Welcome to…

Safety Focused Voice Circles:

Shift the Culture, Change the Game

Please take some time to read the selections on your page and reflect on how you would respond to the questions provided.

Safety Focused Voice Circles: Shift the Culture, Change the Game

Dr. Kathryn A. Page

Voice Activator

"Read all about it"

1.

There is a false and harmful notion that student voice comes from students alone. As a result, it is sometimes assumed that when students do not take on leadership roles in schools, they must lack interest or will. The responsibility to "step up" rests squarely on their shoulders. The reality is, however, that many students have a life history that involves adults expecting youth compliance. This pattern is hard to unlearn. As a result, many high school students do not even imagine the possibility of participating in real planning and decision making and would not know where to begin, if given the chance, because they have never had the experience. It is therefore crucial that principals send a clear and consistent message to the whole school community that student voice is vital. Principals must summon students and teachers to lead the charge and provide examples and opportunities for making student voice a part of all aspects of school culture.

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2. Looking at your population of students, are all students represented in student leadership? Are there voices missing?

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4. How could a building leader serve as a model for student voice? What would he/she do?

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Student action research projects can galvanize, at-risk, disenfranchised youth and engage them in meaningful-rich activities that connect them to their own learning and the educational process. Unlike efforts that focus on "remediating" youth, student action research projects ask students to cover new ground by investigating issues of critical importance to them, and in the process, they develop high-level thinking skills, for instance, with support from adults on the project. In so doing, students can develop broader analysis of the forces affecting their lives and their education, they get to voice their concerns and opinions about issues they select, and they learn how to think proactively about possible solutions.

Student Action Research: Reaping the Benefits for Students and School Leaders Rubin, Beth C; Jones, Makeba National Association of Secondary School Principals. NASSP Bulletin; Dec 2007; 91, 4; ProQuest pg. 36

1. Does this type of learning take place in your school or district? If so, please describe it.

2. What would be the potential barriers for this type of learning in a school?

3. What action research projects do you think students would select if they were given the opportunity?

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While some might claim that student government at the high school level is a perfect example of this sort of leadership, Mitra (2009) points out that most associated student bodies "exercise little power, focus primarily on social activities, and do not represent a cross-section of the school. In fact, a nationwide study of communities found no instances where student governments engaged in formal problem solving related to either the "school's academic program or social-emotional climate," areas of concern that are far more important in terms of achievement and social-emotional well-being than a well-planned prom.

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Student voice, in its most profound and radical form, calls for a cultural shift that opens up spaces and minds not only to the sound but also to the presence and power of students' "power" and "authority". Aspects of student voice do raise concerns for some adults, who feel there needs to be more of a distance between themselves and their students. Cook-Sather (2006:366) explores the influence of "powershift" between adults and students: "the shifts in power dynamics between adults and young people and in roles for students are both prerequisites and results of the key premises and practices of student voice work". This "power shift" can be perceived as threatening to both institution and individual teachers.

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2. How can we help those who are threatened by student voice see the value in it?

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Since the advent of formal education in the United States, both the educational system and that system's every reform have been premised on adults' notions of how education should be conceptualized and practiced. There is something fundamentally amiss about building and rebuilding an entire system without consulting at any point those it is ostensibly designed to serve.

Cook-Sather, A. (2002). Authorizing Students' Perspectives: Toward Trust, Dialogue, and Change in Education. *Educational Researcher, 31*(4), 3–14. doi: 10.3102/0013189x031004003

1. What are your thoughts about this quote? Does it resonate with you? How does it make you feel?

2. In your career, how often have students been included in the school or district's decision-making process? What did it look like?

3. Have students in your school or district viewed the school improvement plan? Do they know what the goals are for the school?

4.

Bringing stakeholders together who have diverse backgrounds, experiences, and opinions strengthens the change process. If voices of students are left out, particularly the voices of those who have been historically marginalized, then the change process is weakened. Adults must begin to learn to trust students to take a central role in the educational change and design process.

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1.What would happen if we treated the student as someone whose opinion mattered in the introduction and implementation of reform in schools?

2. What could it look like to have students included in school reform efforts?

8.

The need for including student voice in inclusive education reform efforts is a critical step toward developing equitable schools. Though youth are at the center of all school reform efforts, they are seldom treated as partners in these efforts. Without youth, school reform efforts are limited to adults' understandings of what counts as equity, which can continue to perpetuate some of the most marginalized youth.

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Why do you think the adult understanding of equity is not enough and could be what is perpetuating what we see with the most marginalized youth?

2. Do you believe adults are ready to listen to student voice and act on what they say? Have you experienced a time when students served as partners and actions were taken? Please share the experience.

Read All About It Activity

Great opportunity for staff, students, parents, or community members to engage in some reading and reflection on the topic of student voice

1. Read your 2 quotes and reflect on your responses to the questions provided.
2. Gather with others who have the same color page and discuss your responses. (8-10 minutes)
3. Select a speaker from your group to summarize the text and your responses with the large group.

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Kathryn Page, Ed.D.

- **Experience:**

22 + years as an administrator at both the building and district level. University Supervisor for Principal Certification Program at Gonzaga University, Continuous Improvement Partner for Office of System and School Improvement for Washington, mentor for Association of Washington School Principals, and an educator for students with disabilities.

- **Education:**

- BA in Elementary Ed. And Special Education at CWU (WSU)
- MA at Whitworth University in Educational Administration
- Ed.D. at Gonzaga University: Educational Leadership

"Best Practices for Uncovering Systemic Barriers to School Improvement"

People hear statistics, but they feel stories.

—Brent Dykes | Director of Data Strategy, Domo

Objectives:

- *Understand how issues and solutions related to physical and emotional safety for staff, students, and community members can be surfaced through community voice circles
- *Discover how the use of data coupled with safety focused circles can be part of a broader strategy to empower students as change agents
- *Recognize both the evidence and the power of perceptual data to transform a system

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Materials, Resources, and Paper OH MY!

Scan the QR Code to learn more about taking meaningful and measurable action by engaging in thoughtful dialogue.

https://systems4support.com

Let's Work Together

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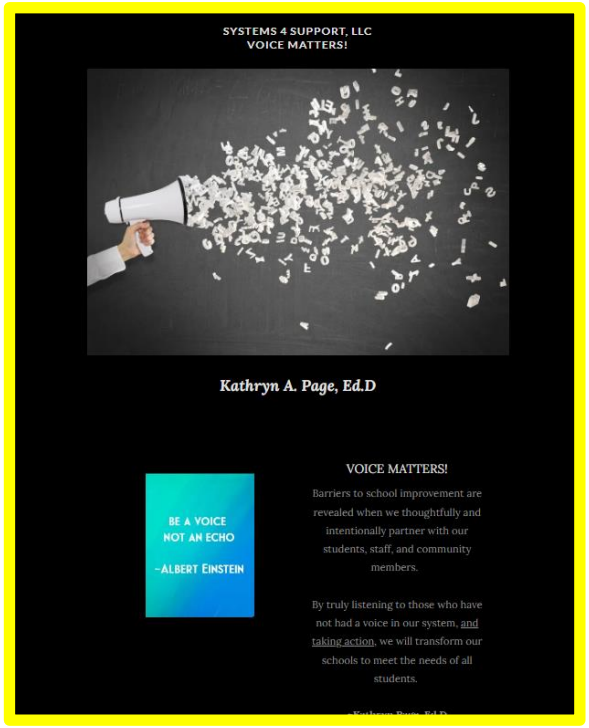
kathryn@systems4support.com
206. 999.5947

LOCATION:
West Richland, WA 99353



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Planning Document for Voice Circles

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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.

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Voice Matters Facilitation Guide

https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/attendance/pubdocs/FINAL%20OSSI%20VERSION%20KPAGE%202022%20%28002%29_Copy.pdf

Voice Matters: Uncovering systemic barriers to school improvement through voice circles

Author & Creator: Kathryn A. Page, Ed.D.

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Editors: Sarah Frazelle, Krissy Johnson (OSPI), Emily Maughan (OSPI), Megan LaPalm (OSPI), and Mandy Paradise (OSPI)

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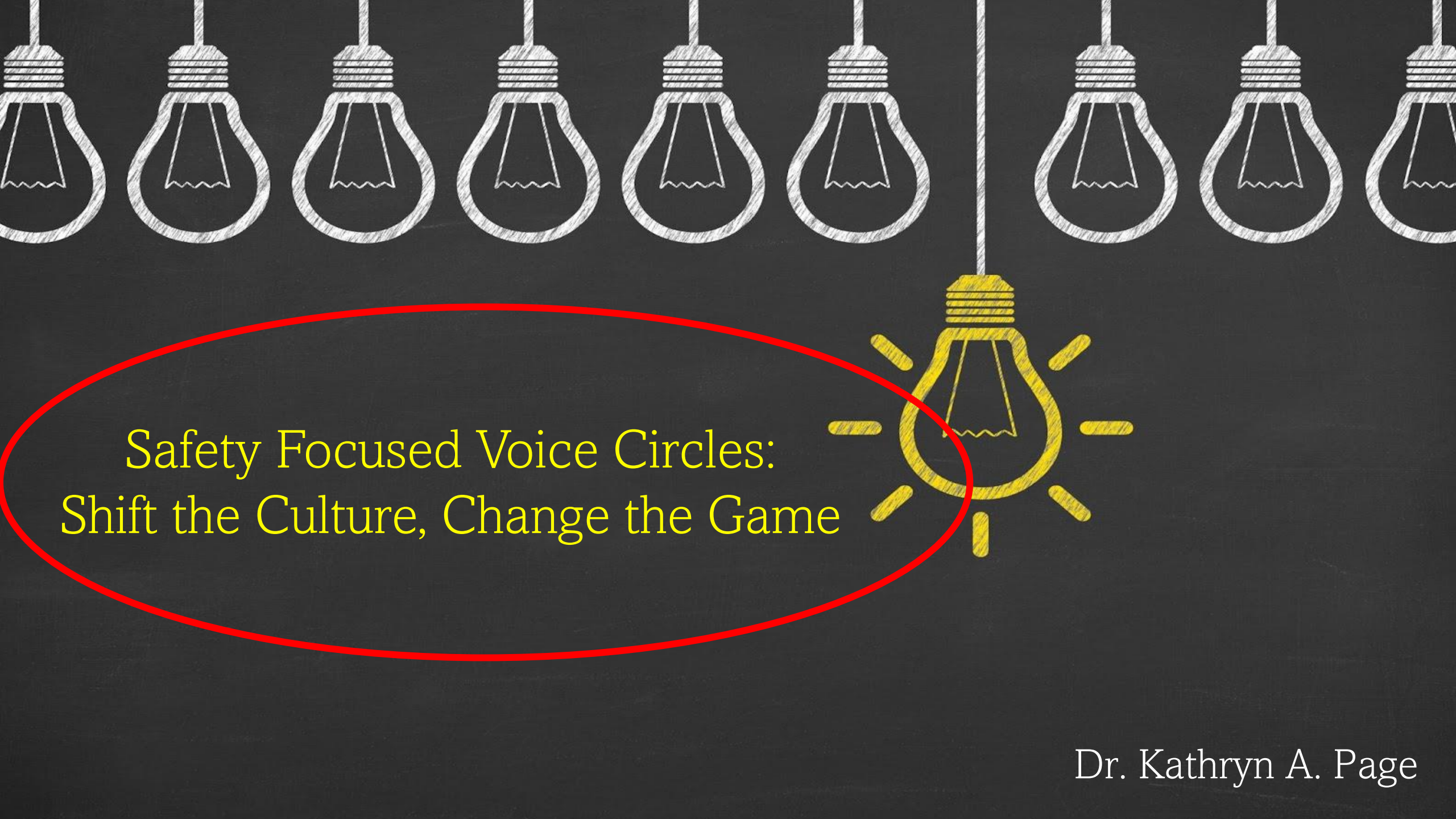

Safety Focused Voice Circles: Shift the Culture, Change the Game

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Student Voice-Defined

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Student Voice

"Community"

Student participation and decision-making in the structures and practices that shape their educational experiences.

