

STUDENT
STUDENT
DEVELOP



Start a Chapter

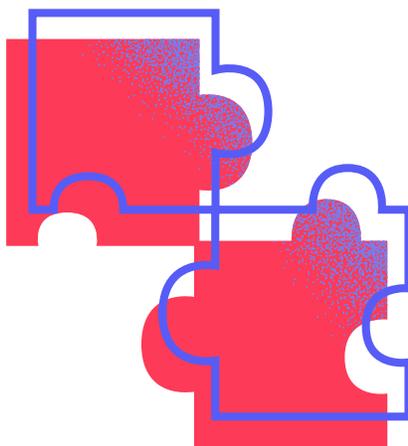
A Student Voice handbook



VOICE

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Who is Student Voice?

Our history

Student Voice is a student-run 501(c)3 nonprofit dedicated to strengthening the student movement for equitable schools, founded in 2012 by students from Fargo, North Dakota to Ferguson, Missouri and everywhere in between. What started as a Twitter chat centered around a simple hashtag, #StuVoice, has blossomed into a national movement.

Our goal

Through our core initiatives, Student Voice aims to illustrate the state of schools today, as well as identify student-centric and student-created solutions to address the systemic inequity in the American education system. This inequity manifests itself as a disparity in access to opportunities and resources across schools nationwide, specifically as it relates to socioeconomically disadvantaged students and school districts.

Our belief

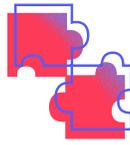
At Student Voice, we believe all students have the right to hold educational institutions accountable to them as partners in shaping their foundational experiences. Students must have a more powerful voice in order to combat the systemic inequity.

Student Bill of Rights



Access & Affordability

All students have the right to an affordable and equitable education.



Civic Participation

All students have the right to engage with their community and expect their schools to treat them with the rights of citizens.



Influence Decisions

All students have the right to shape decisions and institutions that will affect their future.



Deeper Learning

All students have the right to an education tailored to their individual needs and that prepares them for life beyond high school.



Diversity & Inclusivity

All students have the right to learn in an environment that doesn't discriminate against them and reflects the variety of backgrounds in the student body.



Due Process

All students have the right to understand existing rules in their school and the opportunity to address unfair treatment.



Free Expression

All students have the right to express themselves within an educational context.



Modern Technology

All students have the right to access modern technology to use for their education.



Positive School Climate

All students have the right to feel mentally, physically, and emotionally safe in school.

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.

Conversation guide

Here, we have detailed a few exercises that can help get the conversation started at your first meetings.

Group activities

Take a Stand (good for large groups)

The student leader possess a question to the group. Once students hear the question, they move to the designated “agree” or “disagree” side of the room (strongly agree/strongly disagree can be options, if desired). Once students congregate with those who hold a similar opinion, they have a set amount of time to discuss (suggested: 2-5 minutes). Each group will designate one spokesperson who will summarize what the group says and share with everyone in the room. The activity is repeated with a new question.

Circles

Students form two circles, one inside circle and one outside circle. Each student on the inside is paired with a student on the outside; they face each other. The leader poses a question to the whole group and pairs discuss their responses with each other. Then the leader signals students to rotate: Students on the outside circle move one space to the right so they are standing in front of a new person (or sitting). Then the leader poses a new question, and the process is repeated.

Roundtable (best for small groups)

In this activity, students will sit in a circle while a designated moderator poses questions to the group.

Sample questions:

- » Do you feel like students have a voice in our school? What can students impact?
- » Do you feel as though {insert right from the Student Bill of Rights here} is a right that all students have at our school?
- » Can you tell me something about your school that your teachers and administrators DON'T know?
- » What is one thing your dream school would have? What would it NOT have?
- » Do you feel like the things you are learning will benefit you after you graduate?
- » Is there an adult here that you feel values you as an individual?
- » What does student voice mean to you?
- » In what ways, if any, is your school supporting you to realize the future you

imagine for yourself?

- » What do you think is the ultimate purpose of school? What do you think should be the ultimate purpose of school?
- » How does school impact your social and emotional well being positively? How does school impact your social and emotional well being negatively?
- » How could you increase student voice in your own school?

Action plan

Here is an example of an action plan that your Chapter should develop to create change

Problem & Solution

Problem

The problem that has been identified is that there is not any student representation on the school board of your school. This is a major problem, because every decision that school board makes affects your education and your school. Therefore, students should have some input.

