Top 10 Ways to Involve Students in Decision Making

NetDay Speak Up is an annual national research project that collects the voices and views of students, teachers, and parents on topics such as educational technology, science, math, and 21st century workforce skills. Results are shared free-of-charge with school communities to use in their own conversations about school planning and policies. This Top-10 list from participating schools highlights strategies for involving students in decisions that impact to their education.

1. Create a student technical support and mentoring group.

"Students from [the Advanced Tech Tools] class, are involved in technology-based service projects to the whole school and are exposed to the school's 'big picture.' Their comments also prove valuable in planning for the current and future years." (Stephanie Danker, Rachel Carson Middle School, Herndon, VA)

2. Invite select students to join an advisory group.

"We have a student advisory group that meets periodically with our school administrators to discuss education issues impacting them at school." (Terrie Rust, Oasis Elementary School, Peoria, AZ)

"Because students sometimes have access to new and emerging technologies in their homes, they are able to bring insight into what our school needs to stay on the cutting edge of educational technology." (Edward Daughtrey, Granby High School, Norfolk, VA)

3. Post a question on a discussion forum.

"Last year's survey showed that students felt that our firewall was hindering their research at school. I followed up by posting a list of questions in our online student forum and it led to a very productive and helpful discussion that helped us to achieve a better balance between security and access." (Michael J. Curtin, Fordham Preparatory School, Bronx, NY)

4. Start a computer club to research appropriate software.

"In computer club the students provide input into a student survey. Then they survey their fellow students during advisory time to see what activities and software are the most appealing." (Dr. Brenda Cox, S.C. Lee Junior High School, Copperas Cove, TX)

5. Tap student talents and opinions to redesign school websites.

"A student survey in September indicated the student would like the home page to provide more information about school clubs, sports events, top ten music charts, famous birthdays, and a more colorful page. The student responses indicated they wanted a more 'student-centered' page and as a result of their input the website received a complete make-over. (Darla Reid, Baker Middle School, Corpus Christi, TX)

6. Arrange for students to meet with elected officials.

"Our school has a remarkable group of students who form a technology demonstration team, and they make recommendations about activities and try them out first. They also met with 18 elected and constitutional officers in our state capitol in February to lobby for increased educational technology funding for the schools in our state." (Suzanne Martinez, Louis Pasteur Elementary School, Chicago, IL)

7. Ask students about technology practices and curriculum.

"Several students were asked to comment on current technology curriculum and available equipment. We have been able to adjust all curricula to include more technology pieces. We have also revised the computer class curriculum to eliminate several components that students felt were repetitive." (Teri Schoof, Brentwood Middle School, Brentwood, TN)

8. Organize student focus groups to test ideas.

"We are using students in focus groups to gain feedback on how technology is used currently at school and what changes/differences they believe should take place." (Kim Shelton, Clear Creek Independent School District, League City, TX)

9. Ask a student group to raise awareness about Internet safety.

"The Student Council, PTA, and teachers were all pro-active in responding to Internet safety issues and concerns by inviting the iSafe group to present assemblies to the student body. The Student Council was also involved planning a parent Internet safety event that included the local police department." (Billie Holt, Fullerton School District, Fullerton, CA)

10. Have every student complete a Speak Up Survey

"Empowering students and giving them a say in the planning of their education has increased their motivation, increased the number of interdisciplinary lessons used throughout our curricula, and promoted higher-order thinking skills. Our 21st Century Learners' articulation about the 'what and how' of their educational experience has increased inquiry and discovery learning which is a win-win situation for all stakeholders." (Patricia A. Williams and Alfred W. Dinwiddie, Bouchet Academy, Chicago, IL)

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NetDay Speak Up is a national initiative of Project Tomorrow. Our mission is to support and promote the effective and appropriate use of science, math and technology resources in K–12 education so that every student has the opportunity to fully participate in today's global economy and community. We are dedicated to preparing today's students to be tomorrow's innovators, leaders and engaged citizens.