

At-a-Glance: Steps for a Successful Voice Circle

Stage	Steps	Considerations
Before	1. Select and gather the planning team	The facilitator selects 5–8 adults for the planning team who are viewed as caring adults by students. The planning team can also serve as Champions for the voice circle. Gather the team 4–6 weeks prior to the event. From pre-planning to execution to wrap-up, make sure the planning team is engaged with the entire process.
	2. Determine the Purpose.	Are you using data or results from a survey or a report as the wondering? What do you want to know that you do not have the answer to currently?
	3. Create Questions	Approximately 6-10 open-ended questions should be developed that pertain to the purpose. The planning team establishes a draft of questions that should be reviewed by an equity team at the school, district, or region.
	4. Invite Students or Guests	Include invitations to students who have not had a voice in the school, program, or system. Obtain permission from parents/guardians to participate in a confidential listening session. Plan on inviting 4-5 students for each table.
	5. Train the Champions	Provide a training session for all who are assisting with the event. It should include a discussion of expectations, logistics, and the role of implicit bias. Schedule it to take place in the days preceding the event or even the day of the event. The document to record responses should be shared with Champions at this time.
During	6. Welcome the Audience (students)	The facilitator welcomes the students and explains what a voice circle is, how their voice will be used to create change, expectations for participation, and how to excuse themselves if they experience any discomfort. Consider including information on student leadership and additional opportunities to use their voices for change.
	7. Circle Time!	This is the time when the adult becomes the learner, and the learner becomes the teacher. The facilitator is circulating and serving as a timekeeper. A circle can take approximately 75-90 minutes for 6-10 questions.
	8. Conclusion of Voice Circle	Champions thank their guests for participating and provide the directions for any written responses to additional exit questions. Champions write a personal thank you note to each of the students at their tables prior to leaving for the required Champion debrief.
After	9. Champion Team Debrief (required)	Champions gather at a designated location for the debrief. Revisiting the importance of confidentiality should be addressed at this time as well as any safety or health concerns that surfaced. Determining next steps is a must prior to concluding.
	10. Determine Next Steps	Develop a plan for communicating with students regarding actions and/or next steps. How will the learning be shared? Will staff be the creators of an action plan or students? Will it involve a true partnership between educators and students? It will be extremely important to continually bring the students back to monitor progress. A Student Voice Circle must result in an action... or we can cause unintended harm.



Voice Matters

Student, Staff, or Community Voice Circles

Facilitator: _____

Date: _____ Start Time: _____

*Champion Training w/Voice Circle Slide Deck: 30-45 minutes: _____

*Students/Families/Community Welcome, Process, and Ice Breaker w/ Voice Circle Slide Deck 15-20 minutes: _____

*Circle Time 60-75 minutes: _____

*Debrief w/ Champions 30-45 minutes: _____

Voice Circle Agreements

*Speak your truth

*Listen to understand others

*Protect the stories of others
(confidentiality)

*Doodle, Draw, Write

"The knowledge, wisdom, and solutions we are searching for are already present in this room."

~Core Belief of Community Café Model

"When you talk you are only repeating something you already know. But, if you listen you may learn something new."

~Dalai Lama

"Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced."

~James Baldwin