Solution

In order to solve this problem, you need to have student representatives on your school board. This means these students sit at the same table as the board, have a microphone like the board, and the ability to speak like the board.

Step 1

Now that you have identified the problem and your goal for a solution, you must plan out how you will get there. The first step for this process would be to poll students. Ask at least 100 students if they believe the school board should have student representatives, yes or no. Once this is done, poll the teachers. This might require help from the administration and/or other teachers. This is where your teacher advisor can help guide you.

Step 2

Begin to think how and who you will pitch your idea to. In this case, now you have your data on whether people agree with you wanting to put student representation on the school board your team can start thinking where to begin trying to make this happen. This process will probably end in you and your team pitching this idea to the school board at a board meeting.

Step 3

Research what has been done in other parts of your state and the country. There are multiple school boards that already have student representatives, some even having voting power. Contact these schools and try to find out how their student representative position works. You want to get a general consensus of how other school boards have implemented this, so that you can clearly state what it is you

want when you pitch this to your school board.

Step 4

Come up with a plan for how the student representative(s) will be selected. Is it through student council elections, an application, teacher recommendation, or a combination? Make sure to start with your first choice, but have backups in case the school board does not agree to the first one.

Step 5

Once you have all this information gathered and planned out, create your presentation. The easiest form is through a powerpoint. Order your information in an easy-to-follow format, explaining the problem, why it is a problem, what others have done to solve it, your solution, the pros, and who agrees with you.

Step 6

Do several practice runs. Make sure each presenter knows exactly what they will be saying and when they will do so. You want to be well spoken, concise, and professional. This includes basic public speaking skills, such as good eye contact, not fidgeting, loud speaking voice, etc. Groups to practice with could include: your POV group, a group of teachers, your administration, or parents. Note: Presenting in front of your administration is a great idea, because they know how the school board acts, and can likely guess how it will respond, including the type of questions it will ask. It is also good to keep the administration in the know with regards to what you are doing.

Step 7

Contact your school board to ask for a presentation spot at a board meeting. Explain what it is that you want to present about, and about how long you want to present for.

Step 8

Present! The day is here, and it is your time to shine. Get students, parents, teachers, and administrators to attend in support of your pitch.

Step 9

After your pitch, how you proceed will depend on the reaction of the school board. But once this is done, you can plan for how to move forward, and hopefully succeed in getting student representation on your school board.

Social media policy

The following articles outline Student Voice Incorporated's policy(s) and procedure(s) that dictate the management of social media and public statements that directly reflect Student Voice Inc. and all affiliated Student Voice Chapters.

1. Online activity and statements directly affiliated with or coming from a Student Voice Inc. or affiliated Student Voice Chapter must not use language deemed as inappropriate, derogatory, defamatory, obscene, explicit, threatening, offensive, obscene, libelous and/or violates intellectual property laws. The Student Voice Inc. Executive Team and Board of Directors are both granted the right to delete and remove content, without limitation, categorized in article 1.
 - » In general, a good rule of thumb would be to not publish or post content, opinions or speech that one would otherwise not want the public to see. If one has to second guess to post a particular item, it usually is a bad idea to post.
 - » Please keep in consideration Content Warnings, Trigger Warnings, or even Topic Warnings when posting questionable content. Utilize the Student Voice Inc. Director of Communications if one is weary of posting questionable content.
 - » Whereas Student Voice Inc. supports and advocates for voice, one is encouraged to use the voice, tone and messaging that will best reach one's intended audience. It is required that one's voice and tone follow all policy(s) and procedure(s) in article 1 and sub articles a, b and c.
2. "Student Voice" and "StuVoice" are copyrighted and owned by Student Voice Incorporated. Access to the copyrighted name(s) is granted in good faith and good intention to grow the student voice movement across the United States.
3. One must follow all community guidelines and abide by the terms of service or community guidelines of each platform. Failure to follow these may result in the freezing or deletion of your account with no advance notice out of the control of Student Voice Inc.
4. Whereas Student Voice Inc. is a federally registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with the Internal Revenue Services(IRS), Student Voice Inc. and all affiliated Student Voice Chapters are prohibited by federal law to engage in partisan activities, including, but not limited to, endorsing candidates running for public office, campaigning for candidates running for public office, or voicing support for candidates running for public office. Individual Student Voice Chapter members are able to engage in endorsement activities as an individual

not as an affiliated Student Voice Chapter.

