



Roundtable Conversation Facilitation Guide



Dear Student Voice Facilitator,

Thank you for taking charge to help unleash the power of student voices in your community. Your leadership is vital to help Student Voice further its work. Our education system ignores its most populous stakeholder: students. As students, we witness things our teachers and administrators do not. This unique perspective makes it imperative for our voices to be part of the conversation surrounding school improvement. Students must be more than just passive consumers of the education system and instead active agents in improving the system for all.

Arranging, conducting, recording and transcribing conversations with students about their experiences and opinions of school is an integral part of Student Voice's work. By doing this work, you help us ensure that student perspectives inform education policy discussions and decisions. This packet contains information and directions on how to host your own Student Voice Session.

Through these sessions, Student Voice aims to:

1. Amplify student voices by creating space for conversations about student experiences and perspectives.
2. Collect a range of stories that represent what it means to be a student in America today.
3. Prompt participants to think more critically about their own educational experiences and begin considering how they can make their schools better.

We are excited for you to join us and hope you will use this packet as a guide to get you started. The movement is live.

Sincerely,
The Student Voice Team

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Before You Proceed	3
What does student voice mean?	3
Why is student voice important?	3
How to Prepare	4
How to Facilitate Your Session	5
Tips for Facilitating	7
Sample Questions	8
What to do After	9
Media Release & Consent Form	10

Before You Proceed

Before you go any further, we want to make sure you know why the Student Voice sessions you've agreed to host are vital to our actions. You are helping lead a movement to rethink the role of students in education.

What does student voice mean?

"Student voice is any expression of any learner anywhere, anytime focused on learning, schools, or education. This can include, but isn't limited to, active or passive participation, knowledge, voting, wisdom, activism, beliefs, service, opinions, leadership, and ideas. Student voice reflects identity and comes from a person's experiences, ideals, and knowledge. Student voice is the individual and collective perspective and actions of young people within the context of learning and education."

- Adam Fletcher, *SoundOut*

Student Voice's mission is to strengthen the student movement by empowering students to take action on the issues that most impact their education. These Student Voice sessions are the first step in making that mission a reality.

Why is student voice important?

We know from personal experience that when students feel their time spent in school is productive and that they can make real, visible changes within their schools, they engage in their learning at higher levels. Students are most engaged when they are involved, as a partner, in both the design and implementation of an education system that address real world problems. Showing students that their actions and opinions matter while they are still in school will produce more civically engaged young people and, later, adults.

How to Prepare

Student Voice sessions are at the heart of what we do at Student Voice. The stories we collect propel the majority of our advocacy, storytelling, presentations, and publications throughout the year. Here are some ways to prepare before you host your own session.

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 device, or 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 backup.
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, if they choose to, ethnic affiliation, and how they do in school academically in one or two words.
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.

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 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?

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?

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. Email individual student pictures labeled by name, transcripts saved in a word document, and media releases to info@stuvoice.org.
4. 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
5. Thank all participants via email and share any recap materials produced by yourself or Student Voice.
6. File away the signed media releases in a safe place.
7. Conduct more sessions as desired.

Media Release & Consent Form

I hereby give permission to Student Voice to use:

- Photographs
- Audio recordings
- Visual recordings

I hereby authorize Student Voice to edit, alter, copy, exhibit, distribute and publish in print, video, audio recorded productions, and online this material for purposes of publicizing Student Voice programs or other lawful purpose without payment or any other consideration.

By signing this document, I understand that

- The materials will be used only for nonprofit/educational purposes.
- Student Voice will not release the materials to any other nonprofit or commercial entity without seeking permission of person/s.
- Any proceeds from the sale of published or printed matter containing the materials will be used to support the mission of Student Voice.
- The materials will become property of Student Voice, stored in a place chosen by Student Voice and will not be returned to person/s.

In addition, I waive the right to inspect or approve the finished product, including written or electronic copy, wherein my likeness appears. I waive any right to royalties or other compensation arising or related to the use of the materials. I hereby hold harmless and release and forever discharge Student Voice from all claims, demands, liability and causes of action which I, my heirs, representatives, executors, administrators, or any other persons acting on my behalf or on behalf of my estate have or may have by reason of this authorization.

I have read this release before signing below and I fully understand the contents, meaning and impact of this release.

Signature Date

Printed Name

Address City State Zip

Phone Number Email Address

