# Whakatupuhia te reo, whakatupuhia te tamaiti

## Enhancing Student Voice to influence decision-making school-wide and accelerate student progress

The Cognition Education Trust is funding and supporting a project to investigate the impact of Student Voice on teacher and school-wide decision-making.

Our definition of 'Student Voice' is the intentional collection and use of students' thinking and feedback on their learning and using these voices to inform and improve teaching, learning and school-wide decision-making.

This publication summarises the key learning from the first year ('Phase 1') of the project to assist other schools who might be considering the use of Student Voice to inform decision making for teachers and school leaders.

A second and final report on Phase 2 of the project will be available to schools in 2016.
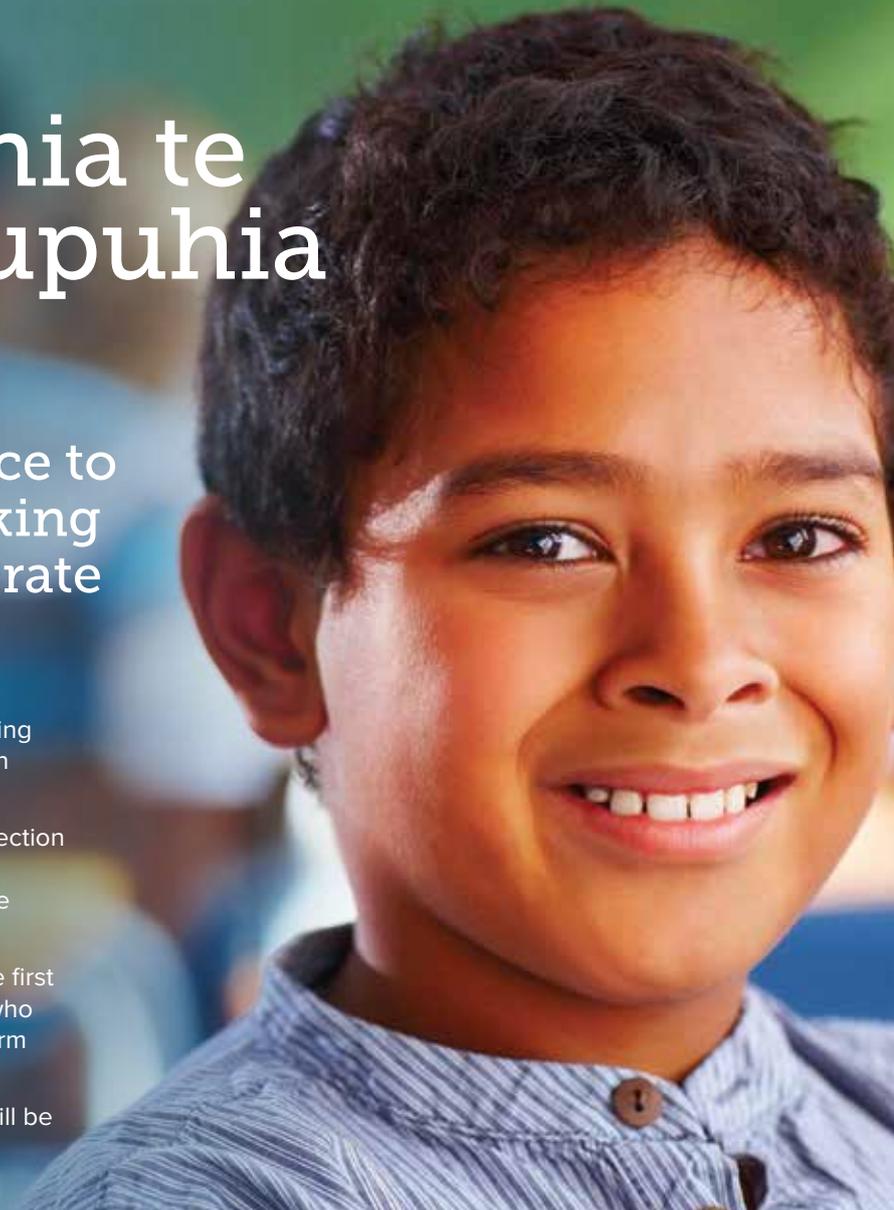
## The Student Voice Project schools

A network of four schools engaged with the project in 2014 and 2015, and implemented Student Voice projects within their own schools.

- **Clevedon School, Auckland** — a rural Year 1-8 school in southeast Auckland with a roll of 390 students

- **Gladstone Primary, Auckland** - a multicultural Year 1-6 school in Mt Albert, Auckland with a roll of 900 students

- (2014) **Marist Catholic School Herne Bay, Auckland** — an inner city Year 1-8 multicultural school in central Auckland with a roll of 180 students. (Project shifted to **St John's School Mairangi Bay** in 2015 with a roll of 337 when the key participating teacher relocated.)

- **Rhode Street School, Hamilton** — a Year 1-8 school in Hamilton with a roll of 250 students and high proportion of Māori students (86%).