5. Whereas promotion is defined as activity that supports or provides active encouragement for the furtherance of a cause, venture, or aim, promotion of products, corporations and/or organizations that is not Student Voice Inc. or affiliated Student Voice Chapters is strictly prohibited. Promotion of synergistic nature can be discussed and posted with advance approval by the Student Voice Inc. Director of Communications.

One's access to and use of affiliated Student Voice Chapter resources and social media accounts utilizing Student Voice Inc. brand or copyrighted name(s) is conditioned on all above stated articles in the Student Voice Social Media Policy. If one disagrees with any stated article above, your access and privilege to Student Voice Chapter resources and social media accounts utilizing Student Voice Inc. brand or copyrighted name(s) will be terminated effective immediately. Student Voice withholds the right to terminate your access to Student Voice Chapter resources effective immediately and without prior notice, for any reason whatsoever, including without limitation to the articles of the Student Voice Social Media Policy, any supplemental documents and resources provided to you by Student Voice Incorporated. Potential violation(s) will be dealt with, including but not limited to Federal and/or State law(s). If one does not comply with all articles of the Student Voice Inc. Social Media Policy, one will be removed from the Student Voice Chapters team. It is priority to handle and settle all violation(s) internally within Student Voice Inc. However, failure by either party to comply will require the matter be reported to the proper legal authorities. At which time will determine the proper action to be taken for the violation(s).

Social media best practices

Social media is arguably the most powerful way to meet and connect with new people, start movements across geographic lines and create an impact in local communities. It is our goal to openly share best practices in this guide of what we have learned through mobilizing and organizing young people on social media for over five years. The below sections should be helpful in connecting with Student Voice and becoming part of the expansive student voice network across the globe.

Student Voice accounts

- » [Facebook.com/StudentVoice](https://www.facebook.com/StudentVoice)
- » [Twitter.com/Stu_Voice](https://twitter.com/Stu_Voice)
- » [Instagram.com/Stu_Voice](https://www.instagram.com/Stu_Voice)
- » [LinkedIn](#)

Social media voice

Keywords & themes

With every piece of content we post, it must pass through our keywords or themes that wholistically build our brand as an organization. Our five keywords are:

- » Vibrant
- » Inclusive
- » Empathetic
- » Relentless
- » Upstanding

Who we are

We believe that the student voice movement exists because of and starts with you. We celebrate both success and failures and believe we learn more from our failures if we critically reflect upon them.

We know students are the most important part of education, yet are often the least heard.

We practice inclusivity knowing that we can unleash student voices from coast to coast in every demographic of young people in the United States.

Voice & tone

While remembering the keywords & themes above that guide the content we choose to share and create, we also must know that no language is ever neutral and that our tone and delivery is equally important. When on social media, we

balance being both smart and savvy. This means a post should never have a grammatical error, but stylistically should be appealing and attractive to our audience of young people. We are thoughtful when necessary, yet fun and playful when we can be. We have seen students' stand up, speak out, and be heard and want to celebrate those successes and stories of overcoming. We welcome dialogue and debate by engaging with our audiences on a two-way conversation, not just using social media as a megaphone to blast out our message.

Ownership of posts

To curate a level of consistency we DO NOT sign names or attribute initials to any post. Rather, we let ALL messages on ALL platforms be reflective of our aforementioned keywords, themes and tone.

Diversity & inclusivity

We wholeheartedly believe in creating inclusive communities both in person and online. All content, whether it be posted, shared or displayed should be reflective of that. Our organization is one that not only embraces diversity in terms of gender, race, sexual orientation, disability, religion and age, but also embraces diversity in terms of cultural backgrounds, thoughts, and opinions. It is through inclusivity that we are able to reach all students and cultivate what it means to use your student voice.

Multimedia

Whenever possible we recommend including a photo, gif, poll or video into your social media. The algorithms on social media platforms that determine what content to show users prioritizes posts with multimedia elements and that are already being engaged with heavily. Ensure that photos and videos posted are quality that focus on the subject at hand and are not blurry, pixelated or poorly lit. Many times, a quick edit of adjusting the lighting or cropping a photo can make a world of difference. Most smartphones have auto-edit features that will fix photos with one touch. Overall, the use of quality multimedia builds a vibrant brand and voice that encourages two-way dialogue with your chapter.

