# Student Voice:
# The Possibility for Deeper Change

Dana Mitra

Professor of Education

Penn State University

dana@psu.edu

@docdana

# What is student voice?

- Opportunities for youth to share in the school decisions that will shape their lives and the lives of their peers

- Youth and adults collaborating together

- Mutual teaching and learning

# United Nations

## Convention on the Rights of the Child

- Defines youth participation formally (Articles 12-15)
  - Series of rights
  - Access to information
  - Expression of views
  - Freedom to form collective organizations

- Legitimizes student voice

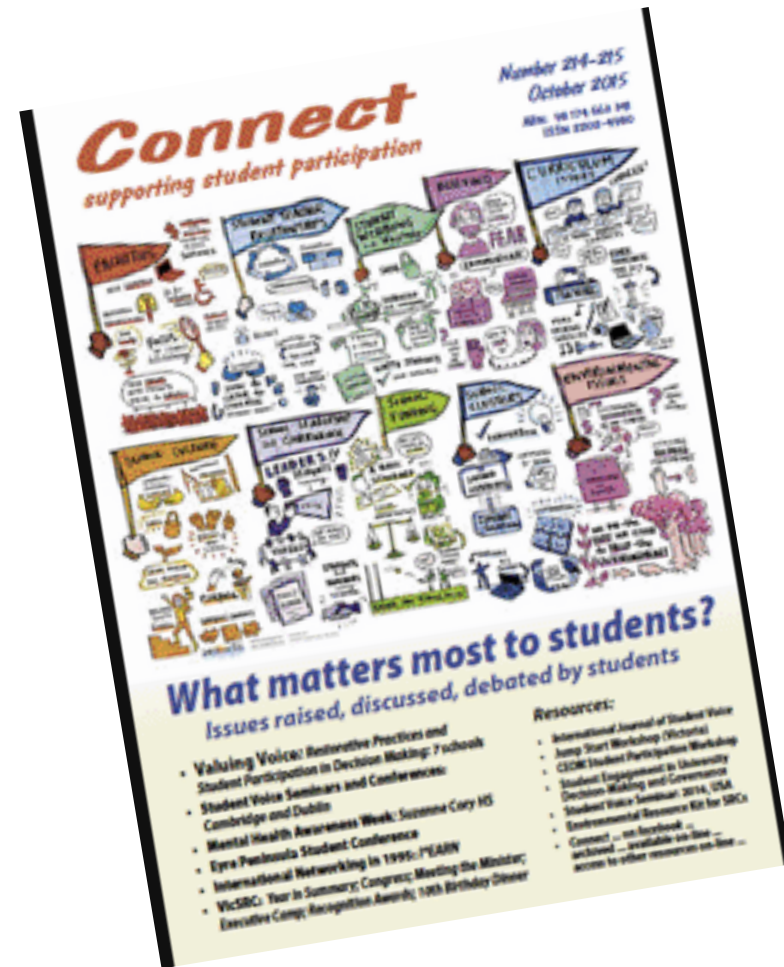- Bolsters need to build youth capacity and to create accountability for youth participation

**ARTICLE 12:** You have the right to an **opinion** and for it to be **listened to** and **taken seriously.**

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

# International student voice policy

- UNESCO publishes regularly on youth participation in educational development and change.

- New Zealand Ministry of Education states a vision for student voice on its website focused on involving students in assessment.

- Ministry of Education in Ontario including a Ministry Student Advisory Council and related projects that prioritize student experience in provincial government.

- Swedish national curriculum includes formal standards for children to express views in matters that concern their learning. Teachers in Swedish schools are encouraged to work "together with the pupils develop rules for working and participating in their own group"

