

Amplifying Student Voice

In education, student voice refers to the values, opinions, beliefs, perspectives, and cultural backgrounds of individual students and groups of students in a school, and to instructional approaches and techniques that are based on student choices, interests, passions, and ambitions. Generally speaking, student voice can be seen as an alternative to more traditional forms of governance or instruction in which school administrators and teachers may make unilateral decisions with little or no input from students.

—*Glossary of Education Reform, www.edglossary.org*

Goal

Amplifying Student Voice focuses students on exploring, understanding and collaboratively sharing the How of Learning with peers as learners across all content areas. Amplifying Student Voice will use the critical thinking tools (HOPs) being implemented with the teachers to support student engagement. The students will use the HOPs tools and skills to explore the guiding questions: How do we learn? Who are we? *Who are we* is relevant culture centered content that is reflective of the student's respective diverse backgrounds. This provides teachers, staff and leadership a greater insight to the students as learners and who they are in creating and sustaining a successful learning experience.

Process

The students will use critical thinking methods (High Operational Practices) to determine what the How of Learning means and reflectively supports their learning. They will then continue use of the critical thinking methods to develop how they will use video to document the *how do we learn* and *who are we* in their classrooms and schools. The critical thinking methods to be used include:

- Collaborative Communities are three supporting methods for a systemic structure for collective and individual success. These include: community building community exercises, collaborative learning methods and peer-to-peer coaching.
- Questions for Inquiry is the use of questioning methods to engage students in education and communities with dialogue. This includes effective methods for developing questioning skills leading to inquiry based discourse.
- Visual Mapping is for organizing and seeing thinking individually and collaboratively to understand patterns of thinking with different cognitive processes along with the frame of reference to understand different perspectives.
- Thinking Environments is an awareness, understanding and a process focused upon the design, interface and impact with the environment of the physical learning space including a person's use of space, materials, and objects.

Student Voice — Students are among the first to recognize that there is an enormous gap between their performance and potential. That is why we should give students a voice in professional development, instruction and classroom management. *QR Code to initial pilot Student Voice project designed and implemented for National Urban Alliance in East Allen Public School District by Robert Seth Price.*



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The students will use the critical thinking tools as part of the process of storyboarding and recording their story. They will be modeled examples and shown models of excellence to guide their own development of storyboards and video recording. Several potential implementation methods include:

- **Mini Documentary About Their School**

Students will brainstorm ideas on how students learn in the school community. The students will collaboratively develop a storyboard to complete a 2-5 minute video on their idea of how they learn. The video will begin with a reflective question based on their idea(s).

- **Reflective Practices Learning Centers**

Students will collaborate in groups of three to record themselves reading, performing or presenting for a 1-5 minute recording. They will then watch the video together (peer to peer coaching) with observations on what they did well and questions using a Thinking Map.

- **How We Do What We Do (DIY – Do It Yourself)**

Students will storyboard a short learning video on how to do a particular HOPs Critical Thinking method. They will brainstorm their idea with a visual tool (Thinking Map) and develop a storyboard (Flow Map) to sequence the video. The video clips of approximately 2-5 minutes in length can be used throughout the school.

- **Cultural Connections**

Students in collaborative groups will use key people and facts connecting with their cultural history, relative quotes, their musical interests (e.g. hip hop), current writers to learn from and express their interests. They will storyboard their ideas with Thinking Maps and develop questions to research for their development of articles, posters, media presentations, still photography and/or video.

- **What Do You Stand For?**

Students brainstorm things about their community that interest them that are of social concern (homelessness, parks...), then they interview a representative for the community of interest (e.g. a woman's shelter director for homeless) with questions they develop while also taking photographs and creating drawings. They ask each interviewee what they stand for. Students develop an understanding to consider what they stand for themselves. This can set the stage for a 'call to action'.

- **AND — Ideas Developed by the Students**

Monitoring Progress and Determining Success

Students use of critical thinking methods to develop their student voice projects will provide an assessment of the thinking, and the video recordings or media presentations will provide a means of determining progress and success. The video recordings will initially be used with teachers to see what they learn about the students.

