

---

# **Student Voice & Learner Voice 2018/9**

## ***Session 2***

---

MAY 29, 2019

---

**ACCS & NCCA**

**Authored by: Gerard O' Sullivan**

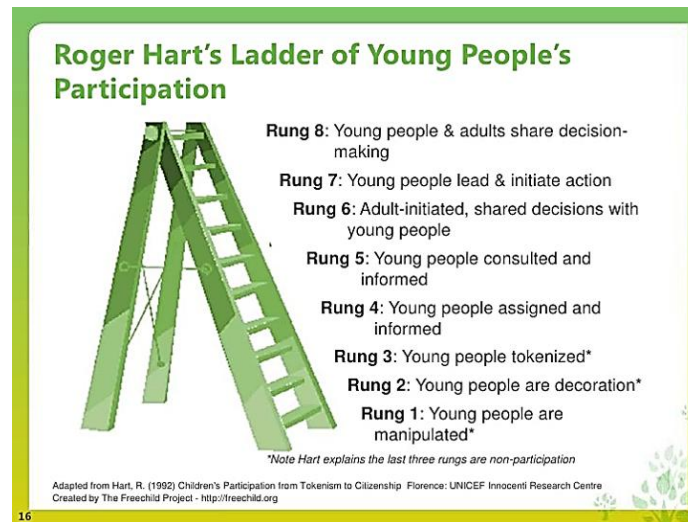
---

*your school,  
your community*



Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools  
*Cumann na Scoileanna Pobail agus Cuimsitheacha*

## Learner Voice in our schools



### ORGANIZING AND GOVERNING

Youth have a central role in the organization's structure, driving programmatic or strategic decisions. Youth are empowered to be part of shared decision-making processes and have the opportunity for youth to learn from life experiences and expertise of adults.

### YOUTH-INITIATED LEADERSHIP

Youth serve as peer leaders in a paid or volunteer capacity. Youth lead activities with their peers or with adults. Adults are involved only in a supporting role.

### YOUTH-INITIATED PARTNERSHIPS

Youth and adults join together as equals to accomplish programming, plan activities, operate the program, or complete specific tasks.

### ADULT-INITIATED, SHARED DECISION-MAKING

Projects or programs are initiated by adults but the decision-making is shared with youth. Attempts are made to use youth-friendly procedures and language.

### INFORMED DIALOGUE

Youth give ongoing advice on projects or programs designed and run by adults. Youth are informed as to how their input will be used and the outcomes of the decisions made by adults. Youth are involved in evaluation of programming.

### ASSIGNED BUT INFORMED

Youth are assigned a specific role and informed as to how and why they are being involved. This includes inconsistent youth involvement or temporary consultations such as focus groups or surveys.

### TOKENISM

Young people appear to be given a choice, but in fact they have little or no choice about what they do or how they participate.

### DECORATION

Young people are used to bolster a cause in a relatively indirect way, although adults do not pretend that the cause is inspired by youth.

*Adapted from works by J. Nowicki and R. Hart.*

---

What we discussed on the day:

Task: Share where your school is in terms of lens of participation model (Hart's ladder)

The Code of Behaviour is developed through a consultation process.

- Establishing the school rules. Consult with the students about rules and consequences. Teach the COB explicitly to all students including the Anti Bullying Charter. Students are given opportunity in year groups to sign up to the Charter. Agreed Code goes to Student Council and Board of Management.
- Students participate in Student Voice initiatives involving student behaviour where students themselves create posters and 1<sup>st</sup> years are addressed by senior students about positive behaviour strategies.

Subject Content Choice is agreed and evaluated by teacher and students.

- School uses end of year survey with students to inform planning for next year. E.g. PE Curriculum in senior cycle – this is what we can offer, which activities do you want to participate in during Term 1 in 5<sup>th</sup> year? Students feed into planning process and have opportunities to give feedback after the modules are complete. E.g. How can we improve the module? What will lead to greater engagement and enjoyment?