# Students say what adults will not/cannot

- Critique of curriculum in New Zealand

- Municipal councils in Israel

- Critique of sex education in Kenya

- Community arts hubs in Canada

- School redesign in Netherlands, including architecture

# U.S. Student Voice Contexts

- Only nation in the world to not commit to ratifying UNCRC

- In many states, youth participation on governing boards is illegal

- Personalization and Relevance



PERSONALIZED LEARNING

STUDENT-OWNED LEARNING

STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING

COMPETENCY-BASED LEARNING

ANYTIME, ANYWHERE LEARNING

DEEPER LEARNING

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, AND DISPOSITIONS TO SUCCEED IN COLLEGE, CAREER, AND CIVIC LIFE

http://studentsatthecenterhub.org/interactive-framework/
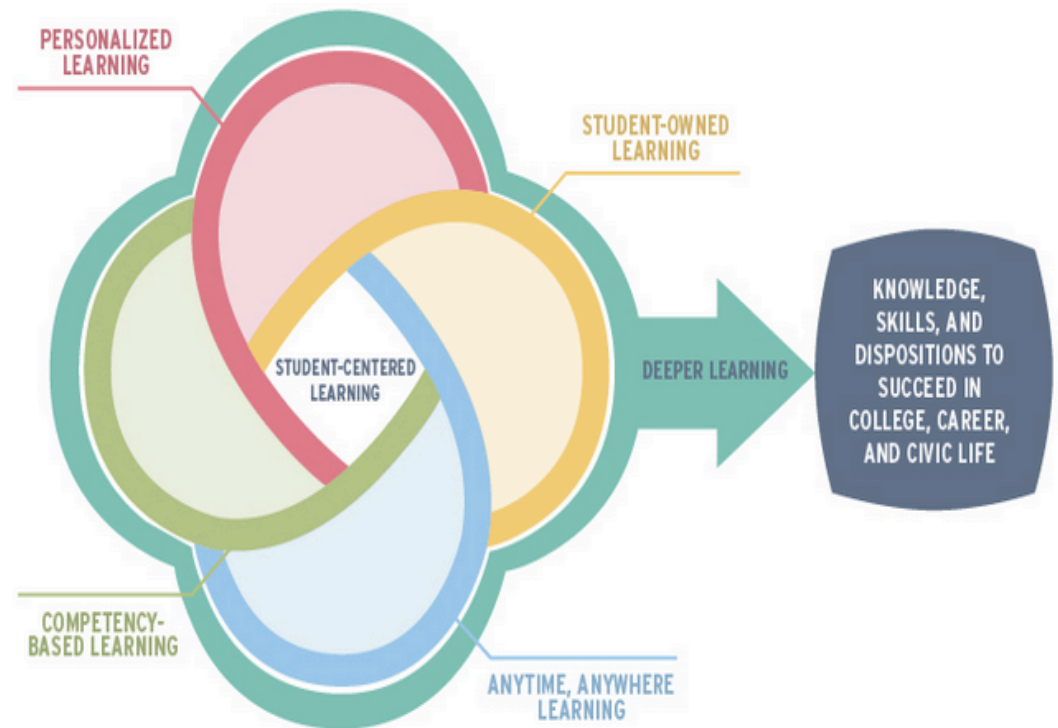
# INSIDE VS OUTSIDE CHANGE

City activism:
Teacher assessment in NYC
Participatory budgeting in Boston
Youth councils in Philadelphia

Statewide student voice councils
Kentucky
Oregon
Vermont's Up for Learning

# Leverage in U.S. systems

- Research-Practice Partnerships (RPP) and Networked Improvement Communities (NICS)
  - Longer term relationships between practitioners and researchers designed to investigate ways to improve teaching and learning

# U.S. Contexts of Polarization

- People are choosing to listen increasingly to viewpoints most similar to their own

- Workplace is often one of the few places where people speak across political differences

- Trump presidency symbolizes an intentional effort to increase dissonance between groups rather than seeking compromise and accommodation

- Learning how to talk about different beliefs in such a way that one hears and learns from the other is an increasingly important skill (Mutz, 2002)

# Making a Difference



Agency

Belonging

Competence

Dialogue

# CRITICAL DIALOGUE

- Encouraging young people to examine their environment, to notice and question injustices, and to take action to make things better.
- Learning to participate in their community and also to take responsibility to push for changes when they observe injustices.
- Developing a growing awareness of the needs of others and social responsibility. Students cannot only become aware of injustices, but they can seek civically responsible roles in which they consider how to take action.
- Considering, collaboratively and generatively, how we want to live together

# Roots of Critical Dialogue

- Citizens, "are not simply to exercise power (e.g., voting; direct action) but to think with one another about the power they exercise" (Parker & Hess, p. 242)

- Dewey: It is not enough to simply *tell* children about democratic practice; rather, they must *live* this experience,

