Guardian Angels Catholic Primary School

Student Voice Case Study 2023

Background

Guardian Angels Catholic Primary School is situated in Ashmore on the Gold Coast. It is the school's third year of the "Student Voice" project, building on the strong foundations of clarity of definition and skills building. The school has grown over the years with a population in 2023 of over 800 students. There is a team of teachers at GA to support systems, processes, and structures to ensure "Voice" is a way of operation at Guardian Angels Primary School. We continue to be explicit and deliberate in connecting to structures, processes, and ideas.

Analysis

In 2023, we ensured there was clarity of understanding around the terms **engagement** and **challenge**. We made clear connections to our named GA IMPACT practices and a GA Learner. Having the engagement continuum visual in class, helped students share their level and strategies they could use to improve.

From Amy Berry- Engagement Continuum and class example

How GA defines ENGAGE and challenge where we ensured we linked to GA practices built over the last few years.
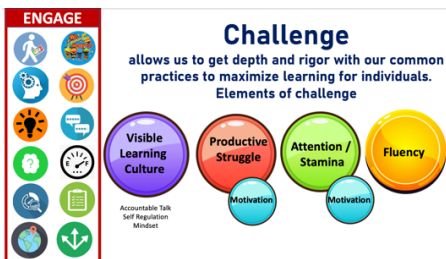
We investigated researched based pedagogical practices to develop and ensure appropriate levels challenge for all students. We focussed on knowing, targeting, and developing student ownership of challenging learning within their zone of proximal development in our learning design.

Purpose

Our goal in 2023 was to look at ways to engage and challenge all learners at Guardian Angels Ashmore. Selected in response to school review feedback which highlighted an opportunity to further deepen the school-wide learning culture. This focus was further narrowed to developing students' ability to value their own opportunities to learn and the learning of others by minimising interruptions to teaching and maintaining a safe school environment. Our student perception data collected in 2022 also echoed this need.

We continued as team to develop Assessment Capable Learners (Fisher, et. al, 2018) that are challenged through high expectations. GA's named "High Impact Strategies" continue to be explicit and deepened.

"We are intentional with our teaching. It is important we understand the key concepts within our year level. This is when authentic, deep, powerful learning can occur."

Our journey

In 2023, we continued to deepen voice in our GA language, processes, and practices. Careful planning and review each term allowed us to ensure we tracked our impact and were responsive to our team.

The theme for 2023 was "Mission C -23- Powered by Voice". We wanted to encourage students to use their voices to be curious, creative, challenged and value choice as a learner. There were clear connections to our expectations of a GA Learner and ways this could be lived.

Fluency
- Spaced Practice
- Repeated Reading
- Metacognitive Tools

Attention / Stamina
- Timed Practice
- Building on an idea
- Researcher
- Concentration building/Recall

Productive Struggle
- Peer Critique
- Cloze reading within & across documents
- Challenging Task- Enabling Prompts
- Spotlighting

Teachers completed a survey to gather positives and next steps for GA's Voice journey.

The following graphics consist of gathered teacher reflections on the use and outcomes as a result of the iKnows survey.

What we learnt about students.

Teacher Perspective
- The survey revealed that the most pressing issues for students were
- - Listening
- - Sharing
- - Working collaboratively
- Teachers all welcomed learning this information about their students.

My thoughts
The surveys this year identified that the areas of concern directly relate to class culture, being the environment teachers set up in their class and how students relate to one another within the classroom.
These are skills that are often not directly taught to students and need to be.
Teachers having a greater understanding of how to teach skills associated with oracy such as accountable talk - Terri or inter thinking - Neil Mercer could be very beneficial.

Success Experienced

Teacher Perspective
- Teachers all indicated that their students experienced success from the implementation of their goals.
- Most teachers indicated that goals were ongoing.
- One teacher would have liked more direction in terms of what was expected to be achieved.
- One teacher mentioned they are goals that teachers already knew and were working on.

My Thoughts
I provided teachers for term 4 planning with the data from Term 1 and Term 3 side by side. It was the first-time teachers directly looked at and compared the data from start of the year to the end of the year. Most saw growth in the focus area however some were the same percent, and some were minimal growth. I think now teachers know there is a comparison will increase their motivation and having a percentage goal to aim for such as a 30% increase could be of value.
I noticed after I completed the introduction lesson for 3G they followed through and continued to talk about active listening every time I checked in. They had one of the largest improvements with a 33% increase in students feeling they were being heard.
I wonder what strategies teachers implemented to make improvements and how frequent the strategies were used.

