



Bedfordshire
county council

Student Voice

An portfolio of Student Voice support
throughout Bedfordshire



Copy right Hannah Mayston

What is Student Voice?

Student Voice is about empowering students, so they can have an active role and a direct impact within their education. Students have the opportunity to express their views and opinions on a range of topics, from the school environment to content of lessons and behaviour management strategies. This is not only a chance for the students to have their voices heard, but to work collaboratively with staff, and have the opportunity to action their views.

Student Voice has a high reputation within Bedfordshire, and has had a successful presence within the County over the past years. In many areas Student Voice is seen as a key drive for school improvement, with the DCSF stating that learning conversations between students and staff are a key strand for school improvement. The Every Child Matters paper sees student participation as:

'Asking Children and Young People what works, what doesn't and what could be done better, and involving them on an on going basis, in the design, delivery and evaluation of services. Engaging Children and Young People in this way gives them the opportunity to make a positive contribution to their communities.'

What can Student Voice achieve?

Student Voice can have an immense positive impact for students, staff, teaching and learning. Student Voice helps to promote and develop good and effective working relationships between students and staff. Student voice is often a big eye-opener for students and staff, who begin to develop greater respect and relationships with each other after seeing things from a different perspective. Student voice can be used as a tool for improving teaching and learning; in many instances students have innovative and exciting ways in which to improve aspects of their lessons and engage students. The different initiatives help students to take ownership of part of their school, and for some acts as somewhere for them to make a difference and turn their negative views of school to positives.

Why does it matter?

The benefits for young people participating in student voice are numerous. Students not only feel valued, but it also allows them to develop a number of personal skills (team work, ability to compromise etc) and qualities (confidence, maturity, empathy etc), which are highly valued in the workplace and further education. The benefits are not exclusive to students; by students and staff working in collaboration there is the opportunity for great progress and improvement within the school. Relationships would not only be improved in and out of the classroom, but staff would discover how best and more effectively to personalise the learning for their students.

How can Student Voice be used as part of school improvement?

Within Bedfordshire and the Local Authority, student voice is seen as a key feature of school improvement. Many of the initiatives involve students observing aspects of their school, and feeding back their results in view of making changes and improvements. Students and staff also work collaboratively for a number of these initiatives. Aspects of teaching and learning are often identified by students and staff as needing improvement, and this is often the focus of many initiatives.

'It's great to have students involved in all aspects of school life.'

'Student Voice is an amazing initiative as students feel more respected because they're listened to.'

'Improvements can be made to the school with teacher and pupil collaboration, meaning students feel their views are taken onboard and acted upon'

Student Voice Initiatives

There are a number of different student voice initiatives which young people have the opportunity to be involved with. It is important to note however that the limitations of student involvement are not exclusive to the ones identified in this document. The training that has been developed, takes into account Bedfordshire's Children Young People's Participation Principles:

- Children, young people and adults will work together
- Children and young people can decide what they become involved in - nothing is off limits
- Children and young people will be treated in an open honest, sensitive and valued way
- All children and young people should have the same opportunity to become involved
- Children and young people are encouraged to develop their ideas, participate and take action
- Organisations should be structured to allow children and young people to become involved in their work
- Children and young people will be involved and informed about all aspects of the work
- Children and young people will have their efforts recognised, celebrated and rewarded
- Children and young people are entitled to training and the support needed to make a positive contribution

All training has been developed and is delivered by Student Consultants for Children & Young People (SCCYP), and can be adapted to fit the needs of each individual school. SCCYP are employed by the Authority to work in all phases of Bedfordshire schools, and are traditionally taking a gap year between 6th form and university. As the Consultant's are closer in age and experiences of the pupils and students they are working with, they often encourage another strand of dialogue between pupils, students and staff in schools.

The Consultants have provided training in and out of County for a number of initiatives:

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The training is not exclusive to this list, and initiatives will be adapted to suit the needs of each individual school. The training allows schools to explore the possibilities that are available to the school, and learn about the national developments that the School Improvement Team drives and is involved in. In all cases schools will be in a position to make informed decisions about how they wish to develop Student Voice, and will have tools to make progress in their planning.

Body talk/Body confidence

This initiative aims to help young people build a positive self-esteem by understanding and dealing with feelings about physical appearance, in particular weight and shape. The workshop is designed to address aspects of the PSHE frame work for Key Stage 3 students but can be adapted for older students.

Buddies

As a school improvement team we have considerable experience of developing buddy systems for schools to address their particular needs. The role of Buddies within schools varies depending mainly upon the phase of the school, but in general they are there to support the students throughout the school day.

