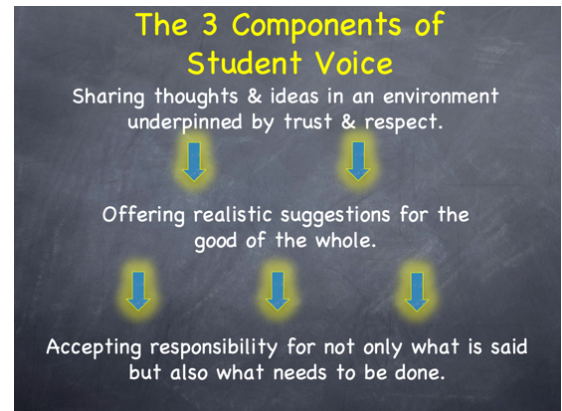


Parents have many opportunities to foster student voice. By genuinely listening to children's concerns and ideas, parents demonstrate that voice matters. In addition, parents can encourage students to be an active part of solutions rather than expecting others to act on their ideas. Student voice is an exciting opportunity for all children to be more engaged in their school and life decisions.

Student Voice is ...

- Productive, not complaining and demanding.
- Thoughtful, not self-serving.
- Active, not token or passive.



Understanding Student Voice

Consider the three components of student voice in the box at the top of this page and reflect on the following scenarios:

If your student does not understand a homework assignment, how could they use their voice to find a solution? HINT: *Just complaining is not the answer.*

If your student is frustrated with the lack of school clubs, how could they use their voice to make a difference? HINT: *Just telling the school to create more clubs is not the answer.*

If your student is concerned about an environmental issue, how could they use their voice to take action? HINT: *Just believing that this is an adult issue is not the answer.*

Supporting Student Voice

BE PATIENT: All students have a voice, but not everyone feels confident expressing their ideas. Create a variety of opportunities for your child to share their thoughts *and* be prepared to withhold judgment. Encourage your child in ways that reinforce self-confidence.

BE A ROLE MODEL: Ensure that your child sees you sharing your own ideas with other adults and offering suggestions. While students are familiar with adults telling them what to do, they do not always see parents using their voices with their own peers in solution-orientated ways.

BE COMFORTABLE WITH MISTAKES: Parents who support voice realize that some of their children's ideas and solutions may be different from their own. That is okay and even encouraged! It's also okay if your child's idea does not work out. Talk about what was learned. Remain open to the fact that children's suggestions can be better than adults' ideas, and celebrate when that happens!

BE AWARE OF VOICE OPPORTUNITIES: Search out opportunities for your child to use their voice. Discuss ongoing community or school concerns. Work together to find ways for students to share their ideas and solutions. Could a local committee benefit from the voices of younger community members? Is there a cause that your student is passionate about? How does your child think their voice can make a difference?