



# Promoting Authentic Student Voice

Featuring the Student Focus  
Group "Fishbowl"

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# Promoting Authentic Student Voice (SV)

- ◆ Rationale & benefits
- ◆ Strategies and guidelines to promote SV in classroom & school
- ◆ Experience a student focus group “fishbowl”
- ◆ Assess your school
- ◆ Brainstorm ways to bring SV to your campus

# Student Voice: A Youth Development Perspective

Youth development is the on-going process in which young people are engaged in building the skills, attitudes, knowledge and experiences that prepare them for the present and the future.

➤ Karen Pittman, Senior VP International Youth Foundation

# Research Supports...

**What many educators have always understood intuitively: academic performance is strongly linked to whether students' basic developmental needs are met--- needs such as health, security, respect, and love.**

When students basic developmental needs are met...

they feel more connected to school.



# A Foundation for Learning

**“ ‘School connectedness’ refers to the belief by students that adults in the school care about their learning and about them as individuals.”**



# Promoting Authentic Student Voice

Is a way to connect students to  
school and the adults in school

# Students Who Experience School Connectedness...



- Feel They Belong and Are Respected
- Like School & Feel Engaged in Learning

# Students Who Experience School Connectedness...



Believe  
Teachers Care  
About Them  
And Their  
Learning

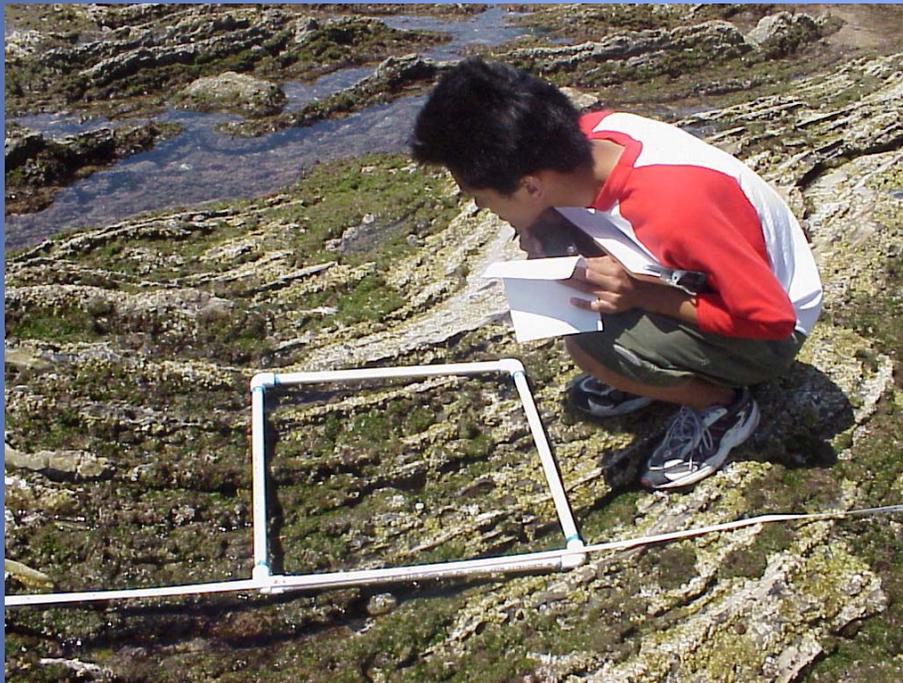
# Students Who Experience School Connectedness...



Feel Safe

Have Friends  
at School

# Students Who Experience School Connectedness...



Believe That  
Education  
Matters

Believe That  
Discipline Is Fair

# Students Who Experience School Connectedness...



Have Opportunities to Participate  
in Extra Curricular Activities

*Robert Blum, Educational Leadership, April 2005*

# Students Who Experience School Connectedness...



Have a  
Voice in  
School  
Decisions

# What Students Need From Us

- A safe, supportive and youth friendly environment
- Promote capacity building
- Be an ally
- Tell the truth
- Be a partner
- Celebrate successes!!

Students have much to tell us  
about how best to  
reform our schools.

Have we asked our students  
how to make their school a  
better place to learn?

# Student Voice

Ways to involve students  
in school decisions that will shape  
their lives and  
the lives of their peers.



# Beginning Practices

## Students

- Informally provide input and feedback regarding classroom & school issues
- Participate and have choice in classroom & school projects
- Help with clean up, decorating or posters for school & classroom projects

# Beginning

- ◆ Class meetings
- ◆ Select project topic
- ◆ Set goals and monitor learning
- ◆ Vote on school or classroom service projects
- ◆ Bulletin boards and poster campaigns
- ◆ Cooperatively learn with classmates
- ◆ Essay contests with public performance
- ◆ Suggestion box

# Intermediate Practices

## Students

- have an arena to voice classroom-school concerns
- are engaged in skill-building activities (agenda development, project planning)
- are involved in the evaluation of classroom-school practices

## Intermediate

- ◆ Critique classmate's writing
- ◆ Develop rubrics
- ◆ Student focus groups on school issues
- ◆ Collaboratively plan with adults school-wide anti-bullying initiatives
- ◆ Classroom climate survey
- ◆ Develop class compact w/consequences
- ◆ Student-led conferences
- ◆ Select, plan, & do service learning project

# Advanced Practices

## Students

- voice classroom-school concerns and are encouraged to develop solutions
- serve on school boards and councils to provide a youth voice
- generate ideas and present to administrators, superintendents, school board members

## Advanced

- ◆ Students interview teacher candidates
- ◆ Serve on school boards and school councils
- ◆ Create school assessments
- ◆ Participate in appropriate funding decisions
- ◆ Participate in school-wide discipline decisions



# Inventory of Adult Attitudes & Behaviors

- ◆ Complete the inventory.
- ◆ Transfer the numbers from each statement to the white boxes on chart.
- ◆ Tally your numbers.
- ◆ Turn to your shoulder partner and discuss your results and what the different styles mean for you as an educator.