Implementation of the survey

Teacher Perspective
- Teachers supported myself coming in to implement the survey. They liked the consistency.
- Concerns raised by teachers were that students didn't understand the questions and possibly ran through ticking boxes rather than thinking through the questions.
- Teachers thought the discussion and goal setting was a valuable experience.

My Thoughts
Over the years implementing this survey I have found students have gained a greater understanding of the questions however it might be worth having more time than 30 minutes and going through each question as well as samples as to what that looks like. One teacher didn't like the survey saying it was a chance for students to unfairly unleash on them. I think this is about the culture set in the classroom and perhaps I can assist by clearly outlining the purpose of the survey for students prior to taking it

What support teachers feel is needed.

Teacher perspective
- Teachers all indicated they understood voice with the average rating of 4 out of 5.
- Teacher wanted more strategies and ideas for opportunities to use voice in the classroom. One teacher indicated the Cafes were the best example of voice.
- Teacher wanted more specific strategies to assist with their goals.
- Teachers wanted time to analyze the data in greater depth.

My Thoughts
- While teachers felt they understood voice when I asked students for a definition most only indicated one of the three parts of the definition. I believe the next step is for teachers to learn the definition so they can understand voice better.
- I also believe teachers might not be aware of the current powerful practices they are doing that are ways of allowing students to have voice. Much of what was presented as part of the BCE in-service on voice would be beneficial for the staff to develop a deeper understanding of how it is already embedded within their classroom.
- The classes that were provided with an introduction lesson to their goal felt that they were provided with enough support while the classes that wanted to go it themselves upon reflection felt they needed more specific strategies. We could look at a variety of ways to do this. The survey provides specific strategies for each statement which can be shown and shared.
- Teachers were provided copies of the data to explore and look at. I personally ask my class about several of the statements throughout the year and work on one goal at a time but more than one goal throughout the term which I found assisted to create a positive classroom environment and lead to an improvement in several areas from the term 1 to 3 survey. I feel though that other teachers won't take it up to analyse in depth independently and perhaps what they were indicated by their feedback is that a staff meeting, or specific time set aside to analyse the data would be of value to them.

Our theme song this was another opportunity to connect as community and celebrate VOICE. We adapted Beatbuds song- I have a voice. [Link to song and student reflections.](#)

We developed a consistent understanding of Accountable Talk (Resnick et al, 2018) – accountable to community, reasoning, and knowledge. Staff committed to this strategy embedding this practice in their classes, raising expectations and scaffolding learners to create deeper conversations in the classroom. Staff were also expected to be accountable in discussions including learning design and student progress.

We continued to revise and develop understanding of the learning process and its connection to our learning design-
1. Acquisition- acquire new learning- content, skills and understanding.

2. Consolidation- learning takes time, time is required to actively process CSU
3. Storage- effective acquisition and consolidation leads to storage. Internalized and can be used critically, extending, applying in transfer,
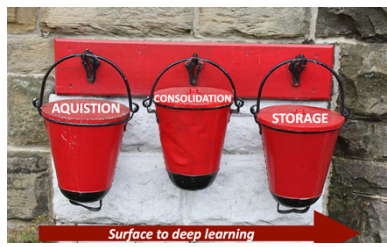
- Implementation of "I know my class" survey twice throughout the year.
- Goal setting and strategies used to achieve goals.
- Improvement tracked and evidenced from survey to survey.
- Clear trends highlighted.
- Teacher reflection for improvement.

One powerful tool we continued to utilise to help develop skills and amplify voice was the Quaglia iKnow survey. This allowed classes to set class skill goals and monitor progress through their named strategies. It also allowed the school to continue to track areas that may need to become a future focus or explored as strengths and areas of growth. The achievements were:

There was opportunity in 2023 to begin to align key elements of voice to the Australian Curriculum - General Capabilities.

We ensured our new students and Preps understood the core elements in the definition of voice through songs, literature and activities.

Throughout 2023, all grades were encouraged to understand how their brain works, so they could develop resilience and a growth mindset in their learning. Some great resources used were- Your Fantastic Elastic Brain by [Sarah Ponce](#), [JoAnn Deak](#), My Brain Is Magic written by Prasha Sooful and illustrated by Geeta Ladi, 'Dear You, Love From Your Brain!'. A YouTube clip on how neutrons connect, brain challenges.

Our GA Café have become a regular way of gathering whole school voice on school goals, areas of concerns and ideas for future direction. To ensure the authenticity and specificity of these sessions, each class gathers prior to the meeting to discuss the topics on the agenda. From there representatives come with their class voice on paper, or devices. The preparations which every student brings to the Café is indicative of the value placed on this opportunity by all.

