Washington State
Governor's Office of the
Education
Ombuds

Reducing the Opportunity Gap by Empowering Students, Families, and Communities

From Listening to Co-Design

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Introduction

For several years, the Governor's Office of the Education Ombuds (OEO) has been extending its conflict resolution work to increasing community conversation and problem-solving through family-focused listening sessions. OEO has also led efforts to capture student voice and decided recently to expand that feature of his work. To grow those offerings, OEO decided it wanted to look at best practices for student voice. While a lot of OEO's services focus largely on engaging adults in problem-solving, OEO is also concerned that students need to be empowered directly and engaged in offering their voices for education reform. This report is part of the body of work being conducted to make this a reality.

The shift towards increasing the empowerment of student voice is part of the broader shift in US K-12 education towards the adoption of student-centered learning processes. Through students, we can create a more equitable school system that centers and prioritizes the experiences of students of color, immigrant and refugee students, students with disabilities, and others. Focusing on these experiences is not only central to racial equity but it also improves what school and communities look like for everyone.

This report begins by outlining the broader background around the shift to student-centered learning. Building on a key aspect of this shift – the role of student voice – the report then explores the role that student voice can play in this process while also beginning to look at the important role that family and community voices also play. The report then looks at the way in which members of historically marginalized and disadvantaged groups have sometimes struggled with having their voices heard and how shifting to active and intentional listening is critical to the success of any process to elicit student, family, or community voice form members of these groups. The report then provides an outline of seven listening methods that can be used to elicit voice from students, families, and their communities.

While listening is an important tool in reducing the opportunity gap by empowering students it is only part of the process – the insights gained from these processes need to be translated into concrete action. OEO's listening sessions have brought together families, schools, and students to convert listening and sharing to action. As this part of OEO's work grows, OEO is interested in what co-design can do to bring tools, techniques, and ways of thinking to transform ideas into collaborative action. Exploring the participatory nature of co-design, the report provides a background to these set of practices before demonstrating the linkages between discussions of participation in student voice and broader issues of student participation in processes of co-design. This section of the report then offers three 'patterns' of co-design – derived from earlier discussions in the report – which can be used by those wanting to include co-design in their professional practice. The report then ends with a worked example of the ways in which the techniques and methods discussed in the report can be put into practice.

Combined, listening sessions and co-design provide a consolidated group of practices which together can enable the collection of insights from a wide range of stakeholders while also involving them in the design and build-out of options to reduce the opportunity gap. Additional value can be gained in that the insights gleaned through these processes also provide useful data that can be used by OEO in both its policy work and its outreach, as well as by schools and districts wanting to improve their processes and practices through co-design.

Student-Centered Learning

Student voice is not a new concept in the education field but it is an increasingly important one.[1] In fact, John Dewey argued for the incorporation of student perspectives into the design of school curriculum over one hundred years ago.[2] However, over the last thirty years, the issue of student voice has increasingly come to the fore in academic as well as in the policy and practice fields.[3]

The shift to student-centered learning is revolutionizing our education systems. But, in order to be successfully transformed, we need to ensure that our understanding of what constitutes schooling extends beyond the formal institutions of our schools to include the formal and informal aspects of learning present in those institutions and within the broader family and community environment within which our student's live and operate.

The underpinning question for this renewed interest in the topic of student voice is:

> What would happen if we treated the student as someone whose opinion mattered?[4]

The answer is more effective learning for students and better outcomes for all involved. This renewed focus in student voice is itself aligned with a growing shift towards student-centered learning. This new approach to education and learning is based on the belief that students need to be at the center of learning – with educators and others working to help construct new knowledge based on what is seen as being interesting to the students themselves. One of the key aspects to this approach is that students should receive guidance and support in the learning process from adults not only in classrooms but wherever learning can take place. Learning then becomes a holistic process that occurs across all aspects of student's life – both inside and outside the formal institution of the school. The importance of the active involvement of the range of adults active in students' lives is one of the greatest takeaways from this shift. And, in order to effectively bring this shift about, these adults – particularly from families and their broader communities – need to be brought into active conversation around student learning with educators, administrators, and the students themselves.

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[1] Dana Mitra, "Opening the Floodgates: Giving Students a Voice in School Reform," *FORUM* 43, no. 2 (2001).
[2] John Dewey, *Democracy and Education. An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education* (New York: Free Press, 1916).
[3] For example, see Jean Rudduck, Roland Chaplain, and Gwen Wallace, *School Improvement : What Can Pupils Tell Us?* (London: D. Fulton Publishers, 1996).For the USA in particular see Jonathan Kozol, *Savage Inequalities : Children in America's Schools*, 1st ed. ed. (New York: Crown Publishing, 1991).
[4] Michael Fullan, *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, ed. Suzanne M. Stiegelbauer and Michael Fullan, 2nd ed. ed. (New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 1991). p. 170.

This change emerged out of the realization that while the job market in the United States has changed significantly over the last one hundred years, our nation's classrooms are still based on a mode of classroom learning designed for an earlier industrial era. The skills that are most important to our students now when they graduate are not just content-based skills such as basic math and English skills but broader based skills such as knowing how to communicate effectively, work collaboratively, direct their own learning, and think critically and solve problems. This is not to say that content-based learning is not important but rather to say that this should be contextualized within a broader system that enables the learning of this content through a process that enables and reinforces the learning of these higher-level skills. Research on how the human brain and memory work in response to different environments has demonstrated the positive impact of this shift in approach for students across a range of measures.[5]

Another key aspect of this broader shift is an increased focus on the role that informal learning plays for students. These forms of informal learning occur in a wide range of settings, from the playground where children learn different games from one another through to the inter-generational transfer of knowledge where children may work with grandparents in various community activities.[6] The key shift here is the recognition that as we move away from the industrial era mode of education, the meaning of school extends to include "any community of people that comes together to learn with each other."[7] The corollary of this is that there is an urgent need to ensure that the broader social context within which students operate – their family and community environment – is actively incorporated by educators in all aspects of students' lives, and vice versa. Catalyzed by their engagement and interaction in everyday family life and community settings, children have been learning the skills and ways of life of their own communities through these informal settings since before formal systems of schooling began. Part of the shift to a student-centered approach to learning is thus understanding how best these informal ways of learning can mesh with and support, and be supported by, other more formal modes of learning.

Although a contrast is often made between informal and formal learning they are not opposite approaches. Instead, students often learn in multiple ways, and communities employ multiple learning approaches.[8] The question to be asked therefore is not whether we should focus on learning in school or out-of-school situations but rather how can we best create a platform for the most effective learning experiences as possible for our students across a range of settings? How can we let student voices, family voices, and community voices all be heard in the quest for better learning environments for our students?

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[5] Rebecca E. Wolfe, Adria Steinberg, and Nancy Hoffman, *Anytime, Anywhere : Student-Centered Learning for Schools and Teachers* (Cambridge: Harvard Education Press, 2013).

[6] David F. Lancy, *The Anthropology of Childhood : Cherubs, Chattel, Changelings*, Second edition. ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). See also Lucía Alcalá et al., "Children's Initiative in Contributions to Family Work in Indigenous-Heritage and Cosmopolitan Communities in Mexico," *Human Development* 57, no. 2–3 (2014).

[7] Ken Robinson and Lou Aronica, *Creative Schools : The Grassroots Revolution That's Transforming Education* (New York: Viking, 2015). p. xx.

[8] Ruth Paradise and Barbara Rogoff, "Side by Side: Learning by Observing and Pitching In," *Ethos* 37, no. 1 (2009).

An important aspect of this shift is thus the pivotal role that student, family and community voice plays in the process. As Alison Cook-Sather has argued with regards student voice:

> As long as we exclude student perspectives from our conversations about schooling and how it needs to change, our efforts at reform will be based on an incomplete picture of life in classrooms and schools and how that life could be improved.[9]

This is true too for the voices of our students' families and communities. Learning from earlier periods of educational reform we thus need to ensure that in undertaking these transformational processes that we are "reforming with, not for students"[10] and including the voices of the broader social context within which are students live and operate.

Student, Family, and Community Voice

Student voice provides an important resource for the shift to student-centered learning approaches. But, as discussed above, this also necessarily involves the inclusion of others involved in student's broader learning – their families and communities. Going deeper into looking at this concept, we can identify student voice as an approach where students have the opportunity to influence the decisions that will shape their lives and those of their peers both in school settings and outside in their broader lives.[11] It is a process where we "take seriously what students tell us about their experience of being a learner in school—about what gets in the way of their learning and what helps them to learn."[12]

Student voice is an important aspect in the shift towards student-centered learning. But, student voice also needs to be accompanied by the voices of student's families and their communities. The same techniques that can be used for eliciting student voice can also be used for eliciting these other voices but success will require that adults – family, community members, educators, administrators and others – are involved and committed to the process.

In this sense, taking student voice seriously is about creating a space for "talking with pupils about things that matter to them in the classroom and school and that affect their learning".[13] In line with the shift to student-centered pedagogies, the more personalized approach to learning that the use of student voice opens up can have a tremendous impact on student engagement through the opportunities it provides for students to develop greater control over their learning and, importantly, who is involved in that learning educators, administrators and broader family and community members, too.[14]

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[9] Alison Cook-Sather, "Authorizing Students' Perspectives: Toward Trust, Dialogue, and Change in Education," *Educational Researcher* 31, no. 4 (2002). p. 3.

[10] Bruce L. Wilson and H. Dickson Corbett, *Listening to Urban Kids : School Reform and the Teachers They Want* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001). p. 126.

[11] Dana L. Mitra, "Student Voice and Student Roles In Education Policy Reform," in *Handbook of Education Policy Research*, ed. Gary Sykes, et al. (New York: Routledge, 2009).

[12] Julia Flutter and Jean Rudduck, *Consulting Pupils : What's in It for Schools?* (London: Routledge, 2004). p. 15.

[13] Rudduck Jean and Mcintyre Donald, *Improving Learning through Consulting Pupils*, vol. 1 (London: Taylor and Francis, 2007). p. 7.

[14] Sarah Quinn and Susanne Owen, "Freedom to Grow: Children's Perspectives of Student Voice," *Childhood Education* 90, no. 3 (2014).

In this respect then, we need to be aware that student voice is not solely directed toward students – adults play a large role in the successful application of these processes. This includes adults working to help facilitate the elicitation of these voices, adults working as educators and in education administration, and adults in students' families and in their broader communities.

Research has shown that adult participation in student-adult initiatives can swing between perpetuating hierarchical relationships to the other extreme of removing themselves completely from the exercise.[15] The most useful answer is somewhere in between these extremes.[16] This is important to note as research has found that student-adult partnerships have led to more effective reforms within schools and community organizations both nationally and internationally.[17] The key aspect here is understanding what are the best structures and processes to involve adults in this transformation.

Mechanisms for eliciting student voice are related – and connected to – mechanisms for eliciting family and community voice. Rather than seeing these as separate tools, it is best to see these different voices as being different aspects of a broader general issue – the learning climate of our students. How student, family, and community voice is applied in schools varies widely across different students, their family members, and their communities – spanning the range from simply sharing their opinions on problems and possible solutions through to taking the lead in seeking change in school systems.[18]

Beyond just the involvement of adults in general, a key aspect to successfully implementing processes of eliciting student, family, and community voice is the need for educational leadership to be involved in the process.[19] Research has shown that if school leadership makes their students' identities a key part of their leadership practice this improves overall school success. Broadening leadership to a greater sense of shared leadership amongst a range of stakeholders has led to teachers and others possessing higher levels of commitment and to an increased sense of effectiveness in their work.[20] Therefore, the shift to a truly student-centered learning system requires the active involvement of both educators and administrators as well as students' families and broader communities.

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[15] Linda Camino, "Pitfalls and Promising Practices of Youth-Adult Partnerships: An Evaluator's Reflections," *Journal of Community Psychology* 33, no. 1 (2005).

[16] Shawn A. Ginwright, "On Urban Ground: Understanding African-American Intergenerational Partnerships in Urban Communities," Ibid. See also Patrick J. McQuillan, "Possibilities and Pitfalls: A Comparative Analysis of Student Empowerment," *American Educational Research Journal* 42, no. 4 (2005).

[17] Marc Brasof, *Student Voice and School Governance : Distributing Leadership to Youth and Adults* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

[18] Dana L. Mitra, *Student Voice in School Reform : Building Youth-Adult Partnerships That Strengthen Schools and Empower Youth* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008).