In Lower schools Buddies are generally more active within the playground, being seen as a 'friend' in the playground. These playground buddies help to create a happy atmosphere within the playground, by making sure everyone is involved, helping people who are upset, and in general supporting students throughout their school day. In these schools, playgrounds will often have Buddy stops or benches where students can go, knowing a Buddy will come and see them. Some of these students will also be trained in how to lead different activities, which help to include everyone in play.

Upper school Buddies are involved once again as a link within the playground, but also some 6th formers have been linked with individual classes as a Classroom Buddy. In this instance students provide guidance for the younger students throughout form or registration times. They are available to answer any worries or questions from a younger perspective, and offer guidance based on their own experiences within the school. The Classroom Buddies are often used to ease the transition period from Year 8 to Year 9.

Community Service Panel

The Community Service Panel is an initiative where students promote positive school behaviour through mediating with other students. These students then negotiate and set appropriate community service sanctions within the school. These sanctions are usually daily tasks within the school that other students can volunteer to participate in; for example, putting chairs out for assemblies or helping the teacher to tidy their room at the end of a lesson.

The Community Service Panel is aimed at reducing low level disruption in lessons, by making the students aware of their behaviour from a peer perspective. Many low level disruptions within the classroom are often not followed up, and instead a talkative student is just sent out of class, or is ignored. It is only when this type of disruption is repeated, that a student is referred to the panel. The panel's role is to use questions to gain an understanding of why the student has been referred, and the reasoning behind their behaviour. This aims for the referred student to analyse their own behaviour and set targets for themselves of how to behave in a positive way; if a student can identify their own triggers to certain behaviours, they will be more likely to avoid it and not continue the negative behaviour.

The training offers students the opportunity to develop their teamwork, target setting, mediation, positive talking and questioning skills through a number of interactive activities. Emphasis is also placed upon the importance of confidentiality and child protection issues, which may arise within the role as a member of the panel. Towards the end of the session students will have the chance to role play, putting the theory into practice. It is important for the students to be fully equipped about how to deal with disruptive students, to help them feel comfortable and confident in the role.

Peer Mentors/Listeners

Students as Peer Mentors/Listeners are a nationally recognised mechanism for supporting Children and Young People in school, by utilising trained young people themselves. Bedfordshire has been involved in developing a nationally accepted protocol for training students and allowing them to support their peers on a day to day basis. The training helps the students to explore the role of a listener and a mentor, and always gives the opportunity to experience through practical role plays. In previous experience throughout the County, this initiative has been successful with mainly Key Stage 3 and 4 students, with younger students adopting a Buddy system instead.

The role of a Peer Mentor/Listener varies throughout schools in the County, with some Mentors helping to boost student's educational achievement and others acting as an emotional support for students on a daily basis. The educational mentors support other students in subjects they are either gifted in or have an interest in. These Mentors are generally older than their Mentees, and help supplement the individual's learning with the view of improving their achievement. For example; in one upper school Mentors have been used to boost the achievement of C/D boundary students. In another role, Peer Mentors/Listeners from a variety of year groups are involved more as an emotional support for other students throughout the school day. Through interactive activities in the training, students gain an understanding of how to help other students through listening. The Mentors listen to the worries and problems of other students, but emphasis is placed on the Mentors supporting the individual to find their own solutions to their problems.

Learning Conversations

Learning Conversations are one of the DCFS's strands for Secondary School Improvement. This initiative involves groups of students and their teachers working together to discuss mechanisms for improving teaching and learning. The Learning Conversations can be either about overall elements of teaching and learning within the school or about individual aspects, for example are all students within a lesson engaged in their learning? The staff and students will then work together to find mechanisms for improvement. The impact of these can be measured through further learning conversations after improvements have been implemented.

The training is ideally run for both students and staff in the same session. The training will involve how to conduct a learning conversation, how to effectively voice your views and a number of team building activities, with the aim of promoting a positive rapport between staff and students.

Peer Mediators

Where the Community Service Panel involves students in the sanctioning of disruptive behaviour, Peer Mediators involves students in more of a mediating role between disputing parties. Peer Mediators for example can then be used in the mediation of bullying, friendship fall outs, a class refuser etc. The role of a Peer Mediator is to get both parties to rationalise their behaviour towards each other, and create working targets and solutions to help improve the situation.

The training for Peer Mediators offers students the opportunity to develop their teamwork, target setting, mediation, positive talking and questioning skills through a number of interactive activities. Emphasis is also placed upon the importance of confidentiality and child protection issues, which may arise within the role of a mediator. Towards the end of the session students will have the chance to role play, putting the theory into practice. Through the training students will be fully equipped on how to mediate in different situations and to different ages of students.

School council

School Councils are the more widely known of the student voice initiatives, and is one of the Governments preferred mechanisms for improving schools and encouraging participation and Citizenship. School council's enable students to have a direct impact within all aspects of school life, and it also feeds into all other student voice initiatives. School councils are the general starting point for student voice within schools.

