



ReConnectEd

STUDENT VOICE CASE STUDY GUARDIAN ANGELS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Guardian Angels Catholic Primary School is situated in Ashmore on the Gold Coast in Queensland. The school has a population of over 780 students.

With a change in leadership, 2021 was the first year that student voice was investigated by staff, students, and the community. We entered our second year with the Student Voice Project in 2022, building on the strong foundations of clarity of definition. There were two staff members initially involved in the student voice project, which was conducted with Brisbane Catholic Education partnering with the Quaglia Institute, and the team expanded to involve a core collaborative of six teachers at Guardian Angels (GA) to support systems, processes and structure to ensure 'Voice' is a way of operation at the school.

Purpose

Our goal in 2021 was to ensure there was a common understanding of voice with students, parents, and staff. We also wanted to identify areas within this where our students needed to develop further understanding. We wanted voice in the school to be a way of being.

We defined voice as:

- Sharing thoughts, ideas, and opinions that are genuine in an environment underpinned by trust and respect.
- Offering realistic suggestions and expectations for the good of the whole.
- Accepting responsibility for not only what you say but what needs to be done.

Opportunities to investigate skills and strategies to support voice were implemented from the data gained from the *iKnow Survey*.

There was an alignment of key school documents to embed student voice eg. Student Behaviour Support Plan, Annual Plans, where a GA learner was defined.

Our goal in 2022 was to deepen voice with students, parents, and staff as a way of operating at GA. We also wanted to identify skills that our students needed to develop further to support authentic voice within the school. A strong connection was linked to GA High Impact practices, which aligned seamlessly with core visible learning practices.

Background Analysis

Key documents and processes were reviewed during 2021. This provided an opportunity to clearly name student voice as a part of our way of operating at Guardian Angels.

Clear communication with all stakeholders was a priority. Clarity around key elements was a continual reference throughout the year: at parent/staff and student meetings, in newsletters, on social media and in professional development.

The use of the iKnow survey allowed teachers and students key skill areas to focus on and develop. Teaching these skills allowed richness in authentic voice and ownership.

In 2022, our defined statement of a 'GA Learner' and components of our behavioural support plan clearly linked the conceptual elements of voice into our ways of working.

Our named GA Learner elements:

A Guardian Angels Learner

- is able to talk specifically about their learning.
 - They are aware of their current level of understanding in a learning area.
 - They understand their learning path and are confident enough to take on the challenge.
 - They can select tools and resources to guide their learning.
 - knows their voice is valued and expected (*sharing ideas and opinions, for the good of the whole and follow through with actions*)
- has a growth mindset and uses feedback to improve and progress
- is an engaged, challenged, curious and an active participant in their learning
- shares how they use the GA Learning Powers and Qualities of Angels to support their learning and play



These qualities promote our students to be assessment capable learners
† At Guardian Angels we used evidenced based practises to maximise impact with student achievement, engagement, and wellbeing.

Examples of student understanding of learning goals:



Focused communication with all stakeholders continued, as did referencing Student Voice through goals, professional development, communication pathways and community events.

The school clearly defined core high-impact practices, which are evidence-based, to provide clarity about our consistent way of operating within the school. A resource was developed to clearly define and support teachers, and induct new staff members.

We continued to seek to see GA life through a student's perspective in order to refine our practices, gain perspective and celebrate.

Continued use of the *iKnow* survey allowed teachers and students to define key skill areas to focus on and develop. Teaching these skills allowed richness in authentic voice and ownership. The process was refined in 2022 and there was opportunity to link to build key focus skills in planning. Short cycle review process enabled GA to close the loop and empower students to know their impact/progress with focus goals. It was linked to class goal setting as a focus.