The school is exploring effective ways of engaging with learner voice in the classroom.

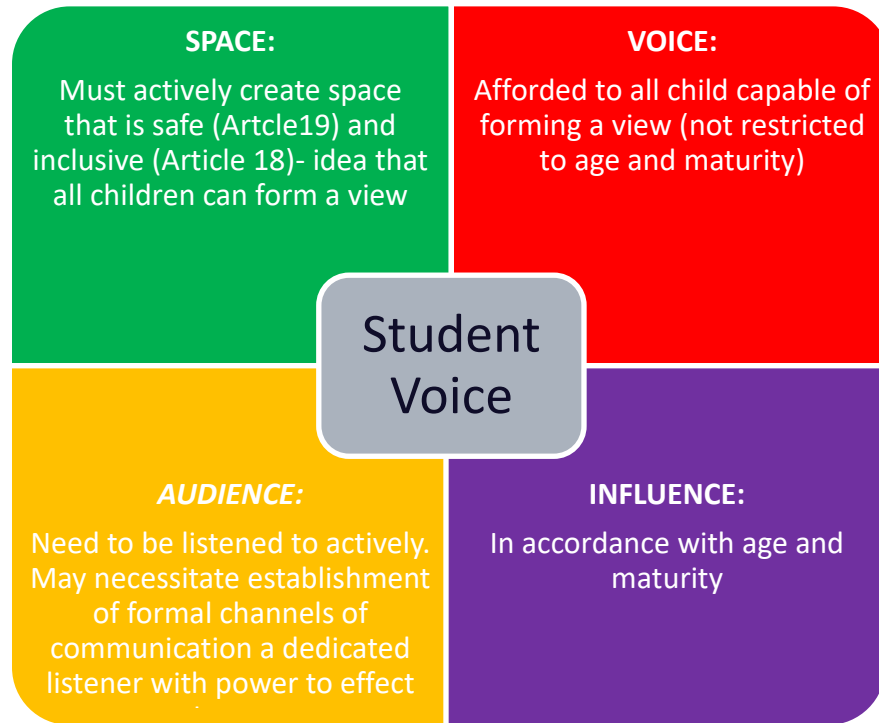
- Emoji commenting reporting method- feedback suggested emojis- but students not consulted on implementation so this could seem like bottom up approach and may not be sustainable.
- Creation of success criteria e.g. book reviews- then peer review using criteria they have collaboratively created, then redraft, take ownership of their learning, students creating a rubric for answering.
- Using '*Battelle for Kids*' as a catalyst of change. Training teachers to use *AfL* more effectively as a strategy – taking these skills to embed a stronger voice for students i.e. the programme facilitates teacher learning in supporting students' language skills which in turn supports learner voice in the classroom.
- (Hart's Ladder scale 5) The students are informed and consulted in terms of SSE focus groups e.g. examining use of *AfL* strategies in classrooms. What helps student learning etc. and this feedback is shared with staff to support their planning.
- (Hart's ladder scale 7) There are lots of student led initiatives going on in school. Teaching and learning is student centred and opinions and feedback on lessons are given. There is a strong emphasis on teacher/ pupil relationship.
- Fundamentally we do not respect students if we do not feed back to them
- Making feedback central to learning. Feedback to students can be facilitated by peers and /or teachers.
- School sees value of CBA in my learning as a teacher and in child's learning.

---

The school promotes activities which supports student voice.

