The Power of Student Voice
Sara Dreiling & Beth Shutters, Roycemore School

bit.ly/isacssv
ISACS Conference 2015

Photo by Leo Reynolds
Post-It #1
Where is student voice being used in your school?

Where is student voice being used in your school?
We asked participants to answer this question, and here is what they said:
- presentations, school assemblies, Facebook
- art room, maker space, interpersonal communication, student council
- hallways, classrooms, newspaper, drama
- student clubs: when 2 or 3 are gathered, a club is formed
- prospective parent tours
- humanities classes
- storytelling/listening
- arts, school assembly, middle school
- daily morning, pages writing
- schedule
- student leadership council
Where might student voice be missing in your school? We asked participants to answer this question, and here is what they said:

- newspaper
- lesson planning
- rule making
- course selection
- school policies
- project/assignment creation
- community meetings
- some classrooms
- STEM courses
- US social studies
- curriculum
- rules
The Power of Student Voice

Student voice involves working together over time. It is not one-way communication (occasional surveys, etc.) but rather an ongoing dialog.

Students are asked not only what they want to DO or LEARN, but also what they THINK, FEEL, and EXPERIENCE. They are involved in their own education, from daily decision-making to major course planning.

"Listening to student voice is the practice of educators intentionally and systematically eliciting student viewpoints on a specific topic for improvement purposes."
- BethAnn Berliner
Choice is subset of Voice, a small portion. Easier to give students Choice, Voice is harder, but more valuable.

Something to think about:
Who is listening to our student's voices? Just the school community? Parents? Leaders? A wider audience?
Sometimes difficult to listen to our youngest student's voices. Surveys, etc, are tough.
Preschool students were so interested in the solar system one year, the teacher changed her thematic unit to reflect what students were interested in. She said “I basically just scratched my plans from end of the year and then put in a Space unit because the kids had been talking about it a lot. We ended up going on “trips to outer space” going through “astronaut training” etc. and building a spaceship because I didn’t want to use a lot of materials since it was at the end of the year.”
The Power of Student Voice

Conduct a mini conference in your own classroom. Students choose the topics and present what they are interested in. Students learn from each other.

Roycemore School uses the Leader in Me approach
Our 4th grade students lead weekly Monday morning meetings - they format it, set the agenda (asking teachers in the whole LS what to include), suggest changes, choose one of the 7 habits to discuss, do skits, etc.)
We are proactive
I have a can-do attitude, I'm in charge of myself and
I do the right thing

We plan ahead and set goals
We begin with the end in mind Oh, yea
Hold up, put first things first, and prioritize
I say no to things that I should not do

Oh, leaders, go leaders, you do the right thing leaders
Roycemore leaders use the Seven Habits

Yeah, yeah leaders are good
I can be a leader and so should you- oh
I've got a leader in me, that leader loves Roycemore
Seven habits are for leaders, we use them everywhere
I've gotta learn the seven habits in school -ool -ool

Now everyone, we'll work this out
We'll think win-win and we'll compromise

Leadership Song by 4th Graders

4th Grade students are even working on an original song about being a leader to share with their peers.
The Power of Student Voice

Kids used bird stickers to indicate they wanted something Tweeted. This is one way to help student's voices reach a wider audience.

LS Theme Week 2015: Students chose from four "maker" interest areas: clothing, toys, jewelry, and tinkering. Students spent each morning for a week engaged in creating items in their interest area with mixed-age (1st-4th grade) groups.

Each student directed his/her own project from idea to design to creation. Finished items included unique board games, fashion "look books" and doll clothing models, an electric snack-delivering machine, and so on.

Link to video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hC2S2ZElz0
In the Middle School, we use student voice in many ways. Students have a weekly elective course. One choice is Genius Hour, where students study a topic they are passionate about to study for the semester.

All Middle School clubs & activities come from student suggestions and teacher expertise.
The Power of Student Voice

Here is an example of an end-of-year survey monkey given to MS students. It helps us get feedback about areas of the Middle School program: Clubs & Activities, Monthly After School Social Outings, Olympic Events, and Miscellaneous items (assemblies, overnight trips, Spirit Week, Sports Banquet, etc).

We have always sought end-of-year student feedback- but technology has made this simpler.

Teachers review the feedback (both the data and suggestions) when planning for the next school year.
For 2 days in February, we cancel regular classes in the MS and students are immersed in a particular theme.

As you'll see, theme days has changed over the last several years, and is one way we have really improved in listening to student voice.
The Power of Student Voice

Theme Days 2006 “Celebrating our Diversity” - two days of field trips spent at Chicago’s DuSable museum & National Museum of Mexican Art. Completely planned by teachers - no student voice.

High transportation costs, high percentage of student absences, low success overall.

The Power of Student Voice

Theme Days 2007: “Where in the World is the Roycemore Griffin?” - Students spent two days “traveling” to countries on all 7 continents, completing tasks unique to the culture/country. Choices were given to students, but the days were still planned completely by teachers - student choice, but not voice.