[19] Dana Mitra, Stephanie Serriere, and Donnan Stoicovy, "The Role of Leaders in Enabling Student Voice," *Management in Education* 26, no. 3 (2012).

[20] Anjalé D. Welton and Rhoda Freelon, "Community Organizing as Educational Leadership: Lessons from Chicago on the Politics of Racial Justice," *Journal of Research on Leadership Education* 13, no. 1 (2018).

Increasingly then, the research evidence shows that when opportunities for eliciting these various forms of voice are utilized, the new knowledge that these processes help create is making a positive difference to life at school.[21] Eliciting these voices has thus allowed teachers and administrators to learn about:

- students' lives outside of school;[22]
- students' learning needs and preferences; and
- how to construct more engaging, relevant lessons and curricula.[23]

Similarly, when students, their families, and their communities are consulted about classroom instruction positive impacts include:

- greater engagement in school;[24]
- stronger relationships with teachers;[25] and
- increased ownership over, as well as more reflection on, student's own learning.[26]

Where they are freely able to express their perspectives, beliefs, and experiences without fear of judgment, students, their families, and their communities are empowered to take control of their overall learning experiences. In light of this research, we can see that eliciting these forms of voice helps build school climates which encourage safe and productive learning environments for all students.[27] The key then is how to bring these voices together well.

An important point to note is that efforts to engage these groups – students, their families, and their communities – can quickly collapse into tokenism if teachers and other school leaders are not genuine in their approach. In fact, tokenistic engagement can actually lead to further alienate these groups from teachers, administrative leaders, and the education system itself. This is particularly the case if the processes utilized are seen as being exclusionary.[28] This becomes even more of an issue for students who are from historically disadvantaged and marginalized groups.[29]

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[21] M. Fielding, "Patterns of Partnership : Student Voice, Intergenerational Learning and Democratic Fellowship," in *Rethinking Educational Practice through Reflexive Inquiry: Essays in Honour of Susan Groundwater-Smith*, ed. N. Mockler and Sachs. J. (New York: Springer, 2011).

[22] Bethan Morgan, ""I Think It's About the Teacher Feeding Off Our Minds, Instead of Us Learning Off Them, Sort of Like Switching the Process Around": Pupils' Perspectives on Being Consulted About Classroom Teaching and Learning," *Curriculum Journal* 20, no. 4 (2009).

[23] Gale Seiler, "Reconstructing Science Curricula through Student Voice and Choice," *Education and Urban Society* 45, no. 3 (2013).

[24] Cook-Sather, "Authorizing Students' Perspectives: Toward Trust, Dialogue, and Change in Education."

[25] R.G. Kane, N. Maw, and C Chimwayange, *Making Sense of Learning at Secondary School: An Exploration by Teachers with Students* (Wellington, NZ: Teaching and Learning Research Institute, 2006).

[26] Jean and Donald, *Improving Learning through Consulting Pupils*.

[27] Katherine Cumings Mansfield, "The Importance of Safe Space and Student Voice in Schools That Serve Minoritized Learners," *Journal of Educational Leadership, Policy and Practice* 30, no. 1 (2015).

[28] Roger A. Hart, "Stepping Back from 'the Ladder': Reflections on a Model of Participatory Work With Children," in *Participation and Learning : Perspectives on Education and the Environment, Health and Sustainability*, ed. Alan Reid (New York: Springer, 2008).

[29] Ruth Sinclair, "Participation in Practice: Making It Meaningful, Effective and Sustainable," *Children & Society* 18, no. 2 (2004).

Bringing in the Voices of Students Historically Marginalized and Most Affected by Opportunity Gaps

Students, families, and communities of historically marginalized and disadvantaged groups can have a difficult time in having their voices heard. Particular effort needs to be applied to ensure that individuals and communities from these groups are able to actively have their voices heard through the use of a wide variety of techniques to elicit their voices in an authentic way.

Recent research has shown how student voices are often silenced by the structural arrangements and sociocultural conditions found in schools.[30] Traditionally, adults have generally justified the exclusion of students from important decision-making structures and processes with the reasoning that students do not yet possess the abilities and maturity to be effective change-makers[31] As a result, student government councils have generally tended to focus on social activities rather than on decisions influencing school policies and practices.[32] Similarly, students who serve on boards and councils with adults have tended to be ignored or out-voted.[33] This is more so the case for students from historically marginalized and disadvantaged groups. These include, amongst others:

- students of color;
- immigrant and refugee students;
- English Language Learners;
- Native students;
- students with disabilities; and
- LGBTQIA* students.

For marginalized and disadvantaged groups, school can thus be a particularly "debilitating environment"[34]. Voices of students from these groups are often stifled by majority voices in institutional contexts.[35] And, unfortunately, this is also generally the case for the voices of families and the broader community from these groups. Extra work then is required to ensure that the voices of students and families from these communities is able to be heard.

Taking this realization seriously we thus need to be careful with the concept of representation. Research has shown that academic and behavior requirements to participate in representative student bodies like councils and forums can act to effectively exclude the voice of some of the

[30] Brasof, *Student Voice and School Governance : Distributing Leadership to Youth and Adults*.
[31] Joan Costello et al., "How History, Ideology, and Structure Shape the Organizations That Shape Youth," in *Trends in Youth Development : Visions, Realities, and Challenges*, ed. Peter L. Benson and Karen J. Pittman (Boston: Kluwer, 2001).
[32] Brenda J. McMahon, "Education in and for Democracy: Conceptions of Schooling and Student Voice," in *Student Engagement in Urban Schools : Beyond Neoliberal Discourses*, ed. Brenda J. McMahon and John P. Portelli (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2012).
[33] Jerusha Osberg, Denise Pope, and Mollie Galloway, "Students Matter in School Reform: Leaving Fingerprints and Becoming Leaders," *International Journal of Leadership in Education* 9, no. 4 (2006).
[34] Bradley J. Porfilio and Paul R. Carr, "The Neo-Liberal Social Order, Youth and Resistance " in *Youth Culture, Education and Resistance : Subverting the Commercial Ordering of Life*, ed. Bradley J. Porfilio and Paul R. Carr (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2010). p. 5.
[35] Jason Irizarry, ""Buscando La Libertad": Latino Youths in Search of Freedom in School," *Democracy & Education* 19, no. 1 (2011).

most marginalized students.[36] Student voice scholars have thus taken issue with the notion that a few students can speak for the many.[37] The broader issue then is to what extent the voices of a few are able to represent the voices of the many – if at all.[38]

In this respect, student voice is even more powerful and more needed as it enables students who are members of historically marginalized and disadvantaged groups – and so too the families and communities of these students – to "interrogate and denaturalize the conditions of their everyday oppression [and so] inspire a process of community and knowledge building."[39] Given that one of the key underpinnings of the shift to student-centered learning is that learning is always fundamentally constituted by and through social, relational, and culturally mediated experiences we can see how the successful adoption of student voice practices thus aligns with critical forms of pedagogy which build from student's existing cultural knowledge base and, in doing so, "fundamentally repositions students as actors and contributors to the struggle for social change."[40] But, in order to do this the voices of these students and so too their families and broader communities need to be heard.

The converse is also true – that ignoring student voices leads to feelings of alienation and powerlessness which almost inevitably then leads to disengagement from the education system on the part of the students, their families, and eventually even their communities.[41] What this means in practice is that – from a situated learning perspective – agency of students is not something that can be simply given; instead, it needs to be created through active processes of capacity building and learning.[42] In order to do this, educators need to give up some of their power and actively work to create a space of trust between themselves and students for "without an intentional focus on building relationships, student voice can easily become tokenism."[43] And so, if teachers and school leaders want to hear the voices of disadvantaged or marginalized students then the structures being utilized to represent these students' voices must be actively created with that purpose in mind. These then are the spaces where connections between schools and their surrounding communities become vitally important as it is the connections between these groups – through process of voice, listening, and engagement

[36] Silvina Gvirtz and Lucila Minvielle, "The Impact of Institutional Design on the Democratization of School Governance," (2009).
[37] Michael Fielding, "Transformative Approaches to Student Voice: Theoretical Underpinnings, Recalcitrant Realities," *British Educational Research Journal* 30, no. 2 (2004).
[38] Alison Cook-Sather, "Sound, Presence, and Power: "Student Voice" in Educational Research and Reform," *Curriculum Inquiry* 36, no. 4 (2006). See also Fielding, "Transformative Approaches to Student Voice: Theoretical Underpinnings, Recalcitrant Realities."
[39] Maria Torre and Michelle Fine, "Researching and Resisting : Democratic Policy Research by and for Youth," in *Beyond Resistance! : Youth Activism and Community Change : New Democratic Possibilities for Practice and Policy for America's Youth*, ed. Pedro Noguera, Shawn A. Ginwright, and Julio Cammarota (New York: New York : Routledge, 2006). p. 269.
[40] Jeffrey Michael Reyes Duncan-Andrade and Ernest Morrell, *The Art of Critical Pedagogy : Possibilities for Moving from Theory to Practice in Urban Schools* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008). p. 13.
[41] Mark D. Halx, "A More Critical Pedagogy: Could It Reduce Non-Completer Rates of Male Latino High School Students? The Student Perspective," *Pedagogy, Culture and Society* 22, no. 2 (2014). See also Russell J. Quaglia and Michael J. Corso, *Student Voice : The Instrument of Change* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2014).
[42] Christopher Emdin, *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood-- and the Rest of Y'all Too : Reality Pedagogy and Urban Education* (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2016).
[43] Mitra, Serriere, and Stoicovy, "The Role of Leaders in Enabling Student Voice."

– that allows educators and administrators within the schools to learn how best to engage with their students' communities.

One of the requirements in making this shift is that teachers might need to let go of some of the techniques and philosophies of teaching that might have underpinned their own training and embrace new ways of organizing their teaching and their classrooms.[44] The shift needed is to increased relational equity for all involved in these processes. Relational equity is the achievement of more symmetrical relations between participants within a learning environment[45] – be it students and teachers, students and community members, teachers and community members, or others. When this form of equity is prioritized – as part of the movement towards the achievement of student-centered learning – it can have significant results, as the following vignette makes clear:

> Teachers believed that a group of Latino students were habitually skipping class because they did not care about school. Student leaders studied the problem within their own school, eventually countering that those students did not return to class because they felt embarrassed and ashamed. These students felt that teachers seemed hostile and angry with them when they returned. Consequently, they found it easier to just avoid the class altogether. The dialogue between student leaders and educators helped educators overcome operating assumptions informing behavior and begin the process of finding practical solutions with students.[46]

However, despite the overwhelming evidence pointing to the successful role that student voice plays in achieving better outcomes for students there are still large gaps in understanding how to leverage it to create spaces where students pursue and develop their own freely chosen interests.[47] The issue at hand then is a need for organizing structures for these processes to occur – spaces where adults can play an important role in facilitating and supporting these conversations. And, importantly, more spaces are needed where the various voices at play in the lives of our students – their own, those of their families, and those of their communities – can come together and be heard by educators and administrators.[48] This is the space where the tools presented and discussed in this report – including the listening model developed by the Office of the Education Ombuds (OEO) – become important supports for educators and administrators to incorporate student, family, and community voice in their own professional practice.

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[44] Karen Steele, "A New Teacher Learning to Share Responsibility with Parents," in *Learning Together : Children and Adults in a School Community*, ed. Barbara Rogoff, Carolyn Goodman Turkanis, and Leslee Bartlett (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).
[45] Daniela K. Digiacomo and Kris D. Gutiérrez, "Relational Equity as a Design Tool within Making and Tinkering Activities," *Mind, Culture, and Activity* (2015). p. 145.
[46] Brasof, *Student Voice and School Governance : Distributing Leadership to Youth and Adults*. p. 15.
[47] Catharine Simmons, Anne Graham, and Nigel Thomas, "Imagining an Ideal School for Wellbeing: Locating Student Voice," *Journal of Educational Change* 16, no. 2 (2015).
[48] See for example Kirsten Foshaug Vennebo and Eli Ottesen, "The Emergence of Innovative Work in School Development," Ibid. See also Wendy Emo, "Teachers' Motivations for Initiating Innovations," *Journal of Educational Change* 16, no. 2 (2015).

Listening and the Office of the Education Ombuds (OEO) Model

Voices only count if they are heard. A key aspect of successfully eliciting student, family, and community voice is the use of appropriate mechanisms, processes, and techniques for listening.