Our journey

In 2021, we looked at ways to promote an understanding of Student Voice:

1. A staff focus was linked to school goals of *Assessment Capable Learners* and a *Cohesive and Collective Professional Learning Culture*:

- Embedded in definition as a learner at GA
- Instructional Strategies
- Feedback

2. Student understanding was promoted as part of our GA Learner. The definition was a focus as part of *WALKING the GA WAY*. Key songs, literature and activities were used to promote key elements:

Picture Book: Cay and Adlee Find Their Voice by Cali and Russ Quaglia:

- *The world is a noisy place. It's full of voices, but what are they all for? How are they different, and how do people use their voices to be heard? We all have an important voice. What kind of voice do you have*

Picture Book: Say Something by Peter H Reynolds:

- *Discuss the many ways that a single voice can make a difference. We can say something with our actions, our words, and our voices.*

Song: I Have a Voice by the Beat Buds. Classes identified the key elements to discover:

- *Everybody has a voice and the ability to use their voice to make a difference in the world.*
- *No matter if my voice is small or loud, I can make a difference.*
- *Find what you believe in, share what you have to say, your voice can make a difference.*
- *I have a voice and the power to speak.*
- *One voice has power and when our voices unite, we create a force like a meteorite.*
- *Let's make some noise, let's change the world with our choice.*
- *Picture Book: The Girl Who Never Made Mistakes by Mark Prett. Subject: Growth mindset/fixed mindset*
- *Link to school theme song for the year 'Live Our Story'*

3. Assemblies, gatherings, newsletters, and social media were all mediums used to reinforce and promote voice at GA. There was space in the library for focused display messages.

- We also wanted to identify areas within this where our students needed to develop further understanding. We wanted voice in the school to be a way of being. The *iKnow my class survey* was used and linked to *GLOWS* and *GROWS* within each room.
- Staff had time to unpack areas and identify strengths, areas for development and wonderings with their students. Students elaborated further in class discussion for clarification. These were used as areas of focus in Term 2/3. The *iKnow survey* is something we are looking to continue each semester.



We also took time to look at authentic opportunities to use voice when ideas or problems arise:

- Learning Affirmations and school feedback with Carter Conversations around the school to get input, ideas, and actionable ways to build our school
- Library Review and future planning Café
- Suggestion box: follow through where the mantra *Listen, Learn, Lead: Using Your Voice* was at the forefront

In 2022, we looked at ways to continue to embed voice in GA language, processes and practices: We continued references to our defined GA Learner. This was promoted at assemblies, newsletters, in classrooms, and named in student diaries. Our definition clearly names what is expected of a learner at GA.

We continued to emphasise the core elements in the definition. Key songs, literature and activities continued to be a powerful way to promote key elements. In addition to those mentioned above, we used:

- *Maybe* by Kobi Yamada: A Story About the Endless Potential in All of Us.
- *Be You* by Peter H Reynolds: a celebration of individuality, persistence and staying true to YOU!

- The Magnificent Thing by Ashley Spires: good options for dealing honestly with feelings, while at the same time reassuring children that it's okay to make mistakes.
- Decibella by Julia Cook: gives children a fun to learn to be better communicators with the importance in using different volumes of their voice in different situations.
- The Invisible Boy by Trudy Ludwig: teaches how small acts of kindness can help children feel included and allow them to flourish.
- Perfectly Norman by Tom Percival: about embracing and celebrating what makes you unique.
- Clear links to GA Pedagogical Practices. Time was invested to unpack WHY, HOW and WHAT of these practices in our context.
- Link to school theme song for the year 'Shine Your Way' by Owl City and key elements of our theme 'Lights on @GA'

LIGHTS ON @GA

- 1** We are all unique and all have gifts that can make a difference in our world
- 2** We are all shining to our individual potential
- 3** We Promote ownership, opportunity and celebrate success

Sample of key documents

The image displays a collection of educational materials. On the left is a large blue poster for 'PRACTICE 1 WALK' with the text 'WE RESPECT, ACT RESPONSIBLY, LEARN TO BE BRAVE, KEEP SAFE'. To its right is a 'Teacher Toolbox' section with icons for 'WALK THE GA WAY' and 'ZONES OF REGULATION'. Below this is a 'GA WALK WHEEL' diagram. At the bottom right is another 'UNIVERSAL PRACTICES' poster featuring a 'WALK' icon. The documents contain various charts, lists, and diagrams related to school behavior and social skills.