(Introducing Space, Voice, Audience and Influence)

- *Health Promotion Week*: All students were not given opportunity to attend all activities. School took on board student feedback including the voice representing annoyance with limited choice in programme. School will use this feedback when planning next year's event.
- *Sustainable Education*: Removing plastic from school- 2<sup>nd</sup> year students who are very environmentally conscious approached student council who approached the school canteen and had single use plastic removed from school. Students appear more health conscious so have introduced a ban on fizzy drinks- Students reinforce the health message creating and display 'sugar posters' to keep awareness up in school community.
- (Hart's Ladder scale 6) School adopts both adult and student-initiated approaches to various challenges which develops a shared decision-making culture in school. E.g, student led initiative '*plastic out of the park*' - no single use plastic allowed on premises
- *Arts Night*- A student centred event - portrayal of students' creativity e.g. cooking, cook-off, gymnastics etc) students organised all (with guidance)
- *Whole School Awards* Student of the year / class – sports awards, extra-curricular awards, intro of creative arts awards – initiative- portray awards/ photos on wall – celebrating success in school.
- (Hart's Ladder scale 5) P/T/S meetings- student surveys in SSE, facilitating student focus groups which enrich school self-evaluation.
- Need to move towards engaging students more taking on board their views and feeding back to students – more genuinely involved
- School recognises that in its classrooms it is at Level 6/7 on Hart's Ladder while at whole school it is at Level 3 / 4 on Hart's Ladder.



There is a Student Council Structure in place in school.

- How effective is this structure in school life and in school community? Is the student council concept working in our school?
- Is there merit in reorganising the current Student Council into separate junior cycle and senior cycle Student Councils?
- How fair is the election process for Student Council? How are SC members chosen? elected? Is there any manipulation in the selection process?
- When does the Student Council meet?
- How is Student Council seen by students? Are the students penalised by having their lunchtimes taken for meetings?
- Do students see Student Council membership as worthwhile?
- What kind of profile does the Student Council have in school? Are they recognised? By whom?
- Are there other schools in the room that feel Student Council is worthwhile? Successful?
- Student Council informed of the educational initiatives in school- literacy, numeracy etc.- asked to feedback to school (each class during pastoral care, RE, CSPE). Now producing brochure using student language and design to embed practices
- There are a number of initiatives going on in the school but success depends on the cohort of students on the Student council- when there are strong leaders, a strong student voice is heard. How can the school develop these strong leaders?

- the school believes it is still at a tokenism stage with Student Council. (Ladder scale 3) It is moving towards creating a Student Voice umbrella approach which will include Peer Mentoring and Student Council, and which will be evaluated using SSE.
- (Hart's Ladder scale 7) The school facilitates a student initiated fundraising initiative to raise funds for South Africa project which includes 64 Student Council members involved in running part of the initiative. School is moving towards more student led initiatives which involve the Student Council establishing sub- committees that branch out from the main student council and ensure greater participation from greater numbers in school in Student Council activities. E.g, planning and managing a programme of activities during "Respect your school" week.
- Student Council recognises the importance that senior management places on student voice in school.
- Student Council is one construct we have in Irish schools – This offers a place for the representative voice. We need to establish ways to connect this with developing Learner Voice in the classroom. A good place to start in school.

#### *Group Observations:*

- Student /Learner Voice is about '*ruffling the calm of the ocean floor*'.
- What is the point of speaking about Student Voice if when they speak, we don't like what they have to say?
- By engaging in SV, a school is promoting effective teaching- engaging students actively in their own learning.
- Notion of prefigurative democracy- for many the first taste of democracy is in school.
- When there are too many initiatives going on in school, this can drain resources in school- teachers away on in-service etc. Schools will need to decide if Student Voice is a priority. A public show- do we value the voice of our students in our schools?
- DES inspection model asks students about the extent to which they agree with the statement: 'I have a say in how things are done in this School' – Is this a flawed question? - The results do not reflect all a school might be doing in facilitating Student Voice.
- The place of *Teacher Voice* alongside *Student Voice* requires consultation and discussion- cannot impose school wide change from top down
- Collaboration in the system supports work in Student Voice. Working with other teachers, working with other schools e.g. single subject departments, the JCT cluster model etc.
- The disposition of the school leader is critical to success when attempting to embed authentic and relevant Student Voice in school.
- 'The Student voice'? In our schools there is a multiplicity of voices and not just 'one' voice.
- Our motivation for promoting authentic Student Voice in our schools includes teacher learning, pupil retention, school improvement, personal development, whole school wellbeing, positive transition from primary to post primary, progression and enhancing classroom space and learning.