- Freire: dialogue is development and acquisition of knowledge, as opposed to traditional (and, for Freire, problematic and potentially oppressive) practices of indoctrination and passive learning.
  - knowledge and the learning process is not *static*, but always in process through the dialogue of teacher and students in the classroom or learning environment

# Ethical dialogue with kindergarteners: Questioning right and wrong

- Shift to co-collaboration embracing meaningful dialogue

- Explicitly discuss the importance of "care" and "respect"

- Collaboratively develop rules to encourage and support productive dialogue and playfully intellectual space

- Teachers modelling questioning, critical reflection, scaffolding dialogue

Serrriere, S., Burroughs, M, & Mitra, D. (2017). Kindergartners and philosophical dialogue: Supporting child agency in the classroom. *Social Studies and the Young Learner, 29*, 4, 8-12.
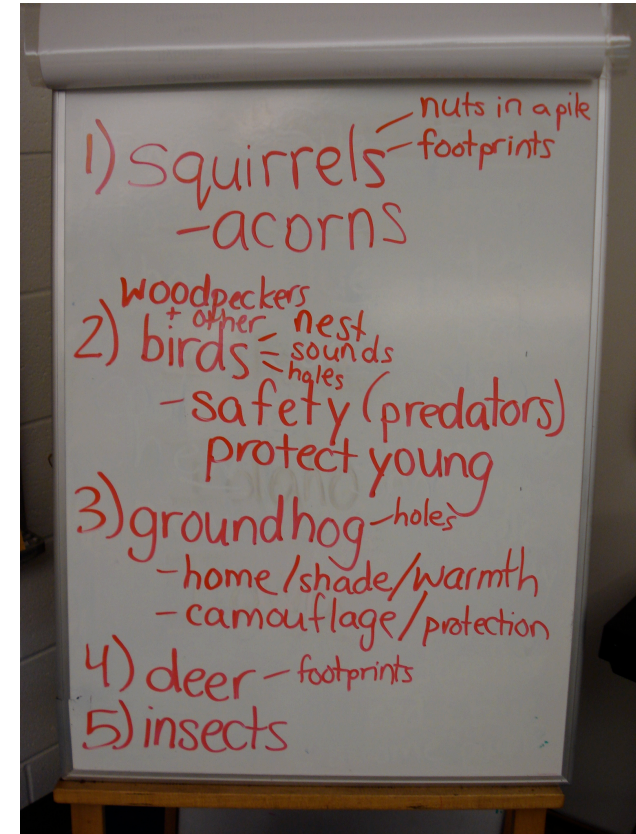
# Critical Inquiry/
## Youth Participatory Action Research



