

Youth Voice Spectrum

YOUTH VOICE

Youth Voice is the active inclusion and participation of youth in their world. In service-learning, youth voice occurs when students and their ideas are meaningfully incorporated into all stages of the service-learning process. It provides youth buy-in to the project and an opportunity for youth to see themselves as agents of change in their school and community.

Youth Guided

In Youth Guided service-learning projects, teachers and adult leaders include youth voice when they think about the youths' interests and talents and use these to design the service-learning project. The project is adult led.

- Youth are actively considered
- Youth are **consulted** in project decision-making
- Youth interests and ideas are **considered** when planning a program

Youth Directed

In Youth Directed service-learning projects, teachers and adult leaders include youth voice by allowing them choices in how they complete project activities. In a Youth Directed service-learning project, the adult fills the role of project leader and guides the program to completion. This stage is often seen in school-based service-learning projects and can be used to balance the demands of meeting curricular objectives with the important role of encouraging youth voice. This project is adult guided.

- Youth are actively **engaged**
- Youth **contribute** to project decision-making
- Youth interests and ideas are **encouraged** when planning a program

Youth Driven

With **Youth Driven** projects, youth themselves develop ideas, plan activities, and take lead roles in executing the service-learning project. The adult serves as a facilitator rather than guide, and supports students in their efforts to develop their own ideas and explore solutions for problems along the way. Students can become central decision makers by taking charge in the process of their service-learning project. This level of youth voice often takes years to build, especially when challenges of meeting state academic standards and other school priorities arise, but benefits include improved social skills, increased academic engagement, and enhanced connection to others.¹ This project is adult facilitated.

1. Shelley Billig, *Growing to Greatness 2007*

- Youth are actively **empowered**
- Youth **drive** project decision-making
- Youth interests and ideas are **foundational** to planning a program

Assessing Youth Voice in Your Classroom

The chart below displays the range of youth voice during each portion of service-learning. As youth voice and participation increases, so does youth leadership.

Directions: Identify where you feel your teaching falls along the spectrum for each step.

SERVICE-LEARNING STEPS	ABSENT	YOUTH GUIDED	YOUTH DIRECTED	YOUTH DRIVEN
Investigation: <i>Identify community needs & resources</i>	No youth voice	Teacher pre-selects need	Students vote on predetermined needs	Students survey community members and formulate a need
Preparation: <i>Develop plan (academics, goals)</i>	No youth voice	Teacher arranges project based on student interest	Students contribute ideas for plan and resources needed	Students develop plan and take the lead in project development
Action: <i>Fulfill service project</i>	No youth voice	Teacher creates activities for students to participate in	Students are able to choose preset roles for project	Students take leadership roles during project
Reflection: <i>Communicate how project affected involved parties</i>	No youth voice	Teacher provides multiple opportunities for reflection	Students select from a list of reflection methods	Students choose their reflection method and topic
Demonstration: <i>Recognize & share efforts/ results</i>	No youth voice	Teacher plans demonstration and assigns roles	Students choose method of demonstration and/ or responsibilities	Students design demonstration and take leadership within it
Evaluation: <i>Analyze outcomes (successes/ areas for improvement)</i>	No youth voice	Teacher evaluates with student input	Students choose from teacher-crafted evaluation methods	Students decide what / how they want to evaluate & follow-up on project



Increasing Youth Voice

Directions: *Select an area where you will work to amplify youth voice and leadership in two ways. How will you achieve this?*

Example: *Reflection*

*I will move from **youth guided** to **youth directed** by allowing students choices for reflection. They can decide to write a song, create a drawing, or film a mini “commercial” about their project.*

When my class completes a project, I’ll pick 3 students to create a question about the project that the class will then discuss.

Area/ Topic:

1.

2.