– Boston's Rennie Center for Educational Research and Policy

https://www.renniecenter.org/

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

~Quaglia Institute https://quagliainstitute.org

“What is a Voice Circle?”

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***STUDENT VOICE CIRCLE**: Voice circles are guided conversations. Carefully and thoughtfully structured questions are used to guide meaningful dialogue that encourages student voice and agency. Students reveal the actions needed to improve the school experience for **ALL** students.*

~Kathryn Page, Ed.D.

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What is a Champion?
(what does it mean to be one?)

Champions are caring adults who authentically show up to listen and learn. They partner with students (community) to surface the barriers to continuous improvement and develop action plans to address those barriers.

Champions hold the mirror up to the system, not the student. A champion will face it and fix it, together, with students.

~ Kathryn Page, Ed.D., 2019

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Champions' Ultimate Goal ?

Protect and honor the space for guests to speak their truth

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VOICE CIRCLE MENU OF POSSIBILITIES

PARTICIPANTS (Honored Guests):

a. Student/Scholar - Student focused gathering based on a data point, authentic wondering, or any topic related to learning from our scholars. Action planning is an expected outcome. Examples: Use as an opportunity to capture solutions based on climate, attendance, instruction, safety, etc.

b. Parent/Guardian or Community - Gathering based on problem-solving on a topic of concern. Examples: Parent/guardian or community safety topic, emergency preparedness, topic based on a survey or community concern.

c. Staff - Gathering with staff members to gather feedback on specific topics. Examples: Consider holding a Voice Circle with bus drivers, attendance clerks, or paraeducators as they provide excellent, often untapped insight.

MENU of VOICE CIRCLES:

a. Attendance- Designed to explore the root cause of attendance-related barriers. They will surface issues regarding equity. Participants: Students, Community, Parents/Guardians, Staff, and/or Attendance Clerks.

b. Pay it Forward- End of the year, quarter, semester gathering designed to reflect on learning and inform the future. Examples: Specific grade levels gather prior to transitioning to a new grade level to inform the school staff on possible improvements.

c. Feedback Loop -An opportunity to bring forth several issues, thoughts, ideas in a small group setting. Topics are placed at different tables and guests can spend time at tables of choice. Topics can be chosen ahead of time through a brief survey or generated based on data reports. Examples: A variety of topics can be discussed such as homework, standards-based grading, school activities, school calendar, scheduling, mental health support, attendance, safety related topics, etc.

d. Partners in Improvement- A gathering specifically designed for continuous improvement efforts. Data (contextual, perceptual, achievement, demographic) are used to paint a portion of the picture with guests providing the complete picture (the "other" data) regarding current reality and next steps. Action planning is an outcome. Examples would include school improvement and progress monitoring. Partnering with student groups who are typically not the voices invited to the table is critically important.

f. Focused- Gathering designed for specific topic or content to capture the expertise of the guests. Examples: Curriculum Adoptions, Behavior Support, Social-Emotional, etc.

g. Scholar or Student-Gathering designed to provide a safe space for students to provide feedback and to partner with adults to improve the school experience. Action planning is an outcome. Examples: Feedback from students on specific topics such as attendance, instruction, engagement, data source, student generated topics, etc.

h. Transitional Years: A gathering designed to uncover the barriers to the successful transition of students between levels of schooling. Examining the social, emotional, developmental, and academic challenges by engaging in dialogue with students will reveal the modifications needed in the educational system so that all students can thrive.

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Any of the gatherings noted can be taken to an online platform

What is your purpose for a Voice Circle? What do you want to know?

Transitional Years Voice Circle

By studying the social, emotional, and academic impact of the transition from ES to MS and MS to HS through student voice circles, we will surface the barriers to successful transitions. We will learn how to modify the practices in our school district by partnering with our students so that all will thrive in the transitional years and beyond.

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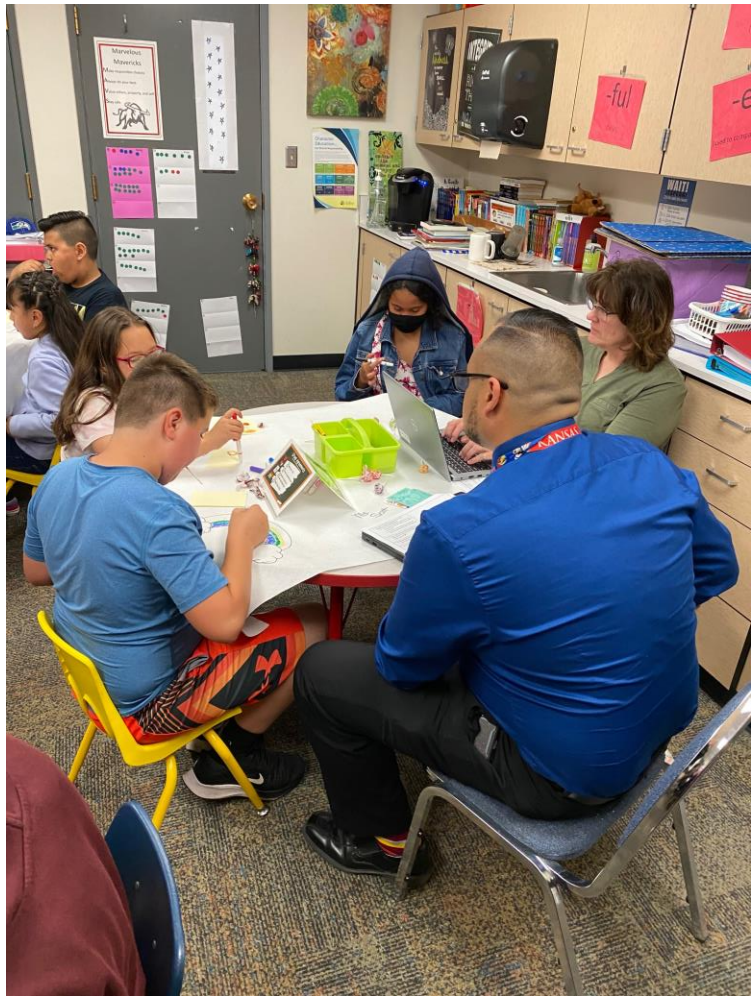
…does a voice circle look like?



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…looks great but why should we consider voice circles as a strategy? Do they really result in any positive results?

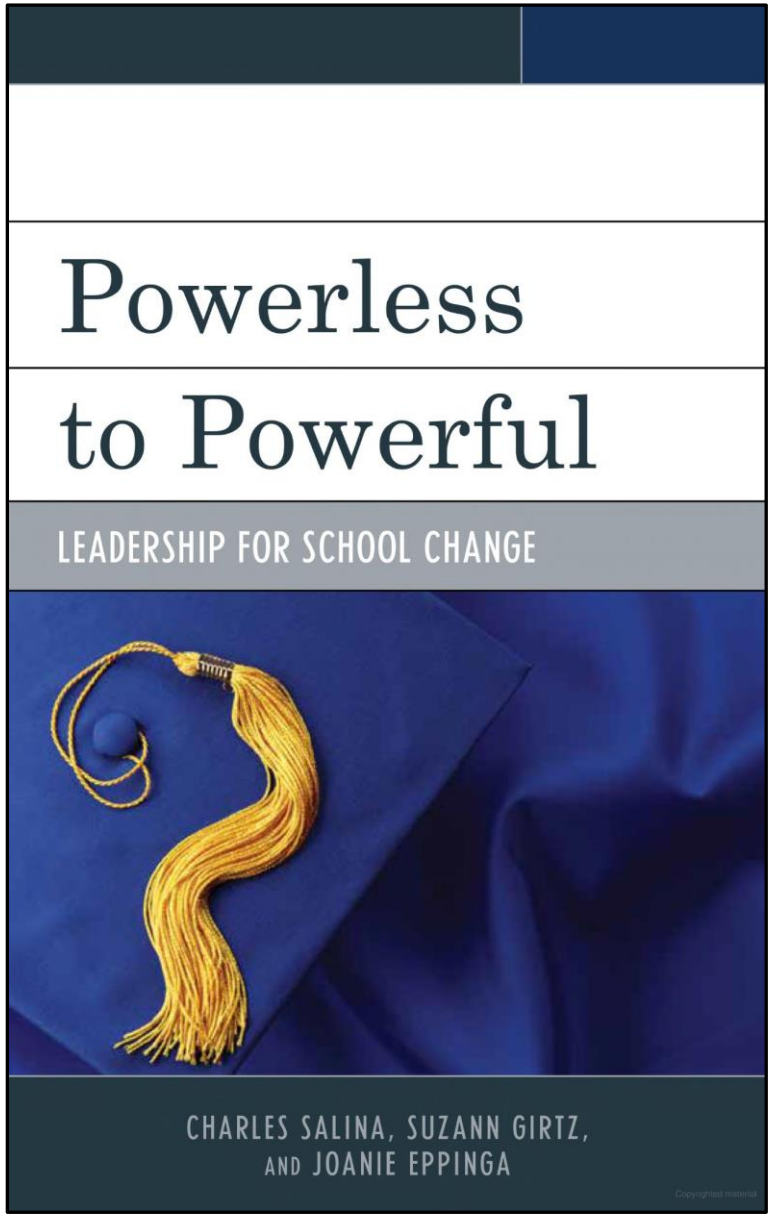
“I thought all I had to do was show people the data and they would understand. But it doesn’t work. You have to tell a story.”

