This Good Practice Guide translates the findings of an Australian Research Council Linkage study (LP140100540) into a practical guide for primary and secondary schools. The research was titled, ‘Improving Wellbeing through Student Participation at School’. It involved 24 government and non-government high schools across New South Wales, Australia.

The research was led by the Centre for Children and Young People at Southern Cross University in partnership with the NSW Department of Education, the Catholic Schools Office (Diocese of Lismore), the Office of the NSW Advocate for Children and Young People, the Australian National University, University of Sydney and University of Central Lancashire.

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For further information on the research see: bit.ly/ParticipationStudy

Centre for Children and Young People 2019.

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CRICOS Provider 01241G
There is increasing agreement in policy, practice and research that student participation is beneficial for students and schools. When done well, student participation has the potential to strengthen school communities, engage and motivate students and enhance their wellbeing (Anderson & Graham, 2016; Fielding, 2007; Hodgson, 2007; Holdsworth, 1996; Mannion, Sowerby & l’Anson, 2015; Mitra & Gross, 2009). Student participation also reflects Australia’s obligations as a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989).

There remains a persistent lack of clarity around what student participation means and involves. The term can be used to describe anything from simply attending school and ‘participating’ in lessons to collaborative decision-making with adults (Rudduck & Fielding, 2006; Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003). Participation is also often referred to by other terms such as ‘student voice’, ‘student leadership’ and ‘having a say’ (Fielding, 2015; Fletcher, 2014; Mitra, 2004). This lack of clarity has hampered student participation efforts and the realisation of potential benefits.

This Good Practice Guide has emerged from ground-breaking Australian research that confirms links between student participation and student wellbeing. The research found that a positive association between participation and wellbeing occurs only under certain conditions. This Good Practice Guide aims to provide primary and secondary schools with insight into the cultural conditions and approaches to participation within schools that offer the greatest potential for improving student wellbeing. The Guide includes practical suggestions, resources, insights from other schools and reflective questions.
Section 1 - Understanding Student Participation
This section highlights four key elements that contribute to effective participation:

HAVING VOICE
HAVING INFLUENCE
HAVING CHOICE
WORKING TOGETHER

It includes insights from other schools, questions and a mapping tool to help you reflect on how these four elements might be understood and improved at your school.

Section 2 - Building Effective Student Participation
This section comprises four key steps for building and improving student participation at your school:

1. Commit
2. Establish Firm Foundations
3. Build Student Participation
4. Monitor, Evaluate and Progress

It includes insights from other schools, video resources, articles and activities from national and international sources (accessible via online links).
EXPECTATIONS AROUND STUDENT PARTICIPATION NEED TO BE CLEAR, ESPECIALLY BETWEEN STUDENTS AND STAFF. FINDING AN ACCESSIBLE WAY FOR EVERYONE TO UNDERSTAND WHAT PARTICIPATION MEANS WILL HELP.

**Four elements of participation**

Meaningful and effective student participation in schools involves the following four elements:

1. Having Voice
2. Having Influence
3. Having Choice
4. Working Together

Each of these are described in a little more detail on the following pages.

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1 If you are using the Student Participation Survey to monitor participation at your school, you will notice that it is developed around six elements of participation: voice about schooling, voice about activities, having influence, having a say with influential people, having choice, and working together. These six elements were derived from the four elements (voice, influence, choice and working together) during the statistical phase of the research project.
An important element of student participation is for students to have a 'voice' or 'a say' in different areas of school life. This may include:

1. **Students expressing views and sharing insights about their schooling.**
   For example in relation to:
   - [CLASSROOM RULES]
   - [DISCIPLINE]
   - [HOMEWORK]
   - [APPROACHES TO TEACHING AND LEARNING]
   - [TOPICS OF STUDY]
   - [ASSESSMENT]
   - [STUDENT SUPPORT STRUCTURES, such as counselling or wellbeing initiatives]

2. **Students expressing views and opinions on other co-curricular activities, such as:**
   - [BEING ON SPORTS TEAMS]
   - [BEING IN A CLUB]
   - [TYPES OF EXCURSIONS]
   - [FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES]
   - [SOCIAL ACTIVITIES AT SCHOOL]
   - [SCHOOL CAMPS]

However, opportunities merely to express views are not enough to predict student wellbeing – students views need to 'have influence'.

