

Elevating Student Voice Through Teacher Leadership



2020
Teacher
Leadership
Report



Elevating Student Voice Through Teacher Leadership



{ 2020
Teacher
Leadership
Report }



Elevating Student Voice Through Teacher Leadership



{ 2020
Teacher
Leadership
Report }

ARIZONA
K12 CENTER

Elevating Student Voice Through Teacher Leadership



2020
Teacher
Leadership
Report

Elevating Student Voice Through Teacher Leadership



{ 2020
Teacher
Leadership
Report }


ARIZONA
K12 CENTER



Contents

Ben Collinsworth	4
Joseph Fuentes	6
Kathleen Paulsen, NBCT.....	8
Miyone Roanhorse	10
Elizabeth Schley Evans, NBCT	12
Arizona TeacherSoutions® Team.....	15


Introduction

The five teachers highlighted in this year's Teacher Leadership Report and at the 15th Annual Teacher Leadership Institute know that raising student voice isn't only about encouraging students to lift their hands in the classroom. Elevating student voice is about helping students feel confident and valued in their identity, and providing them a safe and identity-affirming space to explore their ideas and opinions.

Confident in their identities as teacher leaders, these five have raised their voices and are sharing their stories to encourage you to share yours and elevate the voices of students across our state. For the first time, this year's Teacher Leadership Report also includes the voices of the Arizona TeacherSolutions Team. Near the back of this publication, these 19 teacher leaders share pieces of their ongoing teaching journeys.

When teachers share their stories, others see the potential in themselves. This year's Teacher Leader Spotlights and Arizona TeacherSolutions Team members aren't so unlike you. They question their decisions, hold onto stress, and make mistakes sometimes. They have learned to share that journey with their students and the educators around them, and reveal their humanity as we all make improvements and move forward together.

We recognize that 2020 has not proceeded as expected. We hope the stories included here and at the 15th Annual Teacher Leadership Institute inspire you to continue raising your voice, the voices of your coworkers, and of Arizona's students.



“Elevating student voice is about helping students feel confident and valued in their identity, and providing them a safe and identity-affirming space to explore their ideas and opinions.”

Ben Collinsworth

Inclusion Preschool Teacher
Flowing Wells Unified School District

*Empowering
student voice
through
storytelling*

"In preschool, life is all about discovery. Young children use play and inquiry to discover truths about their environment and, more importantly, themselves."

#AZTEACHERLEADER

Ben Collinsworth's face livens as he reads books aloud. His hands animate descriptions and metaphors as he talks to his students. He easily glides between spoken direction and song.

"How many milks do we need?" he asks his class at snack time, then singingly presents "three milks, four milks, five milks ..."

His students—all between the ages of 3 and 5 years old—excitedly count along.

Collinsworth has been teaching preschool at Emily Meschter Early Learning Center in the Flowing Wells Unified School District in Tucson since 2014, but embraced the power of storytelling far before then. While working as a bookseller at Bookmans Entertainment Exchange in Tucson, he volunteered to lead a children's story time. A former theater major, Collinsworth took his role beyond what his supervisor had expected. He incorporated props into his story times, developed activities related to each book, and asked the young children attending the story hour questions to connect them more to the day's book.

Parents of those children started calling him 'Mister Ben,' which he now also embraces in his formal classroom. It was his wife, Amy Collinsworth, who also works at Flowing Wells, who pointed out that he was doing the work of a teacher and that education might be a career path for him.

"All the lights went on—the whole chandelier," Collinsworth remembers. He then student-taught in a preschool classroom and fell in love with the energy, creativity, and culture of discovery he found there.

Collinsworth works to create a classroom culture of belonging, where every student's story is welcome. That sets the foundation for students to embrace their identity, he explains, and be able to advocate for themselves.

"In preschool, life is all about discovery," Collinsworth says. "Young children use play and inquiry to discover truths about their environment and, more importantly, themselves. As an educator, embracing student identity

is about honoring those discoveries through developmentally appropriate practice. Cultivating a child-directed curriculum also encourages student voice by allowing young students to lead their own learning."

As an inclusion classroom, half of Collinsworth's class are general education students and half are special education students.

"Even though the kids don't realize it, they're interacting with students who culturally represent a whole community of people with disabilities, and the students who are enrolled in special education are showing the typically developing students just another way of what it means to be human."

