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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<th><strong>Level of Student Voice Contribution</strong></th>
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<td>Individual student level</td>
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<tr>
<td>Voices contribute to next steps learning (content and approaches) for individual students, their teacher and family/whanau -usually within classroom and home</td>
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*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.


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.


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.

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.

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

Describes an approach to leadership that engages the voices of Māori 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.

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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