

Guardian Angels Catholic Primary School

Student Voice Case Study 2021

Background

Guardian Angels Catholic Primary School is situated in Ashmore on the Gold Coast. With a change in leadership, 2021 was the first year that student voice was investigated by staff, students, and the community. The school has a population of over 780 students. There were two staff members involved in the student voice project with Brisbane Catholic Education, partnering with the Quaglia Institute.

Analysis

Key documents and processes were reviewed during 2021. This provided 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 meeting newsletters, social media, and professional development.

The use of the iKnow survey allowed teachers and students to gather data on areas of strength as well as assess key skill areas to focus on. Teaching these skills allowed richness in authentic voice and ownership.



Purpose

Our goal in 2021 was to ensure there was a collective understanding of voice with students, parents, and staff. We also wanted to identify areas within this that our students needed to develop further understanding. We want 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 alignment of key school documents to embed student voice- e.g., Student Behaviour Support Plan, Annual Plans- where a GA learner was defined

Our journey

We looked at ways to promote an understanding with

- 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
- Student understanding promoted as part of our GA Learner. 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

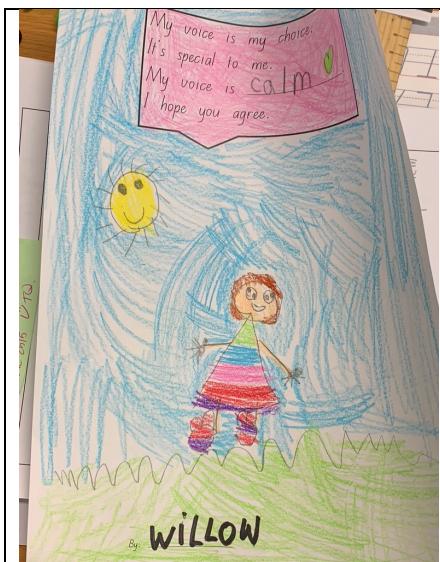
Discuss the many ways that a single voice can make a difference.

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.*



Interviews/Reflections

“As a teacher completing the I-Know survey and in particular hearing the discussion with students was a real learning curve. There were things I didn’t realise that my students enjoyed or found difficult. Naming these things and working on them helped us to develop a more collaborative learning atmosphere where voice was present in an

- *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”

Assemblies, gatherings, newsletter, and social media were all mediums used to reinforce and promote voice at GA. Space in the library for focused display message. ([Link to performance](#))

We also wanted to identify areas within this that our students needed to develop further understanding. We want 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. Student elaborated further in class discussion for clarification. These were used as areas of focus in Term 2/3 and to collaboratively develop next practises as a class. 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.

Data Analysis

Latest iKnow Survey

Gender		
	Count	Percent
Boy	147	49.2%
Girl	148	49.5%
Other	4	1.3%
Total	299	100.0%

Year		
	Count	Percent
3	110	36.8%
4	93	31.1%
5	96	32.1%
6	0	0.0%
Total	299	100.0%

I am taking some or all of this class online.		
	Count	Percent
Yes	36	12.0%
No	263	88.0%
Total	299	100.0%

authentic way. It started to become embedded as part of the culture rather than a one-off attempt or activity. We often referred to the chart and what we had voiced needed to be improved.”

Susan H - Yr4 Teacher

“We had to work on sharing our ideas and I think we have improved. We make sure everyone has an opinion and that they are not ignored. We started doing this thing where we talk to the person next to us and that person can share the idea if the other person doesn’t really want too. I do this for classmates that are not confident sharing.”

Jorja – Yr5

“I think students are sharing more. Our teacher had to learn to be more funner for us and now we do prodigy and timetables in fun ways.”

Charli Yr 3

“I learnt that my voice is important and can be used to stand up for myself, to bring happiness, to ask for help if I don’t understand. I am allowed to say no if I am uncomfortable or something doesn’t feel right. Sharing my voice at school has been helpful because if I kept it to myself, I wouldn’t get help or no one would support me.” Mia – Year 2 Student

“Teaching my class about using their voice to express their thoughts and ideas has been eye opening as an educator. It gave me an opportunity to see into their little minds and hear their worries, passions, opinions and beliefs. I saw the children who would normally sit back, speak up and grow in confidence. I have witnessed my students stand up for what they believe, challenge others if they don’t agree and express themselves openly, honestly and respectfully. It has also allowed me to reflect on my teaching and change to suit the needs and interests of my students.” Amy M – Year 2 Teacher

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	Gender	
		Male	Female
1. I use my imagination in class.	60.4%	58.1%	63.0%
2. I feel comfortable asking questions in this class.	42.8%	51.1%	34.3%
3. I give up when I do not understand something.	1.1%	0.7%	1.4%
4. I share my ideas in this class.	31.6%	39.7%	23.6%
5. I learn from my mistakes.	82.7%	76.4%	90.0%
6. I ask my teacher for help when I do not understand something.	62.9%	64.7%	61.6%
7. I listen to other students' ideas and opinions.	88.8%	85.1%	92.1%
8. It helps me learn when I work with other students.	48.8%	53.2%	43.6%
9. It is my responsibility to do my best in this class.	93.3%	92.9%	94.3%
10. I am bored in this class.	5.6%	8.5%	2.1%
11. I am excited to be a student in this class.	81.3%	77.7%	86.4%
12. I give my best effort in this class.	86.0%	82.4%	90.6%

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	Gender	
		Male	Female
13. The work in this class is easy for me.	14.1%	17.1%	10.7%
14. Students in this class listen to me.	30.5%	31.9%	29.3%
15. We use technology (computers, handheld devices, etc.) to help us learn in this class.	73.7%	73.8%	72.9%
16. What I am learning in this class helps me outside of school.	61.0%	61.5%	60.9%
17. I learn things that interest me in this class.	54.4%	58.2%	51.4%
18. Other students' behaviour in this class makes it hard for me to learn.	24.2%	25.5%	23.6%
19. Homework in this class helps me learn.	49.1%	46.8%	52.9%

Key areas of focus for Term 4 2021 from the data

There was a clear trend across all year levels regarding students' willingness to share ideas and ability to listen to each other. During discussion some of the main reasons for the low scores were:

- * Concerns others would copy their ideas.
- * Concerns what their peers would think of their ideas.
- * Not motivated to share as no one listens so what is the point.

Next practises were developed that focused on encouraging sharing and creating an environment where students felt comfortable to share. Some of the next practises included:

- * Discussions and videos outlining what is sharing and how to be an active listener
- * Strategies that encouraged diverse ways of sharing and listening skills such as “This or That” strategy, “Sticky note Storm” strategy and the “Sage and Scribe” strategy.
- * Games to practise active listening

We will continue to embed “voice” as part of our operational processes moving forward in 2022. We will ensure our language and practices have this at the forefront as an imperative. We will continue to really take time to develop children’s strategies and explicit teach these needs so that the power of voice at GA can be authentic and rich. GA will strive to value the perspectives and opinions of students, teachers and parents, and to act on them in a way that genuinely shapes learning and decision-making at the school.