While the discussion above provided important insights into the value of student, family and community voice, none of this matters if these voices are not actually listened to. This act of listening requires a transformation in relationships between all these stakeholders in these processes: students, teachers, administrators, families, and communities. Successful approaches to student voice – and so too the inclusion of the voices of their families and communities – require a "rupture of the ordinary" in terms of power relations between teachers and their students, their families, and their broader communities.[49] For these processes to work teachers and school leaders must thus be open to doing things differently than they have done them before – using a more open form of partnership.[50]

To create spaces for student voices to emerge unimpeded is to create structures and processes for listening.[51] There is a need for an ongoing awareness that voices only count if they are heard and so we need to ensure that educators and other adults are intentional in their ways of listening to student voices.[52] One of the most important aspects of this process is the realization that students, like all others, speak with multiple voices and from multiple spaces – gay students of color, disabled immigrant students, and so on. No two students are alike and so as much as possible we need to attempt to engage with each student, each family, and each community in terms of their own distinctiveness. And, as part of this goal, we need to actively work to ensure that a variety of models, techniques, spaces, and processes are used to ensure that all student voices are heard.

While previous work has focused on how space for student voice can be created in schools[53], more recent work has begun to focus on the actual implementation of programs for student voice in sustainable ways. To support students from a wide range of backgrounds and circumstances to most effectively express their voice, educators and others will need to further develop their recognition of the broad range of capabilities and methods of communicating that diverse groups of students will use.

Office of the Education Ombuds (OEO) Listening Session Model

The Office of the Education Ombuds (OEO) has developed a listening session model for families and schools. Based on the concept of guiding questions, this model is designed to give families a chance to share their experiences with school district administrators, and to give

[49] Fielding, "Transformative Approaches to Student Voice: Theoretical Underpinnings, Recalcitrant Realities." p. 296.
[50] Cook-Sather, "Sound, Presence, and Power: "Student Voice" in Educational Research and Reform." p. 366.
[51] "Authorizing Students' Perspectives: Toward Trust, Dialogue, and Change in Education."
[52] Wilson and Corbett, *Listening to Urban Kids : School Reform and the Teachers They Want*.
[53] Dennis Thiessen and Alison Cook-Sather, *International Handbook of Student Experience of Elementary and Secondary School* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007).

administrators in the region an opportunity to hear from the families about their children's experiences in school, and to consider areas of need for potential systemic change.

Run by a facilitator from OEO – with other OEO staff or community partners acting as note takers – the listening session begins with an introduction to the process. Depending on the total number of families in attendance and languages spoken, the attendees either stay together and use interpreter headsets, or divide into smaller groups in order to provide effective in-person language support. Following the introduction, and possible re-grouping, families then have time to get some food and water before convening. The remaining time is guided by open-ended questions arrived at in the planning process for the session. For example, in recent work with families whose students receive special education services, families, districts, and community partners have used two guiding questions:

1. How do you feel the district has/ hasn't been able to meet your student(s)' educational needs and set them up for success? and
2. What has worked well, or could be improved, in the relationship between you and the school and district as you work in partnership to support your child's education?

The focus of the guided questions and the conversation that flows from it is to hear families' perspectives about how the school system is working for their children, and how they (as family members) are able to work in partnership with the district. This is an opportunity to reflect on systems issues and systems change, and will not be a forum for addressing individual complaints or seeking resolutions to individual concerns. The focus is on families answering the questions presented by sharing personal examples and their own perspectives. In doing this, families are asked to share only their own stories and to limit examples to their own children. As part of creating a supportive space, participants are asked to respect each other's privacy and not share personal information beyond the listening session.

Family members and district representatives are discouraged from taking notes during the listening session in order to better enable a space of full and open sharing, with the focus being on listening to families' perspectives on systems issues. Note-takers from OEO and community partners work to capture general themes of the conversation. These notes do not include specific examples or identify individual students or families. Themes are synthesized and shared later with the district. Within a month of the initial session, a follow up session is scheduled so that the school district has an opportunity to share what they heard from the families and how they are working to address those issues moving forward. Resources for organizing these listening sessions can be found in the Appendix of this report.

Extending on the OEO model, the next section provides an outline of a number of additional techniques and methods that can be incorporated as part of the listening process in helping ensure that the voices of students, families, and their communities are heard by educators – particularly the voices of those from the most marginalized and disadvantaged groups.[54] Rather

[54] These specific methods and techniques outlined in the following section are drawn from a range of sources including UNICEF, *Knowledge Exchange Toolbox : Group Methods for Sharing, Discovery and Co-Creation* (New York: UNICEF, 2015). and H. van

than replacing the model developed in OEO, these techniques are able to be utilized within the structure of the existing model to provide more nuance and greater customizability to the listening session for different students, families, and communities.

Other Models for Eliciting Student, Family, and Community Voice

A key component of successful listening techniques is ensuring that all participants feel that they are in control of the process: that is, how their voices are heard.

The tools presented here all possess a well-demarcated script. This is important as it helps provide confidence to group participants in actively participating in these type of public listening processes. A key component of all of these tools, to some extent, is that they all help participants feel that they are in control of the process: that is, how their voices are heard. These tools are all appropriate for use with eliciting student, family, and community voices. And, importantly, others are able to participate in these techniques, too – and so, depending on context, educators, administrators, and policy-makers can fully participate in these processes. The key issue is facilitating the process so that no one individual or groups of individuals monopolizes the time of the group.

Facilitation is an essential skill in this work. Particularly when engaging with students, families, and communities most affected by the opportunity, we need to both reassure all involved of the validity of their roles as experts on their own experiences, as well as help in overcoming any hesitation in expressing their own opinions. While initial facilitation would be provided by OEO in these tools (or with coaching from OEO), these processes can all be used effectively by groups in addressing such issues as structural racism, inclusion, and opportunity gaps.

Appreciative Inquiry (groups of 3-100)

A strengths-based approach to social inquiry, Appreciative Inquiry is a method which can be utilized to search for the best in people, their organizations, their communities, and the broader world around them. Starting with the assumption that everybody has something valuable to contribute, the method is used to elicit understanding of what is working within an organization or for individual students, and then uses the data elicited by this process to build concrete ways to bring about change within an organization by starting with what is working. Appreciative Inquiry is particularly useful in spaces where individuals or groups are polarized over issues. The process' underlying method is often referred to as the 5-D method (see below).

- Define (D1) the focus and scope of the inquiry (the facilitator working with the students and other participants)
- Discover (D2) the stories of the system at its best – starting in pairs and from there sharing their stories with larger groups

Rijn and P.J. Stappers, "Getting the Shy to Talk: Scripts and Staging for Contextmapping " (paper presented at the Proceedings of include 2007 London, 2007).

- Dream (D3) by collecting the stories told through the process about what is working and what that means for people
- Design (D4) a way forward to bring into practice the ideas surfaced through the stories of the groups
- Destiny (D5) – take the designs from the stories and put them into practice

Timing (1-2 hours)

- Introduce the method and the guiding questions of the discussion (10 minutes)
- In groups of two people, discuss what is working in the organization (10 minutes)
- Aggregate groups and continue to discuss what is working in the organization (10 minutes)
- Debriefing – Dream/Design/Destiny (30 minutes)

Requirements

- A facilitator
- Flip chart or whiteboard and markers

'As Seen On TV' (groups of 3-30)

The 'AsSeenOnTV' process extends on people's experience watching television shows where they listen to people on those shows. When a participant steps up to the 'TV' as the presenter then the floor is theirs. This simple process has a participant walk up, take their place in the TV frame, speaks, and then step out of the frame when they are done.

Timing (30-60 minutes)

- Introduce the method (10 minutes)
- The first 'presenter' steps up to the TV and tells their story (5 minutes) – the facilitator takes notes during this process
- This process continues until all people have talked (while everyone must take a turn there is no limit to how little they must speak – although there is generally an upper limit of 10 minutes or so per speaker)
- Debriefing – the group looks at the notes taken during the process and extracts key emergent themes (15 minutes)

Requirements

- A facilitator
- Flip chart or whiteboard and markers
- A cut out 'TV' that the presenter stands behind when presenting their ideas

Chat Show (groups of 3-30)

The Chat Show is an activity similar to a television talk show, with a facilitator/rapporteur who interviews one or more guests. It is a useful technique for sharing knowledge in a dynamic fashion. Usually focusing on a preselected theme the key strength of this approach is its informal approach to the Q&A process which works to help put 'guests' at ease while simultaneously engaging the audience.

Timing (30-60 minutes)

- Introduce the method (5 minutes)
- The facilitator/rapporteur begins the interview (15-45 minutes)
- Questions from the audience (10 minutes)

Requirements

- 3 - 5 guests
- Facilitator/Rapporteur
- Room (ideally with theatre-style seating)
- Microphones (lapel and wireless)
- Flip chart or whiteboard and markers

Fishbowl (groups of 3-6)

The Fishbowl is useful for facilitating dialogue between 3-6 participants in a way that exposes others to their knowledge, while at the same time extending the overall knowledge of a subject by the group. In a Fishbowl the knowledgeable participants – the fish – sit in a circle in order to discuss a series of directed questions. They are surrounded by a larger group of observers – the bowl. The inner circle is the space for active speaking and contributing. If observers want to participate in a more active way then they must move into the inner circle.

- Identify participants to take part in the discussion
- Brief the participants on the Fishbowl process
- Set up a circle of chairs surrounded by a larger circle of chairs
- Open the session with the experts in the center circle by explaining the Fishbowl process to all participants
- The outer circle must stay silent – but participants in the outer circle can prepare questions and comments which they can raise when they enter the inner circle
- Once the topics have been covered or the scheduled time has run out the facilitator should then summarize the discussion and open the floor for a debriefing (at this point the inner circle of chairs can be removed). During the debriefing:
    - review key points;
    - interesting comments; and
    - the group's feelings regarding particular issues.
- A key aspect to note is that participants need to be allowed to develop their own conclusions and express themselves freely in this part of the process.

Timing (1 hour 30 minutes)

- Introduce the method and the objectives/guiding questions of the discussion (10 minutes)
- Fishbowl discussion (1 hour)
- Debriefing (20 minutes)

Requirements

- A facilitator
- One chair for every participant (plus three or four empty chairs)
- Flip chart or whiteboard and markers

Kibun (groups of 3-15)

Kibun is a version of the talking stick concept.[55] Taken from South Korea where the concept of Kibun encapsulates a person's current feeling and state of mind, participants use a concrete object to guide turn-taking in group conversations. In this respect, the Kibun functions as a vehicle for expressing emotions. The group participant who holds the Kibun has the authority to speak while others in the group actively listen. When a participant does not know what to say anymore, they then pass the Kibun to another person in the group who adds their part of the story. By passing the Kibun backwards and forwards within the group participants are able to build out a coherent story and narrative together and, in doing so, encourage each of the participants to assume the authority of expert of their own experiences.

Timing (30 minutes)

- Introduce the method (5 minutes)
- Discussant one (3-5 minutes)
- This process continues until students no longer feel that they have anything new to contribute

Requirements

- A talking stick
- One chair for every participant

World Café (groups of 3-50)

The World Café is a simple method for holding conversations around specific issues in a more relaxed space. Through dividing a larger group into smaller subgroups conversations are able to be more focused, relaxed and participatory. This provides a greater opportunity for students to

[55] Susan Carrell, *The Therapist's Toolbox : 26 Tools and an Assortment of Implements for the Busy Therapist* (Thousand Oaks, Calififorniа: Sage, 2001). In the 'Talking Stick' model the person holding the stick has the right to speak. Everyone else is expected to listen with respect. When a person finishes talking, they then pass the stick on to someone else.

speak and contribute more equally. The rotation of the different groups of students through the various tables allows for subsequent groups to build on the discussion of earlier groups.