Along with dramatic performance, song, and dance, Collinsworth includes mindfulness activities and the tenets of social-emotional learning in his classroom. What he most wants his students to understand is how to be kind to others and to themselves. That helps students be "able to say, 'I can be kind to myself, which means I can love myself, which means I can respect myself, which means I can ask for and demand and take accountability for the way that people respect me.'"

That sets the stage for students to later succeed.

"The opportunities to be successful that kids have in preschool give them the confidence they need to go further," he says. "It gives them the boldness to be able to say, 'I'm a learner and I can figure it out.'"

-
1. How does Collinsworth elevate student voice?
 2. How can students' exposure to diverse perspectives through storytelling support their understanding of others?
 3. In what ways does cultivating inclusion in your learning environment make an impact on your greater community?



Joseph Fuentes

Expanded Impact Teacher
Phoenix Elementary School District

*Empowering student voice
through social-emotional
learning and trauma-
informed practice*

*“Elevating students’ voices
is one thing, but it’s really
about truly valuing them
and valuing their voices so
that they can transcend
that into actions.”*

#AZTEACHERLEADER

Third-grade teacher Joseph Fuentes works to bring out “the human aspect” of teaching. That starts every morning when he greets each student by name as they enter his classroom. Some give him high fives, while others provide a handshake or another greeting. It continues throughout the day as he weaves in social-emotional conversations, and models for students how he expresses his own emotions.

“I really try to give my students an opportunity to, one, be themselves, and, two, be able to express how they feel or what they’re thinking,” Fuentes explains. “In my childhood, we didn’t cry and we didn’t say we were mad; we didn’t do those things. But, knowing what I know now, it’s important to own our feelings and to own that it’s okay that we feel that way.”

Helping students feel safe and known is the groundwork Fuentes sets for his students to be able to learn. He is upfront about how his own childhood was full of challenges, but that caring teachers helped him become who he is today.

“They didn’t see me as a kid impacted by trauma,” he says, “but a kid who could and would reach his fullest potential. Going to school made me feel safe because of the adults in my classroom, and that is what I strive to do for every student that enters my classroom.”

His job is not to know what every student might be dealing with emotionally, he explains. “My job is to make them feel safe so they have a space to share.”

“Students, at the beginning of class, will tell me if they are sick, didn’t sleep, didn’t have dinner, or if mom and dad fought all night,” Fuentes explains. “They do this because they feel safe and know that I understand them and will do what I can to support them.”

Fuentes models what it is to be human, to be an emotional being, and to continually learn. He not only shares parts of his past with students, but shares about who he is now. He might share with students when he’s particularly happy or sad about something, or how he continues to learn.

“My students know I’m always learning something new and, especially if it’s related to the classroom, I always share what I’m learning,” he says. “They know right now I’m learning about conscious discipline and learning how to give them more choices. They go on this journey with me and sometimes I tell them, ‘We’re going to try something new and it might not work, but let’s try it and see what we think.’ I think there are a lot of benefits in that, especially the trial and error part that now students are like, ‘Oh, it’s OK! He made a mistake; we can make a mistake.’”

Fuentes is also a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) trainer and coach through KOI Education. He fuses the school day with PBIS, trauma-informed practice, and social-emotional learning to help his students recognize their emotions, handle them appropriately, and be able to learn and advocate for themselves.

“Elevating their voices is one thing,” he says, “but it’s really about truly valuing them and valuing their voices so that they can transcend that into actions.”

-
1. How does Fuentes elevate student voice?
 2. In the next school year, what might be social-emotional learning elements you want to include in your practice?
 3. What steps might you take to learn more about integrating trauma-informed practice in your learning environment?



Kathleen Paulsen, NBCT

District Mentor
Balsz School District

*Supporting teachers
in embracing their
identities to elevate
student voice*



*“Embracing teacher
identity is to embrace
the potential each
teacher has to support
a student in reaching
or exceeding their
potential.”*

#AZTEACHERLEADER

After six years of teaching in elementary classrooms and five years as an instructional coach, Kathleen Paulsen now helps teachers across Balsz School District recognize their voices in order to raise their students' voices.

"Embracing teacher identity is to embrace the potential each teacher has to support a student in reaching or exceeding their potential," she says. "A teacher that lacks that basic identity will struggle to recognize the critical role they play in their students' lives. Teacher voice is what I work to build in all teachers as they learn to advocate for the needs of their students to reach their maximum potential."

With a warm smile and reassuring presence, Paulsen works as a full release mentor with 18 first-year teachers, tailoring her support to what each one needs. Just like she did with students in her former classes, she builds strong relationships with the teachers she mentors to be able to create a supportive space where learning and reflection can happen.

