try that themselves. But at the same time, teachers must remember not to make the comparisons so stark that they hurt the student or make them feel small.
Allow Freedom	Self-efficacy starts with autonomy. Students who are allowed to decide for themselves and choose their ways are more self-reliant and independent. It is always a good idea to let them choose their tasks so that they get to do what they want to and not lose interest in it.
Active Feedback from Students	Feedback is a powerful classroom tool for building efficacy. Strategies may include asking students to write their comments and feedback at the end of each learning session or dedicating the last few minutes of the class for students to ask questions and discuss their opinions. Vocalizing thoughts allows students to be aware of themselves and helps teachers to understand what areas to address.
Active Feedback from Teachers	Feedback must be mutual and benefit both the teacher and students in understanding themselves. It is an excellent idea to frequently give honest feedback to students about their performance and future possibilities. Teachers and educational guides must remember that the purpose of feedback is to enhance self-awareness, and not to discourage the kids, so choosing words wisely is a priority, whether giving positive or negative feedback.
Promote Efficacy in Teachers	Enhancing self-efficacy in teachers increases the probability of making the students more self-reliant. Teachers who are highly productive about themselves and their teaching skills have a better impact on students and can influence them easily. They can bounce back from their stress and have firm control of their teaching style, all of which contribute to making the students highly self-labile
Problem-Solving Opportunities	Daily problem-solving opportunities provide opportunities for students to face problems without fear and increase their chance of winning. It prepares them to meet challenging tasks and proceed from less severe to more difficult tasks. Besides, problem-solving also keeps their mind engaged and improves their decision-making abilities. Teachers can ask them to explain why they reached a particular solution for a specific problem and let them verbalize their thoughts.
Multiple Learning Media	Using a variety of learning sources can help students to sustain their interest in the task and engage more in it. For example, instead of the traditional chalk-talk or lecture methods, teachers can use more visual images, slide shows, online activities, and resources to impart knowledge to students. Such environments, also known as 'skilled navigation settings' make the class more exciting and invite creativity in the whole learning procedure. Needless to mention, they significantly aid in increasing self-efficacy and flexibility among students and teachers.

Source: University of Wisconsin-Madison³³

Building self-efficacy in students requires multiple strategies working together to create an environment that values and uplifts student voice. Interactive and collaborative environments that value student voice promote a strong sense of self-efficacy, resulting in students feeling rewarded, enjoying challenges, and engaging more deeply in school.³⁴

³¹ "Self-Efficacy: Helping Students Believe in Themselves," Op. cit.

³² "Deepening Student Voice and Empowerment," Op. cit.

³³ Figure text taken verbatim with modifications from "Building Self-Efficacy in Students," Op. cit.

³⁴ "Building Self-Efficacy in Students." Center for Teacher, Learning, and Mentoring | University of Wisconsin-Madison.
<https://kb.wisc.edu/instructional-resources/page.php?id=116545>

SECTION II: STUDENT VOICE IN DECISION-MAKING

In this section, Hanover reviews methods for elevating student voices in decision-making processes.

To ensure districts make decisions that benefit all students, leaders must elevate student voice and formally include student opinions in decision-making bodies and processes.³⁵ In many districts, empowering students to take on extracurricular roles, such as student government positions, is not enough to fully incorporate student voice in policy- and decision-making, as student governments are more likely to oversee student activities and plan school events than work with administrators to find solutions to school climate or social-emotional issues.³⁶ Student positions on state and district boards of education and student voice committees can facilitate student voice in meaningful ways that influence important decision-making processes.³⁷ In Chicago Public Schools (CPS), for example, student voice committees go beyond planning for school dances and events; instead, they interview fellow students and teachers to identify ways to improve their school.³⁸

Spotlight: Chicago Public Schools Student Voice Committees



When students at Mather High School noticed their peers did not feel comfortable attending school and weren't engaging in class, they decided to improve relationships between the school's 100 teachers and 1,500 students through a student voice committee.³⁹ The student voice committee conducts surveys, holds town halls, and interviews peers and teachers to figure out ways to make their school better.⁴⁰

To start, students created a presentation and shared it with educators at the beginning of the 2017-2018 school year to teach them how students are feeling and how to improve student-teacher relationships.⁴¹ According to one senior, students are not looking to create familiar friendships with teachers nor keep relations strictly professional, but to find the "golden mean" between friendships and professional relationships.⁴² During the presentation, the student voice committee offered practical suggestions, such as holding doors open for students, checking in to see how they're doing, and leading activities such as "I wish my teacher knew," which allows students to write down information about their lives that teachers should be aware of.⁴³