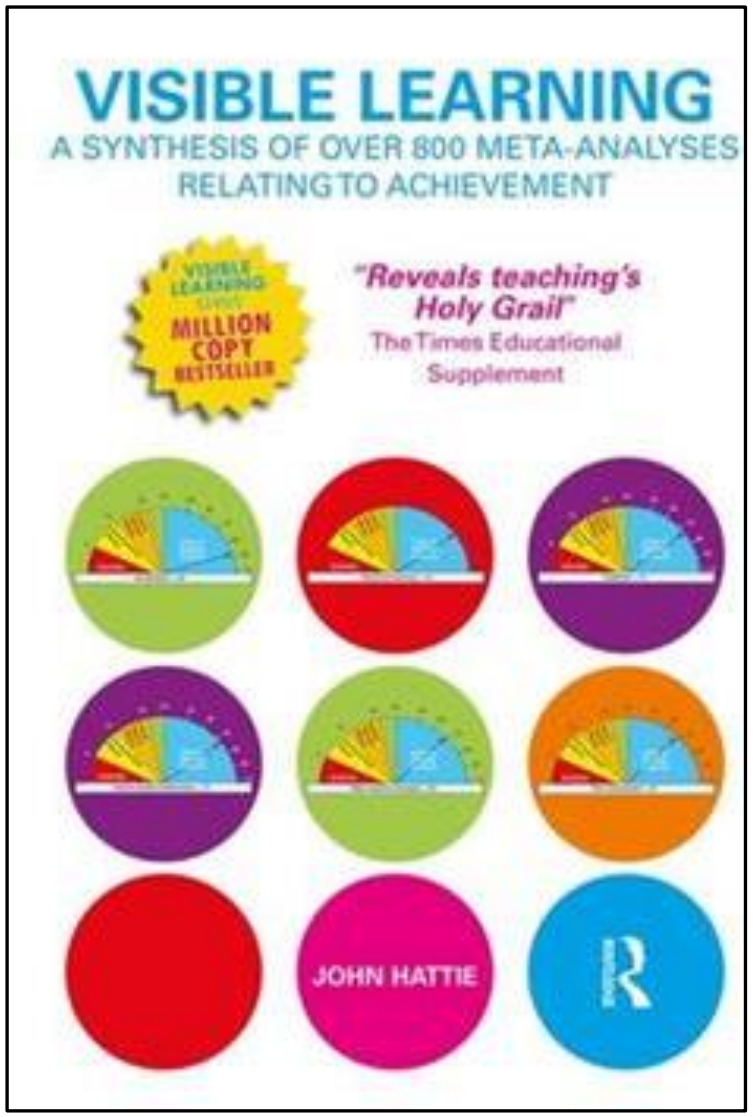
~Cliff Stoll, U.S. Astronomer

PERCEPTUAL DATA

“The use of perceptual evidence is perhaps the most powerful pivot point for creating rapid change in a school that perceives itself as powerless.”

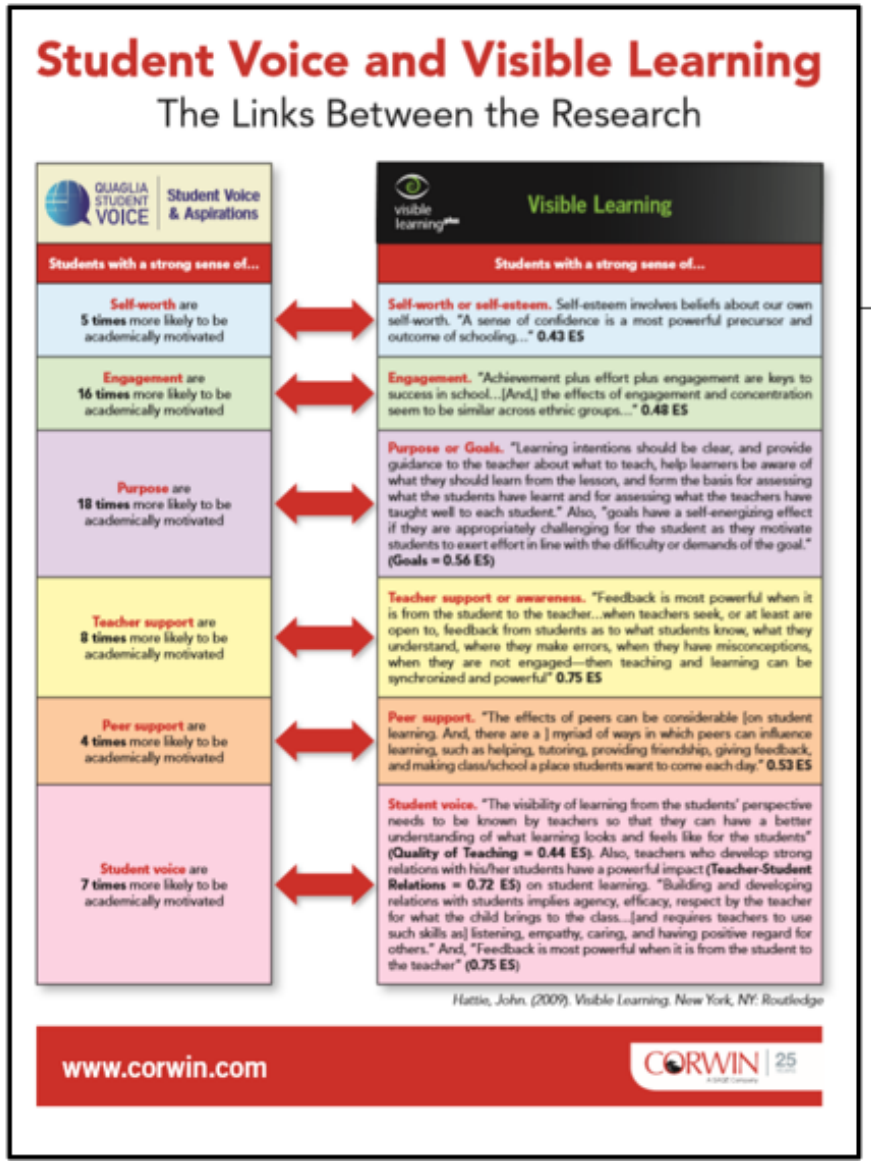
(Salina, Girtz, & Eppinga, 2016, p. 52)





According to <u>Hattie and Timperley (2007)</u> feedback is one of the most powerful influences on learning and achievement.

In an interview, Hattie emphasized that the most powerful feedback is that given from the student to the teacher.



Quaglia Institute: Student Voice

http://quagliainstitute.org/qisa/

The work of Quaglia Institute is based on nearly forty years of research in the field of student aspirations. This research shows that students who believe in themselves, are actively engaged in their learning, and feel a sense of purpose in school are more likely to develop high aspirations. Students with high aspirations are in a position to reach their fullest potential, both in school and beyond.

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"Students with a strong sense of…"

Student voice are **7 times** more likely to be academically motivated

Student voice. "The visibility of learning from the students' perspective needs to be known by teachers so that they can have a better understanding of what learning looks and feels like for the students" **(Quality of Teaching = 0.44 ES)**. Also, teachers who develop strong relations with his/her students have a powerful impact **(Teacher-Student Relations = 0.72 ES)** on student learning. "Building and developing relations with students implies agency, efficacy, respect by the teacher for what the child brings to the class…[and requires teachers to use such skills as] listening, empathy, caring, and having positive regard for others." And, "Feedback is most powerful when it is from the student to the teacher" **(0.75 ES)**

Hattie, John. (2009). Visible Learning. New York, NY: Routledge

HS students reflect on their responses and begin "Analyzing the Data"

"Academics need to change – scores are low. How do we change this?"

"Students to students has an impact."

"Some of us need hands-on learning as that is how we learn"

"Students need to step up and say something instead of hiding in the shadows."

*Talk to parents/community about what our school really is

*Right now there is one story… and it is not the true story about us

*They think they know – but they don't know

Voices…

“Student Voice Circles were the difference maker as I was trying to build a culture at the school where I led my first year as an administrator. I had all these ideas about what I wanted and the more I forced what I wanted; the more students disengaged. The more I asked about what students wanted our school to look and sound like, the more progress I made.

The students were given a safe place to talk, with no judgement, adults were there to listen, and other students listened as well. Needless to say, after our first voice circle, our school became one of love, compassion and high standards. We all learned so much about each other and I am now in my 5th year as an administrator, not even at the same school and it's still rocking!!”