- During the planning for the event, the group or leader generates 3-5 questions for discussion.
- At the event itself, 3-5 tables are set up – one for each question.
- Participants then divide up and choose or are assigned to one of the tables.
- The table host provides a brief outline of the question to be asked at their table and then the students begin to discuss the question.
- As the discussion is underway the table host or the participants at the table are able to note key ideas from their discussion on the flip chart or whiteboard – these notes are left for the next group to add to when they discuss the question of the table
- When time is up the participants move on to another table – and this process repeats until discussion has occurred at three tables
- A concluding discussion wraps up the process

Timing (1 hour 30 minutes)

- Introduce the method and the objectives/guiding questions of the discussion (10 minutes)
- Table discussion one (20 minutes)
- Table discussion two (20 minutes)
- Table discussion three (20 minutes)
- Debriefing (20 minutes)

Requirements

- A facilitator
- 3-5 table hosts
- 3-5 tables and enough chairs for every participant
- 3-5 flip charts or whiteboards and markers

YES Or NO Game (groups of 3-100)

In the YES or NO game, group participants get to reply to statements introduced by the facilitator via putting a “yes” or “no” card individually and anonymously into a container. An example of one such statement might be “I have a lot of family responsibilities at home that make it difficult for me to do my homework every night.” After everyone has submitted a ‘yes’ or a ‘no’, the votes are publicly counted and group participants are invited to tell the story behind their particular vote. The story is not judged and there are no rules about how many participants must share their story. This process helps group participants ‘warm up’ to being able to share their experiences with the group.

Timing (30-60 minutes)

- Introduce the method (5 minutes)
- First vote (5 minutes)
- Stories about the vote (20 minutes) – repeat until all questions discussed

Requirements

- A facilitator
- Yes/No cards

Combined, these methods help provide a range of tools and techniques that are able to be used in running listening sessions that are appropriate for all participants – students, families, community members, educators, administrators, and others. Table 1 provides a comparative outline of these various methods.

Comparison of Listening Methods (Table 1)

Name	When to use	Requirements
Appreciative Inquiry	• Developing community • Network building	A facilitator Flip chart or whiteboard and markers
'As Seen On TV'	A way for people to present their ideas in a safe and focused environment	A facilitator Flip chart or whiteboard and markers A cut out 'TV' that the presenter stands behind when presenting their ideas
Chat Show	• A chance to weave ideas between different students and discern key issues • A way to draw out stories from students without them having to do a lot of preparation	A facilitator 3 - 5 guests Room (ideally with theatre-style seating) Flip chart or whiteboard and markers
Fishbowl	• An alternative to traditional debates • Fosters dynamic participation	A facilitator Chairs Whiteboard or flip chart and marker pens
Kibun	Allows a space for a linked, dynamic conversation amongst peers	A talking stick One chair for every participant
World Café	• Sharing experiences, stories or project results • Problem solving • Planning	Overall facilitator A host at each table 3 - 5 tables and sufficient chairs for all participants One flip chart at each table, plus markers
YES Or NO Game	A way to introduce people to the idea of sharing their ideas in public	A facilitator Whiteboard or flipchart and markers Rectangular cards, in two colors (10 x 20 cm / 4 x 8 inch)

From Listening to Action

Hearing without follow up action can alienate individuals and groups and undermine processes of engagement. Creating the structural conditions necessary to bring about the required new norms and relationships that these listening processes elicit is vitally important.

Listening is thus the mechanism through which student voice – and so too the voices of students families and their communities – is heard. What is heard through listening though often needs to be "translated" for different audiences. In this respect, listening is just the beginning of a longer process of ongoing and iterative engagement as translation is a dynamic process, which in itself creates space for ongoing learning and meaning-making. As Paolo Freire reminds us: It is our awareness of being unfinished that makes us educable.[56]

However, one of the biggest issues in successfully implementing and sustaining student, family, and community voice practices and their associated listening activities is creating the structural conditions necessary to bring about the required new norms and relationships that come from these processes. The Pyramid of Student Voice provides a useful rubric for understanding how these forms of engagement can play out in practice.

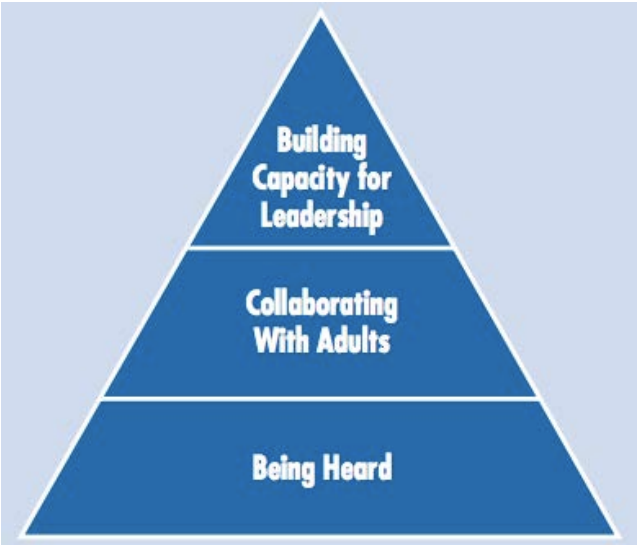

Figure 2. Pyramid of Student Voice[57]

The bottom of the pyramid is the idea that students are 'being heard.' Here, educators are actively listening to students' concerns and experiences. This listening does not necessarily entail action though. At the next stage, at the 'collaboration with adults' level, students and

[56] Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Freedom : Ethics, Democracy, and Civic Courage* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998). p. 58.
[57] Dana Mitra, "Increasing Student Voice and Moving toward Youth Leadership," *Prevention Researcher* 13, no. 1 (2006). p. 7.

educators begin to take action as a result of this listening. At this level, they begin to shift beyond merely speaking and listening through working together to bring about changes in the school. Finally, at the top of the pyramid, is the stage of 'building capacity for leadership'. At this stage there is "an explicit focus on enabling youth to share in the leadership of the student voice initiative."[58] This final level brings students in as full partners in the leadership structure of the school – providing them with opportunities to become change agents and leaders within their school.

As this pyramid demonstrates, providing spaces for student voice to be heard is only part of the solution. In order for successful long-term change to occur, we need to ensure that the insights gained through increased student voice can be transferred into concrete action. We need to be explicit in helping students understand how their engagement will lead to change.[59] In a related vein, in his recent work *Student Voice and School Governance (2015),* Marc Brasof has provided an analysis of the key factors for success in implementing a process for activating student voice in the creation of a joint student-adult governance process. These three factors were:

- identifying the shared beliefs and guiding principles that structure a shared leadership process,
- creating a process and artifacts to solidify the process, and
- building a culture of expectation that students and teachers share in decision-making.[60]

The issue at hand then is not just that the voices of the students, their families, and their communities is heard but also that hearing these voices brings about concrete action. OEO's listening sessions, for example, have been a springboard for taking important insights from families, students, and communities to help guide districts' strategies and approaches. It is in this realization that the power of co-design emerges in helping provide specific mechanisms to ensure that student voice – and the voice of others in their lives – enables students to become full partners and change agents in their schools.

Next Steps: Design & Co-Design

Co-design is an important tool for addressing the various ideas surfaced through listening processes. A set of concrete techniques for harnessing the creativity of groups co-design provides a range of methods for taking ideas and transforming them into action.

Design approaches in general, and co-design processes in particular, provide concrete ways in which issues identified through listening processes can be put into practice for organization change. Co-design – at an initial glance – can be defined as "collective creativity as it is applied across the whole span of a design process."[61] In this respect, co-design refers to "the creativity of designers and people not

[58] Ibid. pp. 7-8.
[59] Susan Yonezawa, Makeba Jones, and Francine Joselowsky, "Youth Engagement in High Schools: Developing a Multidimensional, Critical Approach to Improving Engagement for All Students," *Journal of Educational Change* 10, no. 2 3 (2009).
[60] Brasof, *Student Voice and School Governance : Distributing Leadership to Youth and Adults*.
[61] Elizabeth B. N. Sanders and Pieter Jan Stappers, "Co-Creation and the New Landscapes of Design," *CoDesign* 4, no. 1 (2008). p. 6.

trained in design working together in the design development process."[62] Common current examples of co-design in the education sector include curriculum development, playground design, and building design.

Participatory forms of design – such as co-design – are useful in that they both satisfy a moral imperative of taking into consideration how a possible design may impact users as well as a more pragmatic imperative that calls for stakeholders' early involvement in the design process to maximize the appropriateness of the service or product to be produced. Like student-centered learning and the related concepts of student, family, and community voice, participatory design is guided by the core value that people who will be affected by a decision or an event should have an opportunity to influence it.

Design techniques and ways of thinking are becoming increasingly important tools across a wide range of sectors including health care[63], social innovation[64], and digital service platforms[65]. In the education sector, these processes have a relatively recent provenance. Involving teachers in the process of collaboratively designing new curricula and other educational innovations has slowly been gaining acceptance in the educational community.[66] But, there is little to no published work involving others – such as principals, superintendents, and other administrators - in these types of design processes. This is part of a general overall paucity of research on the use of co-design with students, families, and communities in the education sector. While teachers might feel confident in curricular design, they might lack confidence in addressing larger processes because they tend to lack formal design training and might require support to meaningfully engage in co-design practices.[67] This seems to be particularly the case when moving beyond the brainstorming phase of design.[68]

Co-design is an important tool for addressing the various needs and desires surfaced through listening processes such as those outlined above.[69] In this next section of the report, we discuss the background of co-design as a field – contextualized within the broader domain of participatory design approaches – before then exploring the theoretical and empirical literature around co-design practices with students and families.

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[62] Ibid. p. 6.

[63] G. Robert and A. Macdonald, "Co-Design, Organisational Creativity and Quality Improvement in the Healthcare Sector: 'Designerly' or 'Design-Like'? ," in *Designing for Service: Key Issues and Directions*, ed. D. Sangiorgi and A. Prendiville (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).

[64] Thomas Binder et al., "Democratic Design Experiments: Between Parliament and Laboratory," *CoDesign* (2015).

[65] Jeremy Hunsinger et al., "Issue-Oriented Hackathons as Material Participation," *New Media & Society* 18, no. 4 (2016).

[66] J. Roschelle, W. R. Penuel, and N. Shechtman, "Co-Design of Innovations with Teachers: Definition and Dynamics," (2006). See also Jan Arild Dolonen and Sten Ludvigsen, "Analysing Design Suggestions and Use of Resources in Co-Design of Educational Software: A Case Study," *CoDesign* 9, no. 4 (2013).

[67] Tjark Huizinga et al., "Teacher Involvement in Curriculum Design: Need for Support to Enhance Teachers' Design Expertise," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 46, no. 1 (2014).

[68] Ferry Boschman, Susan McKenney, and Joke Voogt, "Understanding Decision Making in Teachers' Curriculum Design Approaches," *A bi-monthly publication of the Association for Educational Communications & Technology* 62, no. 4 (2014).

[69] Carolyn W. Keys and Lynn A. Bryan, "Co-Constructing Inquiry-Based Science with Teachers: Essential Research for Lasting Reform," *Journal of Research in Science Teaching* 38, no. 6 (2001). For an earlier discussion see Ann Deketelaere and Geert Kelchtermans, "Collaborative Curriculum Development: An Encounter of Different Professional Knowledge Systems," *Teachers and Teaching* 2, no. 1 (1996).

The Background of Co-Design

Active user participation in design processes dates back to the early 1970s in Scandinavia. The "Collective Resource Approach" was established in order to increase the value of industrial production through engaging workers in the development of new systems and processes for introduction into the workplace. This novel approach combined the expertise of designers/researchers with the contextualized expertise of people whose work would be affected by the change.[70] Participatory Design as a practice thus emerged out of a shared concern with labor unions about emancipating workers in their workplaces.[71]

Another related process – co-creation – which plays a part in the emergence of the concept of co-design has a more recent beginning and is often traced back to the emergence of the book, *The Future of Competition: Co-Creating Unique Value with Customers* in 2004. Focusing on the production of physical products for consumers in consumer-facing companies, the authors of the 2004 book argued that:

> the meaning of value and the process of value creation are rapidly shifting from a product- and firm-centric view to personalized consumer experiences. Informed, networked, empowered and active consumers are increasingly co-creating value with the firm.[72]

While recent years have seen crowd-sourcing introduced as a way to tap into a broader range of consumers, early work in this space of co-creation was based around the use of a carefully selected range of 'lead customers'.[73] So, like earlier efforts at involving students in school leadership, these earlier efforts at inclusion in co-creation processes were still based on the underlying idea that 'real' expertise lay with designers and so the involvement of end-users could be seen as being little more than tokenistic. And so, like with earlier approaches to student, family, and community voice this approach effectively eliminated the voices of those coming from minority or historically disadvantaged and marginalized populations.