In other schools, the student voice committee has taken on projects of an even larger scale; at Washington High School, for example, the committee worked with administrators to shift the school to an earlier schedule so students could participate in after-school activities before it got dark, increasing involvement at school.⁴⁴ Another school began including students in curriculum meetings and discussions involving social-emotional learning.⁴⁵ At all Chicago schools, the student voice committee is open to all students who wish to join and faculty advisers are encouraged to recruit students who may not normally participate in student leadership to ensure committees represent the student body.⁴⁶

³⁵ "5 Ways To Include Student Voice in Education Policymaking." Center for American Progress, February 2021. <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/5-ways-include-student-voice-education-policy-making/>

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Stringer, K. "Not Your Average Student Council: How Chicago's Student Voice Committees Are Giving Kids a Real Say in Their Schools." *The 74*, November 2018. <https://www.the74million.org/article/not-your-average-student-council-how-chicagos-student-voice-committees-are-giving-kids-a-real-say-in-their-schools/>

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

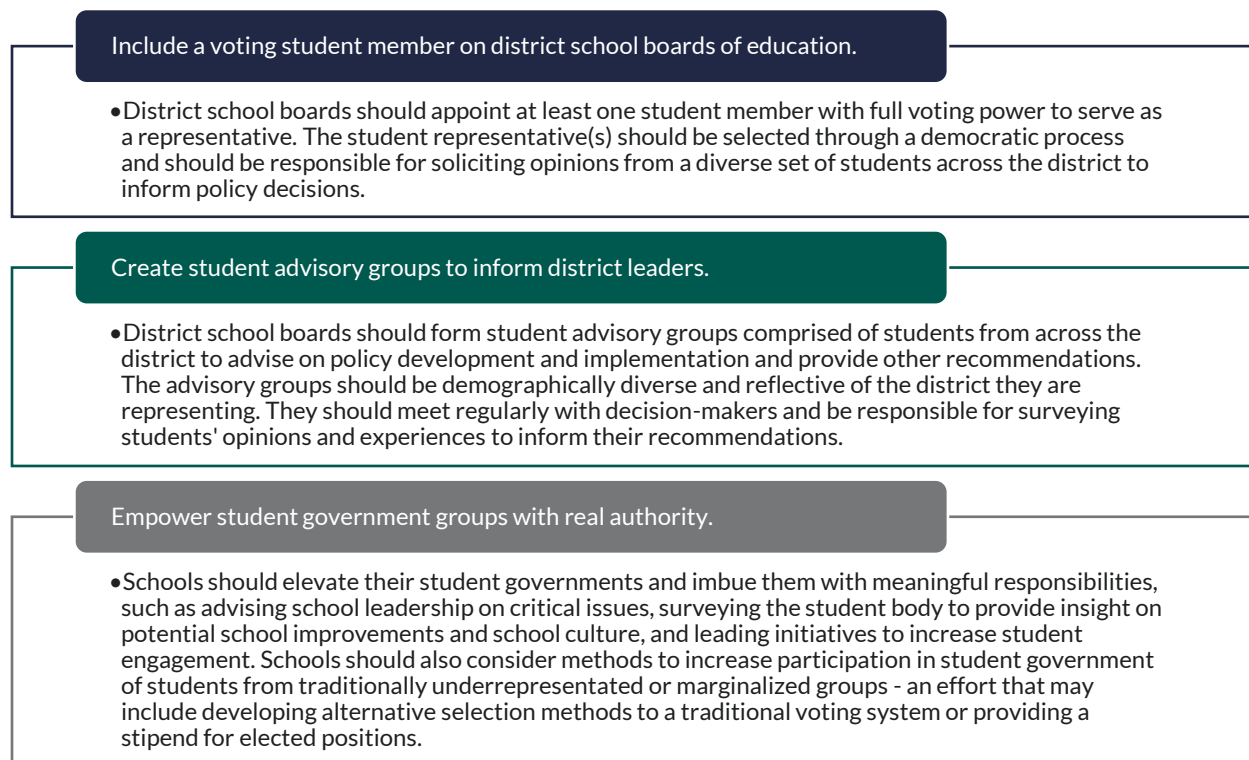
⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ "5 Ways To Include Student Voice in Education Policymaking," Op. cit.

⁴⁶ Stringer, Op. cit.