~Daniel Sanchez, Principal

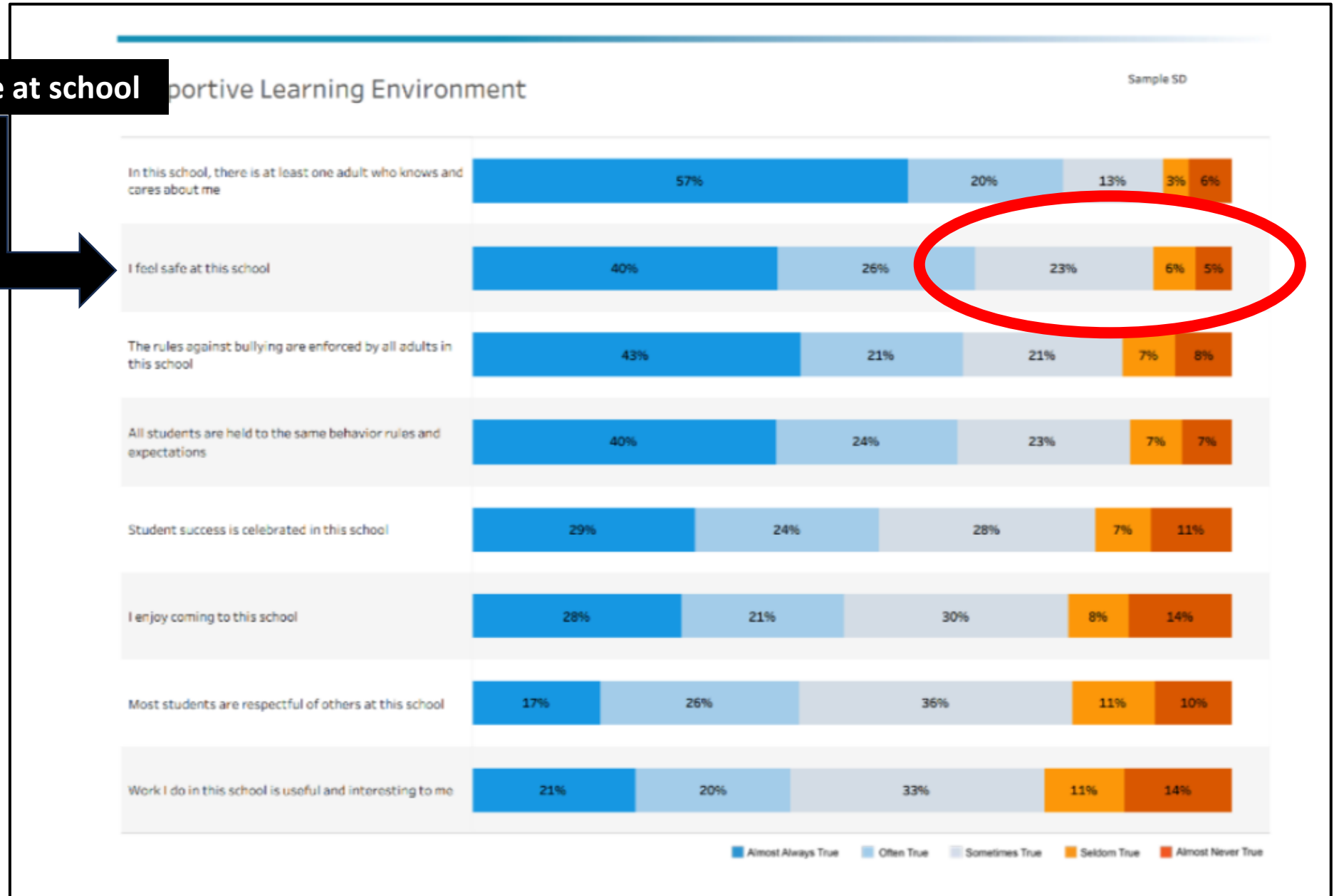
CATS Academy, Toppenish

Safety-Focused Voice Circle

Systems 4 Support, LLC

Sample Report from a Typical Student Survey

I feel safe at school



=34%

Sometimes true, seldom true, almost never true

QUESTIONS
1.Tell me about a staff member who has made a positive difference in your life, your go-to person. What **specifically** is it about the person that makes you want to go to them? What do they say or do? The person can be from any grade level…and this is the one time you get to share the name of the person. (If a student does not have a person: Tell me what characteristics a teacher needs to have for you to feel comfortable to talk to them about anything)
2.What does it look, and sound like to feel safe at school?
3.This is a 2-part question and is based on the results from the survey you took this year. a. Why do you think 40% of our students at this school don't feel safe at school? b. If you could do anything in our school to change this, what would it be?
4.Tell me about a time when you felt safe at our school? (If they don't feel safe, they could select a different school or grade level to describe)
5.Tell me about a time when you felt the least safe at our school? Please provide as many details as possible.
6.Are there places in our school where you feel most safe? Where are the places and why do you feel safe there?
7. Are there places in the school where you feel least safe? Where are the places and why do you not feel safe?
8. Is there anything else you would like to talk about or share related to safety at our school?

Safety-Focused Community Circle
Audience: 9th, 10th, 11th Grade Students

Survey Results (October 22): 40% of students don't feel safe
Voice Circle Held? June 2023

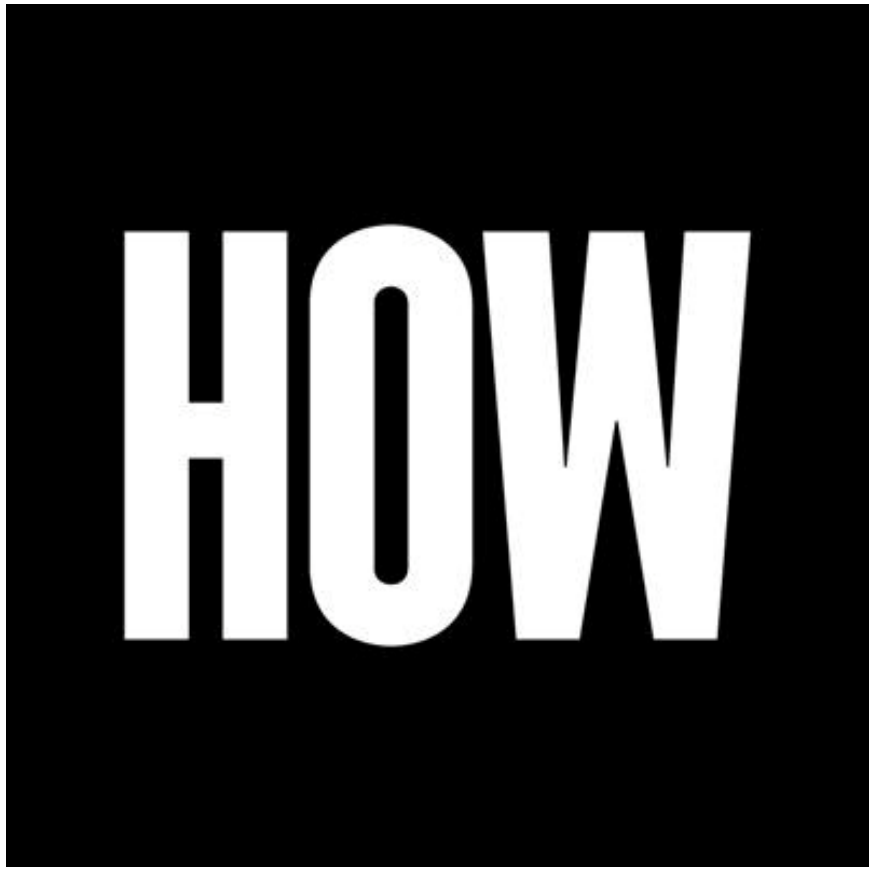
**We are scared because of all the lock-downs. We never knew what happened. We don't know if it is a drill or real. When it is real, a lot of different stories are told. We aren't told anything.*

**Unsafe places? There are places where the cameras don't see you. We know where they are.*

**The most dangerous place is outside the bathrooms. Cameras don't go there and there are people who hang-out there and say and do things to female students.*

Do you see what I see?

1. Survey results received in October 2022
2. Voice Circle held in June 2023
3. Could we have prevented anything?
4. How often are surveys administered and actions not taken?



… do we begin?

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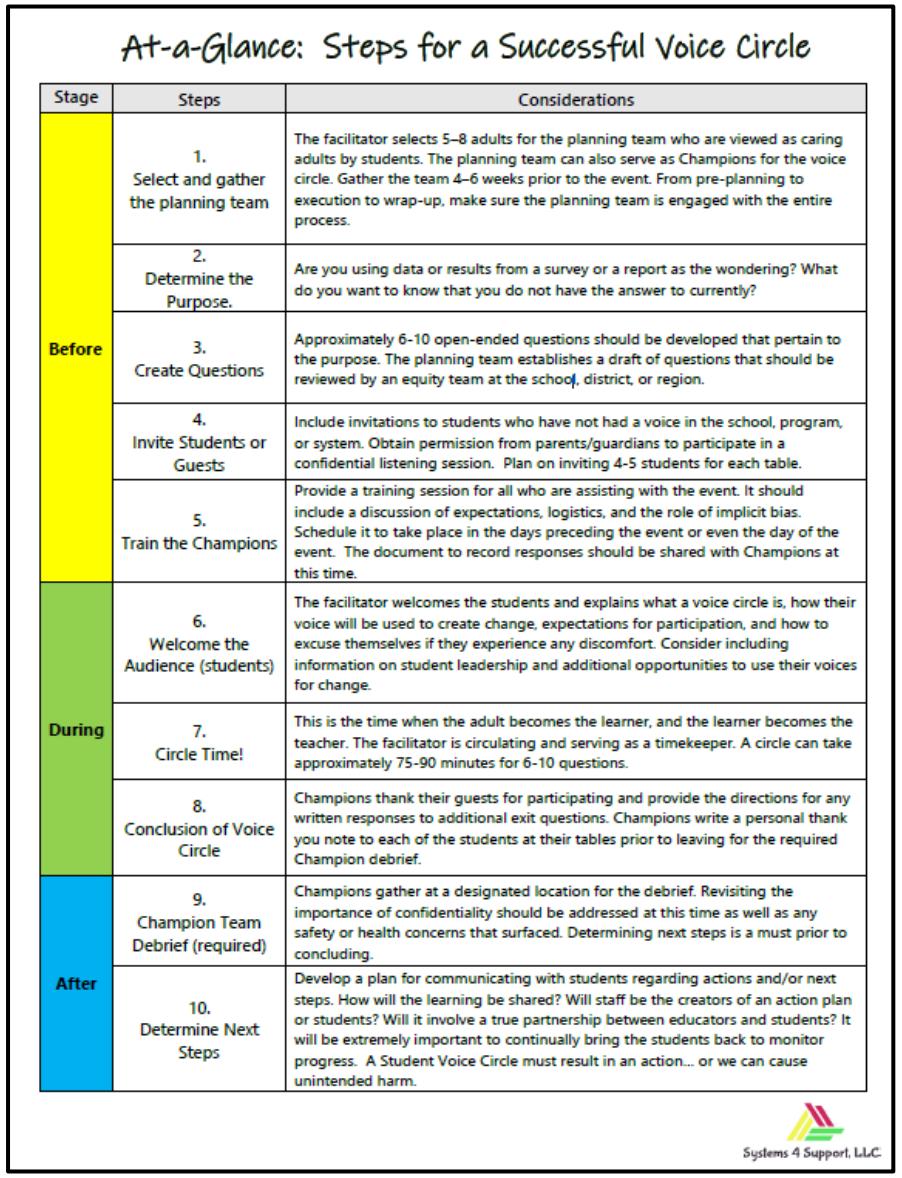

At-a-Glance: Steps for a Successful Voice Circle

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.

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

Systems 4 Support, LLC

VOICE CIRCLE MENU OF POSSIBILITIES

PARTICIPANTS (Honored Guests):

a. Student/Scholar - Student focused gathering based on a data point, authentic wondering, or any topic related to learning from our scholars. Action planning is an expected outcome. Examples: Use as an opportunity to capture solutions based on climate, attendance, instruction, safety, etc.

b. Parent/Guardian or Community - Gathering based on problem-solving on a topic of concern. Examples: Parent/guardian or community safety topic, emergency preparedness, topic based on a survey or community concern.

c. Staff - Gathering with staff members to gather feedback on specific topics. Examples: Consider holding a Voice Circle with bus drivers, attendance clerks, or paraeducators as they provide excellent, often untapped insight.