The project was planned, delivered and evaluated by staff at Cognition Education Limited, with project management support from the Executive Director of the Trust.

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# Key Themes
The following themes emerged from Phase 1 of the project

- Effective implementation of Student Voice requires a transparent, school-wide, planned and strategic approach (for example, clear expectations, shared understandings about teacher practice, and the use of consistent language), so that '…everyone is on the same page…'.  The journey to the meaningful integration of Student Voice in order to accelerate student progress must be school-wide to ensure that students experience consistent practices and expectations across the school.

- Practice shifts are more likely to occur when the wider environment of the school's vision, policies and learning culture supports Student Voice and encourages evidence-informed risk-taking.

- Effective change requires the full commitment and engagement of school leaders, who can identify, share and promote effective and emerging practice across the school.

- Maximising the potential of Student Voice in a classroom often requires a fundamental shift in the teacher/student dynamic.

- Teachers need to see themselves as teachers of all the students in the school, not just those in their own classes, because Student Voice has the potential to improve students' experience of the learning environment at the school, anytime and anywhere.

- Learners benefit when teachers can explicitly identify learning connections to prior learning and to learning across different areas.

- Student Voice and whānau engagement are part of the same picture. Lifting one can also lift the other.

- Evaluation is a critical component of a project like this. In implementing Student Voice, schools must enagage in constant evaluation of their progress towards these outcomes.

- The successful implementation of Student Voice requires planning to clearly identify short, medium, and long term outcomes in agreed timeframes and agreed success criteria.

# Some teaching and learning suggestions

The project identified that students wanted more time with the teacher and changes in their classroom environment; the project network schools suggested the following practices:

- Interview your students to find out what they think an effective learner is – that's the starting point.

- Sit back and look at your classroom environment in terms of student-focused learning – does it look like your room, or the learners' room?

- Reflect on your own practice and be honest when you answer the question 'How do I know what the children can do and what they need to learn?'

- Don't see the collection and use of Student Voice as an 'add-on'. Try to integrate it into something you have already planned.

- Don't rush it. Make sure your classroom systems and procedures are appropriate, well established and understood by the students.

- Sincerely listen to the students and don't make assumptions. You need to continue to question and listen carefully to what they say to get to the heart of what they might need from you.

- Make sure your goals are aligned with those of the whole school to ensure open dialogue and opportunities for critical reflection with colleagues.

- Investigate ways to manage lesson planning to meet the schools needs, while still being responsive to Student Voice.

- Establish a structure that provides the flexibility for students to self and peer assess and manage their own learning needs.

- Share ways in which using Student Voice has impacted on your teacher decision-making with senior management; help them access authentic examples of how the use of Student Voice promotes learning.

- Ensure you are working with colleagues so your practice is not isolated and you have people to share the journey with.

# School contexts
The following conditions were identified as enabling the effective use of Student Voice.

## SHARED UNDERSTANDINGS

- There is school-wide understanding of what is meant by Student Voice, in particular that Student Voice is most authentic and valuable when sought and used as an integral part of professional practice. (i.e. it occurs frequently, 'anytime, anyplace…'). This understanding is embedded as part of the school culture, at both classroom and strategic levels.

- School- wide understanding includes the success indicators for the effective use of Student Voice to inform decision making for teachers and school leaders (in the short, medium and long term), as a framework for consistent, school- wide practice.

- Transparency ensures that there are shared understandings within the school's community about the effective use of Student Voice and associated processes, expectations and protocols.

- There are honest, respectful, and trusting relationships between teacher-student and student-student. The effective use of Student Voice requires a foundation of rapport and trust.

- Teachers understand that they need to be reflective and responsive practitioners when engaging in deliberate acts of teaching which are informed by Student Voice.

- Student Voice can be integrated into a professional 'habit of mind', teaching as inquiry, which is already established at the school.

## A LEARNING CULTURE – THE READINESS AND ABILITY TO CHANGE

- The effective use of Student Voice can challenge historically-embedded school expectations and practices. School leaders need to identify, and possibly themselves challenge existing school practices and aspects of the school's organisational culture. One approach is a process of analysing change opportunities and possible constraint.

- School leadership needs to reflect on community and teacher readiness.Some careful preparatory analysis should identify dominant educational mindframes/ mental models, especially in terms of how staff and students view the role of the teacher.

- Student Voice can lead to a shift in mind-set for teachers about how children learn best.Teachers need to be ready to make the fundamental pedagogical shift required to share responsibility for teaching and learning decisions with students.

## PEDAGOGY

- Teachers need to see that responding to Student Voice is an integral part of the teaching-as-inquiry cycle.

- Teachers need to deeply understand that Student Voice must be actively listened to, and responded to, in order to maximise its potential for improving teaching and learning.

- It is important to spend time inducting and mentoring new teachers into the culture and practice of school-wide integration of Student Voice.

- Collaboration both within the school and among groups of schools, around the use of Student Voice, has considerable potential to deepen understandings about how to use Student Voice effectively .