[70] Susanne Bødker, "Creating Conditions for Participation: Conflicts and Resources in Systems Design," *DAIMI Report Series* 13, no. 479 (1994).
[71] Liam J. Bannon and Pelle Ehn, "Design: Design Matters in Participatory Design " in *Routledge International Handbook of Participatory Design*, ed. Jesper Simonsen and Toni Robertson (New York: Routledge, 2013).
[72] C. K. Prahalad and Venkatram Ramaswamy, *The Future of Competition : Co-Creating Unique Value with Customers* (Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School, 2004). p. 5.
[73] Patricia B. Seybold, *Outside Innovation : How Your Customers Will Co-Design Your Company's Future* (New York: Collins, 2006). See also Eric von Hippel, *Democratizing Innovation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge, Mass. : MIT Press, 2005).

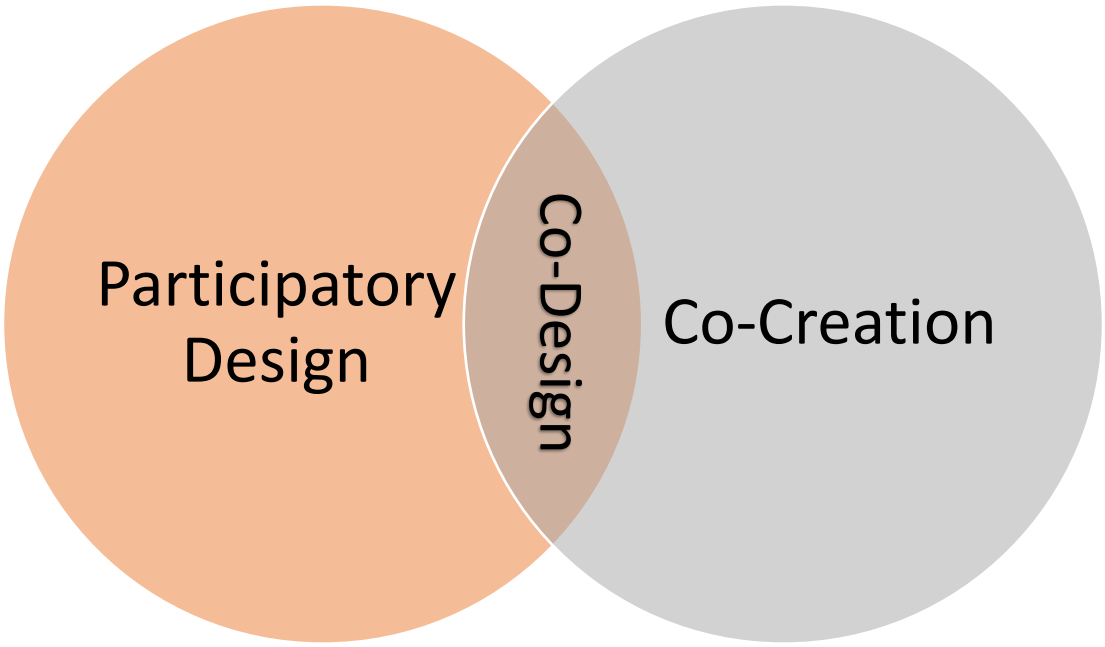

Fig. 3: Relationship between Participatory Design, Co-creation, and Co-design

Co-design then draws on both of these pre-cursors in the creation of a form of collective creativity as it is applied across the whole span of a design process (See Figure 3). In this respect, co-design is a specific instance of co-creation *and* participatory design. Extending co-design beyond the traditional domain of designers as 'the' experts in the design process we can instead use co-design to refer to the creativity of designers and people not trained in design who are working together in the design development process. In doing so, co-design has thus lead to the questioning and reconfiguration of power relations within the practice of design – particularly the notion of expertise.[74] Co-design aligns well with the ideas underlying student-centered learning and student, family, and community voice as it is based centering users as 'experts in their own experiences'.

The fundamental underlying aspects of participatory design practices are outlined in Figure 4.

Politics	People who are affected by a decision should have an opportunity to influence
People	People play critical roles in design by being experts at their own lives
Context	The use situation is the fundamental starting point for the design process
Methods	Methods are means for users to gain influence in design processes

[74] Tau Lenskjold, Sissel Olander, and Joachim Halse, "Minor Design Activism: Prompting Change from Within," *Design Issues* 31, no. 4 (2015).

Product	The goal of participation is to design alternatives, improving quality of life[75]

Figure 4: Aspects of participatory design

We can see a graphical example of this shift in Figure 5 which presents how roles in the design process are changing – and the necessary effect this has on design when users become involved in all aspects of the design process.

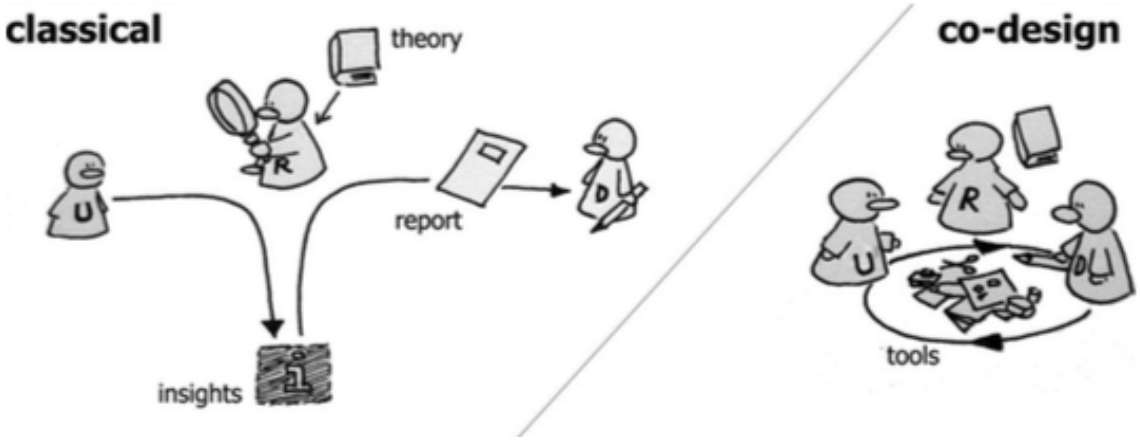

Fig. 5: The roles in the design process are changing[76]

The shift to co-design is radically altering the way that people involved in the design process interact. In the traditional user-centered design process:

- the user is a passive object of study;
- the researcher brings knowledge from theories and develops more knowledge through observation and interviews;
- the designer then passively receives this knowledge in the form of a report and adds creative thinking in order to generate ideas and concepts.

In the co-design process:

- the user is given the position of 'expert of his/her experience' and plays a major role in idea generation and knowledge development;
- the researcher supports the 'expert of their experience' through the provision of tools for ideation and expression.
- the designer continues to play a critical role in giving form to the ideas – although more it in the role of facilitator.

And, in a co-design process, the designer and researcher may be the same person.

[75] Kim Halskov and Nicolai Brodersen Hansen, "The Diversity of Participatory Design Research Practice at Pdc 2002–2012," *International Journal of Human - Computer Studies* 74 (2015).
[76] Sanders and Stappers, "Co-Creation and the New Landscapes of Design." p. 11.

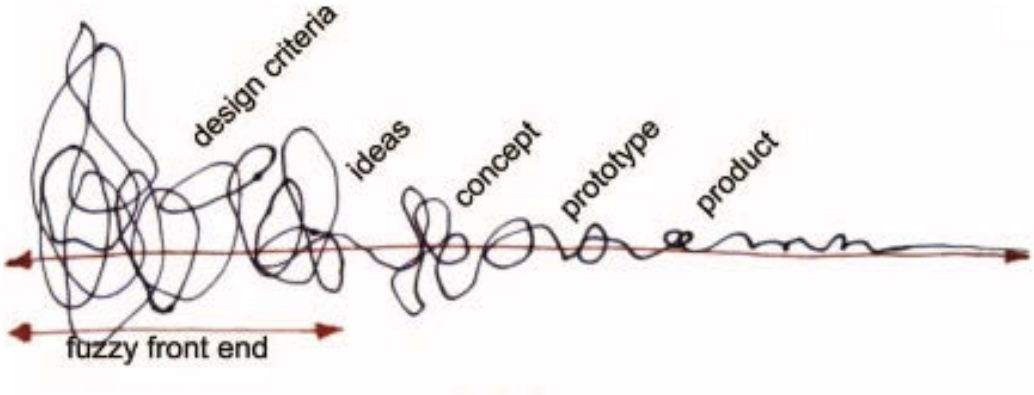

Fig. 6: Co-design Process

Figure 6 presents a simple illustration of the design process. The initial front end of the design process is generally referred to as being 'fuzzy' due to the ambiguity and chaotic nature that characterize it. The goal of the exploration in the front end of the design process is to determine what is to be designed and, as importantly, what is not be designed.[77] This 'fuzzy' front end is then followed by the more traditional design process where the ideas for products or services are developed into concepts which are then prototyped and further refined through iterations of feedback from users until a final product is reached. Whereas previously user feedback was brought into the design process only after the 'fuzzy' front end of the process was completed by designers the shift to co-design means that users are incorporated into all aspects of the design process.

In the adoption of the principles of co-design, we thus see the expansion of participatory design, from its beginnings as a Scandinavian workplace context – mainly consisting of paid workers with an established relationship to each other – through to the emergence of co-creation in corporate contexts, and finally, to a fully developed process of co-design working in diverse contexts including working with historically marginalized groups and communities. This last development in co-design ensures the inclusion of range of voices of stakeholders in all aspects of the design development process. Participatory design processes are rooted in democratic notions of design with a strong focus on involving all of those to be affected by the design and actively working to increase the effectiveness of the final outcome and all stakeholders' collective ownership of the final service or product.[78]

[77] Pieter Stappers, "Creative Connections: User, Designer, Context, and Tools," *Personal and Ubiquitous Computing* 10, no. 2 (2006).
[78] Erling Björgvinsson, Pelle Ehn, and Per-Anders Hillgren, "Design Things and Design Thinking :: Contemporary Participatory Design Challenges," *Design Issues* 28, no. 3 (2012).

Co-Design with Students and the Their Families and Communities

Traditionally, participatory development methodologies have assumed that users are able to effectively and efficiently articulate their needs and are similarly educated to the other participants in the design process.[79] However, research over the last fifteen years has demonstrated that there is no single best practice of participatory design or co-design that is applicable in every situation.[80] Co-design, to be most effective, needs to be highly contextual in nature. Co-design then becomes more difficult in environments where users are marginalized but knowledgeable about their own needs and experiences that can shape and contribute to the design process. Successful examples of where this kind of work has been conducted include work with people experiencing homelessness[81], Deaf individuals[82], and elders.[83] Co-design with students and their families fits under this broader rubric of groups who have generally been designed-for rather than participating in processes of designing-with. This is particularly the case when the students participating in the design process themselves come from a variety of cultural, economic and religions backgrounds.

In this respect, a key aspect of utilizing co-design processes with marginalized communities is realizing that both individuals and community groups are differentiated by a range of factors including – amongst others – age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, immigration status, national origin, religious beliefs, and mental and physical abilities.[84] And, these differences need to be accounted for in the co-design process. Simply adopting generic co-design methods is therefore not sufficient to produce optimal outcomes for all involved unless methods are used that engage with users' actual values – or at least negotiate them through participation in the process itself.[85] This is important as products and services developed with user's values in mind are generally more usable and adoptable.[86] Practice has thus verified that participatory approaches in cross-cultural contexts ought to include a negotiation of the design context itself for best uptake.[87] In this respect, when done in a respectful and open manner:

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[79] Blake Edwin, Tucker William, and Glaser Meryl, "Towards Communication and Information Access for Deaf People," *South African Computer Journal*, no. 54 (2014).
[80] See S. K. Puri et al., "Contextuality of Participation in Is Design: A Developing Country Perspective," (2004). See also Heike Winschiers-Theophilus et al., "Being Participated: A Community Approach," (2010).
[81] Jen Southern et al., "Imaginative Labour and Relationships of Care: Co-Designing Prototypes with Vulnerable Communities," *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* 84 (2014).
[82] E. Blake et al., "Deaf Telephony: Community-Based Co-Design," in *Interaction Design : Beyond Human-Computer Interaction*, ed. Yvonne Rogers, Helen Sharp, and Jenny Preece (Chichester, U.K.: Wiley, 2011).
[83] Winschiers-Theophilus et al., "Being Participated: A Community Approach."
[84] Carl DiSalvo, Andrew Clement, and Volkmar Pipek, "Participatory Design for, with and by Communities " in *International Handbook of Participatory Design*, ed. Jesper Simonsen and Toni Robertson (New York: Routledge, 2013).
[85] Erik Grönvall, Lone Malmborg, and Jörn Messeter, "Negotiation of Values as Driver in Community-Based Pd," (2016). See also Daisy Yoo et al., "A Value Sensitive Action-Reflection Model: Evolving a Co-Design Space with Stakeholder and Designer Prompts" (paper presented at the Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on human factors in computing systems, 2013).
[86] John Halloran et al., "The Value of Values: Resourcing Co-Design of Ubiquitous Computing," *CoDesign* 5, no. 4 (2009).
[87] Heike Winschiers-Theophilus, "Cultural Appropriation of Software Design and Evaluation " in *Socio-Technical Design and Social Networking Systems*, ed. Brian Whitworth and Aldo de Moor (Hershey: Information Science Reference, 2009).