**Having Voice: Reflective Questions**

- Do students at your school currently have opportunities to voice their views in relation to aspects of school life like those listed above?
- Which students have these opportunities? Which students don’t?
When students’ opinions and views are sought but not given consideration, are not responded to or rarely acted upon, then participation will have little meaning and likely be ineffective. In fact under such conditions, participation may create tensions between students and teachers (in terms of expectations), lead to disinterest, and undermine a sense of community. Where it is not possible to act upon student views, it is critical that there is dialogue with students about how their views were taken into consideration and why they have not been able to be acted upon at this time.

Students feel a sense of influence when they have the opportunity for **dialogue with influential people**, such as:

- **THE PRINCIPAL**
- **THE DEPUTY**
- **TEACHERS**
- **MEMBERS OF STUDENT BODIES OR COMMUNITIES**

The element ‘having influence’ fosters accountability. It requires careful consideration of issues such as:

- **WHAT ARE YOU SEEKING TO FIND OUT?**
- **WHAT WILL CHANGE OR WHAT ACTION WILL BE TAKEN AS A RESULT OF WHAT STUDENTS CONTRIBUTE?**
- **HOW CAN PEOPLE IN LEADERSHIP ROLES COLLABORATE WITH STUDENTS TO MAKE IMPORTANT DECISIONS TOGETHER?**

### Having Influence: Reflective Questions

In what ways are student views gathered at your school (e.g. surveys, class discussion, SRC)?

- How (and when) do students receive feedback about their input?
- What opportunities are available for students at your school to have discussions directly with the Principal?
- How does the SRC communicate with the rest of the student body (e.g. receive input, gather ideas and give feedback)? What could your school do to help improve this two-way communication? (See the ‘Insights’ box on p.25 for ideas from other schools).
Student participation sometimes involves offering students opportunities to make choices.

Students generally appreciate teachers’ efforts to offer them small, personal choices in the classroom setting, such as:

- Selecting from a list of project topics
- Choosing how to present an assignment (essay, presentation, video etc.)
- Choosing who they sit next to, or work with

In offering ‘choice’ outside of the classroom, care must be taken not to confuse choice and voice. For example, inviting Year 10 to choose the location of their annual camp (from a range of options) offers them ‘a voice’ but they will not necessarily get their ‘choice’ (unless they are part of the majority and staff support this). Here, being explicit about whether the opportunity provides them with a ‘voice’ or ‘choice’ will likely help manage student expectations and hence their experience of participating.

In addition to small choices, a key aspect of student participation is that it is viewed, in itself, to be an active choice. Think carefully about how you can encourage students to participate in as many different aspects of school life whilst ensuring it remains something they can choose to do - how can you make participation an attractive choice, and for all students?

“[Participation is] a conscious decision to do something above just general attendance.”

(Head Teacher, School F)

If students are choosing not to participate, schools may need to consider the reasons for this and consult on changes that might be necessary for students to feel more comfortable and motivated to do so.

Having Choice: Reflective Questions

- At your school, what choices can students make in the context of teaching and learning in the classroom? Does this differ between classes? If so, does this matter?
- How does your school reach out to students who might be having difficulties, feel marginalised, or have difficulty participating (beyond turning up)?
School H, a mainstream school following the national curriculum, completely reconfigured their approach to curriculum and pedagogy. They operate a problem-based (Years 7-10) and project-based (Years 11-12) approach to learning. Classes at the school are taught in open-plan settings by small teaching teams or, at times, by fellow students. The classrooms are furnished with modular chairs on wheels so that they can easily be reorganised for group work. Lessons and assignments are largely student-directed using a central learning platform that students engage with at their own pace. This was described as students being able to ‘choose their own learning adventure’, with considerable choice in relation to the topic of study, pace of learning, timing of assessment and the format of assignments or assessments.

The school had adopted the problem / project-based approach to learning with the aim of better involving students in their own learning process, as well as better catering to students’ individual learning needs. As students described,

“\nWe’re all different people, unique in one way, so we all use different ways to meet the guidelines”

(Yr 9-10 Student, School H).
Student participation has the greatest association with wellbeing when teachers and students work together in an authentically collaborative way, such as through shared conversations, collaborative inquiry and joint problem-solving across school life.