- Young people as change agents/public impact

- Critical perspectives on equity

- Noticing little and large injustices
  - asking meaningful questions
  - collecting strong data
  - taking steps to be changemakers
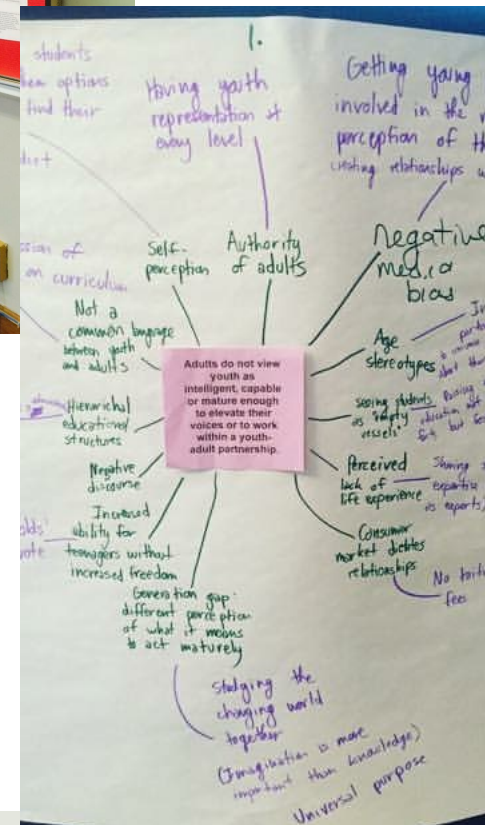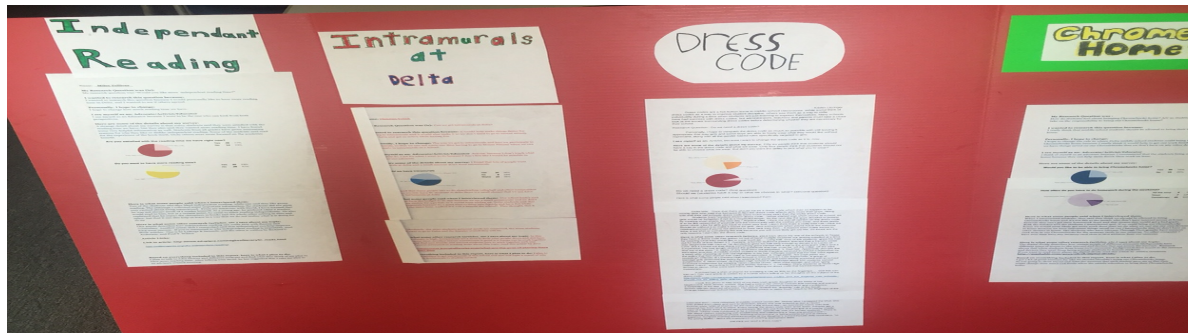
# Partnering with a homeless shelter
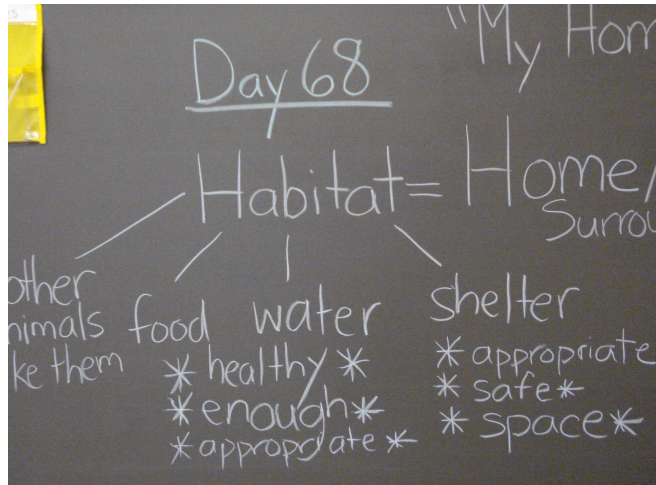
# New roles for teachers

- Adults must learn how to facilitate
  - Learning to get out of the way
  - Meaningful not equal roles

- Buffer/bridge interactions with administration and broader community

- Provide youth with technical support

# Agency: (Up for Learning)



**Personal Power** + **Partnership** + **Purpose** = **Agency**

**Personal Power** to ground and shape a life worth living.

**Partnership** between youth & adults.

**Purpose** to make the world a better place.

**Agency** is the ability to make intentional choices about, and take an active role in, the course of one's own life and on behalf of the lives of others.