More engagement, less absences, but also more hours of teacher planning (mostly spent in trying to come up with activities students are excited about), high supply costs.
The Power of Student Voice

Theme Days 2014: "Lights, Camera, Action!" - two days of learning how to make movies. Day one spent in workshops (Camera Production, Post production, script writing). Day two spent filming a version of "Little Red Riding Hood." Truly started using student voice to plan theme days (After 2007, we started surveying kids for theme days topic ideas.)

High level of student engagement, excellent end products, low costs. Still lots of teacher planning, but HIGH level of excitement all around.

Western Little Red Video (one of 7 different adaptations): https://youtu.be/bDLT8itWqI?
list=PLLjupMUh7eRmJWZ13mWwFDel_jcEax5n

Theme Days 2015: "Change Makers" - Two days studying & improving social issues. Day 1- volunteering at local organizations. Day 2- identifying a problem within social issue and developing a workable solution. Culminated in student presentations with PSAs and logos. Totally student chosen and driven.

Highest levels of engagement and enthusiasm we've seen for theme days, lowest absences. Students truly felt they were making a difference.

Videos:
World Hunger PSA: https://youtu.be/-rZV7HOiz-Q
Bullying PSA: https://youtu.be/J6PBsC5QiEc
Animal Cruelty PSA: https://youtu.be/JkEk3GK4wUA
Homelessness PSA: https://youtu.be/MvD86sEOo
Disaster Response PSA: https://youtu.be/dm0KumYkJIE
Students have a lot of voice in choosing their academic path in the Upper School. One way we’ve listened to student voice is by adding new courses in recent years (Statistics, Anatomy & Physiology, Computer Science, Service Learning) as a result of student needs/interests.
US students are encouraged to set a focus for their education. We are a small school and can't offer all the courses a larger high school can offer. If a course is not available, students can propose independent studies, in order to continue on with a certain focus. Independent studies have included computer programming, criminal science, economics, and film/television.

We will be expanding this concept as we move forward with a strategic plan that includes centers of academic excellence and increased community engagement.

Here is one example of a student who wanted to set a particular focus for her US career, film and TV. Julia joined us her junior year wanting to study Film & TV, which we don't have. She pitched an Independent Study screenwriting class with one of our English teachers, did a JST internship with a production company in New York, and ended up walking out of here with a very strong resume in something we don't even offer.

Here are some quotes from Julia about her high school path.

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The Power of Student Voice

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**Julia: Film & TV**

“I was one of the few students in my class who entered my college already having completed an internship, and it sets me apart.”

- “I now work as a Producer for my college’s Communications Office. I head a team of students in making marketing videos for the school.”

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Photo by Michael Dales
Here is a picture of Julia with Andrew, an alum who own the production company Julia interned with in New York.

Another example of how we are listening to our students is Josh. Josh became interested in 3D printing during 8th grade. He lobbied for the school to buy one and ended up raising money for it at our annual fundraiser.

Josh, now is our US, is focusing on computer science and technology. Though we only offer one CS course, he will be able to design independent studies and continue his work in this area.
Josh has also been instrumental in starting a 3D Ambassadors team at Roycemore. This team is focused on integrating 3D printing into all curriculum and grade levels at the school. It is still brand-new, but the plan is for it to be completely student-led and designed!

Visit http://3dambassadors.weebly.com/ for more info on our 3D Ambassadors.
Like in Middle School, we survey US students about clubs and activities. Some of our longest-standing clubs have come from these surveys. Students often move a club from idea to implementation.
The Power of Student Voice

**Student Government Events:** Student government has offered/will offer 6 events for Upper hoolers this year. Please take a moment to indicate your interest in each event.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Don't need to offer</th>
<th>Nice to offer</th>
<th>A must!</th>
<th>No opinion</th>
<th>Participated this year and would likely participate again</th>
<th>Participated this year and would not likely participate again</th>
<th>Did not participate this year but will likely participate next year</th>
<th>Did not participate this year and likely will not next year</th>
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<td>Jost School Picnic</td>
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AS FOR NEW EVENTS FOR 2015-2016 (i.e. Whirly ball, laser tag, etc.)

**Feedback Surveys**

Example of an Upper School end-of-year activities survey. Note area to suggest new events.

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The Power of Student Voice

**January Short Term**

JST is a 3-week long program all Upper School students participate in. For more about Roycemore’s January Short Term program, please visit [http://www.roycemoreschool.org/jst](http://www.roycemoreschool.org/jst).
JST Purpose

• Design a piece of his/her education
• Learn subject matter not typically taught in a classroom
• Attain success beyond grades
• Learn for pure enjoyment
• Participate in activities and events s/he may not have instituted on his/her own
• Explore a possible career

JST Project Types

This JST proposal/contract is subject to approval by the JST Committee. If the committee denies the proposal, the committee will advise you on what to do to revise the proposal and resubmit it for approval. If recommended changes are not implemented in the time allotted, the proposal will be denied and you will need to pick a new project.