> new formats of participation can be characterized by their sensitivity towards new types of network relations among people, the diverse motivations of people to participate, the subtle balance of values and benefits involved in collaborative endeavors, and the inherent relations between participants.[88]

While explicitly including students in co-design processes themselves is relatively new, there is a more established body of work exploring the ways that children can participate in design projects. One way to look at children's student's role in projects is through the 'participation ladder' popularized by Roger Hart (see Figure. 5).[89] Starting with 'Manipulation' as the lowest rung where children are included in projects only to justify the end results the ladder ends with 'child-initiated, shared decisions with adults' where projects are started by students but receive support from adults.

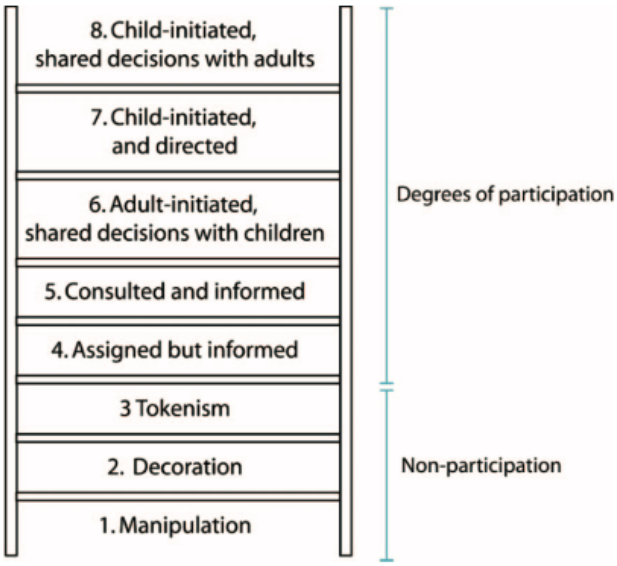

Fig. 7: Participation Ladder

These eight stages, explained in more detail in Figure 8, are:

Student-initiated shared decisions with adults	Student-led activities, in which decision making is shared between students and adults working as equal partners.
Student-initiated and directed	Student-led activities with little input from adults.
Adult-initiated, shared decisions with youth	Adult-led activities, in which decision-making is shared with youth.

[88] Margot Brereton and Jacob Buur, "New Challenges for Design Participation in the Era of Ubiquitous Computing," *CoDesign* 4, no. 2 (2008). p. 112.
[89] Roger A. Hart, "Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship," (New York: UNICEF, 1992). p. 9.

Consulted and informed	Adult-led activities, in which youth are consulted and informed about how their input will be used and the outcomes of adult decisions.
Assigned, but informed	Adult-led activities, in which youth understand purpose, decision-making process, and have a role.
Tokenism	Adult-led activities, in which youth may be consulted with minimal opportunities for feedback.
Decoration	Adult-led activities, in which youth understand purpose, but have no input in how they are planned.
Manipulation	Adult-led activities, in which youth do as directed without understanding of the purpose for the activities.

Figure 8: Hart's Participation Ladder explained

Another useful schema for addressing students' participation in projects has been suggested by Allison Druin (see Figure 9).

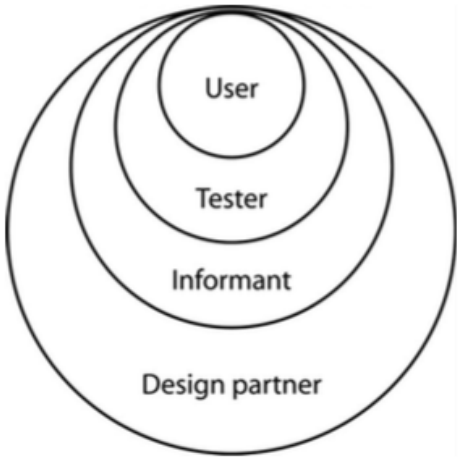

Fig. 9: Children's roles in design

In Druin's schema, there are four main roles that students can fill in the design process.[90] These are:

- User – where students are asked to test existing products;
- Tester – where students are asked to test prototypes of products and services that are not yet released;
- Informant – where students are included in the design process at various stages when designers think that they have valuable information for the project; and

[90] Allison Druin, "The Role of Children in the Design of New Technology," *Behaviour & Information Technology* 21, no. 1 (2002). p. 4.

- Design partner – where students are considered equal partners with adults in the entire design process.

In both of these examples we see a strong resonance with the underlying concepts of the "Pyramid of Student Voice" discussed above. In all three examples, the most effective results are achieved where students are actively involved in these processes with adults playing a strongly supporting and facilitative role as well. Exploring different configurations of these various schema – working from the presupposition that the more involved students are in the projects the better – three broad patterns emerge which align with more recent research on student's concrete participation in design processes and the various schema explored already on the impact of participation of effectiveness.

These three broad patterns are:

- Design **for** Students, Families, and Communities
- Design **by** Students, Families, and Communities
- Design **with** Students, Families, and Communities

In this next section of the report, these three patterns are briefly explained and their respective benefits and limitations are described.

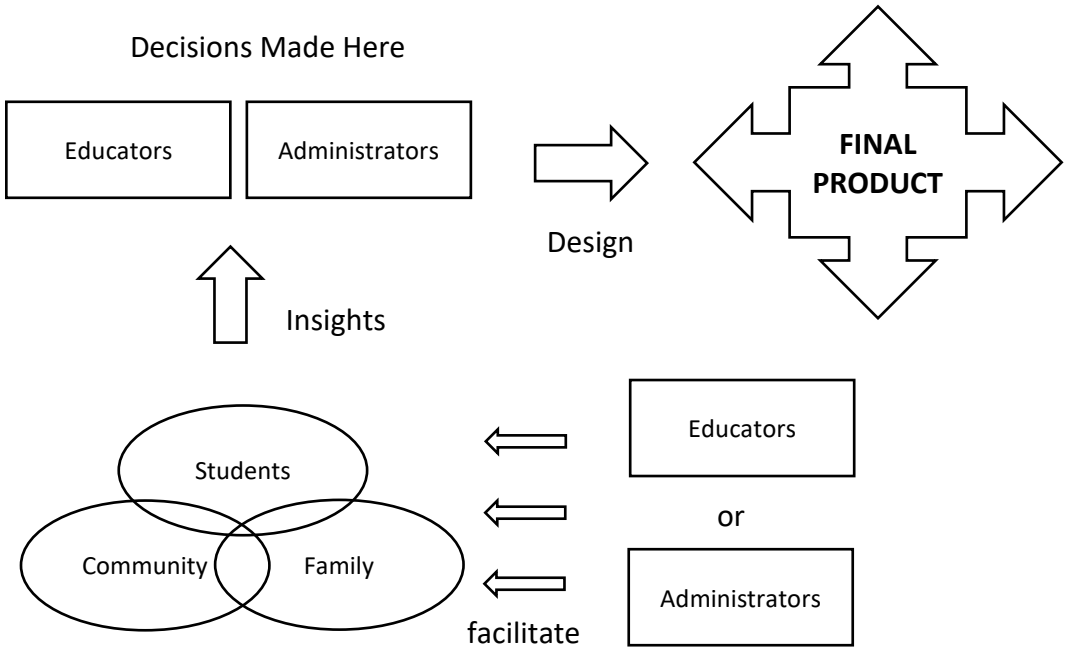

Fig. 10. Design for Students, Families, and Communities

Projects using the 'Design for Students, Families, and Communities' model (Fig. 10) usually take the form of councils and forums.[91] A council might involve bringing together up a group of participants who then work with someone from the school or district who supervises them in their work. The various ideas, concepts, and designs developed by the council can then be communicated to decision makers.[92] Limitations of this approach are that the process is very much structured, set up, and run by educators and administrators with their viewpoints taking a dominant role.[93] These techniques and processes did not also necessarily work very well with participants who do not feel as comfortable communicating or who belong to disadvantaged or marginalized groups.[94]

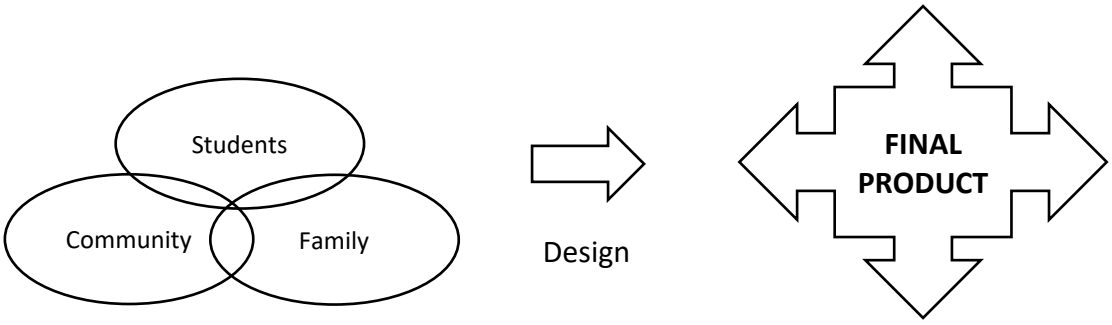

Fig. 11: Design by Students, Families, and Communities

The 'Design by Students, Families, and Communities' model (Fig. 11) sees participants as active designers and planners who possess design ideas that are different than those which have been proposed by educators and administrators.[95] The major limitation of this approach though is that in minimizing by educators and administrators input into the participatory process it can limit the ability for the ideas produced to be taken up seriously by funding agencies and other organizations that would be empowered to put the design ideas into practice.[96] In practice, too, this approach has had limitations in which not all individuals in a school or district were able to participate so this can produce issues of exclusion.[97]

[91] Francesca Romana Alparone and Antonella Rissotto, "Children's Citizenship and Participation Models: Participation in Planning Urban Spaces and Children's Councils," *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 11, no. 6 (2001).
[92] Francesco Tonucci and Antonella Rissotto, "Why Do We Need Children's Participation? The Importance of Children's Participation in Changing the City," Ibid.
[93] Hugh Matthews, "Citizenship, Youth Councils and Young People's Participation," *Journal of Youth Studies* 4, no. 3 (2001). See also "Participatory Structures and the Youth of Today: Engaging Those Who Are Hardest to Reach," *Ethics, Place & Environment* 4, no. 2 (2001).
[94] Lorenza Dallago et al., "The Adolescents, Life Context, and School Project: Youth Voice and Civic Participation," *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community* 38, no. 1 (2009).
[95] Mark Francis and Ray Lorenzo, "Seven Realms of Children's Participation," *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 22, no. 1-2 (2002).
[96] Hart, "Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship."
[97] Michelle Newman and Peter Thomas, "Student Participation in School Design: One School's Approach to Student Engagement in the Bsf Process," *CoDesign* 4, no. 4 (2008).

