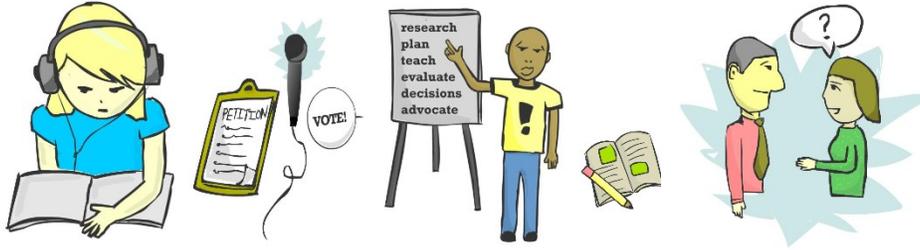


# 69 Ways Students Can Share Student Voice

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



With all the talk about how schools need to change and all the different actions students can take to change schools, figuring out where to start can be hard! The following list of actions students can take to change schools includes all sorts of different ways students can help schools become better places to attend and to learn.

1. **Identify An Adult Ally In School.** Find an adult in your school who is safe, supportive, and empowering. Talk with them about being there for you as you work to change your own learning and your school, and ask if they'll be an adult ally to you.
2. **Have A Real Conversation With A Teacher.** Ask a teacher what they want to see happen to make schools better places. Have real, frank, open, and honest conversations with other adults, too, each focused on what they want to see happen. Find out if they see any role for students in making those things happen.
3. **Propose A Student-Adult Partnership Program In Your School.** Offer a group of students who are willing to talk openly with teachers and administrators about how they think schools should change, and hold dialogue opportunities for students and adults to talk together.
4. **Lead Other Students In Taking Action.** Create a formal or informal group for students who want to make your school a better place. Meet regularly, make plans, and take action.
5. **Have A Mixer.** Host a school improvement mixer for students and adults in schools who are concerned with creating better schools to encourage student-adult partnerships.
6. **Meet With School Leaders.** Call for a meeting with the principal for students to highlight the concerns and recommendations you have for school.

7. **Support Non-Tokenized Meetings.** Talk to adults about meaningfully involving young people in meetings, and consider declining to attend meetings where only one highly involved student is invited.
8. **Hang Out At School.** Find an adult ally who will make their classroom a comfortable, safe, and affirming place so students can “hang-out.”
9. **Ask An Adult For Help.** If they know about computers, ask them to assist you. If they understand diversity, ask them to teach you.
10. **Recognize Adult Involvement.** Don’t assume that just because someone is an adult that they enjoy school. Help them appreciate it by giving credit where its due.
11. **Learn About The Education System.** You can’t change what you don’t know about. Learn what the education system is, how it operates, who affects it, and what happens from it.
12. **Hold Adults Accountable For Their Mistakes, Challenges, And Failures.** Be honest and forthright with adults, while supporting their efforts to improve.
13. **Treat Adults As Individuals.** One adult cannot represent all adults, and each must learn how to represent themselves. Teach them.
14. **Be the change you wish to see.** Want respect from adults? Speak to adults with respect, and avoid interrupting other students or adults.
15. **Watch The Change Happen.** Hold a movie night and discussion for students and adults either at your school or in your community.
16. **Teach A Teacher.** Do you know things about technology, the community, or other topics you think that teachers, parents, community members, or other adults can learn? Hold a student-led professional development session and invite adults from throughout your school to attend. Create a tight program, identify real learning goals, and facilitate good learning for everyone involved.
17. **Start A Resource Library.** Gather materials from across the Internet that will help you develop a successful campaign to change your school, and inspire you to do more. Share those links with your friends, parents, teachers, and others. Include books, websites, and organizations working on school improvement, student organizing and activism, and student power.
18. **Teach Other Students About Education.** Hold workshops and teach-ins for your friends to learn how schools need to change and what they can do to make a difference. Build on what they already know.

