

Voice is sharing thoughts and ideas in an environment underpinned by trust and respect, offering realistic suggestions for the good of the whole, and accepting responsibility for not only what is said but also what needs to be done.

The progression of almost 40 years of research and fieldwork on voice and aspirations has led to the School Voice Process which allows all stakeholders in the school community to develop their voices in a way in which it is heard, respected, and valued. There are three major components to the School Voice Process: Listen, Learn, and Lead.

Listen

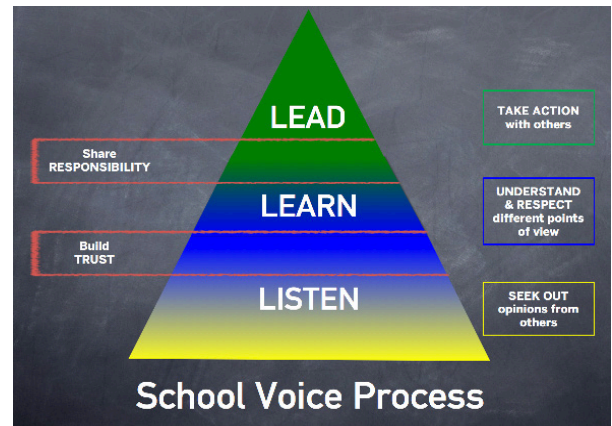
It is critical to understand that listening is not a passive act; it is about much more than hearing someone. Effective listening requires openness and a genuine interest in understanding the thoughts and ideas of others. It includes intentionally seeking out others—including those with opinions different from your own—to invite them to share their ideas. Listening also includes observing. Listening is about understanding what is (or is not) being said and seeing what is (or is not) happening. To utilize voice effectively, students and adults must master the art of listening in order to learn from others, both within and beyond the school walls.

Learn

The true value in listening to the voices of others is the opportunity and potential it presents to learn something new. Underlying the successful development of voice is a fundamental belief that there is something to be learned from the people around you, regardless of their position, age, or any other factor. As with listening, learning is not a passive activity but must be an intentional and regular part of an effort to grow effective school voice. When genuine listening and learning occur, trust and respect are established and relationships are strengthened.

Lead

The culminating element in the School Voice Process is Lead. Leading with voice is about using what has been learned through effective listening to bring about meaningful change in partnerships with others. A foundation of trust and respect, coupled with an understanding of the various voices within a school, sets the stage for turning a shared sense of responsibility into action. When the School Voice Process is optimized, all stakeholders share in the responsibility to continually improve the school community, value the voices of all, and establish a leadership model that capitalizes on the unique skills and talents of every person involved.



For information on how the Aspirations Framework can foster school voice, please see the [Aspirations Framework](#) and [The Power of Voice in Schools](#).