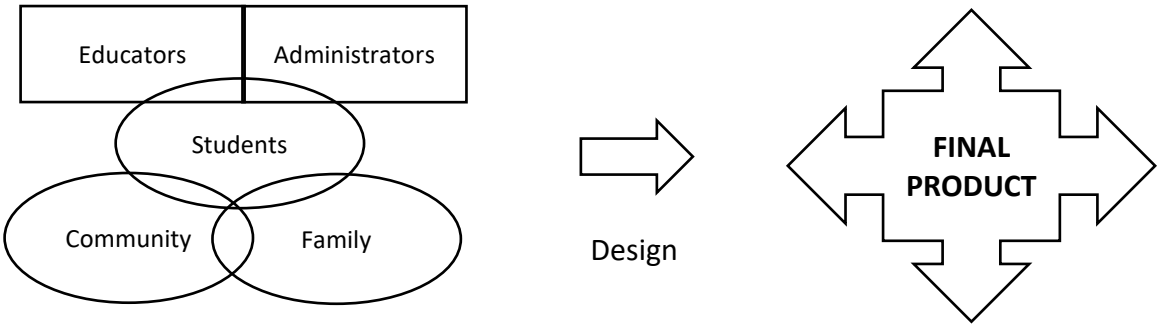

Fig. 12: Design with Students, Families, and Communities

The 'Design with Students, Families, and Communities' model (Fig. 12) brings together a group, or groups, of students, their families, and community members who partner with educators and administrators to come up with design ideas together. The ideas surfaced through this process then act as a catalyst for the involvement of educators and administrators in the implementation of these ideas.[98] In this approach, the ideas of students, their families, and community members are not only heard and recognized but they also can be actively involved in the design and build out process itself.[99] A drawback with this approach is that while it provides opportunities for students, their families, and community members to make shared decisions with educators and administrators, there is often a power differential between these two groups.[100] Overall, these uneven power differentials may mean that students, their families, and community members' creativity in the co-design process might not expressed to its greatest potential.

Facilitation (undertaken or coordinated by OEO or others trained by OEO) is an essential aspect of a successful co-design project. Facilitators provide the space and insights for people to engage with one other in addition to providing ways for participants to be creative, share insights and test out new ideas in a safe and inclusive environment for all.

Combined these three patterns present a range of ways in which students can be usefully included in co-design processes depending on the overall goals of the design process and the capacity of the design facilitators at hand to facilitate the involvement of the students, their families, and community members in the design process itself. In one respect these three approaches can be seen as aligning with a progression up the scales of participation discussed above. As such, the use of these different approaches might represent a phased adoption of co-

[98] Sheridan Bartlett, "Building Better Cities with Children and Youth," (2002).
[99] Robin C. Moore, *Natural Learning : The Life History of an Environmental Schoolyard : Creating Environments for Rediscovering Nature's Way of Teaching*, ed. Herbert H. Wong, Life History of an Environmental Schoolyard : Creating Environments for Rediscovering Nature's Way of Teaching (Berkeley, Calif.: Berkeley, Calif. : MIG Communications, 2000).
[100] David Driskell, *Creating Better Cities with Children and Youth : A Manual for Participation*, ed. Cities Growing Up in and Most (London ; Sterling, VA : Paris: London ; Sterling, VA : Earthscan ; Paris : UNESCO Pub., MOST/Management of Social Transformation, 2002). A range of co-design tools can also be found here.

design approaches as various participants in the process – such as students, educators, family members, school administrators, and community leaders – build up increased levels of trust amongst themselves. In the next section of the report, we provide a worked example to see how the various approaches discussed above can be incorporated together as a coherent whole to provide a mechanism to reduce the opportunity gap by empowering students, their families, and their communities.

Putting Theory into Practice

The processes outlined above for eliciting student, family, and community voice and the related practical issues of co-design come together in an iterative cycle of continuous improvement outlined in Figure 13 below.

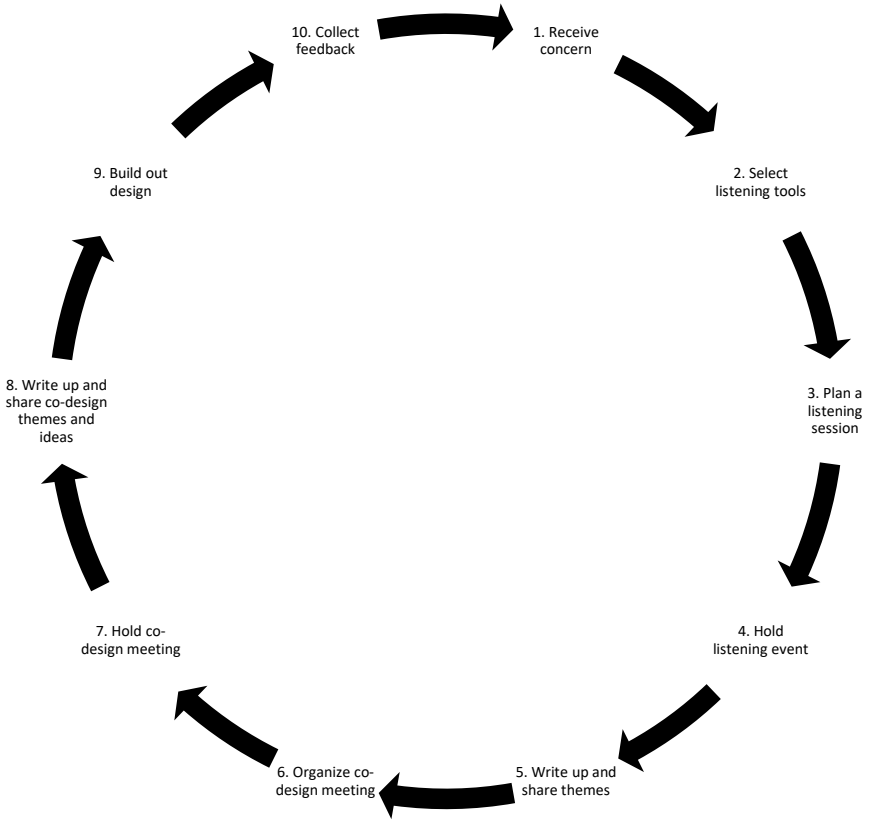

Fig. 13. The 'Listening to Co-Design' Cycle of Continuous Improvement

In this next section, an example – a hypothetical based on OEO's work – is used to explain one way the processes outlined in this report can come together as a set of tools able to be used to reduce the opportunity gap by empowering students, their families, and their communities.

Background

There has been a noted change of behavior with Junior – a Pacific Islander teen – who has begun to be disruptive in class. In the last few months, he often seems sullen and unresponsive. Yet at times, he seems to lash out randomly at his classmates and at his teacher. He has had a number of unexplained absences over the last few months. This has become increasingly problematic for his teacher, Melanie, who has struggled to maintain class flow and discipline. Junior's family have received a warning for him being marked absent so often. Melanie has talked the issues over with leadership at the school and Mary – the school Principal – has recommended reaching out to OEO after recently attending a training that they had held at the District office. At the training, the OEO presenters had said that they were trialing some new tools in their listening sessions and that they were happy to come work with schools if they had issues that they through they'd like to run through the process.

Step 1. Receive concern

After Melanie reached out to OEO, the Associate Ombuds heard her concern had arranged a time for a Senior Ombuds to have a phone call about with Melanie about the issue that she was dealing with and her concerns with how to support Junior. Together, the Senior Ombuds and Melanie decided to treat concerns about supporting Junior as a case within the Ombuds Office and reach out to the family to start collaborative problem-solving. As part of the growing work of OEO's student voice efforts, the Senior Ombuds asked Melanie if there were ways to involve Junior in the conversation. Melanie said that she thought Junior's perspective would be invaluable but wasn't sure how to get at it. The Senior Ombuds suggested that she would raise this issue with Junior's family.

The Senior Ombuds wrote short case notes to outline the key issues in the classroom, as well as Melanie's initial thoughts about how to approach the issues, and then reached out to Junior's family.

Step 2. Select listening tools

The Senior Ombuds connected with Junior's family and shared the school's concerns, asking for their perspectives about the barriers Junior was facing at school. Junior's mother mentioned that she had a hard time understanding what was going through his mind but that she'd like to get him involved in resolving these issues. The Senior Ombuds suggested that she arrange a video call where Junior, his family, and teachers could get a problem-solving conversation started by using the 'YES or NO Game' to begin and taking the conversation from there. The following people participated in the video call:

- OEO Senior Ombuds
- Junior
- Sina – Junior's mother
- Iosefa – Junior's grandfather
- Tim – the school social worker
- Mary – the school principal

- Melanie – Junior's teacher

The video call began with the 'YES Or NO Game' to break the ice and get all participants talking. Before the call, the Senior Ombuds asked Junior, his family, and the school team a little more about their interests and what they enjoyed outside of school. She noticed that they seemed to be interested in sports and that Junior spent a lot of time playing video games.

The Senior Ombuds had put together a list of questions, which she asked the group in order. The first question: "I like the Seahawks?" got an enthusiastic 100% response of yes from all attending. Tim started the discussion by saying that he was new to the region and that supporting the Seahawks had been a great way for him to connect with people. Melanie said that she grew up in Seattle and had always supported the Seahawks. Junior sat with his arms folded and looked away from the screen.

The second question: "Video games are more fun than homework?" got almost the complete opposite result with only two 'yes' votes. Tim started the discussion again and said that homework was very important for students, but that after work, he really liked playing video games with his next-door neighbor, a physician. This response evoked a fleeting smile from Junior, as he looked up quickly but then he went back to staring off into the distance.

The final question: "Sometimes, I feel like people don't really hear what I'm saying?" got an almost equal split between yes and no votes. Melanie started the discussion by saying that she struggled with that issue sometimes at home. Sometimes, her family didn't seem to be listening to her. Mary spoke next and she said that she'd experienced the same issue with her friends sometimes. Sina said that she experienced the same thing at work and it made her unhappy when it happened. During this discussion, Junior actively looked at the various speakers, seeming interested in what they had to say.

As the Senior Ombuds helped to establish greater comfort among the group members, she noticed that Junior seemed more open and looked at the other video-callers more often. When the Senior Ombuds checked in with the participants to see if they felt more comfortable now after establishing this kind of rapport, Junior piped up: "It doesn't matter how we feel. School doesn't matter. None of it matters. It just gets in the way…" Looking quizzically at Junior, Melanie asked: "School doesn't matter to you? But you've always done so well at school." And, from there, a longer discussion ensued.

During the dialogue, Sina shared that Lagi – Junior's father – had recently become incarcerated and that had led to some major shifts in family life. Sina had to take another job to help make ends meet, which meant that Junior had to look after his siblings on some of her work days. Her schedule sometimes conflicted with Junior's school days. Junior had been particularly close to his father and his incarceration was impacting his emotional well-being. Towards the end of the discussion, Iosefa, Junior's grandfather, offered that his family was experiencing shame now that his son had gone to prison.

Mary the principal expressed her concern that Junior's attendance and behavior were affected by these circumstances. Tim suggested that he could be a greater resource to Junior and his family. He knew of some community organizations that offered support for students with incarcerated family members. Sina was heartened to learn that and turned the conversation back to Junior. Junior remarked: "I didn't think any of you cared" but said that he would reach out more to Tim. Tim suggested that he had wanted to reach out to churches and community organizations in the growing Pacific Islander communities in their district and would make that a priority. At the close of the call, Iosefa commented that this call had been good; the talk was very similar to the fono that they had back home in the islands and here at church. The participants agreed to check in again in two weeks to discuss Junior's school attendance and engagement, which improved.

Step 3. Taking the individual issue to leverage systems change: Plan a listening session

As the case conversation wrapped up, Melanie shared that she was overwhelmed about how to be culturally responsive to a growing Pacific Islander community in her school. She wanted some assistance, along with her colleagues, in getting feedback on how well they were addressing school climate with families, students, and community members. She thought that if Junior and his family were willing, they could help district leaders think about next steps for improving school climate. Mary the principal agreed that it wasn't just an issue affecting Junior's school. Her colleagues in principal leadership had also expressed that they, too, were concerned that they didn't always know the best ways to engage with students and families from these cultural backgrounds. Sina offered to help reach out to others in the Pacific Islander community.

Mary, Melanie, and Tim worked closely with colleagues across the district to share the listening session opportunity and explain that it was a process for families and students to be heard about their experiences in the school. Sina assisted the district in identifying a date that was convenient for other community members that were important in the students' lives and education.

Step 4. Hold listening event

The listening event was held one evening in the cafeteria at Junior's school with families and students from other schools in the district in attendance. District leadership attended, but families and students asked that teachers and principals not come so that they could feel most comfortable with sharing their stories and not fearing further breakdown in their relationships. In the earlier planning for this listening session, the OEO facilitator heard from families and students that they also preferred to have separate, smaller fishbowls of their own so that district leadership would better hear their experiences.

Warm food and beverages were provided. The district offered child care for younger children. Interpretation was offered to meeting families' needs. The session began with brief introductions by students, family members, school leaders, and the main facilitator from OEO. The OEO facilitator then explained the outline of the work that they would do in the listening session and introduced other facilitators from OEO and the community that would help that evening.