**19. Teach Others About School**

**Change.** Work with an adult in schools or the community to co-design a lesson plan for students, parents, and the community about education reform and student involvement.

**20. Get Listed.** Create a listing of all opportunities for involvement in your school and community.

**21. Conduct A Teach-In On School Reform For Students and Adults.**

Teaching students, parents, and community members what school reform is and how it happens is an important way to get more voices at the table.

**22. Write A Curriculum.** Do you know a better way to teach something? Propose to a teacher to write and test a lesson plan or even a week-long curriculum and ask if you can test it in their class.

**23. Work Inside Or Outside The**

**School.** Work in your school to change your school whenever possible, but work out-of-school to change your school if you must. Find a local nonprofit that will host your gatherings and provide you with assistance, if you want it.

**24. Go Citywide.** Have a town meeting or school forum for everyone at your school. Invite parents and community members.

**25. Be A Connector.** Are a lot of teachers in your school building from neighborhoods outside of your school's immediate community? Offer to teachers to serve as a neighborhood connector by introducing them to the resources you use locally, especially after school program staff and nonprofit leaders.

**26. Connect The Dots.** Connect with students in your city or state who want to involve students meaningfully, both in your school and others, and around the community.

**27. Engage Voters.** Support political candidates for local, state, and national office who make listening and working with students in schools a priority.

**28. Follow Some Leaders.** Serve in a community-based campaign that is led by other students and community leaders.

**29. Get Some Money.** Raise funds for a student-led organization focusing on school issues locally and through national orgs.

**30. Look To Your Community.** Actively support student-led organizations in your community, and encourage them to address education reform.

**31. Start A Policy Change**

**Campaign.** Want to create long-lasting, effective changes that will affect every student in your state? Target a state law

affecting schools that you want to see changed and work towards changing it. Try partnering with education advocacy organizations, and if that doesn't work, form your own student-driven coalition for school change.

32. **Talk To Policy-Makers.** District school board makers, state legislators, and Congress members are responsible for making education laws in every state, including setting funding priorities and academic achievement goals. These elected officials need to know students are concerned, too.
33. **Learn About Policy Change.** Advocate for a specific school policy change, including curriculum, cell phone usage, truancy and attendance, etc., and call for it to change.
34. **Join School Boards When Possible.** If that's not possible, join the student advisory board. Today, an increasing number of students have roles, and you can share this information with your local board, too.
35. **Conduct Research Studies.** Use participatory action research in your school to identify what needs to change and how it can happen, as well as who should be involved.
36. **Research Students' Perspectives On Schools.** Students' opinions change from clique to clique, grade to grade, school to school - but in many policy-

makers' eyes, students are simply another constituent group. Research a large swath of students' perspectives across your entire school, district, or state, and share those results with education decision-makers who should hear them.

37. **Evaluate The Education System.** Call for your school to have regular student evaluations of themselves, teachers, administrators, and classes that influence performance evaluations, contracts, and hiring.
38. **Find The Truth.** Survey students and adults and parents in your school and present the results to the community, including the school board and others.
39. **Be An Advocate For Student Voice At Any School Meeting.** Advertise any public meeting to students, and encourage adults to make sure students are at the table whenever your school is making choices about students.
40. **Post Your Concerns.** Make students concerns visible in your school by posting them in your classroom, sharing them at meetings where adults are, and posting them on the Internet.
41. **Write Letters Of Concern.** Work with other students to develop a letter writing campaign that informs principals, district and state school board members, the newspaper, and elected officials about student concerns regarding education.