Sample of key documents

PRACTICE 3A

LEARNING INTENTIONS

USING LEARNING INTENTIONS AND SUCCESS CRITERIA CAN HELP TEACHERS ENSURE THAT THEIR ACTIVITIES ALIGN WITH WHAT THEY WANT STUDENTS TO KNOW.



WHY – OUR BELIEFS

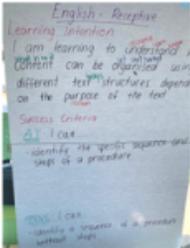
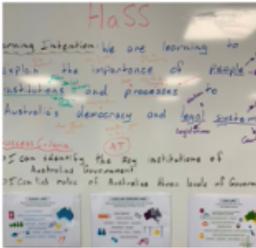
- Learning Intentions give students clear direction and understanding of the learning- it promotes ownership.
- Learning Intentions provide teachers with direction for explicit teaching. They enable teachers to plan and implement lessons with greater clarity.
- Research shows that the impact of using 'Learning Intentions' is 0.89 effect size- double the growth within a year.

HOW - OUR PRINCIPLES

- Learning Intentions are constructed from the Australian Curriculum Achievement Standards. In Prep, simplified language is used to enable students to access the learning intention.
- Learning Intentions are deconstructed with the children- verbs, concepts, skills
- Learning Intentions are visible, interactive and referenced during learning opportunities
- The purpose of the Learning Intention is communicated
- Using the stem, "We are learning to..." to begin a learning intention indicates to students that we value learning collaboratively and that we all are responsible for learning.

WHAT- OUR PRACTICES

- Learning Intentions are used by all GA teachers.
- Time is devoted to teaching, unpacking and referencing Learning Intentions. Handwritten learning intentions/ unpacking has a more powerful connection to the learning for the student.
- Students refer to Learning Intentions and understand what they are learning and why.
- Learning Intentions can be lesson or unit specific.
- Learning intentions are visible and continually used in the classroom to support learning. Consideration of the text size is essential as students use the classroom space as the '3rd teacher'.



VISIBLE, UNPACKED VOCABULARY



"SHARING LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT INTENTIONS IS A POWERFUL WAY FOR TEACHERS TO IMPROVE STUDENT LEARNING. THEY PROVIDE A FOCUS FOR AND CLARITY OF THE KNOWLEDGE, UNDERSTANDING AND SKILLS STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO DEVELOP AS A RESULT OF TEACHING AND LEARNING."

An opportunity to shadow students to look, ascertain and view processes from their perspective was begun in 2022. Reflections were recorded and shared: an example is below:

START OF THE DAY

<p style="text-align: center; background-color: #00728f; color: white; padding: 5px;">OBSERVED</p> <p>Amira arrived at school right on the bell. Other students were outside talking and setting up for at least 10 minutes. When Amira came in, she retrieved her pencil case straight away. We got to choose where we sat, and Amira and her friends went to the back high table. They said they love this table as it is high, and you can see everything. Amira started a conversation about Spider Man as she really likes the actor that plays the character.</p>	<p style="text-align: center; background-color: #00728f; color: white; padding: 5px;">WONDER</p> <p>I wonder if Amira was talkative at the start of the day because unlike the other students she always arrives just on the bell. The other students have time to socialise and then turn their focus to the start of the day activities.</p> <p>I wonder if teachers consider the affect of student arrival time. One girl said she arrives at 7.30am which seems like a long time to be at school waiting for the start of the day.</p>
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MUNCH AND CRUNCH

