



EDUCATION COUNCIL  
NEW ZEALAND | Matatū Aotearoa

## Using Student Voice in Teacher Appraisal

Teachers have always listened to the voices of their students. They ask questions to ascertain students' knowledge, they seek their opinions to gauge their understandings. They teach their students to craft answers of information and opinion using written and oral forms of communication.

Fostering and listening to students' voices features in *The New Zealand Curriculum for English medium in years 1-13* where thinking, using language, relating to others along with participating and contributing are identified as key competencies for 'living and life-long learning'.

More recently, the term 'student voice' has signalled the use of students' contributions in educational change at individual and system levels.

The role of **student voice in informing educational improvements** is underpinned by four key ideas:

- students are as involved in education as their teachers; they need opportunities to participate in decisions, offer their insights, knowledge or opinions that should contribute to change for improvement. Their views complement rather than replace or surpass teachers' knowledge
- seeking students' perceptions about their schooling has been shown to have positive outcomes for their academic success
- asking students for their views on schooling is not enough. Students are aware of their limited power and are more likely to engage in meaningful dialogue when they know that what they say will be acknowledged through positive discussion if not visible change
- discussing learning objectives and success criteria, teaching students to set and evaluate their progress towards achieving goals and making them 'curriculum insiders' expands their knowledge about their learning and enhances their abilities to contribute their voices.

Reference list at end

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Level of Student Voice Contribution	
Individual student level	Systems Level
Voices contribute to next steps learning (content and approaches) for individual students, their teacher and family/whanau - usually within classroom and home	Voices contribute to changes to leadership, systems and structures that affect teachers and students across and beyond the whole school

***Students' voices along with teacher reflections indicating how these contribute to teaching and learning offers useful evidence against the RTC and Tataiako.***

#### ***Sources of students' voices***

Feedback exit slips  
Peer evaluations  
Surveys about the content and approaches in classes  
Students journaling, talking about or discussing reflections on their learning  
Video footage of students discussing their learning  
Student focus group interviews or discussions  
Teacher reflections on insights from student in everyday classroom interactions

#### **Read on...**

The following references **provoke thought and offer practical ideas** for informing teaching and learning particularly in schools.

Bolstad, R. (2011). From "student voice" to "youth-adult partnership". set: Research Information for Teachers, 1, 31-33.

Discusses the limitations of seeking voice without reflecting on power differences between students and teachers and the complexities of establishing fruitful youth-adult partnerships within school settings.

Coleman, C. (2011). "You can try sound brainy" The use of process drama to engage Pasifika boys. set: Research Information for Teachers, 1, 23-30.

Discusses using process drama in social studies to engage year 10 Pasifika boys in developing key competencies where their voices are sought and heard within the drama and reflections

Cook-Sather, E. (2006). Sound, presence, and power: "Student voice" in educational research and reform.

Curriculum Inquiry, 36, 4, 359-390.

Reviews a range of research literature within her discussion of the origins and outcomes of the increased attention to including students' voices as part of education reform.

Jenkins, E. (2006). The student voice and school science education. *Studies in Science Education*; 2006; 42,

ProQuest Direct Complete p. 49

Reviews research studies that discuss the use of students' voices to improve teaching practices and students' learning in science.

Hayes, J., & Clode, A. (2012). Ko te o nga akonga: Creative leadership of Maori student partnerships. *Journal of Educational Leadership, Policy and Practice*, 27, 1, 59-66.

Describes an approach to leadership that engages the voices of Maori students for the purposes of creating education partnerships to change practice, improve student achievement and enhanced school wide cultural competence. The practices used at the two South Canterbury schools are discussed in relation to Mitra's (2006) pyramid.

Mitra, D. (2006). Increasing student voice and moving towards youth leadership. *The Prevention Researcher*, 13, 1,

7-10.

In this article, Mitra explains her pyramid of student voice that signals the power differential between students and teachers, and identifies the relationship between 'being heard' collaborating with adults and building students' capacity for leadership.

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A series of videoed goal orientated teaching and learning reflections by professional leaders, teachers and students. <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/Curriculum-stories/School-stories/Ourinquiry-framework>