Example Café and prompts discussed in class and shared at Cafe

System data from students showed strong connection to VOICE.

Given the strong and longstanding connections that exist within our community, voice underpinned the opportunities sought as part of our process of reviewing and updating our school branding. As a core value, leadership strategically mapped opportunities to engage our community ensuring voice's prominence in design of the new logo for GA and uniform changes.
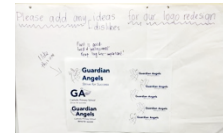
As a staff we took time to understand engagement and challenge. We continued to engage in professional develop through professional reading and discussion. Some core readings were:

- Engagement by design - Fisher Frey and Quaglia (2017)
- Challenge readings- The Neuroscience Behind Productive Struggle (2020)
- Student Engagement by Amy Berry (2022)
- School examples of VOICE from "Bright Spots" Quaglia Site
- Article- 10 Obstacles
- Challenge – 4C's for better engagement Fisher, Fret and Gonzalez (2023)
- Inclusive Strategies to Support Student Voice (2023)

References:

Berry, A. E. (2022). *Reimagining student engagement: from disrupting to driving*. Corwin.

Fisher, Hattie and Frey (2018) *Developing Assessment-Capable Visible Learners, grades K-12: maximising skill, will and thrill,* Corwin

Resnick L.B., Asterhan C.S.C, and Clarke S.N. (2018) *Accountable Talk: instructional dialogue that builds the mind* UNESCO International Bureau of Education

Data Analysis

Latest iKnow Survey: It was pleasing to see growth many areas in our 2023 data from 2022. There were some areas that decreased but these could be understood with a few changes with classes/teachers, being a disruptive factor to the continuity of growth.

2023 DATA		2022 DATA	
Question	Total in Agreement	Question	Total in Agreement
1. I use my imagination in class.	67.6%	1. I use my imagination in class.	62.6%
2. I feel comfortable asking questions in this class.	56.7%	2. I feel comfortable asking questions in this class.	47.5%
3. I give up when I do not understand something.	4.3%	3. I give up when I do not understand something.	1.4%
4. I share my ideas in this class.	51.9%	4. I share my ideas in this class.	37.8%
5. I learn from my mistakes.	82.9%	5. I learn from my mistakes.	78.8%
6. I ask my teacher for help when I do not understand something.	72.4%	6. I ask my teacher for help when I do not understand something.	63.6%
7. I listen to other students' ideas and opinions.	90.5%	7. I listen to other students' ideas and opinions.	92.0%
8. It helps me learn when I work with other students.	55.7%	8. It helps me learn when I work with other students.	52.0%
9. It is my responsibility to do my best in this class.	93.3%	9. It is my responsibility to do my best in this class.	95.4%
10. I am bored in this class.	9.5%	10. I am bored in this class.	3.6%
11. I am excited to be a student in this class.	78.5%	11. I am excited to be a student in this class.	81.4%
12. I give my best effort in this class.	85.2%	12. I give my best effort in this class.	88.2%
13. The work in this class is easy for me.	21.4%	13. The work in this class is easy for me.	9.6%
14. Students in this class listen to me.	40.0%	14. Students in this class listen to me.	39.8%
15. We use technology (computers, handheld devices, etc.) to help us learn in this class.	73.8%	15. We use technology (computers, handheld devices, etc.) to help us learn in this class.	85.3%
16. What I am learning in this class helps me outside of school.	65.7%	16. What I am learning in this class helps me outside of school.	56.0%
17. I learn things that interest me in this class.	68.6%	17. I learn things that interest me in this class.	61.4%
18. Other students' behaviour in this class makes it hard for me to learn.	30.6%	18. Other students' behaviour in this class makes it hard for me to learn.	33.8%
19. Homework in this class helps me learn.	55.9%	19. Homework in this class helps me learn.	59.8%
20. My teacher cares about me.	92.1%	20. My teacher cares about me.	89.0%
21. My teacher encourages students to work together.	67.6%	21. My teacher encourages students to work together.	69.1%
22. My teacher learns from students.	55.4%	22. My teacher learns from students.	45.9%
23. My teacher treats students fairly.	88.2%	23. My teacher treats students fairly.	81.0%
24. My teacher makes learning fun.	68.9%	24. My teacher makes learning fun.	72.9%
25. My teacher wants me to be successful.	96.9%	25. My teacher wants me to be successful.	92.8%
26. My teacher encourages me to be creative.	80.0%	26. My teacher encourages me to be creative.	75.7%
27. My teacher listens to my ideas.	87.2%	27. My teacher listens to my ideas.	88.5%