

50 Ways Adults Can Engage Student Voice

By Adam Fletcher, Founder of [SoundOut](#)



The following things that adults throughout schools can do to support, empower, and involve students throughout the education system. Adults outside schools can support students these ways too, and work to make sure adults in schools are doing them.

1. **Have A Real Conversation With A Student.** Ask a student what they want to do find out how you can help make that happen.
2. **Actively Support Student-Led Action.** However possible, including working with students out-of-school to accomplish their goals in education.
3. **Infuse Student Voice in Classes.** Teach students about their voices, let them learn about themselves, and engage them in learning about education. Build on what they already know.
4. **Develop A Student-Adult Partnership Program.** Help your school become a place where students and educators can actually transform school together.
5. **Create a Student Voice Center.** Use your school for students to become involved in changing their school and communities.
6. **Use Participatory Action Research In Your Classroom.** Students can use PAR to establish substantial action in your school.
7. **Be An Advocate For Students At School Meetings.** Make sure students are at the table whenever your school is making choices about students.
8. **Focus On Critical Thinking.** Create classroom lesson plans that actively engage students in critical thinking about education and action that changes schools.

9. **Start A Resource Library For Teachers.** Inspire students to make change with materials or link collections. Include books, websites, and organizations working on democracy, social change, schools, and student power.
10. **Make Student Voice Visible.** Make students concerns visible in your school by posting them in your classroom and sharing them at meetings where adults are.
11. **Promote Structural Change.** Sponsor a letter with students to the administration about student issues.
12. **Respect Students As You Do Adults.** Don't expect more from students than you do adults and don't interpret for students what they can say for themselves.
13. **Bring Students In As Teachers.** Co-design a lesson plan with students about education reform and student involvement.
14. **Amplify Under-engaged Voices.** Listen specifically to students whose voices are seldom heard in schools, including students who are minority, low-income, have low grades, or don't interact with their peers.
15. **Connect The Dots.** Host an activity for students and educators to encourage student-adult partnerships.
16. **Position Students For Action.** Engage students as classroom consultants, interns, apprentices, and activities staff.
17. **Make Expectations Obvious.** Be consistent and clear about your expectations of students in your classroom.
18. **Make Spaces For Student Voice To Sound Out.** Team up with students to have a town meeting or school forum for everyone at your school.
19. **Create Networks With Students.** Identify and network with students in your school who are concerned about their school.
20. **Build Support For The Movement.** Connect with other adult allies who want to involve students meaningfully, both in your school and others, and around the community.
21. **Let Students Hire Adults.** Include students in hiring adults at your school, including staff, teachers, and administrators.
22. **Support Engagement For Under-Resourced Students.** Arrange resources for students who would not otherwise be able to participate in school activities, including transportation, permission, and childcare.
23. **Represent Student Voice At The Ballot Box.** Support political candidates for local, state, and national

- office who make listening and working with young people a priority.
24. **Broadcast Student Voice.** Arrange for a radio station to sponsor a call-in show led by students that allows them to talk about their concerns about school.
 25. **Meet With Student and Adult Leaders.** Arrange an meeting with the principal for students to highlight the concerns and recommendations they have for school.
 26. **Go Big.** Create a school-wide vision for student involvement and voice that includes adults and students.
 27. **Stay Focused.** Be a real, active, and engaged adult ally to students within your classroom or program.
 28. **Get Into Standing Opportunities.** Serve on an advisory board or board of directors for a student-led effort.
 29. **Stand Strong When Necessary.** Refuse to attend meetings where students are not invited or where you cannot bring students with you.
 30. **Level The Field.** Discourage unfair opportunities for students based on academic performance, attendance, race, gender, etc.
 31. **Think Wide.** Create student-led experiences in your classroom and throughout your school.
 32. **Create Good Space.** Make your classroom a comfortable, safe, and affirming place so students can “hang-out.”
 33. **Support The Word Getting Spread.** Help students create an online newsletter, or work with your school newspaper, to share students' concerns about their school and education.
 34. **Identify Current Opportunities.** Help students create a listing of all opportunities for student voice in your school and community.
 35. **Advocate For Student Self-Evaluation.** Call for your school to have regular student evaluations of themselves, teachers, administrators, and classes that influence performance evaluations, contracts, and hiring.
 36. **Ask A Student For Help.** If they know about computers, ask them to assist you. If they understand diversity, ask them to teach you.
 37. **Support Students For Real.** Sponsor a support group for students who face particular difficulties such as parents' divorce, violence, etc.
 38. **Get Money.** Raise funds for a student-led organization focusing on school issues.
 39. **Give Money Or Time.** Actively support student-led organizations in your community, and encourage them to address education reform.
 40. **Be Active In The Community.** Join (or form) with students a community task

force to address student issues and coordinate responses in schools.

41. **Train Students.** Prepare students for multiple roles in your school, including learner, teacher, and leader.
42. **Demonstrate Openness.** Ask students' advice on school issues you are wrestling with.
43. **Build Allies.** Start an adult support group to share ideas, concerns, and ways to listen better to students.
44. **Recognize Student Voice.** Don't assume that just because someone is a student that they enjoy school. Help them appreciate it by giving class credit or through other meaningful recognition.
45. **Inject Student Voice In Professional Settings.** Include students in the membership and on committees in professional education organizations.
46. **Hold Students Accountable For Their Mistakes And Challenges.** Be honest

and forthright with young people, and support their efforts to improve.

47. **Treat Students As Individuals.** One student cannot represent all students, and must learn how to represent themselves. Teach them.
48. **Act Right.** Speak to students with respect, and avoid interrupting students.
49. **Begin At The Beginning.** Involve students from the beginning of class by having them create a list of their own expectations for the climate of the classroom through the end by having them conduct self-, class-, and teacher-evaluations.
50. **Get Loud.** Become a system-wide advocate by continuing your movement towards Meaningful Student Involvement by calling for student voice throughout the education system, and by offering yourself and your classroom as a resource consistently.

This article was taken with permission from The Guide to Student Voice by Adam Fletcher. Learn more at <http://amzn.com/148499504X>.

About the Author: Adam Fletcher is the founder of SoundOut, the nation's most experienced organization focused on promoting student voice, student engagement, and meaningful student involvement. The author of more than 50 publications, Fletcher has worked with more than 300 K-12 schools, districts, state agencies, and nonprofit organizations focused on education. Learn more about him at <http://adamfletcher.net> and more about SoundOut at www.soundout.org.