- The use of Student Voice will be balanced with more traditional pedagogy as appropriate to the situation and context.

- Student Voice has to be built on really strong student-teacher and student-student learning relationships that are open and trusting.

## Using Feedback/Feedforward

- The feedback from using Student Voice can inspire teachers because it is a tool for teachers to better meet the learning needs of everyone in their class.

- Google docs has the potential to facilitate peer feedback to teachers and students (taking time to build teacher and student capability to use the google doc environment is a valuable investment).

- There are other cost-effective forms of technology to facilitate rich Student Voice experiences.

- Students need to be intentionally taught the language of feedback and how to effectively give and receive feedback.

- Students need input and ownership to fully understand the processes and protocols for providing and receiving feedback.

- In response to feedback from students, teachers need to engage in deliberate acts of teaching in response to Student Voice, '…you told me x about your learning and so this is where I think we are going next…'

- Feedback from students and using the effect size strategy is motivating for teachers and sparks professional conversations regarding impact.

### Differentiation effects

- Teachers need to be very careful that high achieving students are not overlooked, so do not assume they will 'get it'.

- The most significant achievement shifts are seen with the lower achieving students.

# Enabling Better Learning Capabilities

**VISION:** Cognition Education Trust aims to raise the educational expectations and contribute to raising the life chances of students identified as our beneficiaries.

**MISSION:** We believe all children and young people are entitled to an education delivering high expectations that maximises their potential.

We support a collaborative approach to help create a system which is responsive to the learners' needs and aspirations, thereby contributing to New Zealand's social and economic health.

**GRANTING STRATEGY:** We invest in educational initiatives, interventions and projects that measurably improve the outcomes of New Zealand learners.

Evaluation of impact is at the core of the Trust's granting to ensure projects are tightly-focused and the Trust can confidently share evidence-based findings with the education community.

Because effective teaching and learning is informed by a robust process of teacher inquiry, our investment will be targeted to build teachers' capacity to 'know the impact of their teaching' to inform teaching and learning.

## APPENDIX 1 Programme Logic

The four network schools and project facilitators began Phase 1 by developing a programme logic outlining how the resources and ideas underlying the use of Student Voice were to be implemented. The logic also includes an outline of the short, medium and long term outcomes.

| OUR PLANNED WORK | | OUR PLANNED OUTCOMES | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Resources (Inputs) | Activities | Short term Outcomes | Medium term outcomes | Long term outcomes |
| Cognition Education Trust funds four participating schools and Cognition Education Ltd consultants | Five workshops<br>• Laying the foundations<br>• Preparing for action<br>• Understanding our baseline<br>• Monitoring progress<br>• Identifying our impact<br><br>Online support via the Virtual Learning Network<br><br>Face to face support if required | School participants are informed about:<br>• Research and opportunities to gather and use Student Voice<br>• Planning and evaluating an initiative in their school<br>• Ways to design a project or an intervention<br>School participants have opportunities to:<br>• Critique each other's plans, provide feedback and feed forward<br>• Explore a range of Student Voice examples and impact<br>• Plan as leaders of a school initiative<br>Participating schools<br>• Identify current practice in relation to Student Voice from a range of stakeholders | Participating schools and teachers are supported to:<br>• Design effective processes and systems to gather learning related Student Voice<br>• Use student feedback when planning for learning<br>• Build student learning feedback into syndicate/school wide plans and targets | • Students are effective partners in learning, evaluating their own learning and creating pathways for next steps<br>• Students are clear about their own learning needs and can articulate those needs confidently<br>• Teaching meets the learning needs of all students |

## APPENDIX 2 Phase 1 Tools

**Some tools used by the network schools in Phase 1**
- Student playground interviews ('What makes a good learner?')
- Classroom interviews
- Student focus groups (middle school) (n=5 per class)
- Student survey (assessment capability, next learning steps, areas of future learning interest)
- Student Voice post-it notes ('What I found tricky', 'What I am learning')
- Google docs to record student feedback
- Teacher focus groups
- Teacher surveys and interviews
- Video in class
- Video of a planning session
- Feedback comments and student responses in workbooks
- Use of rubric to develop shared learning language and identify writing strategies, learning expectations, and next steps
- Student Voice data in OTJs – equal weighting to other forms of assessment
- Teacher and student blogs (influence of Student Voice in writing and maths)
- Rubric for measuring Student Voice in writing
- Content decisions within a learning area influenced by Student Voice
- Teacher and student use of learning intentions and success criteria
- Top reading group involved in planning their learning week
- Learning conversations between students which inform the planning of the next teaching steps
- Appraisal cycle examining how teachers are using Student Voice in their daily planning
- Addition of a 'Student Voice' column to planning documents
- Student feedback in work books ('...was work easy, just right, or hard...'). Subsequently developed as a more visible reflection wall
- Student reflection in groups on learning needs and next steps
- Student analysis of mid-year reading assessment results. Common needs written in modelling books
- Student Voice collected on next learning steps in writing
- Scheduled 'learning conversations' between teachers and students