"My role as a new teacher mentor is much more than helping teachers deliver lessons or manage a classroom," she explains. "I work to challenge their thinking, offer new perspectives, and invite conversation around diversity, equity, and inclusion. My hope is that when our time together is done, these teachers feel empowered to take on the work without me."

While brand-new teachers may need focused, intense support at first, Paulsen continually works to empower teachers to step into their identity as a teacher.

"The key to that work is helping them see that they don't just have a group of students in front of them," she explains. "They have individual students, and, when you really drill down and you see what their individual strengths are and what challenges they have as students, you can plan differently. You can plan for the students who have different needs. You can design your environment so it can change because you know who they are and you know what their individual needs are."

Teachers rooted in their identity and students affirmed in their voices can create an inclusive, community-focused environment. Paulsen describes one of Balsz's elementary schools as having a joyous culture; the diverse population of students and teachers there are celebrated with no one singled out.

"The culture we try to cultivate with these teachers is that it's good to be unique, it's good to be different," she says. "When you get to know students at an individual level, you celebrate who they are. Students then have the opportunity to be in an environment where they can speak their opinions, speak their truth, and share who they are and where they come from."

"Ultimately," Paulsen continues, "that helps them develop relationships with each other, with the staff at the school, and, when they get older, hopefully they can support and impact their community."

-
1. How does Paulsen elevate student voice?
 2. How do you affirm individual student and teacher identities in your learning environment?
 3. How do you celebrate diversity in your classroom or on your campus?



Miyone Roanhorse

English Teacher
Salt River Schools

*Elevating
student voice
by developing
changemakers*

"It's amazing to see my students come back to talk to me and explain their stories of travel, college, and work experience. I don't think I'll ever get tired of those moments, hearing a student say 'I made it; I'm making it.'"

#AZTEACHERLEADER

Miyone Roanhorse wants her students to know she's in their corner; that she's there whether they succeed or fail. That allows students to embrace their identities and move forward in their own individual narratives.

"They know that they can push forward," she says, "because they have that. 'No one's going to give up on me. I'm going to push forward, because I have people rooting for me. I have people in my corner.'"

As a Seminole and Diné woman, Roanhorse uses her own story to relate and encourage the students she teaches at Salt River High School in the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, those she coaches as a basketball and cross-country running coach, and those she leads as a student council advisor. Roanhorse began as a tutor in Salt River Schools before pursuing an education degree, then becoming a full-time English teacher.

"The point of education is to allow students to wonder, explore, and find their passion," Roanhorse says. "As a Native American student who went through public schools, I always felt I could relate to my Native American teachers more because they have endured what we are enduring, and they embraced walking in both cultural, traditional ways and modern Western society. It's a balance, and I try to show my students that it is possible to walk in balance."

Whatever the unit or book her class is studying, Roanhorse works to connect the state standards-based curriculum with the indigenous identity and experiences of her students. Conversations about the 'American Dream' become discussions of the 'Native American Dream.' Holocaust-related literature flows into conversation about indigenous genocide and historical trauma.

Roanhorse wants her students to recognize the historical trauma within their past but "be able to say, 'That may have happened, but that's not my story. This is my story.'"

Roanhorse shares about her own challenges she has worked through, like anxiety, and ways she is continuing to learn and grow. She also

helps students understand how investing in school can be a stepping stone to more choices in their careers and lives. She refers to her own life as an example of having power over an individual's story.

"I want to leave the kids knowing that if I, as a little girl from a reservation, can do it and make it all the way into a big city, go through college, and find a job I love, they can do it too," Roanhorse says.

"I constantly preach: You don't have to be what you are now," Roanhorse continues. "You can change that, but you need to address it. How are you going to take those next steps? How are you going to make sure that if this isn't the life you want to live, you're going to make it the life you want to live? How are you going to be able to live every day, waking up saying, 'I love what I do.'"

Roanhorse is overjoyed when former students return to update her on their lives. "It's amazing to see my students come back to talk to me and explain their stories of travel, college, and work experience," she says. "I don't think I'll ever get tired of those moments, hearing a student say 'I made it; I'm making it.'"


-
1. How does Roanhorse elevate student voice?
 2. How do you encourage students to wonder and explore the world around them?
 3. How do you encourage students to tell their own story or write their own future narrative?



