



Kula Elementary has been a Quaglia Student Voice School of Action since 2022 and has been diligently working to implement Student Voice & Aspirations as part of our way of being at school. Over time we have increased opportunities for all staff to listen to, learn from, and lead with students as important partners in our quest to always be improving our school. This has resulted in many changes at our school, including more student voice and choice in the learning experience across all grade levels, meaningfully connecting our Student Voice & Aspirations work with our efforts to embrace the HA Framework, and significantly increasing student leadership opportunities.

For our 2024-25 Case Study, we would like to focus on one example of how Student Voice as part of the Kula way of being has evolved over time to result in a major improvement to our school campus that has created a great sense of accomplishment for all staff and students. Here is our story of how Student Voice built a playground!

The Problem

During the 2021-22 school year, the School Safety Committee and School Leaders identified that the playground equipment at Kula Elementary was quite broken down and causing safety concerns for students. In August of 2022, at the start of a new school year, staff discussed that the slide and bridge were broken, and the swings had been removed. District Administrative Services had been to the school and taken pictures of the broken equipment, but there was no solution yet in sight.

Students Taking Action!

Since the start of the 2022 school year, students had been engaging in lessons and conversations about the importance of Student Voice, based on the following definition:

Student Voice is

1. Sharing thoughts and opinions in an environment underpinned by trust and respect.
2. Offering realistic suggestions for the good of the whole.
3. Accepting responsibility for not only what is said but also what needs to be done.

Putting this learning into action, in January 2023 fourth grade students wrote and sent a letter to district and state leaders about the playground equipment issue and related safety concerns.

To Whom It May Concern,

Imagine a school with a broken playground. Well unfortunately that is the reality at Kula Elementary School. Since we were in 2nd Grade parts of our playground have been off limits.

The bridge to get from one side to another has a hole, which is unsafe. The slides are also closed because they have cracks and holes that could cut or hurt us.

Our playground has yellow caution tape which makes it look not interesting and uninviting. We only have one slide and only one person can go down at a time. We have 80 kids at recess waiting for a turn! Guess what! Our swings are broken as well, it's like the playground doesn't even exist. Can you please help us get a new playground? The kids at Kula School would be so happy to have somewhere fun to play again for years to come.

Did you know that kids are 5x as likely to be a healthy weight if they have a playground nearby? Thank you for a moment of your time, we really need this!

From,

The 4th Grade Students in B3 on behalf of all the students and teachers at Kula School.

It is hard for students (and adults!) to be patient, so in February, our student council decided to add to the letter that had been sent by creating a "Save Our Playground Video" that was also sent to district and state leaders. It was exciting to watch students move from simply complaining about the playground situation to brainstorming what it would take to fix the problem and discussing actions they could take to be part of the solution.

A design was eventually finalized, based on student input, and construction began. It was an exciting time for students to watch the new playground being built, knowing they had been instrumental in making this happen.

The next step was to engage students in the process of developing new playground rules and creating a shared sense of ownership for behavior expectations, and taking collective responsibility for taking care of the new playground. This was quite the process. It would have been easier for staff to simply make and enforce new rules, but as we continued to embrace Student Voice & Aspirations work, we have come to deeply believe that working in partnership with students creates meaningful experiences for students and a true shared responsibility for the health of our school community. The following is an example of the rules suggested by one class:

Play ground rules Inbox x

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to 1/1

1. Stay away from **ORANGE** cones DANGER !!
2. No bouncing on the spider web 🕸
3. Listen to supervisors 🙋
4. Push swings from oceanside 🌊
5. Wait in line for the swings by the **GREEN** pole.
6. Stay off the skeleton 🦴
7. Remember you are the best 4th grade teacher EVER !!!!!!!
8. LOVE ❤️❤️❤️

Eventually, the following set of rules was approved by students and staff with an intentional focus on creating a space where all students know they belong, can feel safe, and have fun during recess while also respecting and taking care of the new equipment we are so lucky to have been given.