MENU of VOICE CIRCLES:

a. Attendance- Designed to explore the root cause of attendance-related barriers. They will surface issues regarding equity. Participants: Students, Community, Parents/Guardians, Staff, and/or Attendance Clerks.

b. Pay it Forward- End of the year, quarter, semester gathering designed to reflect on learning and inform the future. Examples: Specific grade levels gather prior to transitioning to a new grade level to inform the school staff on possible improvements.

c. Feedback Loop -An opportunity to bring forth several issues, thoughts, ideas in a small group setting. Topics are placed at different tables and guests can spend time at tables of choice. Topics can be chosen ahead of time through a brief survey or generated based on data reports. Examples: A variety of topics can be discussed such as homework, standards-based grading, school activities, school calendar, scheduling, mental health support, attendance, safety related topics, etc.

d. Partners in Improvement- A gathering specifically designed for continuous improvement efforts. Data (contextual, perceptual, achievement, demographic) are used to paint a portion of the picture with guests providing the complete picture (the "other" data) regarding current reality and next steps. Action planning is an outcome. Examples would include school improvement and progress monitoring. Partnering with student groups who are typically not the voices invited to the table is critically important.

f. Focused- Gathering designed for specific topic or content to capture the expertise of the guests. Examples: Curriculum Adoptions, Behavior Support, Social-Emotional, etc.

g. Scholar or Student-Gathering designed to provide a safe space for students to provide feedback and to partner with adults to improve the school experience. Action planning is an outcome. Examples: Feedback from students on specific topics such as attendance, instruction, engagement, data source, student generated topics, etc.

h. Transitional Years: A gathering designed to uncover the barriers to the successful transition of students between levels of schooling. Examining the social, emotional, developmental, and academic challenges by engaging in dialogue with students will reveal the modifications needed in the educational system so that all students can thrive.

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Any of the gatherings noted can be taken to an online platform

Menu of Possibilities

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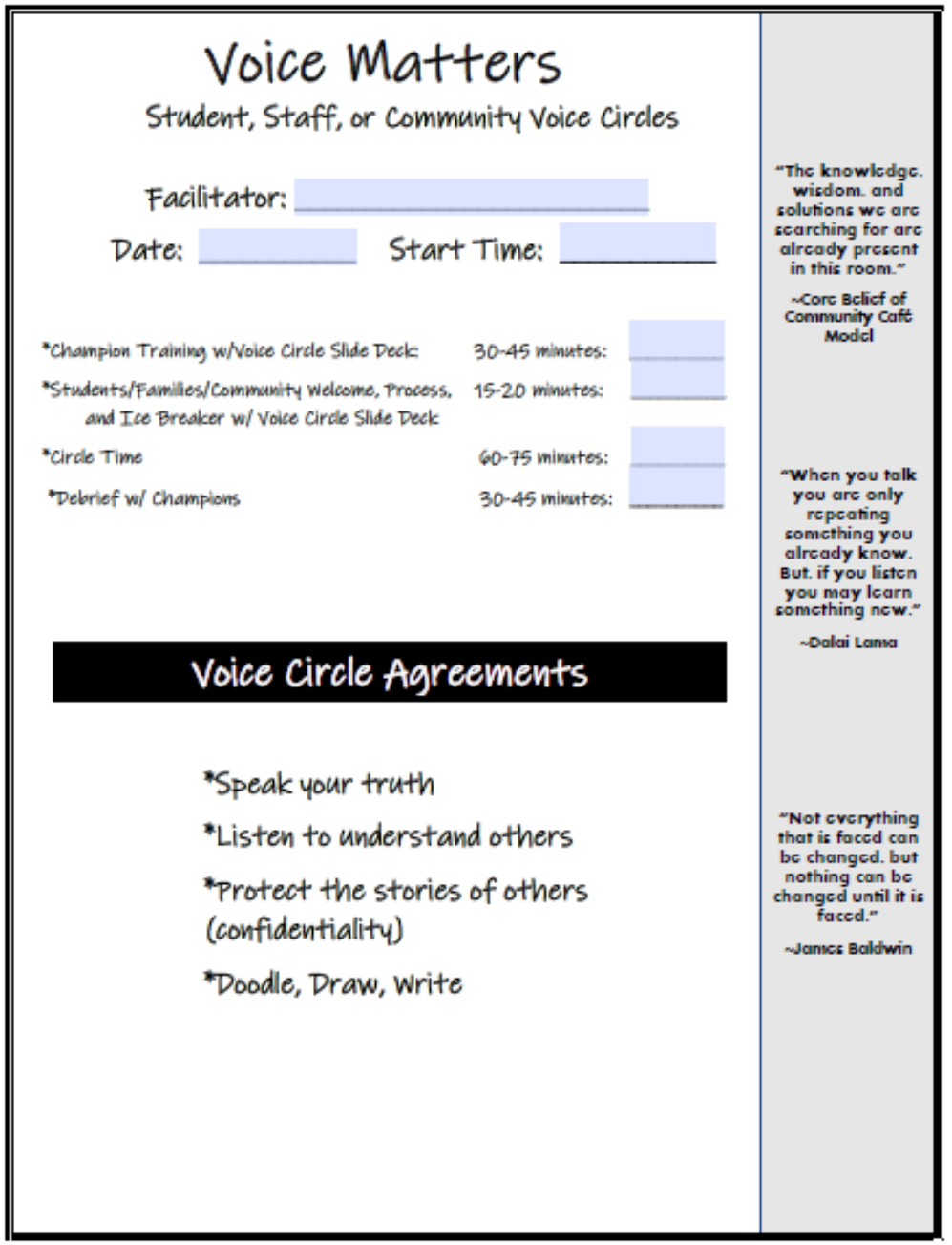
AGENDA



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

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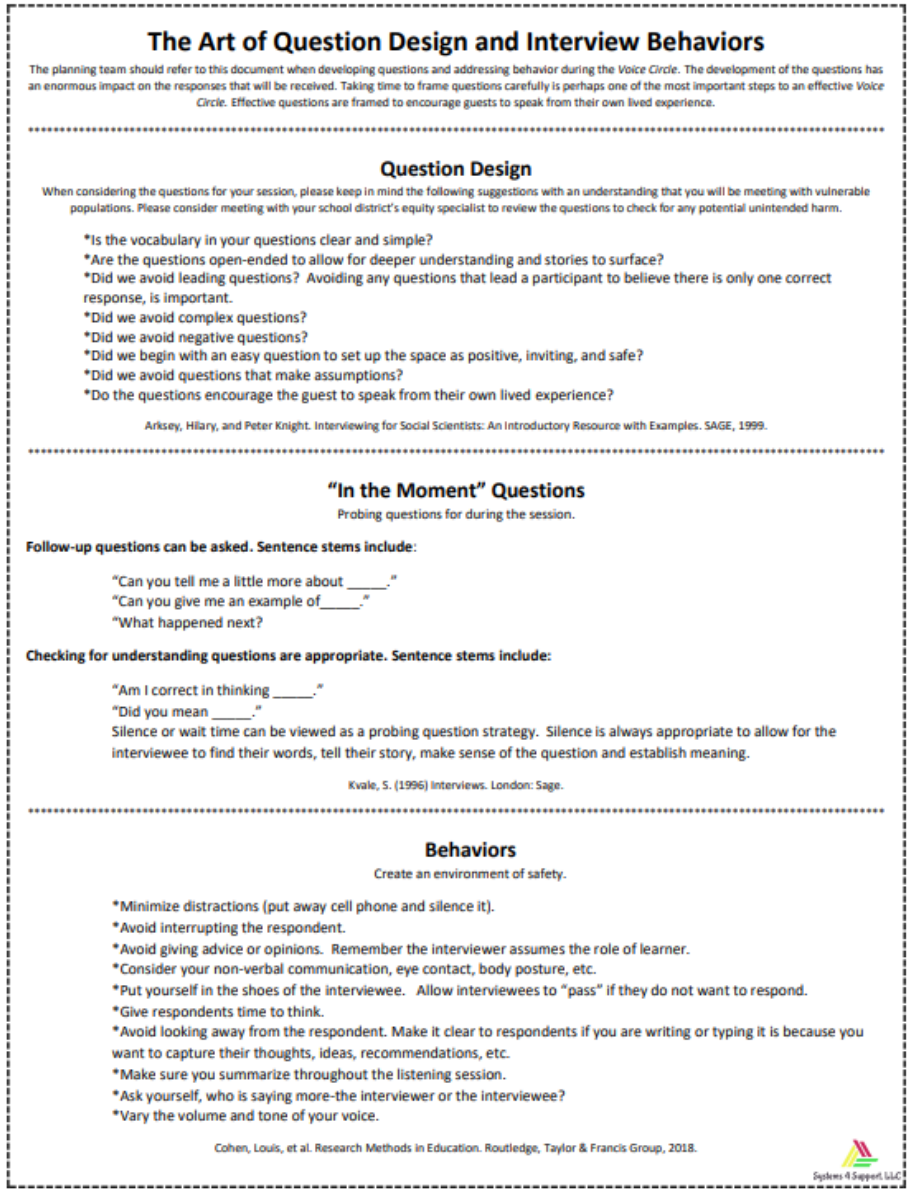
The Art of Question Design and Interview Behaviors

https://www.systems4support.com



The Art of Question Design and Interview Behaviors

The planning team should refer to this document when developing questions and addressing behavior during the *Voice Circle*. The development of the questions has an enormous impact on the responses that will be received. Taking time to frame questions carefully is perhaps one of the most important steps to an effective *Voice Circle*. Effective questions are framed to encourage guests to speak from their own lived experience.

Question Design

When considering the questions for your session, please keep in mind the following suggestions with an understanding that you will be meeting with vulnerable populations. Please consider meeting with your school district's equity specialist to review the questions to check for any potential unintended harm.

*Is the vocabulary in your questions clear and simple?
*Are the questions open-ended to allow for deeper understanding and stories to surface?
*Did we avoid leading questions? Avoiding any questions that lead a participant to believe there is only one correct response, is important.
*Did we avoid complex questions?
*Did we avoid negative questions?
*Did we begin with an easy question to set up the space as positive, inviting, and safe?
*Did we avoid questions that make assumptions?
*Do the questions encourage the guest to speak from their own lived experience?

Arksey, Hilary, and Peter Knight. Interviewing for Social Scientists: An Introductory Resource with Examples. SAGE, 1999.

"In the Moment" Questions

Probing questions for during the session.