To Consider

To begin incorporating youth voices, it is important to listen to and welcome a range of student opinions in decisions about academic content, discipline, school culture, free time, the physical space of the school, and family partnerships. They will consider individual student's wishes about which adults in the building will best teach and counsel them.

Amplifying Student Voice

Five Ways to Welcome Student Input from Giving Students a Voice in a Harvard Graduate School article in *Usable Knowledge, Harvard Graduate School of Education, by Leah Shafer, 2016:*

- Regularly solicit student feedback.
- Engage students in studying and assessing their school.
- Include authentic student representation on leadership teams.
- Invite students to any discussion related to their own learning.
- More broadly, consider young people as stakeholders and partners in their schools.

Equipment Needs

For video a smart phone or tablet with video is fine, as is a digital camera that has video capabilities. Quality sound is always important: e.g. using an external mic. It is helpful that the video is easily edited with software on the device (e.g. imovie with iphones or ipads). If planned well, editing should be at a minimum. Performance is important including a setup and place to project the completed video clips. An additional idea is a monitor or projection that can be dedicated to being a Kiosk in the front office.

Why and How Video for the School Community

- Children and Youth — if children and youth learn to influence media, they will be more attune to when they are being influenced.
- Educators — peer to peer coaching so we can actually see what we thought we did.
- Action Research — to reflect on practice.
- Documenting and Documentaries — to share the story.

What Makes Roosevelt Excellent: Students Documenting Their School

A fifth grade classroom of 34 students created their documentary of the school over three half-day sessions. The first day focused on video exercises. The second day the young filmmakers used Thinking Maps to storyboard their mini productions. The whole class then observed one filmmaking group make a film. Each group was composed of four to five students including a director, camera person(s), and interviewer(s). The third day was reserved for filmmaking purposes for all groups. All questions for the interviews were developed by the students. The video included The Documentary by the students; the video exercises (thaumatrope, introduction exercises, rotating in rhythm); and documenting the documentary.
<https://vimeo.com/user12997522/student-voice-documenting-the-school>



students
documenting
their school



school portfolio
video

School Portfolio: Interviewing on Video and Documenting in Print.

The following are examples of project documentation include action research, use of video, reflective print material and more.

Roosevelt UFSD in the New York City area. This includes interviews with students, teachers, school leadership and supporting professional development mentors. The video clips are short and the print materials are transcribed from the video interviews.

- Video: <https://vimeo.com/user12997522/roosevelt>
- Print: <http://www.eggplant.org/pdf/roosevelt-poster-collection1.0.pdf>



school portfolio
print

Research Connecting to Student Voice

Read the following articles on research on *Situating Learning in the Lives of Students* and *Deconstructing Race*. A suggested sequence of methods to discuss the articles includes:

Guiding Questions

- What are your questions after reading this research?
- How does this research apply to your school?
- How would you map out a plan to implement practical tools and practices to support the quality of the school's social capital?

Research in Action

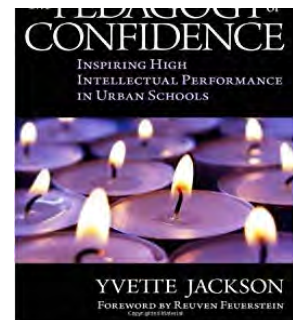
1. Use Collaborative Questions to respond to, *What are your questions from reading this research?* Then in small collaborative groups, write several questions from the Collaborative Questions exercise with each question on a separate piece of paper to sort (see the categorization map and section on inductive sorting). Sort the questions into categories with a top category label. Use a visual tool to map: How does this research apply to your school? Possible maps include brainstorming, cause and effect, comparing or a map that supports your thinking.
2. What are the steps and parts of the steps to implement a plan? Use a Flow Map to sequence.

Pedagogy of Confidence: Situating Learning in the Lives of Students

Jackson, Yvette, *The Pedagogy of Confidence: Inspiring High Intellectual Performance in Urban Schools*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2011.



