

## **What is *student voice*?**

In education, the concept of student voice is twofold. It refers to the expression of values, opinions, beliefs, and perspectives of individuals and groups of students in a school and to instructional approaches and techniques that are based on student choices, interests, passions, and ambitions.

Student voice acknowledges that students have unique perspectives on learning, teaching, and schooling, and should have the opportunity to actively shape their own education. By providing students with intentional opportunities to be active participants in their schools, communities, and education system, they are able to contribute to decision making processes and collectively influence outcomes through sharing their hopes, ideas, views, and concerns.

## **Bringing student voice into collaborative planning, programming & transitions:**

The following are suggestions of guiding questions. Consider answering from the student's perspective first.

### **All About Me:**

- This is who I am (name, age, family make up, quick personality description such as "I'm funny, curious, and love to be exposed to new things" or "I know what I like and am not afraid to tell you!")

### **Communication:**

- This is how you can help me with my communication...
- It helps me to understand when you...(length of sentence, processing time needed, repetition of keywords, sign language plus verbal language, pictures to support language, etc.)
- To communicate I use...(consider completing a personal communication dictionary, describe use of words/pictures/gestures/eye gaze/etc.) Some examples of what this might look or sound like are...
- The communication equipment I will be bringing with me is...
- You can prepare the following equipment for when I arrive...(class based apps, visual schedules, photos of classmates, object calendars, etc.)

### **Academics:**

- My favourite classes are...
- It helps me to learn when you...(examples might include: preload vocabulary, work with a friend, have some time in class followed by 1:1 time outside of class, use simple books that are at my grade level such as TarHeel Reader stories, etc.)
- It is best for me when my schedule... (what routines are important, how to ensure predictability, etc.)
- Academic tools that help me are... (apps, standing frames, pencil grips, etc.)

- I show my learning by... (examples might include: answering yes/no or multiple choice questions, making a story, getting involved in a project). Consider bringing examples of work the student has completed to the transition meeting.

### **Socio-Emotional:**

- I feel proud when/I feel motivated when...
- I like praise when... (provide forms of praise that are most effective)
- I enjoy working with friends when... (mention specific peer connections where relevant)
- The work is meaningful for my life (provide examples if possible of meaningful work)
- I can see/hear/touch/smell/taste what I am doing (provide examples of how to involve senses in learning)
- I can be my best self when...
- I enjoy these sensory tools (bean bag, weighted blanket, favourite music, etc.; where possible describe sensory diet and how it looks to be regulated or dysregulated)

### **Care Routines:**

- My self-care and personal hygiene routines are...
- Here's how I give consent for these activities...
- This is how I help during these routines (what can the student do independently, with support, fully dependent aspects of the routines)
- These are some things you can do to prepare for my arrival (examples might include: placing visuals in the washroom, installing a lift, etc.)

### **Don't Forget!**

- This is what my schedule looked like last year...
- Here is a picture or video of me at school for you to see who I am and what I can do!

### **Other considerations for facilitating student voice:**

- Choice board
- Pictures/images chosen by student
- Word choices
- Provide daily self-reflection which can build information over time
- Creating authentic learning environments in the classroom where the student's have choices
- Provide multiple ways and number of opportunities to respond
- Authentic questions that are structured to allow the student to respond in the way they communicate
- Pre-teach the vocabulary and concepts that you will be asking about
- Give explanations in small, distinct steps
- Be concise with verbal information
- Ask questions requiring short answers or break complex questions into shorter response answers
- Create a video of the student response so the non-verbal communication is also included as well as the specific words and phrasing of the student

## **Additional Resources:**

### **[Intelligent Lives](#)**

Dan Habib has many resources focusing on student voice on his new documentary film site called *Intelligent Lives*. The film features three pioneering young American adults with intellectual disabilities – Micah, Naieer, and Naomie – who challenge perceptions of intelligence as they navigate high school, college, and the workforce.

### **[Communication Assistance for Youth and Adults \(CAYA\)](#)**

**[Transitional Planning for Youth with Special Needs](#)** - p.27 - Getting to Know the Youth - Gathering Information

## **Student Voice Definition Sources:**

- [Elevating Student Voice in Education](#)
- [Toward Authentic Student Voice in IEP in High School Students Research](#)
- [Student Voice A Growing Movement Within Education](#)
- [Why Student Voice Matters](#) - <https://www.enrichingstudents.com/why-student-voice-matters/>
- [Student Voice](#)
- [Resources on Engaging Student Voices](#)