Follow-up questions can be asked. Sentence stems include:

"Can you tell me a little more about _____."
"Can you give me an example of_____."
"What happened next?

Checking for understanding questions are appropriate. Sentence stems include:

"Am I correct in thinking _____."
"Did you mean _____."
Silence or wait time can be viewed as a probing question strategy. Silence is always appropriate to allow for the interviewee to find their words, tell their story, make sense of the question and establish meaning.

Kvale, S. (1996) Interviews. London: Sage.

Behaviors

Create an environment of safety.

*Minimize distractions (put away cell phone and silence it).
*Avoid interrupting the respondent.
*Avoid giving advice or opinions. Remember the interviewer assumes the role of learner.
*Consider your non-verbal communication, eye contact, body posture, etc.
*Put yourself in the shoes of the interviewee. Allow interviewees to "pass" if they do not want to respond.
*Give respondents time to think.
*Avoid looking away from the respondent. Make it clear to respondents if you are writing or typing it is because you want to capture their thoughts, ideas, recommendations, etc.
*Make sure you summarize throughout the listening session.
*Ask yourself, who is saying more-the interviewer or the interviewee?
*Vary the volume and tone of your voice.

Cohen, Louis, et al. Research Methods in Education. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2018.

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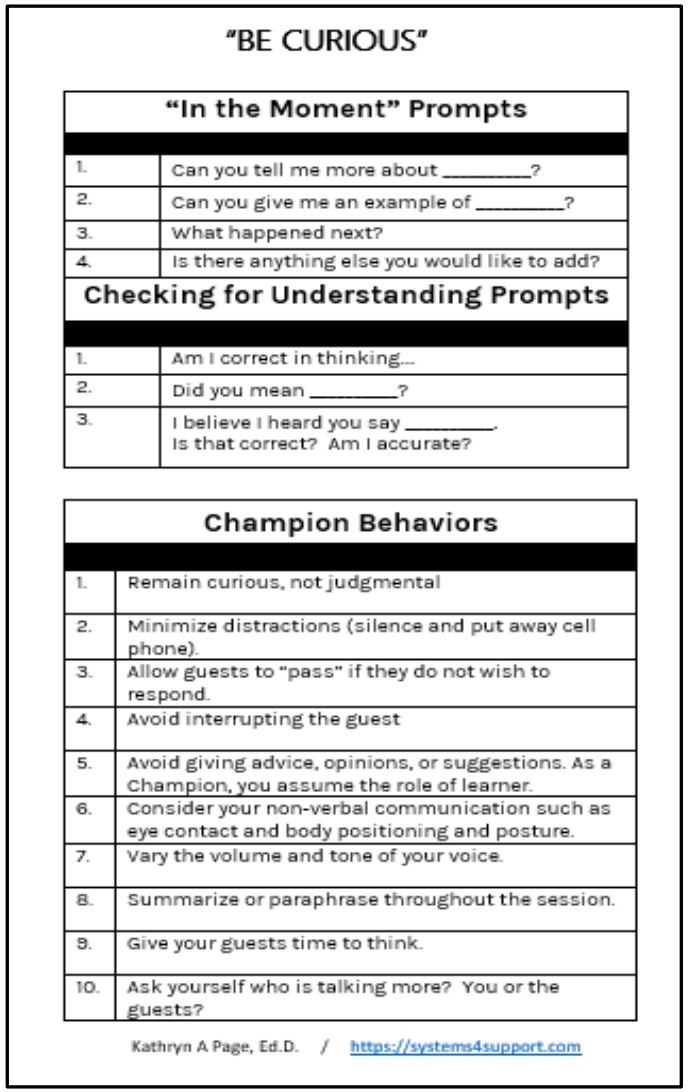
AT A GLANCE FOR COMMUNITY/STUDENT VOICE CIRCLES



"BE CURIOUS"

"In the Moment" Prompts	
1.	Can you tell me more about _____?
2.	Can you give me an example of _____?
3.	What happened next?
4.	Is there anything else you would like to add?

Checking for Understanding Prompts	
1.	Am I correct in thinking...
2.	Did you mean _____?
3.	I believe I heard you say _____. Is that correct? Am I accurate?

Champion Behaviors	
1.	Remain curious, not judgmental
2.	Minimize distractions (silence and put away cell phone).
3.	Allow guests to "pass" if they do not wish to respond.
4.	Avoid interrupting the guest
5.	Avoid giving advice, opinions, or suggestions. As a Champion, you assume the role of learner.
6.	Consider your non-verbal communication such as eye contact and body positioning and posture.
7.	Vary the volume and tone of your voice.
8.	Summarize or paraphrase throughout the session.
9.	Give your guests time to think.
10.	Ask yourself who is talking more? You or the guests?

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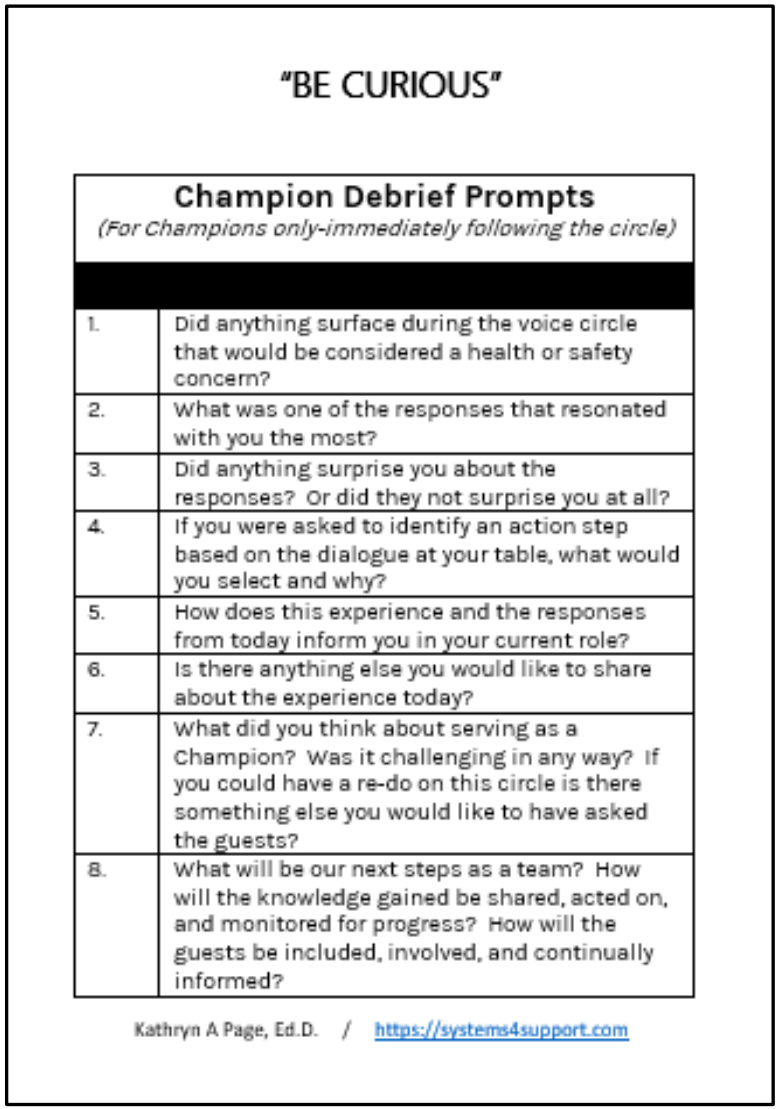

"BE CURIOUS"

Champion Debrief Prompts *(For Champions only-immediately following the circle)*	
1.	Did anything surface during the voice circle that would be considered a health or safety concern?
2.	What was one of the responses that resonated with you the most?
3.	Did anything surprise you about the responses? Or did they not surprise you at all?
4.	If you were asked to identify an action step based on the dialogue at your table, what would you select and why?
5.	How does this experience and the responses from today inform you in your current role?
6.	Is there anything else you would like to share about the experience today?
7.	What did you think about serving as a Champion? Was it challenging in any way? If you could have a re-do on this circle is there something else you would like to have asked the guests?
8.	What will be our next steps as a team? How will the knowledge gained be shared, acted on, and monitored for progress? How will the guests be included, involved, and continually informed?

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Guidelines for Developing Questions

*Are the questions authentic? We ask questions for what we truly do not have the answer to and genuinely want to know.
*Is the vocabulary in the questions clear and simple?
*Are the questions open-ended to allow for deeper understanding and for stories to surface?
*Did we avoid leading questions? Our guests should not believe there is only one correct response.
*Did we avoid complex questions?
*Is our first question for the voice circle somewhat easy to set up the space as positive, inviting, and safe?
*Did we avoid questions that are based on assumptions?
*Do the questions encourage the guest to speak from their own lived experience?

TRY IT OUT

Forming Questions with a Purpose

(Please record at least 3 safety related questions.)

My Role (Teacher, principal, student, supt., law enforcement, counselor, etc.)	Respondent: Role of the Person You Would Like to Respond in a Safety-Focused Voice Circle (law enforcement, student, teacher, counselor, etc.)	Safety Question (It must be a genuine wondering for which you do not know the answer)
1.		
2.		
3.		

Question Guidelines:

*Are the questions authentic? We ask questions for what we truly do not have the answer to and genuinely want to know.
*Is the vocabulary in the questions clear and simple?
*Are the questions open-ended to allow for deeper understanding and for stories to surface?
*Did we avoid leading questions? Our guests should not believe there is only one correct response.
*Did we avoid complex-multistep questions?
*Did we avoid questions that are based on assumptions?
*Do the questions encourage the guest to speak from their own lived experience?

What else do we need to know about conducting a voice circle?

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

Stage	Steps	Considerations
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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.

Train the Champions

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

Stage	Steps	Considerations
Before	1. Select and gather the planning team	
	2. Determine the Purpose.	
	3. Create Questions	
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	5. Train the Champions	
During	6. Welcome the Audience (students)	
	7. Circle Time!	
	8. Conclusion of Voice Circle	
After	9. Champion Team Debrief (required)	
	10. Determine Next Steps	

How Can Bias Impact Voice Circles?

Biases, no matter their source, can impact interactions in several ways. The following are generally most prominent:

- **Body Language** – Just as you may have a first impression, the subject will also have a first impression of you. Bias can impact body language and communicate negative feelings.
- **Verbal Expression** – Bias can influence how you speak to others. You may speak with someone in flowery terms, or you may show a lack of respect in your word choices.
- **Listening Skills** – You may show your bias by being easily distracted or otherwise not actively listening to the subject. Most people can tell when we are distracted. How does that make you feel when it happens to you?
- **Affinity Bias** – If your bias is positive it can result in assigning certain traits to the subject even if it is not justified. This can skew data and create false narratives.