Elizabeth Schley Evans, NBCT

Advanced Placement Government and Politics Teacher
Chandler Unified School District

*Developing
active citizens
by empowering
student voice*

A photograph of a female teacher with long brown hair, wearing a green long-sleeved shirt, leaning over a desk. She is looking at a document held by a female student with long dark hair, wearing a grey hoodie with a NASA logo. The student is smiling and looking at the document. On the desk are several papers. In the background, there are educational posters on the wall, including one titled 'Understanding U.S. Population' and another titled 'Diversity in the United States'.

“My job is not to know everything. It’s not your job either. Our job is to explore and to just sometimes ask questions that don’t have answers. And that’s fun.”

#AZTEACHERLEADER

As an Advanced Placement Government and Politics teacher, Elizabeth Schley Evans empowers the students in her class to raise their voices as informed and active members of the United States.

While Schley Evans has a degree in early childhood education, she has also earned a master's degree in secondary education with an emphasis in history, and has found a thriving home at Basha High School in Chandler Unified School District, teaching high schoolers, often those nearing graduation.

"The challenge that I get with seniors, especially second-semester seniors, is that there are a thousand other things going on in their life," Schley Evans says. They're thinking about where to go to college, potential majors, and all of the other decisions they'll have to make for themselves after having such a set daily schedule in school the past 13 years.

Schley Evans counters that by creating "a classroom environment that is challenging for students, but also a space where they understand that life is life." That kind of space comes from building genuine relationships with her students and seeing them as individuals with their own strengths and challenges.

"I believe that you should teach students the content, not teach the content to the student," she explains. "This allows me to know where I have to take my students and how to get there. In my classroom, there is no right or wrong answer; there is only continued learning toward the ultimate goal of being a productive and educated citizen."

She is clear that she does not try to change any of her students' opinions, but shows them how to locate sources, analyze data, and recognize hard evidence. She works to create a classroom environment where students feel safe and seen, are able to openly ask questions and dive into discussion without criticism. She hopes they take those skills beyond her classroom, where the standards of debate can be very different.

"One of my biggest challenges," she says, "is trying to figure out how to keep kids politically

involved, raise their voice in an environment of social media and of online criticism and trolling, and giving them that confidence to understand that you can have opinions and you can use that voice with strength, with wisdom, and with education."

Schley Evans shares about her classroom experiences and expertise through the Arizona K12 Center's *Stories from School AZ* blog and her own website, TeachingAPGovernment.com. Along with her teaching load at Basha, she is also a teacher development advocate, formally mentoring other teachers.


"Being a mentor is really challenging, but in the best way possible," she says. An important part of her role as a mentor is to build other teachers' confidence, which, in turn, can build each teachers' students' confidence.

Schley Evans gives her students the confidence to raise their voices by sharing about herself and her own learning journey.

"When they're doing their Socratic seminars," she says, "I have my documents out and I'm continuing to annotate because, I tell them, 'I've read these documents at least a hundred times in my career, but I don't know everything because that's not my job. My job is not to know everything. It's not your job either. Our job is to explore and to just sometimes ask questions that don't have answers.' And that's fun. That's what this class is about."

-
1. How does Schley Evans elevate student voice?
 2. How are you preparing students to be active and informed citizens?
 3. What do you think it means when Schley Evans notes to "teach students the content, not teach the content to the student"?





“Every day we ask kids to do brave things. They read tough books and write long essays, and do it all while under the scrutiny of their peers. So put your own fear aside and engage, because that’s what pushes the profession forward.”

—Cornelius Minor

“I don’t like to call it a classroom so much as a learning environment because I think one thing that is also important is I remain transparent and tell them that I am also learning to be a better teacher from them. Even though I was the one sharing knowledge, I was also gaining knowledge from them.”

—Cinnamon Kills First

“I do not have all of the answers but I can figure them out with the people that I am working with. Those people who I am working with don’t necessarily have to be my colleagues, they can, but they also include the kids I am serving and their families.”


—Kass Minor

Arizona TeacherSolutions® Team

Elevating Student Voice Through Teacher Leadership and Inquiry


In 2011, the Arizona K12 Center launched the Arizona TeacherSolutions Team in partnership with the Center for Teaching Quality (CTQ). Solutions-oriented teacher leaders from across Arizona push themselves to think outside of what is and begin looking toward what could be for Arizona's students. The Arizona teacher leaders who make up Arizona's TeacherSolutions Team represent the diversity of our state and the contexts in which we all work. These teachers lead by example while seeking solutions to some of the most complex problems facing our schools.