Examples can include:

- Restorative Justice Approaches to Behavioural Issues
- Shared Dialogue Around Lesson Effectiveness
- Co-Planning of Learning
- Co-Development of Assessment Approaches
- Working Together to Expand and Evaluate Opportunities for Student Participation
- Joint Problem-Solving to Improve the School Environment
- Joint Problem-Solving Around Issues in the School Community

Underpinning this element of working together are positive, respectful relationships (particularly between students and teachers, but also amongst students). Effective participation requires positive relationships, and relationships are also strengthened through effective participation. Meaningful collaboration requires adults to be open to students’ insights and perspectives and to work in partnership with them.

A key ‘take home’ message from this Guide is that student participation is not just about offering opportunities for student ‘voice’ but about facilitating meaningful student-teacher ‘dialogue’. This requires close attention to the quality of relationships within schools.

Working Together: Reflective Questions

Which routine aspects of school life offer students and teachers the opportunity to work together in genuinely collaborative ways?

What kinds of strategies are in place at your school to help build positive student-teacher relationships? Are there any existing initiatives, times or events when relationship-building is the key aim?
Exploring the Four Elements at Your School

The four elements of participation outlined above can help to build shared understandings of participation within your school community. They also offer a simple way to map current participation opportunities currently available at your school. The four key areas of school life to consider are:

- **The Classroom**: (e.g., in learning, lesson planning, assignments, marking schemes, seating arrangements etc.)
- **Co-curricular Activities**: (such as clubs, excursions, camps, events and performances etc.)
- **Formal Structures**: (e.g., school governance, school policies, special interest committees such as the eco-committee, canteen committee etc.)
- **Informal Interactions**: (e.g., greeting students, adult-child interactions, student welfare structures, opportunities for informal conversation etc.)

You might find it helpful to list the participation opportunities available to students in each of these four areas of school life.

For each item on your list consider whether it offers students an opportunity for voice, influence, choice or to work together (some opportunities might offer one of these, others more than one). This exercise can help identify areas for improvement at your school.

We have created a simple mapping template to help with this exercise. It can be found in A4 size in the Appendix of this Good Practice Guide for easy printing or photocopying. The template also includes some example responses to help get you started.
SECTION 2

BUILDING EFFECTIVE STUDENT PARTICIPATION AT SCHOOL

1. Commit
2. Establish Firm Foundations
3. Build Student Participation
4. Monitor, Evaluate and Progress

Each step is explained in more detail on the following pages, accompanied by useful resources and insights from other schools.
A change in culture towards student participation requires commitment from school leadership to champion the change. Teachers will need to be supported to develop confidence in facilitating student participation and embedding it into their pedagogy.

“...upskilling staff in how to actually facilitate [participation]. I’m almost certain that most teachers would like to be doing more of it because they know how powerful it is but when we go to do [it] we don’t always feel like it goes well.” (Teacher, NSW, School A)

One of the key indicators of commitment is prioritising time for staff to engage in professional learning and reflective discussion. A series of publicly available professional learning workshops developed from the Student Participation Study provide further guidance with this.

For more information on accessing these see: [www.bit.ly/ParticipationStudy](http://www.bit.ly/ParticipationStudy)

The following pages offer some additional ideas and useful resources for fostering commitment amongst staff and students.
**STEP 1 | COMMIT**

**Prioritise Professional Learning**

Organise professional learning opportunities to help teachers develop shared understandings of student participation and the potential benefits. Topics might include:

- Discussion of the four elements of participation (voice, influence, choice and working together)
- Opportunities to explore new ways of thinking, without judgement
- Exploring the foundations of effective and meaningful student participation: strong student-teacher relationships and student capacity building (see Step 2: Establish Firm Foundations, below).