Capturing Dialogue Doc.

_____HS Safety Focused Student Voice Circle Date: _____

Table # _____

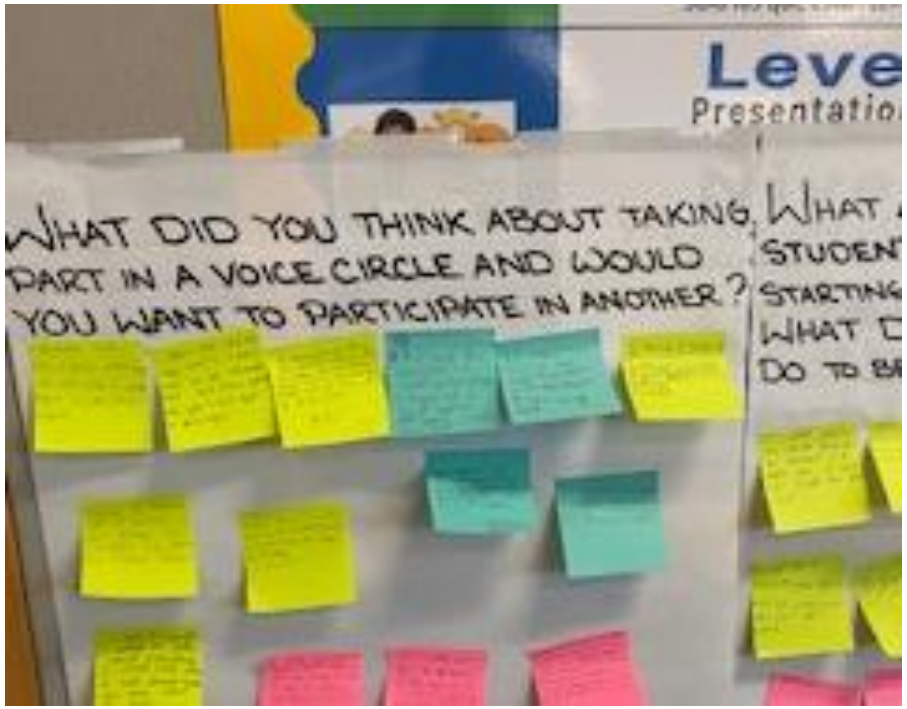
Entry Point: _____ Data (survey, incident, etc.)

Champion Name: _____

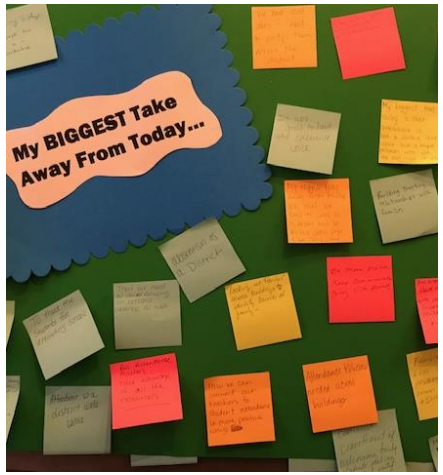
Champion/Facilitator Script:

1. "Welcome to our Student Voice Circle! Thank you for taking the time to assist our staff with understanding the responses to a survey you took this year so that we can take action. Before we begin, let's start by having each of us share our name, grade, role at HS (if a staff member) and something you are looking forward to this summer. I will start (champion/facilitator begins to make sure all students are at ease).
2. "We invited you here today because we have some questions that we don't have the answers to. All of you took an anonymous survey this year that we reviewed as a staff. We quickly determined we needed to go back to our students to dig a bit deeper-ask additional questions so that we can take the correct next steps. We need YOUR VOICE. Please know that we are **NOT** searching for a specific response because it does not exist. Whatever you say is 100% correct! We would really appreciate you providing us with as much detail as possible. At the end of our time today we will have 2 additional questions, but they will be recorded by you on individual post-it notes and placed on the chart paper you see posted (point to where the chart paper is with the questions written at the top). You should not put your name on the post-it notes unless you want to.
3. Today I will be asking 8 questions. You will notice that almost all of the questions today are based on safety. We don't need to go in any specific order when answering the questions in our group. Please know that if a question makes you feel uncomfortable in any way you can say "pass". We will not be recording names of others on our recording document unless it is a compliment you would like shared. We have 8 questions and 60 minutes for our time today. With __ number of students., it means each of you will have approximately ___ minutes to respond to each question.
4. You will see me typing as you respond (show the doc to the group). I am recording responses but there is not one place on this document that has any of your names. The only name on here is my name. After the voice circle is over, all of the responses from everyone in this room will go on one master sheet. It will be a long list of responses from everyone in this room. From time to time, I might ask you to tell me more or give me an example of what you are sharing. I also might ask if I captured your response correctly. What you won't hear today is me giving my opinion, telling stories, or answering questions. Voice circles are all about honoring the voices of our guests. You are the guest and as soon as we begin…you are also the teachers. I am here to create and protect a safe space for each of you and to receive, clarify, capture, facilitate, and learn.
5. This next part is an important part of the voice circle process. Know that what you share today is **YOUR** truth. We have group agreements within voice circles so we maintain a safe space for all to speak from their own lived experiences. These group agreements are also for the staff in this room. Know that you will not hear any of the staff members sharing or talking about answers that are ever tied to a name of one of you. We couldn't be here at this table with you if we didn't agree to be completely confidential. Now let's take a look at the group agreements for all of us. Please feel free to ask questions or ask for examples if they are not clear.

KPAGE, 2023, Systems 4 Support, LLC


Leve
Presentatio
WHAT DID YOU THINK ABOUT TAKING PART IN A VOICE CIRCLE AND WOULD YOU WANT TO PARTICIPATE IN ANOTHER?
WHAT
STUDEN
STARTING
WHAT D
DO TO B

Commitment I Made Today....


My BIGGEST Take Away From Today...

Table

Debrief w/Champions

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

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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.

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TEAM DEBRIEF TIME

(immediately following the voice circle)

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

~James Baldwin

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Voice Circle Debrief		
Date:	Location:	Facilitator:
Champions (Names)		

Questions	
1.Did anything surface during the voice circle that would be considered a health or safety concern?	
2. What was one of the responses that resonated with you the most?	
3. Did anything surprise you about the responses? Or did they not surprise you at all?	
4. If you were asked to identify an action step based on the dialogue at your table, what would you select and why?	
5. How did this experience and the responses from today inform you in your current role?	
6. Is there anything else you would like to share about the experience today?	
7. What did you think about serving as a Champion? Was it challenging in any way? If you could have a re-do on this circle is there something else you would like to have asked the guests?	
8. What will be our next steps as a team? How will the knowledge gained be shared, acted on, and monitored for progress? How will our guests be included, involved, and continually informed	

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Debrief Document

Who:
Facilitator & Champions

When:
Immediately following a circle

Why:
Address immediate health and safety concerns and determine next steps

What happens after the Debrief?

Analysis to Action

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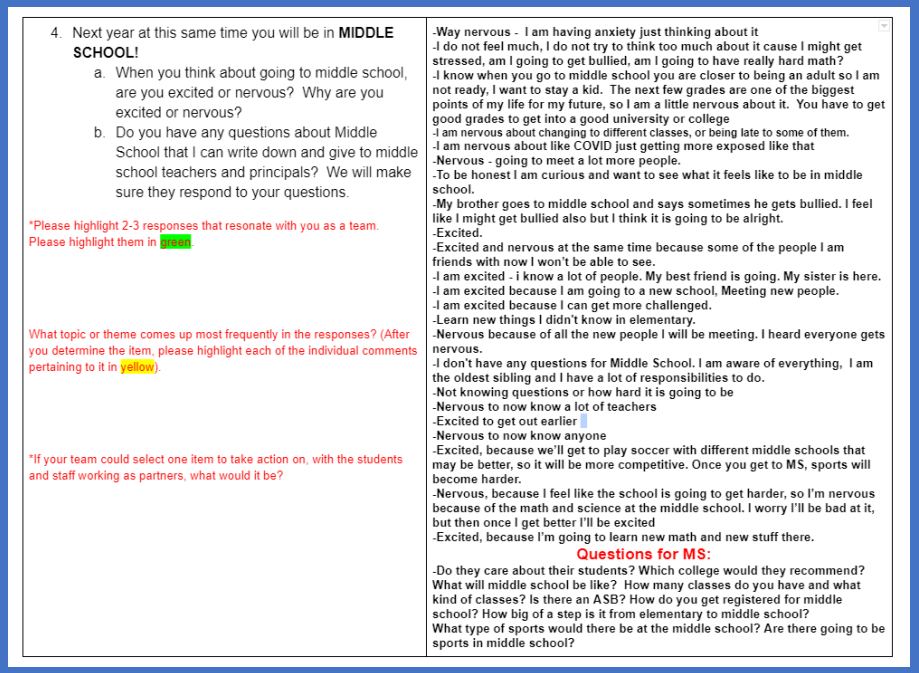
1.Highlight 2-3 responses that resonate with you as a team. Please highlight them in green.

2.What topic or theme comes up frequently in the responses? (After you determine the item, please highlight each of the individual comments pertaining to it in yellow).

3.If your team could select one item to take action on, with the students and staff working as partners, what would it be? Please write the action step/s and highlight in pink.

