



## Student Voice

### Thematic Session

Breakout sessions at CASSA 2022 are designed to allow time for participants to explore topics of most interest to them. Whether gathered with your own team and colleagues, or meeting leaders from across Canada, this is an opportunity to share and discuss issues relevant to us all.

### Student Voice

For years, there have been increasing efforts to give students a meaningful voice in education and agency to support change. From leadership and council initiatives at the school level to formal roles on Boards of Education students have seen a wide range of involvement.

Historically, many of the explorations of the importance of student voice have been focused on the importance of strengthening democratic values and showing respect for and inclusion of student perspectives. Recent publications have added to that base and have pointed to a dramatically increased sense of motivation when students feel that they have choice and voice in their learning. These current studies are suggesting a direct impact on student achievement, morale, and absenteeism (Kahne, Bowyer, Marshall and Hodgkin (2022)) and Quaglia Institute (2016).

The OECD's Conceptual Learning Framework on Student Agency states that the concept of student agency:

*...is rooted in the principle that students have the ability and the will to positively influence their own lives and the world around them. Student agency is thus defined as the capacity to set a goal, reflect and act responsibly to effect change. It is about acting rather than being acted upon; shaping rather than being shaped; and making responsible decisions and choices rather than accepting those determined by others.*

Most if not all schools in Canada have formal and informal structures to hear and respond to student voice. How are we making the shift from listening and responding to empowering? From voice to agency? At your tables, consider these guiding questions:

1. What structures do you currently have in your schools or District/Division that empower student voice for change?
2. Are the changes you see happening in the classroom at the instructional level, or at the administration/governance level? Which do you believe is more valuable and why?
3. How have you worked to examine the impact of your student voice/agency initiatives on learning and motivation? If not, how might you take such a step?



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## References

Kahne, J. Bowyer, B. Marshall, J. & Hodgin, E. (2022) Is Responsiveness to Student Voice Related to Academic Outcomes? Strengthening the Rationale for Student Voice in School Reform. American Journal of Education. (Vol. 128 No. 3).

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St. John, K and Briel, L. (2017) Student Voice: A growing movement within education that benefits students and teachers. VCU Center on Transition Innovations  
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