The committee approves your proposal, it immediately moves to contract, and with an additional student signature, is accepted.

Project Name

1. the space below, please type a detailed description of your project.

Location(s)

Estimated Cost

Group and Individual

JST Project types include Group Projects and Independent Projects. This is an example of a JST contract, which is approved by a committee of students and teachers.

Videos shown:
Chicago Cinema Connection (group project example): http://bit.ly/1khA0xc
Piano and Singing Technique (individual project example): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nv9KV7y-o9g
More JST artifacts are available at our Digital Gallery: http://www.roycemoreschool.org/gallery

For more about Roycemore's January Short Term program, please visit http://www.roycemoreschool.org/jst.
The Power of Student Voice

School-wide student voice initiatives include focus groups, surveys, professional development, and a culture of openness between students and faculty.

Our mission, vision and core values:

Mission: Our Purpose
To inspire and nurture excellence and prepare each student for success in higher education and in a dynamic and complex world.

Vision Statement
Roycemore School will sustain our legacy of outstanding college preparatory education within our nurturing community. We remain committed to enhanced opportunities for student learning as we develop new centers of academic excellence, increase our engagement with our local community and develop long range fiscal plans to sustain our school for future generations.

Core Values: Who We Are
We value:

Scholarship • Integrity • Community • Respect • Compassion

Our mission is to inspire and nurture excellence and prepare each student for success in higher education and in a dynamic and complex world. Students have had a key role in implementing our mission and focusing on core values.
School constituents were surveyed on what core values were important to them. Students identified Compassion as an area we are now focusing on.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Value</th>
<th>Faculty/Staff Scale 1 to 5</th>
<th>Parents Scale 1 to 5</th>
<th>Students Scale 1 to 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>3.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>3.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>3.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellence</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>3.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative/independence</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>3.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>4.62</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>3.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Best</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>4.65</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>3.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>4.35</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>3.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self reliance</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>3.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>3.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teamwork/partnership</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>3.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Indicates top 5 preferences*

Our school culture, in general, is very open. Students feel comfortable approaching any teacher or administrator with ideas.
Listening to student voice is a wider educational trend. Learner Agency is a vital element in "A TRANSFORMATIONAL VISION FOR EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES," released by Education Reimagined in September.

To read the vision, or for more info, visit Education Reimagined: http://education-reimagined.org/ or follow the #learnercentered hashtag on Twitter.
We also listen to “teacher voice” - many of our more recent PD sessions have included choice-based workshops for teachers. We ran a “faculty enrichment day” last year, where teachers voted for the sessions they wanted to see. This year, we are trying EdCamp style workshops after school.

Student voice is powerful. The benefits are many.
**Student Benefits**

- **Independence** - Students are willing to take risks and try new things. They come up with their own ideas, instead of just going with the flow!
- **Confidence** - Students believe their opinion matters, and are confident when advocating for themselves. They take on new roles.
- **Leadership** - Students feel they are part of the solution, not the problem.
- **Compassion** - Students learn that ALL voices matter, not just their own. They genuinely care that everyone has a chance to share and lead.
- **Ownership** - When students feel their voice is heard, they take more ownership in their education, thereby increasing achievement.

**School Benefits**

- **Collaboration** - Student voice projects have inspired much collaboration, particularly cross-curricular collaboration.
- **Positive Climate** - Listening to the student voice contributes to positive communication. Students feel they can approach any adult in the school.
- **Student Responsibility** - Student voice means students have responsibility for change, not just the adults in the school.
- **Fresh Perspectives** - How can we truly know what the student experience is like unless we ask them?
Further Learning

- Amplifying Student Voice webinar from EdWeek
- Students’ Views on Teachers, Policy Hold Sway in Georgia District from EdWeek
- Speak Out, Listen Up! Toolkit

More Resources

Twitter hashtags of interest
  #stuvoice: https://twitter.com/hashtag/stuvoice?src=hash
  #learnercentered, #studentdriven, #geniushour, stuvoice.org
  #learntcentered: https://twitter.com/hashtag/learnercentered
  #studentdriven: https://twitter.com/hashtag/studentdriven
  #geniushour: https://twitter.com/hashtag/geniushour?src=hash

StuVoice.org: http://www.stuvoice.org/

Learn Like a Pirate book: http://www.learlikeapirate.com/
  Thrively: http://www.thrively.com/
  Education Reimagined: http://education-reimagined.org/
The Power of Student Voice

We will post pictures of your ideas here a few days after our presentation, so check back to see other's ideas!

Where will you incorporate student voice more? Here are some of our participant's ideas!

- use more video documentation
- clubs
- projects
- class meetings that they structure
The Power of Student Voice

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Programs --> Digital Gallery

Slides: bit.ly/isacssv

Please feel free to contact us with any questions!