Specifics

There are many small quirks and details that we follow when posting on social media. Below are a few.

- » Links are auto shortened, so there is no need to use a URL shortener like bit.ly or tinyurl as these just get caught in internet filters.

- » Replace “and” with ampersand (&) when wanting to condense posts on Twitter for characters.
- » Replace Students’ with (Ss) when wanting to condense posts on Twitter for characters.
- » Include any relevant mentions from active AND engaged accounts. Don’t tag accounts that have not tweeted in months.
- » Avoid using more than two #hashtags per post as that scares people away knowing the post is trying to be klouted.
- » When quoting tweets always add your own copy or language before sharing so that it matches your voice and tone. If you’re not original, no one wants to see the same thing numerous times.
- » When possible, add the location or “check in” as that will show the post to nearby users and promote the post higher in timelines using the algorithms.
- » Include any relevant mentions from active AND engaged accounts
- » Avoid using more than 2 #hashtags per post
- » When quoting tweets always add your own copy or language before sharing

Frequency

Twitter

3-5 daily posts, including quote tweets and retweets

Instagram

1-3 weekly posts, stories should be used when applicable

Facebook

1-3 weekly posts, including posts, articles, photos and videos

Instagram

Instagram is a complex and ever-changing platform. This platform is the fastest growing and also the most applicable to connecting with fellow young people. Below are a few recommendations:

- » Aesthetic is very important. Your photos must be perfect, artsy and have a consistent theme to them.
- » Videos on Instagram as posts do not perform well and take a long time to load on devices. Try to limit video to stories.
- » If posting videos on stories that are well produced and you want to save them, consider creating a story highlight on your profile.
- » Stories should be consistent in filters, quality and using the same font as well.

- » Consider following hashtags and people on Instagram to engage with them both to grow your following.
- » Be personable. Photos with people in them that are active (candid) and well taken (artsy) perform the best for engagement.

Engagement style

Twitter

- » Retweet or quote tweet tweets from Student Voice Official account + chapters
- » Favorite tweets from followers and #StuVoice hashtagged tweets

Facebook

- » Like comments from users
- » Respond to users when deemed appropriate
- » Refer to personal messaging to answer any questions
- » Respond to messages in a timely manner
- » Share posts in Facebook groups that are relevant to the members in the group. IE: inviting them to an event you're hosting

Instagram

- » Like pictures that are #StuVoice related
- » Follow back users that comment frequently and engage with the #StuVoice hashtag
- » Follow the #StuVoice hashtag

Ambassadors

Posts that have high engagement quickly after being posted are promoted higher in timelines as it is deemed quality content by the algorithm. Knowing this, we recommend having a group of people you can rely on to be social media ambassadors that will like/favorite/retweet/share your posts quickly. On Facebook, you can use the Youth United for Action Facebook group and on Twitter we will be sure to add you to our Student Voice Allies group message.

Regularly used hashtags

Student Voice's official hashtag is #StuVoice, though consider following and engaging with those on #StudentVoice to grow your reach. Never be afraid to tag the Student Voice official accounts in posts either to catch our attention through all the clutter of the internet.

Roundtable guide

How to prepare

1. Arrange for a group of 3-6 students in the same age group to sit down with you for one hour of recorded conversation. Think about what you hope to gain from the conversation when selecting the age level, from elementary to high school, for your session. These students can be from a school, youth development organization, church, sports teams, or just your friends.
2. Be sure you have a good recording app on your phone and test out your ability to record quality audio in advance by verbally labelling the roundtable with your name, the date of the conversation, and the setting.
3. Decide on a topic or theme for your session. Consider choosing a few of the rights in the Student Bill of Rights to start the conversation and focus the discussion on.
4. Prepare a set of questions to help guide you through the discussion. Feel free to sway from your prepared questions if the conversation leads that direction but have the questions as a back-up.
5. Do some background research. Find out the general demographics of your school district and identify some areas where students have, or have not, affected change in your community. Find some statistics or information on various education issues that interest you.
6. Be sure to print out enough copies of the media release for your session and, if possible, distribute them to participants ahead of time for parent signature.