<p style="text-align: center; background-color: #00728f; color: white; padding: 5px;">OBSERVED</p> <p>We all went to our bags to get out our munch and crunch. I was talking to some girls while I was outside and when I came in, I was asked to sit by the door for "distracting others". The teacher read out loud "Wonder to the class." It was hard for me to engage being so far away from the group and I noticed several students disengaged with the story after 5 minutes also sitting far away from the group. We sat on the floor for a good 20+ minutes and my legs and neck started to hurt. The longer we sat the more students started to fidget and disengage.</p>	<p style="text-align: center; background-color: #00728f; color: white; padding: 5px;">WONDER</p> <p>I wonder if teachers deliver consequences based on what one student has said without determining the full situation.</p> <p>I wonder if teachers consider if the consequences are then assisting students to reengage or learn. I was sitting by the door therefore the temptation to disengage was high.</p> <p>I wonder if teachers consider what it is like to sit on the floor for 20 minutes or more.</p> <p>I wonder if teachers observe disengagement and change lessons to compensate accordingly.</p>
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FIRST BREAK

OBSERVED

We first went to the toilet but had to wait as there were only 3 toilets with doors that shut and there was 4 of us.

We sat on the floor to eat our lunch near the girls' toilets. We talked about food and animals and headed to the library to play on the big whiteboard. We draw different images commenting on them and I suggested we write a story based on the images.

I mentioned that we had just learnt about onomatopoeia and we came up with some of these words to add to our story.

WONDER

I wonder about the peer influence on food. I had porridge and was the odd one out and students commented on my lunch. I wonder how a nervous student would react to comments about their lunch being weird or gross.

I wonder if teachers on duty engage with students in meaningful ways that assist students to transfer learning to their play/socialising situations.

ENGLISH ROTATION 2

OBSERVED

We moved to our next rotation which was in a different room with a school officer. We were told a definition of onomatopoeia and for different scenarios had to create sounds that might go with it. For example, "a door closing" to which Amira wrote "Bang". Some students had difficulty at first using the i-pad toolbar. Some students finished early and chatted about the noises and some students rushed at the end at

WONDER

Moving groups gave us a quick minute break in which to have a conversation and stretch our legs. I wonder if teachers consider the needs of students regarding movement and breaks.

Again, I wonder if we are getting the most out of the session if we don't allow students opportunities to transfer the learning.

We continued to refine our process for developing student skills. We closed the gap this year by building in reflection on how the classes achieved their goals and teachers linking skill needs within their planning.

Each term we used voice when ideas or problems arose, also to give input into school goals and needs from the students. These were really taken up by all classes as they had class meetings prior and representatives came with their class voice on paper, and using technology.



Goals created by students upon reflection of their results from "I know my class" survey.

Class	Goal	Timeframe	Review
4Q	Reduce distractions within the class.	1-3 weeks	Term 4 Week 5
4B	Improve engagement with homework.	1-4 weeks	Term 4 Week 5
4M	Improve engagement with homework.	1-4 weeks	Term 4 Week 5
4W	Improve engagement with hands on tasks.	1-4 weeks	Term 4 Week 5

Class	Goal	Timeframe	Review
5Q	Connect our learning to the real world.	1-3 weeks	Term 4 Week 4
5B	Connect our learning to the real world.	1-3 weeks	Term 4 Week 4
5M	Improve our ability to share our ideas.	1-3 weeks	Term 4 Week 4
5W	Improve our ability to listen to each other.	1-3 weeks	Term 4 Week 4

Our Class Goal
(As decided by the students of 6Q)
is to decrease the level of distractions in our class!

How: we will create a list of what is acceptable behaviour at tables in the class and what is deemed as distracting behaviours. We will agree on consequences of repeated distracting behaviours. Example: 3 reminders and you have a set seating space in the room or sit on your own.

Time Length: Week 1 - create agreement. Weeks 1-4 implement and adhere to agreement.

Reflection: In week 5 we will discuss as a class if distractions have reduced.

Based on our analysis of the *iKnow Survey Data* from 2021 and 2022 (see details on the next page), we continue our journey to promote student voice as a way of being at GA in 2023. Strategic action planning allows us to be intentional through connecting direction, building skills and strategies to develop rigour and engagement for student voice at Guardian Angels. Over our journey we have noticed how empowering voice within our community is making a significant difference to driving learning and a community of learners that are striving to contribute actively to make a difference.