**Useful Resources**

- The Student Participation Study’s Professional Learning workshops: [bit.ly/ParticipationStudy](https://bit.ly/ParticipationStudy)
- Short, inspiring video from VIC SRC in primary schools: [https://youtu.be/22CuDoMJP0](https://youtu.be/22CuDoMJP0)
- Students at the Centre Toolkit (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2013) (see, for example, p.15): [https://studentsatthecenterhub.org/resource/](https://studentsatthecenterhub.org/resource/) Then search for ‘Student Voice Toolkit’

**Identify Participation Champions**

Identify participation ‘champions’ at your school. Champions are those staff who are really enthusiastic about participation and who are willing to be involved in supporting the development of new opportunities across school life.

**Useful Resources**

Commit to Involve Students from the Outset

Open up dialogue with students by arranging a process for a whole school consultation around participation. You might consider:

- Facilitating structured discussion activities to map the ways students perceive participation already happens at school (the mapping tool on p.28-31 might be useful).
- Encouraging discussion around the nature of the participation they experience – is it informal, formal, anonymous or collaborative?
- Inviting students to propose ways that current opportunities could be expanded upon or enhanced to make them more meaningful.

Bear in Mind: Initial efforts to involve students may feel quite structured and consultative. This is likely a necessary part of the process in the early stages. Over time, student involvement, ownership and innovation will strengthen.

Useful Resources

Background information and inspiration for staff:

- Video from the Student Participation Study – Northern Rivers schools: https://www.dropbox.com/s/9hyojsjagwlbbvyq/ARC%20Wellbeing%20in%20schools_1080p.mp4?dl=0

Resources for involving students:

It might be a no, but the requests are taken seriously, and [the students] are given a reason, and that makes a difference.”  
(Principal, NSW, School B)

Student participation that is effective and meaningful relies on positive relationships between adults and students, as well as between students. Relationships are central to teachers and students feeling safe and confident to try out new approaches or share ideas. Positive relations are built upon clear communication, shared expectations, mutual respect, trust and accountability.

In addition, a key component of meaningful and effective student participation is to scaffold students to develop the confidence and skills to contribute effectively, both inside and outside of the classroom.

Run a program to encourage student participation, without any put-downs, to make it feel like it’s a good, safe thing to do.”  
(Year 9-10 Student, NSW, School G)

Skills students might need include:

- Giving and receiving constructive feedback
- Organising and articulating their viewpoints
- Contributing effectively to meetings
- Negotiating with others
- Personal and shared decision-making
- Setting goals and effective study skills
- Self-regulation
- Making and executing a plan
- Event management

It is important that all students have the opportunity to develop these skills, not just those who are outspoken, currently on the SRC, or already active contributors. This learning process will need to be on-going with each new cohort of students and adjusted to meet the needs of all students.

The following pages provide some suggestions, inspirational ideas and resources both for strengthening student-teacher relationships and scaffolding students’ participatory skills.
Strengthen Relationships

Look for ways to build informal relationships between students and staff and amongst the student body. For instance when organising universal extra-curricular events (such as theme days, overnight camps, eco-days etc.) intentionally create activities, time and opportunities for fostering relationship building. Or, when planning events such as sports carnivals, include fun activities that are open to all. Encourage students and staff to participate together, including the principal and members of the executive team.

Look for opportunities in the school day when the development of relationships can be prioritised over content. For example, take care not to over-structure home-room or pastoral care sessions. Offer content if desired but utilise this to facilitate discussion and relationship building.

Be mindful of the power dynamics that can exist when students and adults try to collaborate. It is also important to be aware of the power dynamics that can come into play between students.

The concept of ‘recognition’ has been identified as important for supporting student participation and student wellbeing (Graham et al., 2018). In the context of schools, recognition can be understood as a three-part framework: ‘being cared for’, ‘being respected’ and ‘being valued’ (Graham et al., 2014). These are the key ‘ingredients’ for building positive, reciprocal relationships in schools.

Useful Resources

- ‘Building Positive Relationships’ (in both primary and secondary schools), Student Wellbeing Hub, Education Services Australia: https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/topics/building-positive-relationships/
- Short video on strengthening dialogue and relationships during morning meetings, primary school focus, Edutopia (2015): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iMctALPpLF4
- ‘Six Secrets to Building More Successful Partnerships Between Students and Teachers’ (Students at the Center Hub): https://studentsatthecenterhub.org/resource/six-secrets-to-more-successful-partnership-between-students-and-teachers/
- For more on recognition see the Student Participation Study’s Professional Learning workshops: bit.ly/ParticipationStudy

Be Held Accountable

A key starting point for improving student-teacher relationships is to build students’ trust in the process. Prioritise dialogue between students and adults, including with those in positions of authority such as the school executive. Ensure students receive honest and timely responses to their ideas (e.g., follow-up the student mapping and discussion activity in Step 1 with a summary of the small changes teachers are going to try to make).