All schools throughout Bedfordshire across all phases have got a school council, although these do vary in productivity. In a number of cases throughout the County, students aren't fully aware of how much impact they can have, and also how to implement their ideas. With this in mind the training provided for students involves how to run meetings, the roles within a council, making democratic decisions and how to implement them; enabling students to have a greater impact.

Throughout Bedfordshire the role of a school/year council varies between schools in all phases. In lower schools students are involved in fundraising events for new equipment for the school (e.g. a buddy stop), and are often a key link for any other student voice within the school. In one middle school in the county students have been working with the Buddies to and researchers to see whether students are satisfied with the activities within the playground. After the researchers have collated the results the council will raise funds to improve the activities and facilities (e.g. benches) available for students in the playground. In upper schools students begin to focus more upon social events (e.g. end of year prom), but some have decided to focus upon another issue alongside, such as changing the school uniform.

Student Governor

Post 16 students are often used in the role of Student Governor to add a student perspective to the deliberation of the governing body of the school. The training prepares students for the role and responsibilities of a Student Governor, and also addresses the ethics and importance of confidentiality. The students will also be trained in the mechanism of giving feedback to senior teachers, governors, as well as communicating with their fellow students.

Student Interviewers

Students are often used in the process of formally interviewing for posts in schools, either as an interview panel or when acting as guides in the school. A representative from the students would then feedback the student view of the candidate to the lead interviewing panel. The training for this initiative addresses the ethics and the legal requirement associated with the interview process and stresses the importance of confidentiality. Students will be prepared for the roles of guide and interviewer, and will also have an understanding of how to design questions for interviewing. They will also be trained in the mechanism of giving feedback to senior teachers and governors.

Study Walks

Study Walks are an important mechanism for focusing on school improvement. Study Walks involve students from all phases travelling round the school focusing on one individual focus. The focus is generally issues identified by the students or staff that are areas needing improvement. The focus allows students to generate new ideas about the topic they have been investigating, and then they feedback these views to the senior leadership team or other staff.

Training Trainers

For students to truly have ownership of student voice within their schools, it is important for them to be actively involved with the training. As a School Improvement Team we have considerable experience of developing training schemes for groups of students in schools to allow them to train their fellow students. Hopefully this will make the development of student voice in schools sustainable.

The training session for this initiative will enable students to deliver training for other student voice initiatives. For this to be effective, students involved will need prior knowledge of the student voice initiative they will be training for. The training will be delivered according to the needs of the school, and students will be provided with resources and knowledge of activities they would need when delivering training.

Students as Learning Partners (SALP)

Students as Learning Partners is a nationally recognised mechanism for improving teaching and learning. In this initiative students work in collaboration with teachers or other adults in the school, in order to jointly investigate issues within their school. SALP is an innovative way for students to be involved in the improvement of lessons and the classroom environment. SALP gives teachers the opportunity to get feedback about their lessons from their primary audience. Together students and staff decide upon the focus (an area identified as needing improvement). Although the foci vary, the majority are linked directly with teaching and learning, for example, questioning - which gender does the teacher direct questions to? After observing the decided focus, students will provide constructive feedback to help aid the improvement of that focus. It is also advised that the same focus is observed a few weeks later, which would enable any recommendations of improvement to be measured as to their effectiveness.

Through training students receive an understanding of the role of the teacher, develop their own ground rules for behaviour (including ethics) and how to provide constructive feedback to staff. For students to be fully involved in all aspects of this initiative, it is important for them to have an understanding of what foci can be used, and what appropriate methods of recording could be used for each focus. Though role plays students will know how to provide constructive feedback about aspects of the focus they are observing. To increase the effectiveness of this training, it is advised that students and staff both attend the session. This helps to develop positive rapport between both groups, and will help them to identify each others role within the initiative.

In recent years SALP has mainly been an initiative within Upper schools (with the majority now having active SALP especially in training schools working with trainee teachers), but now it is beginning to progress into the Middle and Lower schools. In Upper and Middle schools there is more emphasis placed upon SALP improving the teaching and learning within lessons, involving students observing aspects within lesson themselves. The role of SALP within Lower schools has been slightly different with students and staff deciding to focus more upon improving the learning environment.

Students as Researchers (StAR)

Students as Researchers is a nationally recognised mechanism for improving Learning and Teaching. The StAR's develop a research project around an issue that has been identified by students. The focus for the research is something that is important to the students, and can be an issue raised within school or the local community, (e.g. the effectiveness of homework policies and homework timetables). The StAR's would produce a report of their results, providing feedback and presentations for other students and the senior leadership team, with the view of making changes. This initiative is successful in all phases of schools in Bedfordshire.