The session facilitator from OEO assured student and families that no names or other identifying information would be shared outside the room or in the summary report. Participants were asked to respect one another's confidentiality. Participants were also advised that the session would be recorded for note-taking purposes only and that OEO would be producing a document in association with this listening session to help the students, families, and the district understand next steps moving forward.

The event began with a quick "yes/no" game with partners and then went into the fishbowl approach. In the end, there were four fishbowls—two student-focused and two family-focused. The student groups moved to the library area of the school for their discussion, outside of the listening range of their parents. In some cases, students shared stories with leadership that their parents or elders had not heard before. Similarly, parents and community members felt more comfortable talking with one another about their concerns and hopes for their students.

Fishbowl

Both the library and cafeteria were reorganized into clusters of two concentric circles of chairs – one circle in the middle for those speaking and a larger circle of chairs surrounding it for district leadership to listen. The district had wanted to hear from students and families so the students and families were empowered to and decided in advance as part of the planning and co-design process that they would be the ones speaking in the inner circle and district leadership would remain on the outside of the circle and only listen and not speak—unless invited into the circle or if they had questions. Speakers on the inside of the circle could ask questions of the listeners or give them opportunities to speak if they chose to do so.

The speakers on the inside of the circle were guided by questions and support from facilitators from OEO. For example, in their fishbowls, students shared how they often worried about not fitting in at school, had experienced bullying from other students, and felt a conflict between doing what they needed to do for their families and what school expected of them.

The students were able to decide if they wanted to invite in the listeners from the outside of the circle to join the conversation. The OEO facilitator checked in with them during the process. Towards the end of the listening session, a couple students asked their peers if they could hear what the district leadership wanted to do about bullying. The students agreed to invite in the Director of Student Supports from the outer circle. She shared how they were working with an outside consultant to bring anti-bias tools to their professional development.

She then asked if the students wanted her to stay in the circle. They invited her to stay because they had more questions. They asked her if any of her colleagues could add to this idea and she suggested bringing in their Director of Student Health Supports. He joined the inner circle and talked about what impacts he had seen on student health. The students nodded and then asked the district leadership to exit the inner circle and go back to their roles of only listening.

Step 5. Write up and share themes

After concluding the session, OEO facilitators used the recordings and notes from the fishbowls to pull together an outline of what happened in the listening session and what themes emerged. These were then shared with all participants so that they could have a chance to add anything that they thought had been missed.

Step 6. Organize co-design meeting

Once OEO collected feedback on the collated notes, the school district worked with families, students, and community leaders to organize a co-design meeting. The co-design meeting was held three weeks after the listening session.

Step 7. Hold co-design meeting

Participants from the original listening session were invited to take part in the co-design process to look for strategies and ideas that might help improve students' attendance and experiences of the school climate. The main OEO facilitator opened the meeting with quick introductions from everyone. She then outlined what themes had come from the listening session in response to questions about what had been challenging for students and families at school:

- Many parents had multiple jobs and could not engage with school during regular hours and wanted other ways of communicating
- Students and families shared that school staff lacked understanding of different Pacific Islander cultures and the importance of preserving language and culture
- Students felt disconnected and were not coming to school because they didn't see staff who looked like them
- Community leaders had concerns about discrimination and bullying at school by other students
- Students, families, and community leaders felt like there was a disconnect between teachers and students in understanding the role of culture in learning and how their communities communicated with school about important issues

OEO used a brainstorming activity to look at the linkages between these ideas. In this brainstorming session, three groups were utilized – students; family and community members; and educators and administrators. The outputs from the brainstorming session were then brought together and OEO used a card-sorting process to organize key themes. The key issue

that emerged from this process was a need for greater cultural responsiveness, especially for bigger issues within the Pacific Islander community within the district. A further brainstorming session was conducted to come up with options for how this could come together. Once these options were put together, the group voted on the rough sketch ideas. The idea with the most votes was working with community groups to help redesign processes for listening and sharing high-stakes information in meetings such as IEPs, discipline, and attendance.

Step 8. Write up and share themes of co-design ideas

The outline of the co-design meeting and the outcomes were compiled and collated by the facilitator from OEO who then shared them with all participants. They then had a chance to add anything that they thought had been missed.

Step 9. Build out design

The school district brought together a committee with members from the student body, community (including churches), and school leaders to draw up plans for creating a call for proposals from community groups to be partners in this cultural responsiveness design work. This solicitation and review process occurred over the following month. The district identified resources and families and students identified ways in which they wanted to participate. The district agreed to also seek outside grant funding to continue the work past one year.

Step 10. Collect feedback

After the first six months of operation of the program, the committed collected feedback from a range of participants, which was generally positive. One issue that emerged from the feedback was around children speaking languages other than English at school. Families and students wanted an expansion of cultural responsiveness project that would honor home language, and in the future, incorporate more information about that in teaching history, language arts, and other subjects. In moving forward with this idea, the committee proposed that another listening session would be a great way to get feedback from students, families, and the community on the potential next stage of co-design.

Summary

Listening sessions and co-design provide a consolidated group of practices which together can enable the collection of insights from a wide range of stakeholders and involve them and others in the design and build out of options. Training schools, districts, and communities in these techniques could help extend the ability of OEO to deal with issues arising under its mandate by empowering these other groups to pursue alternative methods before escalating issues to the OEO. The practices and techniques outlined in this report, and highlighted in this worked example above, show how they can be used by schools and districts to improve their processes

through co-design. The insights gleaned through these processes also provide useful data that can be used by OEO in both its policy work and its outreach and training.

Conclusion

As part of the Governor's Office of the Education Ombuds' (OEO) extension of its conflict resolution work, it began an effort to increase community conversation and problem-solving through family-focused listening sessions. OEO has also conducted student-focused listening sessions in the past. OEO is committed to growing best practices for eliciting student, family, and community voice. This report has outlined the ways in which OEO's efforts are part of a broader shift towards the adoption of student-centered learning approaches in the state. This report has outlined how student voice is critical to that shift, as well as in fostering more inclusive and welcoming school climates. Elevating the voices of students, families, and communities leads to greater likelihood that the voices of those from historically marginalized and disadvantaged groups will also be heard and leveraged for designing better processes, programs, and experiences for students, families, and communities. The report has offered a worked example of how these processes can come together as an iterative cycle of continuous improvement. In summary, student voice and stories can be a leverage point for not only taking the temperature of the policy system but also effecting change in schools and more broadly in our state's education system to reduce opportunity gaps by empowering students, families, and communities.

Appendix One: Research Labs

EduDesign Lab

Based out of the University of Washington the EduDesign Lab was created to create professional learning communities that bring together "teachers across schools to learn new pedagogy and then develop, implement and adjust lessons—with children—right away." The focus is on codesign between teachers.

Family Leadership Design Collaborative (FLDC)

This initiative is based out of the university of Washington and brings together a national network of 40 scholars, practitioners, and family and community leaders. The focus of their work is the centering of racial equity in family engagement. They do this through the use of a broad-reaching research agenda and the development of new practices, measures and tools.

The lab is led by Ann Ishimaru and Megan Bang

Invincibility Lab

Based out of Michigan State University the Invincibility Lab uses an equity and social justice focus to explore "how and why identity, agency and learning takes shape across settings and time, and the implications this has for youth from non-dominant communities."

The lab is led by Angela Calabrese Barton

Kidsteam

Kidsteam brings together around 8 children, aged between 7-11, with technologists and researchers from a range of backgrounds to co-design technologies that support children's learning and play.

The lab is led by Allison Druin

KidsTeam UW

Comprised of 10 students, aged 7 to 11, and a number of undergraduate and graduate researchers from the iSchool and the Human Centered Design & Engineering department the students work on various projects brought to the University by government agencies and non-profits. Completed projects include helping to redesign BlockStudio, a programming tool that

helps kids build games using blocks and work with the Seattle Public Library on building out their STEM education programs.

The lab is led by Jason Yip

SoundOut

This organization provides a range of services and resources (including books and toolkits) to promote their mission "to engage every student in every grade in every school across the United States and Canada through Meaningful Student Involvement."

The link for the organization's website can be found here.

Students at the Center Hub

This organization provides a range of resources around best practices, policies, and research for student-centered approaches to learning for students, families, educators, and the broader community.

The link for the organization's website can be found here.

Reclaiming Access to Inquiry-based Science Education (RAISE) for Incarcerated Students

An NSF-funded project which uses codesign methods within a Universal Design for Learning framework to build out a science curriculum in order to make it more accessible, engaging, and effective for teaching science to incarcerated youth.

The lab is led by Michael Krezmien

Appendix Two: Resources

Books

Barger-Anderson, Richael. *Strategic Co-teaching in Your School : Using the Co-design Model*. Baltimore: Paul H. Brookes Publishing, 2013.

> *Uses the term co-design to describe a form of co-teaching in inclusive classrooms. Provides a range of concrete examples (including examples of useful checklists) specific to this particular model of teaching. Focuses almost exclusively on the classroom environment though with little attention paid to the broader environment in which students operate. It also takes a very teacher-centric view – despite the name of the book – with little space allocated to discussion of how students' views can be incorporated in the classroom experience.*

Cook-Sather, Alison. *Learning from the Student's Perspective : A Sourcebook for Effective Teaching*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2009.

> *Drawing on the perspectives of high school students in the United States, England, Canada, and Australia the book provides a comprehensive introduction to the concept of student voice as well as providing detailed guidelines for gathering and acting on student perspectives.*

Sanders, Elisabeth, and Pieter Jan Stappers. *Convivial Toolbox : Generative Research for the Frontend of Design*. Amsterdam: BIS Publishers, 2013.

> *A readable introduction to a range of tools, methods, and approaches to enacting co-design processes.*

Appendix Three: An Example of the Office of the Education Ombuds' (OEO) Listening Session Model[101]

The Office of the Education Ombuds is facilitating a listening session for Spanish speaking families of special education students in the Seattle School District. The purpose of this listening session is to give families a chance to share their experiences with school district administrators, and to give administrators an opportunity to hear from the families about their children's experiences in school, and to consider areas of need for potential systemic change. There will be a facilitator from OEO and two SPS interpreters available to support effective communication. Following an introduction, families will have time to get some food and water before convening. The remaining time will be guided by two open-ended questions:

Guiding Questions

1. How do you feel the district has/ hasn't been able to meet your student(s) educational needs and set them up for success?

2. What has worked well, or could be improved, in the relationship between you and the school and district as you work in partnership to support your child's education?

During the listening session, families will be answering the guiding questions and everyone else will be listening. Note takers will try to capture general themes rather than specific details about the families' individual situations. OEO will bring these notes to the district within two weeks for a follow-up debriefing session to discuss potential action steps based on the themes brought out during the listening session.

Ground Rules

The focus of the guided questions and the conversation that flows from it is to hear families' perspectives about how the school system is working for their children, and how they (as family members) are able to work in partnership with the district.

This is an opportunity to reflect on systems issues and systems change, and will not be a forum for addressing individual complaints or seeking resolutions to individual concerns. Individual families and district representatives may decide to make plans to meet privately, as needed, to resolve ongoing concerns or questions.

1. We will ask families to try to answer the questions presented by sharing personal examples from their own perspective.

[101] This appendix is provided as an example of a listening session model. OEO adjusts its work, format, ground rules, and questions to meet the needs presented.

Families will share only their own story and limit examples to their own child.

2. We will ask all participants to respect each other's privacy and not share personal information beyond this listening session.

3. We will give space for each family to contribute to the conversation and avoid having any single person dominate the conversation. We will ask participants to be conscious of each person having time to share insights and experiences.

4. We will encourage each family to participate by agreeing to listen without judging, including not trying to answer or resolve another family's questions or concerns.

5. Though families will be invited to share their experiences and may share concerns, questions or examples of situations where they feel things are not going well, we will remind families that this is not a forum for seeking individual resolution of specific concerns.

6. We will ask all participants to maintain an open and receptive tone for the conversation and to avoid unproductive arguing, venting or accusations.

7. We will discourage participants and district representatives from taking notes to enable a full, open sharing and maintain the focus on listening openly to families' perspectives on systems issues.

Note-takers will capture general themes of the conversation. These notes will not include specific examples or identify individual students or families. Themes will be synthesized and shared with the district later.

8. Within a month of this session, a follow up session (re-convening) will be scheduled so that the school district will have an opportunity to share what they heard from the families and how they are working to address these issues moving forward.

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