

# 5 Principles for authentic engagement

## 1. Be solution oriented

Work with young people to have solution-oriented discussions about the problems they face in their school environment. The partnership should be focused on fostering creative approaches, increasing awareness, and ensuring equitable representation through this process.

## 2. Engage at various levels

As students, we want to work as your partner to find and test solutions to issues that arise. Engaging student perspectives is helpful on every level. Whether that is bouncing instructional ideas off of a student in a department meeting or working on scheduling with an administrator or having a student involved in decisions at the district level, policies that engage students will be more impactful.

## 3. Have empathy, not sympathy

Students are seeking empathy not sympathy. Students do not want to be viewed as lesser or treated like the “other”; meaningful engagement is empathizing with the student experience while seeing students as people who can provide valuable insights and information. This includes being treated as professionals who can propose valuable solutions to issues that directly affect them.

## 4. Drive change with equal-partnered relationships

Adult and student relationships are built on trust. When both parties trust each other and believe that the other is acting with best intentions, both adults and students will feel more comfortable sharing their experiences and using their voices.

## 5. Know that authenticity and impactfulness matter

These relationships will be authentic, sincere and impactful if both parties are to agree on what has been outlined above. When working alongside young people, know that your intentions and your impact must both be transparent and in the best interest of students.