Situating learning in the lives of students engages student participation by facilitating their discovery of relevance and meaning in academic learning. It has long been established that engaging anyone in learning requires connecting to that person's cultural context or frame of reference (Feuerstein et al., 1980, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978). Lave and Wenger (1990) extended this understanding by pointing out that learning is a function of the activity, context and culture in which it is situated. However, most classroom learning activities that involve abstract knowledge occur out of context, hampering cognition and learning. This lack of contextualizing is an instructional reality for school-dependent children. Most often, the examples and connections they are provided come from the cultural context of the teacher or from a community to which they do not belong (Lave & Wenger, 1990). Like all students, these individuals have vast knowledge from their life experience that is organized into elaborate networks of abstract mental structures (schemata) that represent their understanding of the world. When they must assimilate new conceptions of understanding or schemata that seem to contradict their existing understandings in relation to their life experience enables them to recognize the connections to what is being introduced and what they already know and suppositions they have already formulated, minimizing internal conflict and maximizing comprehension (Lave & Wenger, 1990 SIL International, 1999). Working from the personal cultural context of students engages and heightens their attention because the engagements are perceived as meaningful.



Yvette Jackson video of Inspiring High Intellectual Performance Presentation at the SJI 2015 Conference.

Research Connecting to Student Voice

Deconstructing Race: Key Concepts

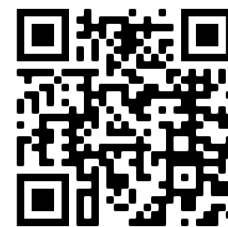
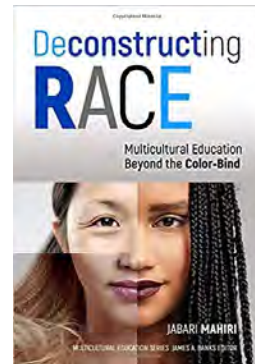
Mahiri, J. *Deconstructing Race : Multicultural Education Beyond The Color-Bind*. New York: Teachers College Press, 2017.



We are all born into a social position and with physical features that contribute to our sense of who we are. But social positioning and physical features are not (or should not be) determinative of identity. Against the grain of social constructions, this book reveals how people's identities are ultimately determined by a wide range of personal-cultural practices, choices, and perspectives. The practices engaged in throughout our lives are tied to major and minor life choices as well as perspectives we develop about ourselves and others at the intersection of personal, social, material, and spiritual worlds. The lives of the interviewees provided evidence for how the intersections and interactions of these components reflected the actual identities of individuals, rather than the essentialized racial categories that Brodtkin (1998) noted are "assigned" by white supremacy.

"Micro-cultures" (with a hyphen) is a key concept that captures the numerous components of positioning, practices, choices, and perspectives that make up the unique identities of each individual. This idea builds upon, but is distinguished from, Banks' (2013) concepts of "microcultures" (without a hyphen) and "multiple group memberships," as discussed in Chapter 9. I describe micro-cultural identities and practices as being mediated by language, and, like language, as being both acquired and learned. But they are also constituted and mediated through digital texts and tools that dramatically increase the range of how they can be engaged or enacted. At any moment, the vertical axis of these virtually limitless combinations of components—like fingerprints—reflect and define the ultimate uniqueness of individuals. On multiple horizontal axes, alignments of components also reflect similarities of individuals to specific others in shared or connected experiences within histories and geographies-within time and space. Unlike fingerprints, the combinations of micro-cultural components are dynamic and constantly changing (Mahiri, 2015; Mahiri & Kim, 2016; Mahiri & Ilten-Gee, 2017). From this perspective each life might be seen as a river fed by many distinct tributaries flowing into the sea of humanity.

The core argument of this book is that the continually emerging, rapidly changing micro-cultural identities and practices of individuals cannot be contained in the static racial categories assigned by white supremacy.



Jabari Mahiri video of Deconstructing Race at the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace Annual Lecture 2018.