# Inventory Results

Style #

1 Students as objects

2 Students as recipients

3 Students as resources

# Student Focus Group Guidelines

- ◆ Preparation
- ◆ Three parts
- ◆ Roles
- ◆ Agreements
- ◆ Environment
- ◆ CA Healthy Kids Survey data on Connectedness
- ◆ Follow Up:  
Collaborative  
Planning

# Youth Focus Group

Thank You Tewinkle Middle  
School Students



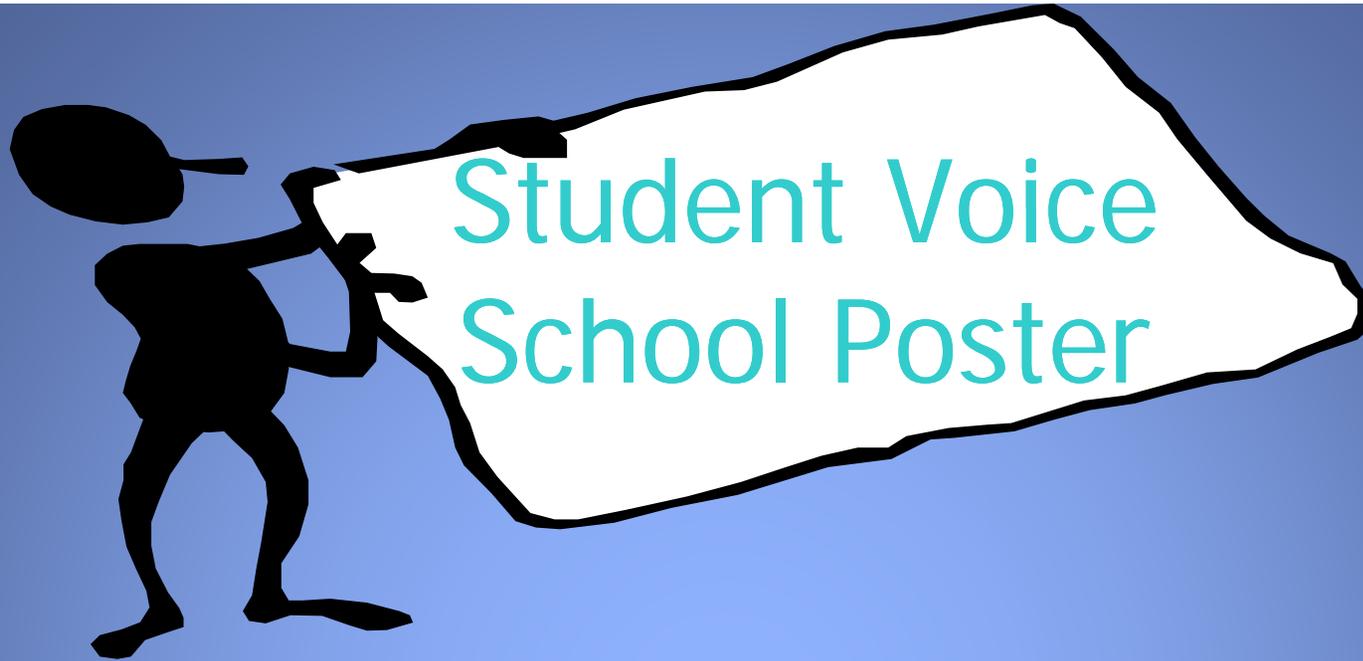


## After Focus Group

- ✓ What comments or thoughts do you have about listening to the students?
- ✓ Any acknowledgements or appreciations?

# Assess Your School

- ◆ Read “Voice” article marking ideas that resonate with you
- ◆ Individually rate your school
- ◆ Timed Round Robin: comment on one item in the article
- ◆ Discuss your school ratings, question by question, making sure each person shares their rating



- ◆ What already occurs at our school to promote student voice?
- ◆ What might we consider starting to promote student voice at our school?



# Gallery Walk

Take post-it notes to leave comments and questions on the other schools' charts.

# Select References

- ◆ Dana L. Mitra. *The Significance of Students: Can Increasing “student voice” in Schools Lead to Gains in Youth Development?* Teachers College Record Vol 106. Number 4. April 2004. pp.651-688.
- ◆ Bonnie Benard. Resilience & Youth Development Module. California Healthy Kids Survey. Adapted from Student-Led Focus Group Self-Study Toolkit, Laboratory Network Program, 2000.
- ◆ Dana L. Mitra. Amplifying Student Voice. *Educational Leadership*. November 2008, Volume 66 . Number 3. ASCD.