The Arizona K12 Center's TeacherSolutions Team members engage in an inquiry goal-setting project each year. Each member develops a goal that matters to them and sets out to seek change and learning from trying to achieve their desired outcomes. In this section of the report, you will find an overview of the 2019–2020 members' goals, outcomes, and next steps all connecting back to the idea of elevating student voice. We invite you to read about the Arizona TeacherSolutions Team's work toward elevating student voice through leadership and inquiry as a way to inspire action for yourself, your community, and your students.




"The inquiry goal project was the driving force for my students' learning all year long. With that goal in mind, I planned and facilitated meaningful conversations with students that connected our learning with their lives and experiences. The goal also gave me confidence to try new methods and strategies with my students."

—Leah Clark, NBCT



"The inquiry goal process allowed me to share strategies with teachers across my district and helped them give a voice to student behavior. The teachers are now more equipped to provide their diverse learners a safe place to learn and grow while increasing productivity time in their classrooms!"

—Erika Chapman, NBCT



"My experience on the Arizona TeacherSolutions Team has been career changing! It has helped me find my voice and has given me the chance to present about things that I wouldn't be able to present on otherwise."

—Kareem Neal

Utilizing Student-Centered Pedagogy to Change Outcomes

Josh Meibos, NBCT

K–8 Physical Education Teacher
Maricopa County Regional School District

Goal

I made it a goal to take my middle school students off campus for their quarterly one-mile challenge. This goal was a conscious effort to support and increase the holistic learning opportunities for my students.

Outcomes

My action steps supported my students' holistic learning by helping them find empathy toward one another, and find identity, meaning, and purpose in life through connections with their local community and to the natural world.

Next Steps

My hope is to identify more holistic learning opportunities with all of my students, one grade level at a time.



August 'Sandy' Merz III, NBCT

Middle School Math Teacher
Catalina Foothills School District

Goal

Some students in high-performing, upper socioeconomic settings face social, personal, or familial challenges that impact their well-being and leave them disconnected from their school and education. As a new teacher in a district that prioritizes math placement, my goal is to take an ever-increasing role in improving and developing our support system for disconnected students—with an emphasis on student self-advocacy in determining their math placement.

Outcomes

I wrote the article *Math Placement: A Tale of Two Districts* that compared two approaches for placing students in the most appropriate math level. I worked with students, counselors, administrators, and parents to identify students who would most be helped by math interventions or advanced placement, using criteria beyond test scores and grades. I also helped students exit from intervention classes because they were more engaged when working at grade level.

Next Steps

I plan to expand my efforts to get and keep students connected to math by promoting more enrichment. This includes in-class activities featuring elements proven to increase engagement, and extracurricular activities such as interschool math competitions.

Yolanda Wheelington, NBCT

1-3 Grade Teacher

Phoenix Elementary School District

Goal

I want my students to vocalize and visualize the impact COVID-19 has had on their education and how they see themselves moving forward toward future goals and lifestyles. Research shows that while children begin developing long-term career choices as young as seven, there is a disconnect with their ideal lifestyles. I will explore if students were able to develop and/or maintain these connections in the midst of COVID-19 interruptions.

Outcomes

Outcomes are still being developed. Students have analyzed the childhoods of American heroes, events, and resources that contributed to them reaching their goals, and completed a mock college application as Mary McLeod Bethune and writing her a letter of recommendation. I have created a Flipgrid for students to share their current educational experience, and future visions and lifestyles.

Next Steps

Research shows that children often choose careers based on heroes or people in their immediate community. Next steps will be to provide parents with opportunities that help expose their child to desired careers and explore strong alternatives, and assist in identifying skills and resources needed to support their child in achieving these goals.

Standards-Based and Reflective Practices



Sara Wyffels, NBCT

High School Spanish Teacher

Chandler Unified School District

Goal

I will use standards-based practices in the classroom because I want my students to be reflective upon the feedback they receive in order to create an environment that is not focused on a grade or number but, rather, on growth.

Outcomes

Students became more comfortable in an environment where it wasn't expected for all students to be at the same place in their progress at the same time. There was a more accepting attitude about the class, about assessments, and about the grades. I think the repetition of me saying, "our goal is to do better than last time" sunk in and gave the students freedom to grow and experiment.