# Agency (Mitra)

- Increasing ability to articulate opinions to others

- Constructing new identities as change makers

- Developing a greater sense of leadership

# Student agency influences
(Toshalis & Nikula, 2012):

- Self-determination

- Self-regulation

- Student engagement

- Motivation

- Competence beliefs

- Stereotype threat

# Agency (GRIP TAPE)

- Self-Awareness

- Confidence

- Demanding Opportunities

- Seizing Opportunities

- Skills & Competencies

- Activation

> GRIPTAPE > LEARNING CHALLENGE

# Constructing a field: Convening, collaborating, and dreaming
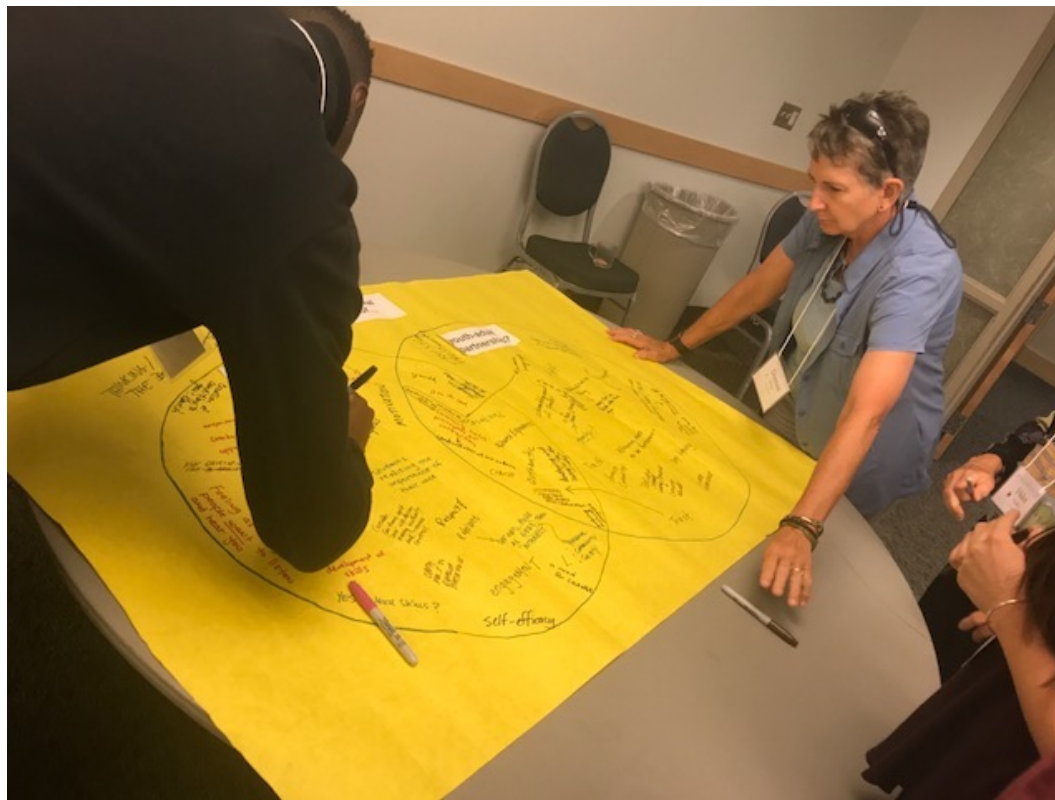
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**The International Journal of Student Voice**

The International Journal of Student Voice (IJSV) is a peer-reviewed, open access e-journal publishing on the ways in which students co-lead their schools and communities by collaborating with teachers, administrators, and community stakeholders to define problems and develop potential solutions and/or take the lead on making change in their schools and communities. We define students to include a wide range of young people, from early childhood to university studies. Taking as foundational

*Other Student Voice Resources*

Student engagement and Experience Journal

The Journal of Educational Innovation, Partnership and Change

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# Pupil consultation

- Teachers partnering with students to discuss teaching and learning
  - Inviting students to provide feedback on instructional styles, curriculum content, assessment

- Increase the curricular relevance
  - Self-directed learning opportunities for students
  - Connection to employment including students' jobs
  - Desire to engage in less specialized coursework in their final years of high school so that they have a wider range of post-secondary options

# Pupil consultation outcomes

- Students can improve academically when teachers construct their classrooms in ways that value student voice
  - especially when students collaborate on curriculum and instruction

- Students show interest in schoolwork and learning *for change*.

- Students show better meta-cognitive understanding of own learning, including gaining a stronger sense of own abilities
  - Educating students about the differences between learning styles, multiple intelligences, and emotional intelligence

# Contexts for STUDENT VOICE

- Innovation requires a space for risk taking

- Collective meaning making

- Valuing diverse opinions of teachers and students

- Scaffolding discussions and modeling critical reflection

- "The way we do things here"

# "Visible Victories"

# BELONGING

Belonging to a school is positively related to academic success and motivation

Attachment to peers, their teachers, their school, and their broader community

KADEN → More boys at Delta wanted a dress code (12, n=60) than girls (9, n=60) perhaps because more boys are less impacted by a dress code as compared to girls.

SARAH → More girls (10, n=59) than boys (7, n=59) want to go to the playgrounds. However, more students at Delta Middle don't want to go to the playgrounds at all (31 versus 17). We are unsure of why this data is occurring right now.

# COMPENTENCIES

- Develop new skills and abilities
  - physical, intellectual, psychological, emotional, and social
- Solve problems
- Be appreciated for one's talents
  - Value a diverse range of talents and leadership styles: critical thinker, teacher, anchor, peacemaker, and supporter
- Facilitate conversations with adults and youth
- Speak publicly to diverse audiences