Useful Resources

Scaffold Students’ Confidence and Skills to Contribute Effectively

Students need specific opportunities to further develop:

- General participation skills – e.g., organising and articulating their viewpoints, contributing to meetings, negotiating with others, planning and organising events etc.
- Participatory learning skills – e.g., self-regulation skills, understanding learning styles, ‘growth’ mindset skills, study skills etc.

Offer repeated opportunities for students to practise articulating and sharing their views, often in small student groups to promote confidence. Create regular opportunities for small-scale personal decision-making.

Students will also feel supported through teacher-student interactions in which:

- Participation feels enjoyable and safe
- Students’ ideas and perspectives are closely listened to
- Adults offer examples of what they might do but encourage students to find their preferred ways of tackling a task, issue or activity

Useful Resources

- Inspiring video of young primary students practising their oral participatory skills (School 21, UK): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ADAY9AQm54
Students suggest that to foster a greater sense of community and to improve relationships the Principal needs to be more visible, approachable and involved with students:

‘They need to get engaged with the school students and what they do, so they feel welcome to share and discuss problems or activities about the school’.

(Yr 9-10 Student, School F).

School C had sought to prioritise relationships amongst the whole school community. Twice per school year they arranged a universal, social activity in which they took the whole school community ‘out to do something extraordinary’ designed to challenge them ‘intellectually…physically and…socially’ (Principal, School C).

During these activity days, the Principal could be found climbing the likes of a hired rock wall alongside students and teachers. The Principal drove the organisation of the activity day and the school raised funds to ensure everyone could attend.

Through these events the school looked for changes in students’ willingness to challenge themselves, ‘to get in and a have a go’ (Principal, School C) and to support each other, even peers they might not necessarily like or know well. The Principal believed that many positive relational benefits emerged from these events.
Following on from Steps 1 and 2, it is then time to seek to expand student participation opportunities across school life. Look for opportunities to offer students voice (with influence), choice and opportunities for dialogue and collaboration in the classroom, in co-curricular activities, in relation to school governance, and through informal interactions. Collectively, these changes will help contribute to cultural change.

Below are a few ideas and useful resources for building student participation opportunities across school life.

**Build Student Participation in the Classroom**

**Offer Students CHOICE**

- On how they submit assignments (e.g., essay, speech, video etc.).
- About who they sit next to in class or who they work with in a group.
- From a range of relevant topics (individually or as a class), have a class discussion to compile the list of choices.

**Create Opportunities for WORKING TOGETHER**

- Work together with students to create the assessment scheme – What are the core skills relevant to the task and what level demonstrates suitable proficiency? What does quality look like?
- Create opportunities for group work and help students develop their skills to collaborate effectively as a team.
- Combine all of the above: involve students from the outset, during and throughout the planning process (i.e., start with student interests then identify the curricular opportunities, rather than starting with the curriculum and trying to find a way to engage and connect to the students).

**Work Towards a CULTURE of Participation**

- Adopt a restorative justice approach for managing behavioural issues.
- Consider adopting a project or problem-based approach at your school, in your classroom / subject area, or for one unit.
- Ensure students with additional support needs have a voice, influence and choice in the processes designed to support them.
Step 3 | Build Student Participation

Useful Resources

- And, for VET subjects (Coonamble High): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cWGPYdM41NI
- Video example of a restorative justice approach in an Australian primary school: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JfiGiA2bpoY

Build Student Participation in Broader School Life

Offer Students VOICE (with INFLUENCE)

Involve students in identifying the issues that are important to them and the challenges they face.

Use a range of methods for listening to and gathering student views – surveys, ballot systems, suggestion boxes, open forums, student-led focus groups, and informal conversation. Remember always to share the results with students.

Consider whether you could improve the process of communication between the SRC and the broader student body (see the ‘Insight’ box on p.25 for ideas).