Data Analysis



4. Next year at this same time you will be in **MIDDLE SCHOOL!** a. When you think about going to middle school, are you excited or nervous? Why are you excited or nervous? b. Do you have any questions about Middle School that I can write down and give to middle school teachers and principals? We will make sure they respond to your questions. *Please highlight 2-3 responses that resonate with you as a team. Please highlight them in green What topic or theme comes up most frequently in the responses? (After you determine the item, please highlight each of the individual comments pertaining to it in yellow). *If your team could select one item to take action on, with the students and staff working as partners, what would it be?	-Way nervous - I am having anxiety just thinking about it -I do not feel much, I do not try to think too much about it cause I might get stressed, am I going to get bullied, am I going to have really hard math? -I know when you go to middle school you are closer to being an adult so I am not ready, I want to stay a kid. The next few grades are one of the biggest points of my life for my future, so I am a little nervous about it. You have to get good grades to get into a good university or college -I am nervous about changing to different classes, or being late to some of them. -I am nervous about like COVID just getting more exposed like that -Nervous - going to meet a lot more people. -To be honest I am curious and want to see what it feels like to be in middle school. -My brother goes to middle school and says sometimes he gets bullied. I feel like I might get bullied also but I think it is going to be alright. -Excited. -Excited and nervous at the same time because some of the people I am friends with now I won't be able to see. -I am excited - i know a lot of people. My best friend is going. My sister is here. -I am excited because I am going to a new school, Meeting new people. -I am excited because I can get more challenged. -Learn new things I didn't know in elementary. -Nervous because of all the new people I will be meeting. I heard everyone gets nervous. -I don't have any questions for Middle School. I am aware of everything, I am the oldest sibling and I have a lot of responsibilities to do. -Not knowing questions or how hard it is going to be -Nervous to now know a lot of teachers -Excited to get out earlier -Nervous to now know anyone -Excited, because we'll get to play soccer with different middle schools that may be better, so it will be more competitive. Once you get to MS, sports will become harder. -Nervous, because I feel like the school is going to get harder, so I'm nervous because of the math and science at the middle school. I worry I'll be bad at it, but then once I get better I'll be excited -Excited, because I'm going to learn new math and new stuff there. **Questions for MS:** -Do they care about their students? Which college would they recommend? What will middle school be like? How many classes do you have and what kind of classes? Is there an ASB? How do you get registered for middle school? How big of a step is it from elementary to middle school? What type of sports would there be at the middle school? Are there going to be sports in middle school?

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WORTHY ISSUE ?

How do you decide which issue to address through an action plan?

1. **Issue appears to be pervasive-impact of issue is widepread**
2. **Issue was mentioned frequently by guests**
3. **Addressing the issue could positively impact a large number of students**

Wellman, B. M., & Lipton, L. (2017). *Data-driven dialogue: A facilitator's Guide to Collaborative Inquiry*. MiraVia, LLC.

Analysis to Action

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TAKE ACTION

VOICE CIRCLE ACTION PLAN

SCHOOL or DISTRICT: _____

CURRENT REALITY: (A. What was the focus for the listening session? B. Why was it chosen as the focus? C. Was it based on data? If so state it here)

SMARTIE GOAL (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time-Bound, Inclusive, Equitable):

The following actions/strategies were selected because they are supported by research and/or are examples of best practice

Action Steps to Achieve Goal	Strategies or Training?	Timeline	Resources Available	Who is Responsible or Involved?	Monitoring Effectiveness
What **actions** will occur? What steps will take place? ***(Example: The participants of the voice circle will take part in an equity audit of attendance for the school.)***	**How** will participants acquire the necessary skills and attitude to implement the action? ***(Example: The principal has received training on the tool and will share it with the team)***	When will this strategy or action **begin?** ***(Example: We will conduct the audit by _____.***	What are the existing and new **resources** that we will use to accomplish the action? ***(Example: The equity audit tool will be used. Data without names will be provided)***	**Who** will provide the leadership? Who will provide the support? ***(Example: The participants of the voice circle, school principal, and staff members who attended.)***	**What** ongoing formative evidence will we gather to show this action is making a difference **When** will it be gathered? **Who** will monitor -students? ***(Example: We will examine the results and commit to using the tool at the building every year. Based on the results we will hold additional mtgs. to determine action steps to address any inequity we see in policies, procedures, etc.***
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					

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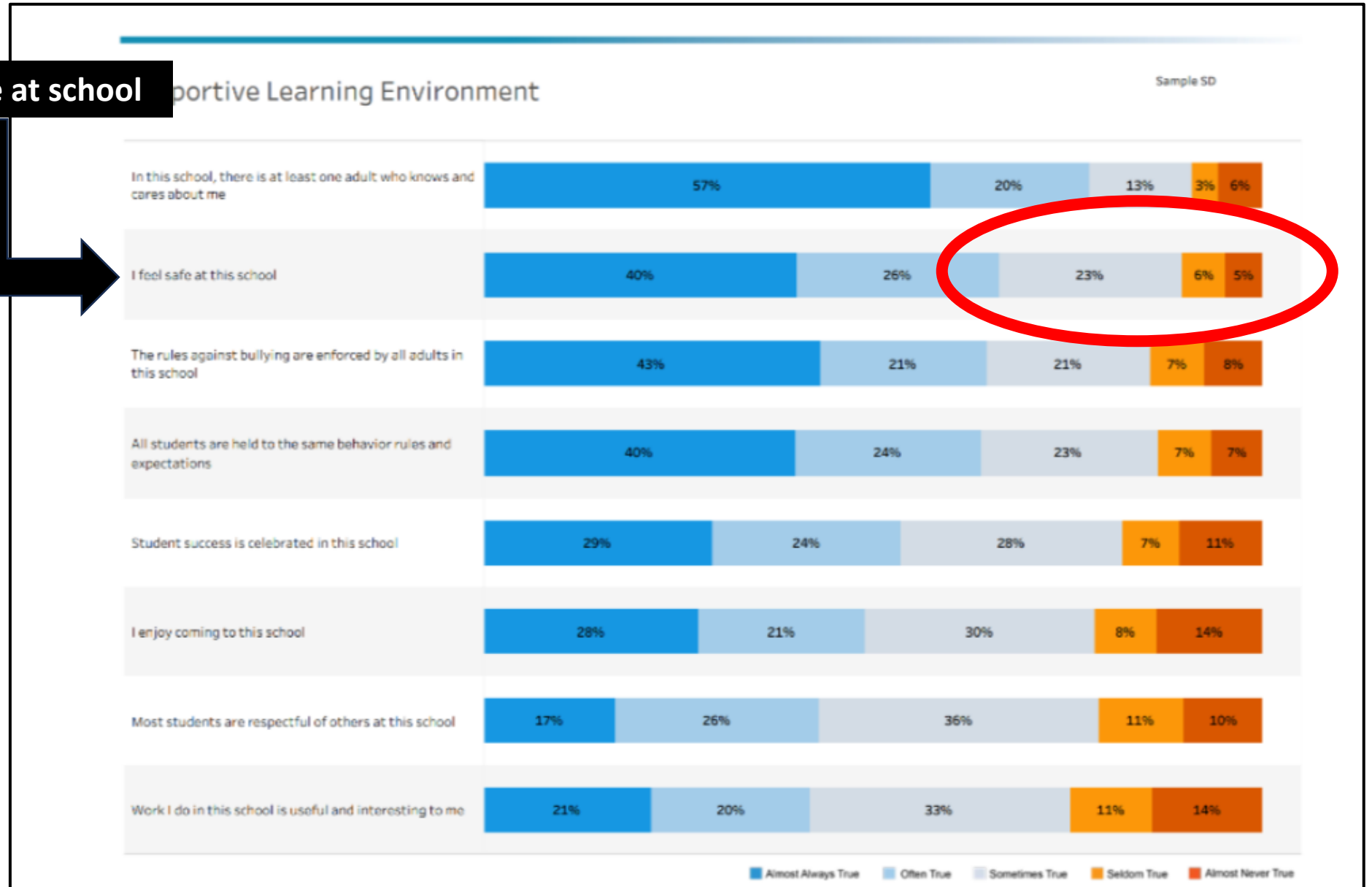
Something to ponder as our time draws to a close…
Reflect on your next move in your current role.
What is that one thing?

Sample Report from a Typical Student Survey

I feel safe at school



=34%

Sometimes true, seldom true, almost never true

"FISH DISCOVER WATER LAST"

~Ethiopian Proverb

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“Fish discover water last” is an Ethiopian proverb that begs us to consider what is our water?

The only way fish will discover water is if it goes out of its environment, the pond, lake, river or ocean it is immersed in. Human beings are very similar when it comes to our own “environment,” which are our rituals, routines, commitments, norms, beliefs, and our identity. We are so immersed in our “environment” that it is difficult for us to see it, just like the fish doesn’t see the water.

What are we missing about our efforts related to safety in our schools because we are so immersed? Is it possible that engaging in dialogue to collect perceptual evidence could help us in discovering our water and what we have been missing?

What remains invisible to all of us? Something to ponder.

QUESTIONS
1.Tell me about a staff member who has made a positive difference in your life, your go-to person. What **specifically** is it about the person that makes you want to go to them? What do they say or do? The person can be from any grade level…and this is the one time you get to share the name of the person. (If a student does not have a person: Tell me what characteristics a teacher needs to have for you to feel comfortable to talk to them about anything)
2.What does it look, and sound like to feel safe at school?
3.This is a 2-part question and is based on the results from the survey you took this year. a. Why do you think 40% of our students at this school don't feel safe at school? b. If you could do anything in our school to change this, what would it be?
4.Tell me about a time when you felt safe at our school? (If they don't feel safe, they could select a different school or grade level to describe)
5.Tell me about a time when you felt the least safe at our school? Please provide as many details as possible.
6.Are there places in our school where you feel most safe? Where are the places and why do you feel safe there?
7. Are there places in the school where you feel least safe? Where are the places and why do you not feel safe?
8. Is there anything else you would like to talk about or share related to safety at our school?

Safety-Focused Community Circle
Audience: 9th, 10th, and 11th Grade Students

Survey Results (October 22): 40% of students don't feel safe
Voice Circle Held? June 2023

**We are scared because of all the lock-downs. We never knew what happened. We don't know if it is a drill or real. When it is real, a lot of different stories are told. We aren't told anything.*

**Unsafe places? There are places where the cameras don't see you. We know where they are.*

**The most dangerous place is outside the bathrooms. Cameras don't go there and there are people who hang-out there and say and do things to female students.*

Do you see what I see?

1. Survey results received in October 2022
2. Voice Circle held in June 2023
3. Could we have prevented anything?
4. How often are surveys administered and actions not taken?

TRY IT OUT

Forming Questions with a Purpose

(Please record at least 3 safety related questions.)

My Role (Teacher, principal, student, supt., law enforcement, counselor, etc.)	Respondent: Role of the Person You Would Like to Respond in a Safety-Focused Voice Circle (law enforcement, student, teacher, counselor, etc.)	Safety Question (It must be a genuine wondering for which you do not know the answer)
1.		
2.		
3.		

Question Guidelines:

*Are the questions authentic? We ask questions for what we truly do not have the answer to and genuinely want to know.
*Is the vocabulary in the questions clear and simple?
*Are the questions open-ended to allow for deeper understanding and for stories to surface?
*Did we avoid leading questions? Our guests should not believe there is only one correct response.
*Did we avoid complex-multistep questions?
*Did we avoid questions that are based on assumptions?
*Do the questions encourage the guest to speak from their own lived experience?

Voice Matters

For additional Information about the process and benefits of using voice circles , please contact …

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Feedback Needed

Please take a moment to use this QR code to provide feedback regarding this session.
Thank you!

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