Next Steps

As I continue this work, it needs to be refined and will need to be shifted depending on the group of students. I think the only true way to make this a solid change would be to change the policy and the entire grading system. As long as percentage or letter grades exist, we will never get away from the focus on the number. However, integrating more growth and standards-based practices has given myself and students a clear path of how to do better.

Commonalities Across Demographics



Empowering Students Through Social-Emotional Learning

Susan Collins, NBCT

K-5 General Music Teacher
Kingman Unified School District

Goal

I want my students to know that learning something new is never easy. I plan to use my leadership to foster an environment where failure is expected as a path to learning. This is important because one of the key ingredients that I see missing in students is their ability to persevere in the face of a challenge.

Outcomes

As a result of the steps that I took to build resiliency in my students through failure, I am seeing a surge of creativity in their assignments. With distance learning in place, I see students embracing open-ended lessons, exploring new tools online, building instruments from items around their home, and making up their own songs. This has truly prepared them for the unexpected situation we find ourselves in as a result of COVID-19.

Next Steps

Going forward, I am planning to implement a hybrid learning environment of in-person and digital learning spaces. I will give my students more opportunities to share what they can create when they are given the space to achieve without negative consequences from failure.

Student Voice Leads to Student Choice



Randi Fielding, NBCT

K-8 Dean of Students
Florence Unified School District

Goal

I want to expand my role to include proactive social-emotional support for students. I believe students will change their behavior if their social-emotional needs (the function of their behavior) are met, they have a replacement behavior, and those behaviors are reinforced.

Outcomes

Through explicit instruction on emotions and the brain, the use of sentence stems, and validation, students were able to express their needs and predetermine a better response when they found themselves in a similar situation later.

Next Steps

To maximize the effectiveness of this approach, it will be helpful to include teachers and parents in the conversation. When they understand the approach the students are using to express their needs, they can intentionally remind, reinforce, and respond with kindness.

Failure = Resilience



Jen Hudson

High School Beginning Teacher Mentor
Paradise Valley Unified School District

Goal

I want the teachers I support to further connect and elevate their students' voices in an era of physical distancing and remote learning. Many of my beginning teachers are used to virtual learning themselves but have been grappling with how to meet both their own and their students' social-emotional and academic needs during this time.

Outcomes

There has been positive feedback on targeted mini webinars utilized during this time. Teachers enjoy them and are sharing tricks and tips that are effective in their new 'digital classrooms' as a way to meet both the social-emotional and curricular needs of their students.

Next Steps

Next year, I hope to continue our 'Webinar Wednesdays,' which teachers can view at their leisure. Working with my new team, I can use the skills that have been developed this year to support next year's beginning teachers.



Jessica Jaeger, NBCT

Fifth-Grade Teacher
Tucson Unified School District

Goal

I want to leverage my humanness as a teacher to be vulnerable with my students when facing emotional stress because they lack appropriate strategies to regulate their emotions. I want to model appropriate strategies for emotional regulation and self-care for students.

Outcomes

I was able to form genuine connections with my students by becoming vulnerable. Students were able to empathize. They gave voice to emotions they were feeling through shared stories, which helped me understand their mindsets and perspectives.

Next Steps

What I hope to accomplish next is discovering more ways to remain connected during social distancing and beyond. I want my students to be able to name their thoughts and feelings to realize their own emotional responses and triggers.

Igniting Change Through Educator Professional Development

Erika Chapman, NBCT

K–2 Special Education Teacher
Nadaburg Unified School District

Goal

My goal is to provide teachers with strategies they can incorporate to bring voice to student behavior as a way to understand what kids are really saying. It will assist teachers in deepening their understanding of student perception and validation, listening with empathy, and letting go of power struggles. Incorporating these strategies and language in the classroom brings our students' voices to the forefront and shows that adults are listening to them.

Outcomes

By implementing the strategies of understanding perception, validation, and empathy, students felt more connected with their classroom teachers and worked harder in their classes. Disruptive student behaviors decreased and on-task time increased. Office referrals decreased in the classrooms where teachers implemented these strategies.

Next Steps

My next steps are to continue to share these strategies with more classroom teachers in my school district. I want to extend my reach and help more children feel that they are heard, cared about, and valued.



The Voice Behind the Behavior



Paraprofessional Training

Kristin Cox, NBCT

Elementary Special Education Teacher
Dysart Unified School District

Goal

Paraprofessionals are often hired with no experience and given almost no training. We are asking them to work with the most complex students on campus and their only tools are what they bring with them and the strengths of the teachers leading the classrooms where they work. By training our campus paraprofessionals, I can empower students through increased adult efficacy.