Work with students to develop student-friendly meeting spaces and meeting practices. Consider where the meeting is held, the seating arrangements, the length and timing of meetings, and how to reduce issues of power. For example, students may feel more comfortable forming a break-away discussion group and then feeding back to the meeting.

Ensure that when students are involved in annual event committees they have opportunities for voice, influence and choice, and that they are not just following pre-determined steps.

Consider ways in which students could be more fully involved in the development of policies and guidelines for the school.
Create Opportunities for WORKING TOGETHER

Consider offering opportunities for Student Action Teams (SATs) (see useful resources for further information).

Look for opportunities for students not only to be a member of a team, club or society, but to participate in the direction of the group’s activities e.g. choosing the team, planning the program of activities, reporting on results.

Work with students to create a fair process for responding to students’ new ideas (such as for a new event, a revised canteen menu etc.). How many ideas can be supported at one time? Which ideas will get the go ahead? Who will be responsible for supporting the students (including helping them develop the necessary skills) to see their idea through to fruition?

Useful Resources
- Roger Holdsworth discusses the benefits of SAT projects (2012): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lr2P4ayWowo

Continue to Be Held Accountable – acknowledge and act on student input

Offer Students VOICE (with INFLUENCE)

Communicate regularly on up-coming plans and reflect on changes that have arisen from student views.

When any student input will not be acted upon have a debriefing session so that the students can understand why.

Continue to Support Staff Enthusiasm and Capacity

Ensure on-going professional learning opportunities. Arrange regular times for small groups of teachers to reflect upon participation processes, to share successes and to collegially discuss new ideas and techniques.

At first, opportunities for student participation might feel a little disjointed in different spaces, but work to continually expand until student participation becomes embedded in the culture across all areas of school life.

Useful Resources
- The Student Participation Study’s Professional Learning workshops: bit.ly/ParticipationStudy
Opening up to Student Feedback on the Teaching and Learning Cycle

An important aspect of improving the teaching and learning cycle is gaining student feedback on lesson effectiveness. This form of participation can be tricky as it challenges dominant norms around authority, expertise and power and requires navigation of delicate relational dynamics between students and teachers:

‘It’s hard because...they might take it personally and they might not, but it just depends’ (Yr 7-8 Student, School D).

In most schools in the Student Participation Study, this process was largely informal and dependent upon the approach of individual teachers – it differed considerably between classes.

School E sought to tackle this important form of participation by creating a formalised feedback initiative. A group of interested students learned techniques to observe teachers and students in the classroom and to formulate and share constructive feedback. Small groups of ‘trained’ students sat in on the lessons of other classes and then discussed their observations of the lesson’s effectiveness with the teacher to contribute to the teacher’s reflective practice. All staff in the school were required to be observed regularly, although they could nominate whether this was undertaken by a fellow staff member or members of the student team.

The program worked well, with teachers gaining different and valuable feedback from the student observers. Teachers noted there was a high demand amongst students for a place as an observer. Critically, the process also seemed to be encouraging more informal classroom dialogue and feedback between students and teachers outside of the formal process.
INSIGHTS FROM OTHER SCHOOLS…

Improving Student Communication
To, From and Within the SRC

Class Representatives
At School B, rather than electing two members per Year group/grade level for the Student Representative Council (SRC), they allowed for the election of two representatives from each class. This was perceived as a way of helping to address many communication issues:

‘They know those two people. Whereas before if it was two kids from another class [they] might not even know who they were’

(Teacher, School B).

Time was allocated for brief, regular class discussions and the class representatives took any ideas forward for discussion at Year group meetings. A few representatives (on rotation) from each Year group meeting then took their Year’s ideas forward to a SRC meeting held with the principal. Information also filtered back to each class along the same chain.

Year Group Forums
School J had retained the model of electing two student representatives per Year group, but had allocated time during the school day for each Year group to have a weekly forum. This allowed any student to raise issues and ideas for the SRC to pursue, and also to hear about progress made:

‘It’s a 20 minute period where …they can talk as a student body. So the Year meetings are a two way conversation between staff and the students to get things moving’

(Principal, School J).