SMALL PLAYGROUND

Turf

- You can run on the turf, but stay at least an arm's length away from the playground equipment.
- Keep your shoes on at all times.
- No spitting on the turf—let's keep it clean!
- No jackets or water bottles on the turf.
- Tag must be played **OUTSIDE** of the playground area.
- No climbing the green poles.

DOWN ONLY ZONES

Slide

- Only one person at a time.
- No climbing up the slide.
- Wait till the person who just slid clears the bottom, then the next person can slide down.

Platform

- Can be used to go up and down.
- No hanging out ON & UNDER the platform.

UP ONLY ZONES

Rope Ladders, Steps & Metal Rings

- One person at a time.
- Once you are on the upper platform, no going down.

SPINNER

- May fit as many people that the Orange / Black area may allow. Must stay seated & keep feet inside while Spinner is spinning.
- No sitting on the metal bar.
- Count to 20 Kula Cougars to take turns (say "one Kula Cougar, two Kula Cougars...").
- Everyone else needs to wait patiently by cone.

Update: 3/3/25, 1:20 PM



BIG PLAYGROUND

Turf

- You can run on the turf, but stay at least an arm's length away from the playground equipment.
- Keep your shoes on at all times.
- No spitting on the turf—let's keep it clean!
- No jackets or water bottles on the turf.
- Tag must be played **OUTSIDE** of the playground area.

Swings

- Only 2 people max on a swing at a time & pushing.
- Count to 20 Kula Cougars to take turns (say "one Kula Cougar, two Kula Cougars...").
- Don't stand or climb on the green poles.
- Sit up & hold on to rope or seat to protect yourself. No laying down!
- No jumping off the swings—stay safe!
- Only push from the ocean-side.
- When pushing, only push the seat, not the ropes.
- Keep clear of the mountain-side coned area.
- Don't lay underneath the swings.

Bridge

- Only 8 people on the bridge at once.
- Don't hang from the ropes.
- Don't "launch" each other by jumping up and down.
- Don't lay under the bridge.

Spider Web

- Stay off the outer poles (the skeleton).
- Don't hang upside down—it's not safe.
- No jumping off the web.

Slide

- You can climb up or slide down—both are okay!
- You can go with others, but be careful not to bump.
- If someone is climbing up, wait until they're done before sliding down.
- KNOW YOUR LIMITS!! If you cannot reach the top yet, please do not use the slide.

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We also saw benefits from this process of engaging students in establishing rules that translate from the playground into classrooms. Our Student Voice Survey results showed a 13.7% gain from 2022 to 2024 on the statement “Students help make classroom rules.” 94.5% of students also report that they believe it is important to follow rules. It is interesting how rules become a very different thing when students are involved in creating them.

Typically, it is teachers who explain and enforce new rules at school. But this was another great opportunity for students to use their voices, take action, and share in the responsibility of what it takes to not only create, but teach and enforce expectations. Students created videos that explained the new equipment and expected behavior to keep students safe and show respect and care for the new playground. These videos were shown on Morning Broadcast and discussed by all classes.



New Playground Opens!

In March 2025, the new playground finally opened to the delight of the entire Kula school community. Even though the students who had written the original letter and created the video advocating for a new playground had graduated from Kula and moved on to middle school, their legacy lives on, and current students continue to be inspired by those who took action and were an important part of making this happen. Many of those students have younger siblings who are currently attending Kula, and they were able to come check out the new playground, knowing they had used their voices to make a real difference.

What's Next?

This is just one of the MANY examples of how students have used their voices and taken action as important partners in making Kula the most amazing school it can possibly be. As we continue to grow Student Voice & Aspirations at our school, some of the areas we plan to focus on in the future include filtering more student voice strategies and practices into the learning experience in all classrooms schoolwide. We recognize that we have been highly successful in growing student leadership opportunities by redesigning the student council and opening up a variety of student committees. Any student who wants to be part of leadership can be. We want to extend this to a greater sense of belonging for all students, even if they don't choose to be part of student leadership, particularly in grades 3-5, where there seems to be a greater need for increased belonging for some. Our commitment to Student Voice is strong at Kula Elementary, and we will continue to grow in partnership with students.



Kula Elementary