Outcomes

Paraprofessionals reported feeling more effective after applying their learning from training modules during their time with students. Through increased adult efficacy, we retained paraprofessionals who started working in the field of special education with no prior experience. Paraprofessionals shared successes and asked for additional training sessions.

Next Steps

I will work with the administration at my school to set up trainings for the next school year. I will also revisit the topics covered this year and add some depth to create a spiraled curriculum.

Jesse Delgado

High School Special Services Mentor
Tolleson Union High School District

Goal

I want to develop future leaders who will use technology to drive innovation. As a teacher leader, my goal is to introduce tech tools and strategies to teachers as a way to engage students in their own learning.

Outcomes

I led professional development for administrators and teachers that centered on technology-integration strategies. Teachers were able to facilitate student learning remotely using technology tools based on strategies taught during our time together.

Next Steps

Future steps are to create a set of video training tutorials for teachers and students to build their capacity to lead through technology. Specifically, my plans include training tutorials that include platforms such as Nearpod, Flipgrid, and Microsoft Teams.



Kristin Roberts, NBCT

High School English Teacher
Phoenix Union High School District

Goal

I want to use my leadership to expand the use of restorative practices in my school. I believe restorative practices help teachers develop strong relationships with their students and help both teachers and students to become more reflective, develop better problem-solving skills, and become more conscious of their impact on others.

Outcomes

I have helped build and encourage leadership capacity with the members of our Restorative Justice committee. We have developed systems and facilitated workshops to support teachers, but our most important learning is that no one can successfully implement restorative practices unless they are self-regulated and relaxed.

Next Steps

Supporting staff members and prioritizing their wellness is key to expanding the successful use of restorative practices. I started to see this earlier in the year, but the COVID-19 pandemic has made it abundantly clear. Next year, I plan to work with other teacher leaders to promote adult wellness as a prerequisite for the successful implementation of restorative practices with students.



Prioritizing Relationships and Community to Create Opportunity

Annie Diaz, NBCT

K-6 Instructional Coach

Washington Elementary School District

Goal

My goals are to provide frequent coaching, model restorative practices, cultivate healthy relationships with teachers, and support students with healthy behaviors. As an instructional coach, I wear many hats and, often, my duties are far removed from my job description. These goals are important to me because they encompass the true root of what a great coach can be when their focus is on helping students and teachers through building strong, meaningful, and caring relationships.

Outcomes

COVID-19 threw us all for a loop. I reread Timothy Kanold's *HEART!* while at home. I reflected on my actions to cultivate restorative practices with students and adults. I realized that our profession is not for the weakhearted and I believe we will rise up together. I am grateful to be a coach, colleague, champion, and friend.

Next Steps

I want to be transparent with my colleagues and share my goals. I also want to practice listening and trusting more, spreading happiness and sharing compassion and my love for this profession. I am also focusing on trusting more as a way to help grow stronger relationships. I believe I have touched a few educators and students in a deeper way this year. I hope to build on this momentum when we return to the physical school setting.

Restorative Practices and Relationship Building

Student Empowerment

Sheri Loyd, NBCT

Third-Grade Teacher

Dysart Unified School District

Goal

I want my students to develop positive self-identities. Through my leadership connections, I offered opportunities for students to see problems and solutions through the eyes of others.

Outcomes

My students created a community-building event for their parents to attend. They planned STEAM activities that fostered an environment where parents could work together and get to know one another.

Next Steps

Before school went to online learning, our class had discussed making these events bigger to include other third-grade classes in our school.

Christina Musselman, NBCT

First-Grade Teacher

Lake Havasu Unified School District

Goal

My goal is for every teacher in my building to create a learning community where students and staff feel seen, heard, and welcome. These learning communities will enable all students and staff to feel safe to make mistakes, be vulnerable to new opportunities, and to grow in confidence. Learning communities will empower student voice and support teacher unity and collaboration.

Outcomes

Our site created a classroom social contract with each class. Most classrooms worked on creating 'All About Me' Thinking Maps with their students. As a staff, we created a social contract and established norms for staff interactions.

Next Steps

My hope is that we can take this a step further next year and have classes participate in celebrating student identity and classroom identity. My plan would be to model it with our staff first, and then carry it on into everything that we do in our building.