42. **Be Real.** Be consistent and clear about your expectations of adults in your school, including how they treat students and what the outcomes should be. Don't just complain or agree, but be real about what matters the most to you.
43. **Have A Call-In.** Arrange for a radio station to sponsor a call-in show led by students that allows them to talk about their concerns about school.
44. **Get Artistic.** Meet with students in your school who are particularly artistic, and develop a proposal with them for your building's leader to create art around the building focused on school reform. This might include icons painted on hallways throughout the building, or a mural summarizing students' visions for schools.
45. **See The Future.** Create a school-wide vision for student involvement and voice that includes adults and students.
46. **Host All Kinds Of Action.** Create student-led experiences throughout your school.
47. **Spread The Word.** Create a newsletter, website, or Facebook group to share students' concerns about their school and education.
48. **Be An Advocate.** Call for student involvement and student/adult partnerships throughout the education system.
49. **Meet With The School Board.** Let elected district school directors know that students care about their schools and their education by attending school board meetings and presenting issues students care about. Ask directors if you can meet with them individually to present your concerns, as well.
50. **Learn About Classroom Teaching.** Work with your friends to study and learn about effective teaching, and offer feedback to teachers in an accessible, non-threatening way.
51. **Offer To Be A Teacher Coach.** After forming a student/adult partnership with an adult ally in your school, offer to coach them by providing regular feedback in an appropriate fashion after class or after school. Share your insights about how they can teach better, manage more effectively, or effectively involve other students in class.
52. **Provide Voluntary Evaluations Of Teacher Performance.** Find out which teachers in your school want student-led evaluations of their performance, and lead a small cadre into their class during study hall periods to assess them. Then share those results with the teacher.
53. **Be A Friend.** Be a real, active, and engaged friend to adults in schools. They need allies too.

54. **Respect Adults Like You Do Students.** Don't expect more from adults than you do students and don't interpret for other students what they can say for themselves.
55. **Give Yourself Some Feedback.** Have students self-evaluate themselves, their classes, and their teachers, and provide those results to teachers.
56. **Push For Reality.** When teachers assign you tasks to create imaginary situations or participate in "mock" activities like government law-making or elections, take on assignment topics that address real school issues. Do legitimate work and apply your classroom learning to real-life scenarios that affect you every day.
57. **Create A Student-Led School Reform Group.** Work with your peers to identify, define, focus, and organize a student-led school reform campaign for your school or in schools across your community. Use traditional protest tactics to demand meaningful student involvement throughout schools, and the types of reforms students think should happen.
58. **Involve Non-Traditionally Engaged Students.** 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.
59. **Share The Wealth.** Arrange resources for students who would not otherwise be able to participate in school activities, including transportation, permission, and childcare.
60. **Refuse Inequitable Rewards.** Work against unfair opportunities for students that are based only on academic performance, attendance, race, gender, etc.
61. **Support The Whole Student.** Sponsor a support group for students who face particular difficulties such as parents' divorce, violence, etc.
62. **Call For New Roles.** Encourage your school to involve students as advisers to the principal, classroom consultants, interns, apprentices, and activities staff.
63. **Become An Interviewer.** Call for schools to include students in hiring adults at your school, including staff, teachers, and administrators.
64. **Self-Monitor Behavior.** Encourage your school building leadership to consider adopting a student-led conflict resolution program such as a peer leaders, a restorative justice program, or a student court.
65. **Create Expectations.** Ask your teachers to co-create group expectations and norms for classroom behavior and action.
66. **Get Students On Board!** No decisions about students should be made without

students, and getting students onto school building-level, district, and state committees and boards is an important way to involve students in school decision-making.

67. **Build The Web.** Connect with students across the U.S., Canada, Australia, the UK, on the African Continent, across Europe, and in other countries around the world where there are powerful and effective student voice initiatives. Link to

them, share their work, and share with them as much as you can.

68. **Volunteer For Student-Led Organizations.** Student-led organizations want adults to be allies.

69. **Engage, Enliven, Empower.** Your friends want to get involved in changing schools, and you can engage, enliven, and empower them to make a difference. Recruit people you don't know and take action for change *right now!*

If you have worked your way through these 69 items, you have transformed your school! Read the rest of the guide for more ideas!

*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](http://www.soundout.org).