Special Interest Groups
School G operated what they called a ‘floating SRC’. Rather than one general SRC, they opted for special interest committees or action teams. For example, one committee looked after the promotion of responsible environment practices, such as recycling around the school.

Open Forum
School H had moved away from electing SRC members but retained the idea of providing a platform for teacher-student dialogue. Any student could turn up at designated ‘SRC’ meeting time to share their ideas or have their say.
It is important to evaluate participatory initiatives to identify what’s working well (and for which students), as well as to explore new ideas and possibilities. Monitoring and evaluation are key to helping ensure open, transparent dialogue, to maintaining respectful relationships, avoiding tokenism and improving practice. As with all of the above steps, involve students as far as possible in developing the monitoring and evaluation process (i.e., not just as survey respondents). Co-design a range of methods for gathering views, such as:

- Surveys that include open-ended questions
- Anonymous suggestion boxes
- Focus groups or dialogue-based consultations
- Student-led research projects

Remember: It is important that results are reported back to students (and staff). Seek student insights into particular issues highlighted in the data. For example, is the data suggesting change is needed in a particular area? What factors might be contributing to this?

Aim to use the information gathered through evaluation processes to continually improve upon and expand participation opportunities.

Useful Resources

- The Student Participation Study led to the development of a validated Student Participation Survey. This is freely available to schools for measuring and monitoring the progress of student participation. For further details, and to download the survey and accompanying information handbook visit: bit.ly/ParticipationStudy


  Once here scroll down to locate the resource.

- The National School Improvement tool – ACER: https://www.acer.org/gb/school-improvement
REFERENCES


## APPENDIX: MAPPING TEMPLATE

### LIST EXAMPLES OF THE PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS IN YOUR CLASSROOM/S.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLASSROOM</th>
<th>Have Voice</th>
<th>Have Influence</th>
<th>Make Choices</th>
<th>Work Together</th>
<th>REFLECTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example: Co-developing the marking scheme for a unit of work / assignment</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
<td>Am I really listening, or am I guiding the students towards my preference? Do all students speak up/involve themselves? What can I do about this?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST EXAMPLES OF THE WAYS STUDENTS CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE CO-CURRICULAR SPACE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CO-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>Have Voice</th>
<th>Have Influence</th>
<th>Make Choices</th>
<th>Work Together</th>
<th>REFLECTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example: Voting on the location of the school camp (from a verified list)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Do we find this approach works or does it create divisions amongst the students? Could we involve students in a different way? e.g., earlier in the process rather than at the end? What sorts of camp features are most important to them?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST EXAMPLES OF THE FORMAL STRUCTURES AT YOUR SCHOOL AND THE WAYS STUDENTS CAN PARTICIPATE IN THESE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORMAL STRUCTURES</th>
<th>Have Voice</th>
<th>Have Influence</th>
<th>Make Choices</th>
<th>Work Together</th>
<th>REFLECTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example: SRC Members</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How well is our SRC working? What sort of influence do members have? Who puts themselves forward as members?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### List Examples of How Students at Your School Can Experience Participation in Their Informal Interactions with Others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informal Interactions</th>
<th>Have Voice</th>
<th>Have Influence</th>
<th>Make Choices</th>
<th>Work Together</th>
<th>Reflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Example: Student has experienced the death of a family member</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td>✔️</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>How do we find out about student issues? How do we support them to manage their experience in the school context - academic workload, handling questions from other students, space to take time out if they need it?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** The table is incomplete and requires further filling in.
This guide has been developed from an Australian Research Council Linkage project [Grant no: LP140100540], led by the Centre for Children and Young People at Southern Cross University in partnership with the NSW Department of Education, the Catholic Schools Office (Diocese of Lismore), and the Office of the NSW Advocate for Children and Young People.

Several additional resources have been developed from this research to provide guidance on introducing, strengthening and monitoring student participation at school. These include:

- A shorter Quick Reference Guide for supporting student participation at school
- The Student Participation Survey (and accompanying information pack) which is a validated survey tool to measure and monitor student participation at school
- Video vignettes on participation at school
- A series of professional learning workshops for school staff

Other research outputs include:

- Full reports for each phase of the study
- Short summaries of the findings from each phase

The above resources and documents are available at: bit.ly/ParticipationStudy

For further information about this project please contact
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