

Youth-adult partnership is a right and a part of being a citizen in our democracy

Students must have an active role in their learning if that learning is going to be meaningful and lasting, and such an active role should include having input into how their learning is facilitated. This is the right of the students, and it is the responsibility of adults to ensure that that right is guaranteed.

—Alison Cook-Sather, 2008

If the central goal of schools were to prepare students to engage productively in a democracy, then students would be working on the concerns of their immediate and future life and on the concerns of their immediate and extended communities.

—Carl Glickman, 1993

According to the Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey in 2017, 61% of high school students surveyed agree or strongly agree that they matter to people in their community; a significant increase over the past decade (47% in 2007, 50% in 2015). For middle school students, 64% reported that they mattered to people in their community, up from 53% in 2011.

Youth-adult partnership promotes ownership

If students feel some ownership in the school where they learn, we might have better attendance, fewer suspensions, and more respect for keeping our building clean. Also, having a choice in how we are taught might make most students more enthusiastic about learning.

—student proposal for democracy, Meaningful Student Involvement Guide to Inclusive School Change, Adam Fletcher

Fostering student voice—empowering youth to express their opinions and influence their educational experiences so that they feel they have a stake in the outcomes—is one of the most powerful tools schools have to increase learning.

—Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012

Students report that adults rarely listen to their views, and they rarely involve students in important decisions. Large numbers of high school students describe their school experiences in terms of anonymity and powerlessness.

-Dana Mitra, 2008

While a clear majority of students (61%) believe they have a voice upon entering middle school, one third (37%) say they do by twelfth grade (QISA, 2013). In other words, the more our students mature, the less opportunity they have to offer their opinions and participate as leaders in meaningful ways. When we talk with students who are struggling and disengaged in school, a significant reason for their negative experience is the belief, real or imagined, that they have little control or influence over what happens to them.

— Quaglia & Corso, 2015

Through youth-adult partnership, students transform from being objects to being inventors

There's a radical — and wonderful — new idea here...that all children could and should be inventors of their own theories, critics of other people's ideas, analyzers of evidence, and makers of their own personal marks on the world. It's an idea with revolutionary implications. If we take it seriously.

—Deborah Meier, 1955

There is something fundamentally amiss about building and rebuilding an entire system without consulting at any point those it is designed to serve.

—Alison Cook-Sather, 2009

Research indicates that young people tend to broach subjects that adults are reluctant to discuss, such as equity issues that tend to get swept under the rug by administrators and other adults in the school who would rather avoid controversy.

--Dana Mitra, 2008

53% of students in Vermont report that they do not have a say in decisions that are made at their schools.

—YRBS Survey, 2013

Youth-adult partnership renews hope

Hope is something shared between teachers and students.... [when] we can learn together, teach together, be curiously impatient together, produce something together, and resist together the obstacles that prevent the flowering of our joy.

—Paulo Freire, 1998

Hope predicts GPA and retention in college, and hope scores are more robust predictors of college success than are high school GPA, SAT and ACT scores.

—2013 Gallup Student Poll National Report

54% of students are hopeful about their future. Hopeful students are 2.8 times more likely to say they get excellent grades, 3.1 times more likely to strongly agree they do well in school, 4.1 times more likely to be engaged with school, and 2.2 times less likely to say they miss a lot of school ... than their discouraged peers. Hope was studied because there is a direct relationship between hope and how well a person does in school.

--Gallup Student Poll, 2016

Youth-adult partnership improves academic success

There are numerous reasons to believe that engaging students is a critical step in improving schools. Foremost, engagement will almost certainly improve learning outcomes.

—F. Jowslowsky, 2007

Aspiring for rigor, relevance and relationships in the classroom will not only trigger excitement about learning. It will also increase performance and better prepare our children for their lives beyond school.

— Bill Daggett, 2012

Each child's innate desire to experience, understand, know and decide more and more in an ever widening spiral as he or she matures and grows — can and should be the foundation of all our educational efforts.

— Quaglia & Corso, 2015

Students who believe they have a voice in school are seven times more likely to be academically motivated than students who do not believe they have a voice in school.

-QISA, 2013

Youth-adult partnership increases engagement

Disengaged students attend school less, have lower self-concepts, achieve less academically, and are more likely to drop out of school.

--Mitra & Cross, 2009

In a 2013 Gallup Student Poll of 600,000 students, 28% of students report being “disengaged” from school; 17% are “actively disengaged.” Only 55% report feeling engaged.

Research on student voice has indicated that when students take a greater role in leadership practices in schools, it can lead to improvements in instruction, curriculum, testing policy, assessment systems, and teacher-student relationships.

--Dana Mitra, 2008

Engaged students are 2.5 times more likely to say they get excellent grades, 2.5 times more likely to strongly agree they do well in school, and 4.5 times more likely to be hopeful.

Disengaged students are ten times more likely to strongly disagree that they do well in school, 9 times more likely to say they get poor grades, 7.2 more likely to be discouraged, and twice as likely to say they missed a lot of school last year.

--Gallup Student Survey, 2016

