

A Systemic Professional Development Strategy

Getting an “A” in Equity™



*Secondary School
School Improvement Through the Lens of Students*

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Background

Student voice has become increasingly important in improving instructional practice and student learning outcomes (Hopkins, 2008). Soliciting the perspective of students regarding their schooling experiences provides a powerful lens on the teaching and learning process, giving insight to classroom teachers and support staff into the impact of classroom instructional practices on the learning environment as related by the students themselves. The data that student voice provides to teachers and support staff goes above and beyond the typical review of disaggregated assessment data, in that student voice data illuminates the relationship between student learning style, student motivational factors, lesson design and delivery, and teacher-student relationship and learning experiences. While the use of traditional quantitative assessment data provides important trend data about what students did or did not learn in a given course of study or cycle of teaching, use of these data provides limited information about the social organization and functioning of the classroom environment—in particular-how teachers plan and organize learning opportunities, and how teachers and students relate to one another around the curriculum.

Individual and focus group interview sessions with students have suggested that students have important insights into the teaching and learning process that are important to improving classroom instructional practice (Dufur & Korinek, 2010). Recent studies involving urban youth have found that students identify the importance of positive, respectful student-teacher relationships; effective motivating instruction; and active student involvement in the school community (Mitra, 2004; Cushman, 2003 & 2006). Student voice sessions conducted by over the past five years in urban and suburban schools has revealed similar findings. Additionally, the subsequent professional development conducted with teachers around student voice has given teachers real-time, powerful data about the practice of teaching, and effective strategies to improve learning for their students.

Description

“Student Voice” is electronically video-recorded, focus group interviews, featuring students from the school under study, whom are representative of a cross section of racial and programmatic backgrounds and achievement levels. consultants facilitate student discussions around critical aspects of the school culture and the teaching and learning process, including, but are not limited to positive aspects of the school; descriptions of high and poor quality teaching and classroom instructional activities; race consciousness and the “achievement gap”; and descriptions of productive relationships with teachers. The ninety-minute long focus group sessions are analyzed for emergent themes, and condensed into a 30-minute video and later used as a professional development tool for school staffs.

Purpose

There are two purposes of the Student Voice videos. These are:

1. To provide a qualitative data source, for use in concert with traditional achievement measures, in order to enable a more comprehensive analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the school's instructional program; and
2. To be used as a professional development tool to increase the school's capacity to appreciate, analyze, and problem-solve the impact of culture, race, language, and class, on the teaching and learning process.

Overview of the Process

Activity		Description	Day of Support
1	Initial School Consultation	Meet with the school leadership team to introduce the Student Voice protocols, procedures, and outcomes. Dates for the student focus groups and teacher professional development are identified.	1
2	Student Voice Focus Group Session(s)	Student focus group(s) are conducted involving 12-15 students representing a wide cross-section of the student population.	2
3	Leadership Team Consultation	School leaders will preview the video. consultants will review the professional development tools to be used during the general professional development meetings with teachers to build the capacity of the school leaders to facilitate department discussions.	3
4	Professional Development-School wide (Session 1)	Teachers, organized by department, will review the data and chart their reflections, emergent themes, and initial strategies. Teachers will share their findings from their respective groups and collectively prioritize not more than 3 high priority strategies to implement school-wide.	4

Activity	Description	Day of Support
 5 Instructional Round¹	EEquity consultants will facilitate an Instructional Round with administrators and teacher-leaders using an observational protocol derived from the emergent themes and initial strategies identified by the teachers from the video. The purpose of the Instructional Round is to deepen the school's understanding of the emergent themes identified in the video by conducting targeted classroom observations and data gathering.	5-7
6	Leadership Team Consultation School Leaders will analyze and chart the findings from the Instructional Round alongside the student voice data for alignment, and/or new reflections.	7
7	Professional Development-School-wide (Session 2) Teachers, organized by department, will analyze the data gathered during the Instructional Round and refine the 3 high priority strategies to implement, as well as identify the necessary professional development, school-wide systems, programs, and/or procedures to effectively implement and monitor improvement strategies.	7-9
8	Final School Consultation Discuss next steps, including additional Instructional Rounds, monitoring and evaluation systems, and post-interviews with the original students.	10-12

The concurrent professional development sessions are to deepen the subject matter departments to analyze qualitative and quantitative (assessment) data to develop and implement researched based student-centered strategies to increase student learning. The Instructional Rounds will deepen participating teachers and administration ability to discern “what is working” to bring about rigorous teaching and learning school wide.

¹ The instructional rounds model is intended to help education leaders, practitioners develop a shared understanding of what high-quality instruction looks like, and what schools and districts need to do to support it. Inspired by the medical-rounds model used by physicians, whereby doctors observe each patient and then debrief as a group to determine next steps, the authors have pioneered a new form of professional learning known as the instructional rounds networks. Through this process, educators develop a shared practice of observing, discussing, and analyzing learning and teaching (City, Elmore, Fiarman, & Teitel, 2008).



Accountability:

Measure the academic achievement progress of targeted students during the school year. The use of a pre-assessment and post assessment data to measure progress of the instructional strategies. Instructional team will discuss the progress of targeted student every 3 weeks using work samples, grades, behavior and engagement in the classroom.

Program Evaluation:

EDEquity will provide support evaluations monthly to monitor the effectiveness of the training and instructional support.

Logistics:

Consultant will schedule days with the administration and instructional teams to identified training and classroom walk-thru. The consultant will collaborate with administration periodically to discuss the progress of the support model.

Budget Analysis:

An EDEquity consultant will provide 12 days of on-site support to work with students and teacher cluster group.

Visit www.edequity.com/studentvoice to view student voice promotional video.

Bibliography

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