Jen Robinson, NBCT

Elementary School Principal

Maricopa Unified School District

Goal

Teachers model the process of goal setting and empower scholars to set their own goals and action steps. This process looks different for each scholar, which invites teachers to scaffold support. All scholars have opportunities to lead their own learning by creating/setting goals and tracking their action steps.

Outcomes

Through teacher modeling of setting appropriate goals and choosing actions steps, scholars created their own individualized goals and picked action steps. Dedication time each day provided scholars with the time to track and discuss their progress, reflecting on their action steps and growth. Scholars needed different levels of support provided by other scholars or their teacher.

Next Steps

In order to maximize the effectiveness of this approach, it will be helpful to ensure all teachers and staff have a strong understanding of setting goals and action steps for themselves. When they understand the approach, they are better equipped to help scholars set goals and choose action steps.



Developing Perspective Taking to Increase Understanding

Leah Clark

High School English Teacher
Glendale Union High School District

Goal

My goal focused on exposing my 11th-grade students to diverse American experiences through multi-genre texts written by diverse authors with diverse perspectives.

Outcomes

Students found connections and interest in the texts. They regularly asked to read and were genuinely more interested in reading experiences connected to classroom learning. Students found relevance and salience in their learning, allowing our group to delve deeper into the varied experiences in America.

Next Steps

I plan to use my knowledge of students as a foundation for offering texts that provide opportunities for rich discussion and reflection honoring students' experiences and backgrounds in all of my classes. I hope to continue fostering positive reading experiences in all of my classes through a wide range of relevant and high-interest texts.



Kareem Neal

High School Special Education Teacher
Phoenix Union High School District

Goal

I want to rethink equity in schools by considering one-sided inclusion practices. Students with learning disabilities and neurotypical students can both benefit from entering each other's classrooms. We need to rethink viewing some students as 'the standard' because it makes other students feel like they don't belong.

Outcomes

The people who hosted me to speak on the topic at a conference shared positive feedback and invited me to speak again in September. People from the conference have also reached out individually to explore the ideas that I presented further.

Next Steps

I hope to continue spreading this information to as many educators, parents, and students as possible for the purpose of creating change.

Holli Taylor, NBCT

Fifth-Grade Teacher, District Technology Mentor
Nadaburg Unified School District

Goal

My goal is to build fortitude in students as a way to find ways to raise their voices as digital citizens. I want them to also have a cognizant awareness of their footprint by making a choice to be heard by others in multidigital ways. I believe students have the power to create change with their voice, and to express themselves even when it comes to controversial topics.

Outcomes

My work has shown that many of my students thrive when given the opportunity to share their individual voice in their writing when I present them with topics that engage them in expressing their voices within digital spaces. The work has continued this spring through our distance learning. I have noticed the need for continued work on navigational skills that engage my students through exploring bias in the media and how they can be made aware through fact-checking practices.

Next Steps

As the world is shifting and rural communities are looking to connect students to the virtual world in multiple ways, it has brought to light how far we still need to come in preparing students for the digital world. I plan to extend my goal as I build technology mentorships in my district as a way to deepen understanding around the power of virtual spaces. I also hope to continue to cultivate students to be digital citizens that express their views in respectful ways.

Interested in becoming a member of our Arizona TeacherSolutions® Team?

The Arizona TeacherSolutions Team consists of teacher leaders from throughout the state. As we navigate the future of teaching and learning in Arizona, we continue to seek educators who desire to advance their leadership skills through unique opportunities.

Discover the leader inside yourself and apply to be a part of our team. Members serve for three years and new members are announced each spring.

Please visit bit.ly/TST21-22 to find the application for the 2021-2022 school year.



Acknowledgements

Thank you to this year's teacher leaders who allowed us to share their stories and expertise, and to their colleagues, schools, and districts for welcoming us into their spaces. The teacher leaders included here not only planned and shared with us about their work to elevate student voices but did so during an especially challenging time.

We hope these teachers' accounts of passion, courage, selflessness, and resilience inspire educators across the continuum to take positive action to enhance their education communities. We dedicate this publication to all of Arizona's educators. As teacher leaders, we salute your willingness to take risks and sacrifice for your students, colleagues, and the betterment of your community. You are cultivating a spirit of hope for the future of Arizona and our nation. The energy you exert and time you dedicate to better our state's education system are priceless.





**When teachers learn,
kids learn;
when teachers lead,
kids lead; and
when teachers are inspired,
kids are inspired.**

Learn more about teacher
leadership at **AZK12.ORG**

602-443-6444 • info@azk12.org