Bedfordshire has been involved in developing a nationally accepted protocol for training students and allowing them to investigate issues that they identify within their own school. Through training students will be provided with research tools specifically tailored to the school needs which will allow them to undertake high standard research in their school. As part of this, students will gain a full understanding how to conduct research, including knowledge of all methods of data collection, how to conclude and evaluate data, including writing reports. Through role plays students gather an understanding of how to vary their feedback for different audiences, and the importance of confidentiality. All this enables students to conduct high quality research.

StAR's can be used as commissioned researchers, where they conduct research around a focus identified by someone else (e.g. member of staff). In this instance StAR's can also work in collaboration with another group or initiative (e.g. a staff working party).

Teachers for tomorrow

Teachers for tomorrow is an initiative where students can take an active role within lessons, leading certain activities. These students are mainly 6th formers, and normally assist in the subject they are focusing on for their A' levels. Training involves students gaining an understanding of how to lead an activity, and also knowledge of different activities and how to adapt these for different age ranges and subjects.

Teachers and students co-planning (TASC)

The purpose of TASC is not only to develop the role of student voice, but also to enhance teacher training, embed creativity into lesson planning and delivery, as well as improving learning and teaching. It involves students and staff collaborating on designing a lesson plan, which the student will then observe and provide coaching feedback on. It is a fantastic opportunity for students to gain an insight into the role of a teacher, and for the member of staff to hear from students what actively engages them within lessons. This initiative would mainly be aimed for Upper school students (in particular training schools), although schools with a strong foundation of student voice (especially SALP) may see this as the next step.

TASC is a new initiative within the County, but has been very effective in a school in London where we have delivered training. The training the students receive is reasonably intense, but will give them the knowledge needed to be involved with all aspects of the lesson planning. Although students can't have an impact with the subject content of the lesson, they can be involved in all other aspects. The training is very interactive, and will get students thinking about the role of a teacher, what is involved in lesson planning, and what comprises a good lesson in a number of situations. Students will receive training on key aspects of lesson planning such as, behaviour management strategies, and assessment for learning. Students already have their own knowledge of a variety of lesson activities, and so time is given for students to share ideas and experiences, so elements of a well planned lesson can be identified. Included in the training session, is time for students to plan a 10 minute lesson, which they will then deliver, this helping the students put into practice the training.

Student Consultants for Children & Young People (SCCYP)

Student Consultants for Children & Young people are employed by the Authority to work in all phases of schools in and out of County. Traditionally these Consultants are taking a gap year between 6th form and university. As the Consultant's are closer in age and experiences of the pupils and students they are working with, they often encourage another strand of dialogue between pupils, students and staff in schools. The SCCYP's have been involved in a variety of roles within the County this year:

STUDENT VOICE TRAINING

All training for Student Voice Initiatives has been developed and is delivered by the SCCYP's. Through interactive training sessions, all students and staff involved will have full knowledge of the initiative, and for students how to have an impact within their school. The training can be adapted for all phases, and is tailored to the individual needs of each school.

PEER MENTORING/E-MENTORING

The SCCYP's people have been working with the Greys Education Centre, to support disaffected students within school. This has been achieved through two ways, with the SCCYP acting as a Peer Mentor or an E-Mentor. The Mentor roles have generally been used to support vulnerable students who won't engage with their learning. As the SCCYP is closer to the age of the student, in a number of cases this helps students to voice their true thoughts and develops a unique rapport for the student (which they often don't have at home). It is this rapport which often encourages these students to participate in work either set by the school or on the learning platform, with the added support of the SCCYP.

COUNTY IMPLEMENTATION OF NETMEDIA

This year SCCYP's have been assisting the Bedfordshire Netmedia team with the implementation of Netmedia (learning platform) into schools within the County. They have been heavily involved with supporting the training of schools in the set up, and use of the learning platform after initial training.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

Each year the SCCYP's are involved with research projects, and as far, this has mainly been for the School Improvement Services. Two projects that the SCCYP's have led on this year are; 'Am I bothered?' for Raising the Bar (looking at factors affecting female underachievement in Key Stage 3), and a research project on behalf of gifted and talented (focusing on student awareness of G&T). For each of these projects the SCCYP's have collated and analysed data, providing a written report and presentation for the conclusion.

The role of the Student Consultants within the County are ever changing, and can be used in a variety of ways within the Education Services. If you are interested in working with the SCCYP's please look below for pricing, and for further information.

PACKAGE	DESCRIPTION	
A	10 Days consultancy at £150 per day	£1500
B	5 days consultancy at £160 per day	£800
C	3 days consultancy at £170 per day	£510
D	1 day consultancy at £180 per day	£180
E	1 hour consultancy at £50	£50

Please note that travel time must be included in the hourly rate and travel outside Bedfordshire is charged at cost. In addition any preparatory visit, preparation, report writing and further work will be charged.

For further information please contact
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