2021

Student Perceptions of the Course Overall

The course itself should be inspiring and relevant to students. Teachers can engage students by ensuring that course content is interesting and relates to students' everyday lives.

Question	Total in Agreement
13. The work in this class is easy for me.	14.1%
14. Students in this class listen to me.	30.5%
15. We use technology (computers, handheld devices, etc.) to help us learn in this class.	73.7%
16. What I am learning in this class helps me outside of school.	61.0%
17. I learn things that interest me in this class.	54.4%
18. Other students' behaviour in this class makes it hard for me to learn.	24.2%
19. Homework in this class helps me learn.	49.1%

Student Perceptions of Oneself in the Learning Process

Students should see themselves as active participants in the learning process. By creating an environment that encourages participation, collaboration, and exploration, teachers have the ability to engage students in meaningful ways.

Question	Total in Agreement
1. I use my imagination in class.	60.4%
2. I feel comfortable asking questions in this class.	42.8%
3. I give up when I do not understand something.	1.1%
4. I share my ideas in this class.	31.6%
5. I learn from my mistakes.	82.7%
6. I ask my teacher for help when I do not understand something.	62.9%
7. I listen to other students' ideas and opinions.	88.8%
8. It helps me learn when I work with other students.	48.8%
9. It is my responsibility to do my best in this class.	93.3%
10. I am bored in this class.	5.6%
11. I am excited to be a student in this class.	81.3%
12. I give my best effort in this class.	86.0%

Student Perceptions of the Teacher and Instruction

A teacher's level of engagement in class directly impacts students. By building positive relationships with students, designing lessons that afford students time to process and solve problems, and providing regular feedback to students, teachers can increase student engagement.

Question	Total in Agreement
20. My teacher cares about me.	85.6%
21. My teacher encourages students to work together.	58.1%
22. My teacher learns from students.	48.9%
23. My teacher treats students fairly.	77.5%
24. My teacher makes learning fun.	64.6%
25. My teacher wants me to be successful.	93.7%
26. My teacher encourages me to be creative.	74.4%
27. My teacher listens to my ideas.	73.9%

2022

In 2022, using the *iKnow Survey*, we saw that most areas increased from 2021 data except for questions 4, 10, and 14:

Student Perceptions of the Course Overall

The course itself should be inspiring and relevant to students. Teachers can engage students by ensuring that course content is interesting and relates to students' everyday lives.

Question	Total in Agreement
13. The work in this class is easy for me.	9.6%
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.	85.3%
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.	61.4%
18. Other students' behaviour in this class makes it hard for me to learn.	30.6%
19. Homework in this class helps me learn.	55.9%

Student Perceptions of the Teacher and Instruction

A teacher's level of engagement in class directly impacts students. By building positive relationships with students, designing lessons that afford students time to process and solve problems, and providing regular feedback to students, teachers can increase student engagement.

Question	Total in Agreement
20. My teacher cares about me.	92.1%
21. My teacher encourages students to work together.	67.6%
22. My teacher learns from students.	55.4%
23. My teacher treats students fairly.	88.2%
24. My teacher makes learning fun.	68.9%
25. My teacher wants me to be successful.	96.9%
26. My teacher encourages me to be creative.	80.0%
27. My teacher listens to my ideas.	87.2%

Student Perceptions of Oneself in the Learning Process

Students should see themselves as active participants in the learning process. By creating an environment that encourages participation, collaboration, and exploration, teachers have the ability to engage students in meaningful ways.

Question	Total in Agreement
1. I use my imagination in class.	62.6%
2. I feel comfortable asking questions in this class.	47.5%
3. I give up when I do not understand something.	1.4%
4. I share my ideas in this class.	37.8%
5. I learn from my mistakes.	78.8%
6. I ask my teacher for help when I do not understand something.	63.6%
7. I listen to other students' ideas and opinions.	92.0%
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.	95.4%
10. I am bored in this class.	3.6%
11. I am excited to be a student in this class.	81.4%
12. I give my best effort in this class.	88.2%

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