How to facilitate your session

1. Begin by collecting signed media release forms. Keep track of who has their media release forms and who doesn't. Follow up after the session to collect forms from students who don't have them. Be sure to collect each participant's email address.
2. Next, ask each student to introduce themselves and to self-identify by saying and spelling their name, grade, school, preferred pronouns, and if they choose to, ethnic affiliation.
3. Explain who you are and why you're there. Possible script: "My name is ____ and I'm here today to listen to what you have to say about education. What you say today will be amplified as part of a larger discussion and movement to inform

adult educators and policymakers about the American student experience from the perspective of students themselves”

4. Begin the conversation by asking students to participate in an activity. For example, you could ask them to evaluate the inclusion and value of student voice in their school and community on a 1 to 10 scale and explain their answer or ask them to all share one thing about their school that none of the administrators know about.
5. Dive into your prepared questions.
6. Listen carefully to the responses and try to ask some follow-up questions to indicate that you are hearing what is being said and to prompt deeper thought and discussion.
7. When possible, call the name of the student who wishes to respond to indicate on the audio who is speaking.
8. Ask the group if you can take a candid shot of them talking to each other— or get someone else to do it for you—so that we can better document the discussion for later presentations.
9. Take an individual, clear, and candid photo of each student participating.
10. Thank everyone for their time and encourage students to follow @Stu_Voice on Instagram and Twitter. Tell them to reach out Student Voice directly through stuvoice.org if they are interested in getting involved.

What to do after

Now that you’ve completed your Student Voice Session, you’ll need to summarize the conversation, and find prominent quotes and student stories. Then you’ll need to send those quotes and stories to Student Voice so we can share them with our national audience. Follow these steps to amplify the voices you’ve collected.

1. Transcribe your audio as soon as you can. However, you don’t need to write down everything. Only transcribe comments that summarize the sentiments of the students during the Session or are particularly impactful stories. Aim to collect three to five solid quotes from each student. Make sure to identify them by name, grade, and school.
2. Scan each of the signed media release forms.
3. Consider writing a reflection on your session and including quotes from the

students. These reflections may be posted on the Student Voice Medium page or you could submit it to your local paper. For help in writing a follow-up reflection, contact our Director of Communications through info@stuvoice.org. Email individual student pictures labeled by name, transcripts saved in a word document, and media releases to info@stuvoice.org.

4. Thank all participants via email and share any recap materials produced by yourself or Student Voice.
5. File away the signed media releases in a safe place.

Tips for facilitating

- » Facilitating is a learned skill; getting the hang of how and when to ask the right questions isn't easy. It's important to create a conducive space for students to think critically about school. Follow some of these quick tips for better facilitation.
- » Sessions are more effective if you have a list of general topics in mind to ask about instead of fully written questions. However, you should prepare a set of questions to break the ice.
- » Your first question should be open enough to get the students thinking. A good example: "Tell me a story where you experienced something in school that you think your teachers or administrators weren't aware of."
- » Allow silence to work for you. Don't feel as though you need to talk. Often, people are thinking.
- » Practice good and active listening. Make eye contact, nod your head, and smile to show you're listening.
- » Ask for students to define and explain terms that are unclear and could be misinterpreted. Don't just assume that everyone is on the same page.
- » Be flexible. Watch for and pick up on promising topics introduced by the group, even if you weren't planning to discuss the topic. Use these leads to shape follow up questions that dig deeper.
- » Remember that practice makes perfect. The interrogative and communication skills gained through roundtable facilitation are useful beyond this setting.

Sample questions

Here are a few general sample questions to get you started. It's always best to create questions that are specific to the setting the roundtable is taking place whether that be school, district, city or state-wide. These questions might be good ways to open, close or use if the conversation comes to a pause.

- » Can you tell me something about your school that your teachers and administrators DON'T know?
- » What is one thing you dreams school would have? What would it NOT have?
- » Do you feel like the things you are learning will benefit you after you graduate?
- » What does your school feel like, look like, sound like?
- » Is there an adult here that you feel values you as an individual?
- » What does student voice mean to you?
- » Do you feel like students have a voice in your school? What can students impact?
- » In what ways, if any, is your school supporting you to realize the future you imagine for yourself?
- » What do you think is the ultimate purpose of school? What do you think should be the ultimate purpose of school?
- » How does school impact your social and emotional well being positively? How does school impact your social and emotional well being negatively?
- » How could you increase student voice in your own school?

Student Voice

We want to hear from you.

Please reach out with your plans and ideas, as well as
any questions.