- 
- Finding ownership: student focus groups engaged regularly during year in school to embed Student Voice in decision making processes.
  - Managing Behaviour in school and looking at leadership roles- finding ways to listen to challenging students
  - School trips- citizenship- co-planning trips with students
  - 5 different schools looking at Student Voice through different prisms:
    - a. Year group review
    - b. SEN
    - c. Students' thoughts on school
    - d. Art classes
    - e. STEM subjects

### Outcomes and next steps:

It was agreed that:

- Using LAOS as a guide, each school will continue to develop one aspect of practice to enhance student voice in advance of Day 3 in Autumn 2019. *(Choose one statement from LAOS and map your school's activity in the area of SV to this statement. Explore how this activity can be developed to embed SV in this area with one group of students – (small steps are best) Sharing of these practices by relevant students and staff will form the plan for Day 3.*
- A showcase of achievement and progress in building a culture of student voice will take place in Spring 2020 at the ACCS Education Conference.

## Looking at Our School 2016: A Quality Framework - The Leadership Dimension: Where we can see Student Voice.

### Domain One: Leading Teaching and Learning

*School leaders:*

- promote a culture of improvement, collaboration, innovation and creativity in learning, teaching and assessment
- foster a commitment to inclusion, equality of opportunity and the holistic development of each student
- manage the planning and implementation of the school curriculum
- foster teacher professional development that enriches teachers' and students' learning

### Domain Two: Managing the organisation

*School leaders:*



- 
- establish an orderly, secure and healthy learning environment, and maintain it through effective communication
  - manage the school's human, physical and financial resources so as to create and maintain a learning organisation
  - manage challenging and complex situations in a manner that demonstrates equality, fairness and justice
  - develop and implement a system to promote professional responsibility and accountability

#### Domain Three: Leading school development

##### *School leaders:*

- communicate the guiding vision for the school and lead its realisation in the context of the school's characteristic spirit
- lead the school's engagement in a continuous process of self-evaluation
- build and maintain relationships with parents, with other schools, and with the wider community
- manage, lead and mediate change to respond to the evolving needs of the school and to changes in education

#### Domain Four: Developing leadership capacity

##### *School leaders:*

- critique their practice as leaders and develop their understanding of effective and sustainable leadership
- empower staff to take on and carry out leadership roles
- promote and facilitate the development of student voice, student participation, and student leadership
- build professional networks with other school leaders

### **Looking at Our School 2016: A Quality Framework - The Leadership Dimension: Where we can see Student Voice.**

#### Domain One: Learner outcomes

##### *Students:*

- enjoy their learning, are motivated to learn, and expect to achieve as learners
- have the necessary knowledge and skills to understand themselves and their relationships
- demonstrate the knowledge, skills and understanding required by the post-primary curriculum
- attain the stated learning outcomes for each subject, course and programme

#### Domain Two: Learner experiences

##### *Students:*

- engage purposefully in meaningful learning activities

- 
- grow as learners through respectful interactions and experiences that are challenging and supportive
  - reflect on their progress as learners and develop a sense of ownership of and responsibility for their learning
  - experience opportunities to develop the skills and attitudes necessary for lifelong learning

#### Domain Three: Teachers' individual practice

##### *The teacher:*

- has the requisite subject knowledge, pedagogical knowledge and classroom management skills
- selects and uses planning, preparation and assessment practices that progress students' learning
- selects and uses teaching approaches appropriate to the learning intention and the students' learning needs
- responds to individual learning needs and differentiates teaching and learning activities as necessary

#### Domain Four: Teachers' collective/ collaborative practice

##### *Teachers:*

- value and engage in professional development and professional collaboration
- work together to devise learning opportunities for students across and beyond the curriculum
- collectively develop and implement consistent and dependable formative and summative assessment practices
- contribute to building whole-staff capacity by sharing their expertise