Additional ways of ensuring student voice influences decision-making bodies at the school and district level include student advisory groups that inform district leadership and empowering student government bodies with real authority.⁴⁷ The Center for American Progress (CAP) partnered with Student Voice in late 2020 to hold community conversations with high school students across the country.⁴⁸ Students expressed how schools were not listening to them and discussed how they would like to be included in future decision-making in their schools, districts, and states.⁴⁹ Students identified advisory groups, school board seats, and real authority in student government as methods for incorporating student voice in decision and policy implementations.⁵⁰ Figure 2.1 expands upon these strategies.

Figure 2.1: Incorporating Student Voice at the School and District Level



Source: Center for American Progress⁵¹

Students can offer unique insights as part of leadership teams when schools are implementing changes, such as integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) systems into school culture.⁵² Adult members of leadership teams, such as SEL teams responsible for finding solutions to improving school climate, should ensure students are properly prepared for their roles and treated as full members of the team.⁵³ Figure 2.2 lists strategies for creating equitable space for students on leadership teams. *Note: While the guide refers to student members of SEL teams, these strategies can apply broadly to other school or district leadership teams.*

⁴⁷ "5 Ways To Include Student Voice in Education Policymaking," Op. cit.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.






⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Figure text taken verbatim with modifications from Ibid.

⁵² "Supporting Student Members of the SEL Team." CASEL Schoolguide. <https://schoolguide.casel.org/resource/supporting-student-members-of-the-sel-team/>

⁵³ Ibid., p. 1.

Figure 2.2: Guide for Adults in Supporting Student Team Members

	<p>Prepare students for their role. Meet with students prior to the first meeting to learn about their goals and motivation for joining the team and ensure that they understand the commitment. Ensure that they understand that participation is voluntary and that they do not feel pressure to join. Discuss the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The goals of the SEL team and expectations of team members; ▪ Meeting routines, procedures, and relevant background; ▪ Their interests and comfort level regarding involvement in meetings, normalizing that they may feel less comfortable volunteering for tasks and speaking up initially, but may want to challenge themselves to participate more over time; and ▪ Any concerns or questions that the students have about participation on the team.
	<p>Prepare the team to receive student members. Prior to students joining the meeting, hold a team discussion regarding the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How to welcome students and put them at ease; ▪ How to show students they are influential and not merely token members; ▪ How to encourage students to share their perspectives and be involved in informed decision-making; ▪ How to listen to and accept student input with an open mind; and ▪ Revisit meeting protocols to guide interactions and support students with understanding information that is discussed (e.g., add an item to the agenda for students to report out, ask questions, or lead an activity).
	<p>Structure opportunities around student strengths and interests to engage them as influential team members and increase responsibility over time. For example, students may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facilitate a check-in, welcome/inclusion activity, or closing activity; ▪ Provide regular updates to the team regarding related activities taking place in student-led groups or teams (e.g., student council, student committees); ▪ Plan and facilitate activities such as summits, student conferences, and assemblies; ▪ Assist in delivering presentations or professional learning about schoolwide policy implementation for the school community; ▪ Participate in the assessment of SEL implementation or school climate by participating in walkthroughs, development student surveys, or facilitating interviews with peers or adults about SEL; and ▪ Communicate about SEL activities via social media.
	<p>Be an ally or mentor. Make connections with students that extend beyond meetings by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Discussing what students see as their strengths and areas in which they would like to grow as a leader; ▪ Scheduling a regular one-on-one check in with students to determine the degree to which they feel they have a voice on the team; and ▪ Asking about and affirming student interests and goals.
	<p>Build student leadership capacity. Adults can build students' leadership skills and provide them with learning experiences to support their role on the team. Adults may consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preparing youth to be facilitators and co-facilitators of meetings or presentations and giving students the opportunity to speak first;

- Teaching students how to collect and analyze data, and create opportunities for youth participatory action research, where students create their own research questions and use observations and feedback from peers to draw conclusions about what's going well and what can be improved; and
- Engaging in developmentally appropriate conversations about complex issues that impact education, such as racism, resource inequities, and opportunity gaps.

Source: Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning⁵⁴

When adults create space for students to participate in policy initiatives and decision-making processes, students become more engaged in what's happening at their school and are more likely to take ownership of activities and initiatives at school.⁵⁵ Adults and students both benefit; students develop leadership skills while collaborating with adults on important school issues, increasing their sense of belonging, while adults have the opportunity to grow as educators and become better-informed school leaders after listening to and acting on student opinions that typically diverge from adult thinking.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Figure text taken verbatim with modifications from "Supporting Student Members of the SEL Team," Op. cit.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

ABOUT HANOVER RESEARCH

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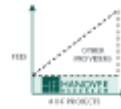
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