



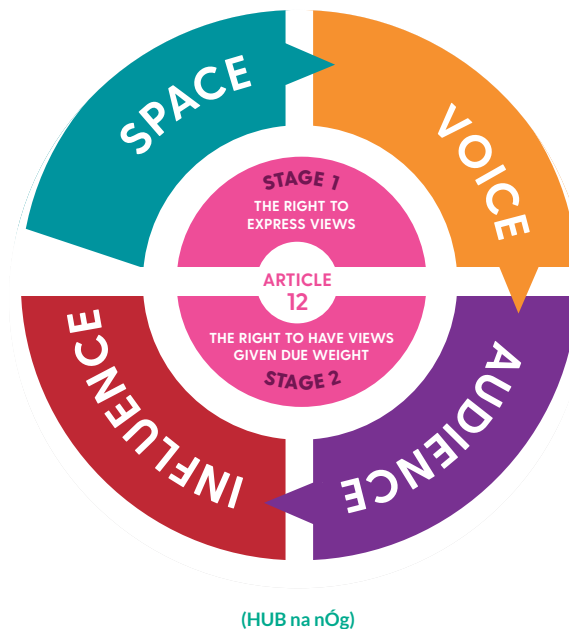
## Student Voice

Students have a right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them. This right is therefore fundamental to all actions taken concerning students. It is the right of individual students *and* the right of groups of students.

The central premise of student voice is that students know what is and is not working in their classrooms and schools, and therefore, it is the responsibility of anyone who wants to improve students' educational experiences to attend to their perspectives, solicit their ideas, and take their feedback seriously.

Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (United Nations (UN), 1989) highlights that children have the right to have their opinions considered, their views respected in decision-making that affects them, and given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity. Research clearly emphasises that prioritising children's participation impacts positively on their self-esteem and confidence, and promotes their overall development, autonomy, independence, social competence and resilience (Harmon 2021; NCCA 2020; Ring *et al.* 2018).

Professor Laura Lundy developed The Lundy Model to conceptualise the distinct elements involved when supporting student participation.



**Space:** The initial step of the Lundy Model of Participation starts with creating a safe and inclusive space for all children to express their views. Such space is a pre-requisite for children to express their views, without fear of rebuke and reprisal (Lundy 2007). This space is not just a physical space but a space for voice to be heard and not solely in a tokenistic way.

**Voice:** Nobody expresses themselves in the same way and once a safe space has been established (Lundy 2007) adults can develop opportunities for young people to express themselves inclusive of the silent voice (Harmon, 2021).

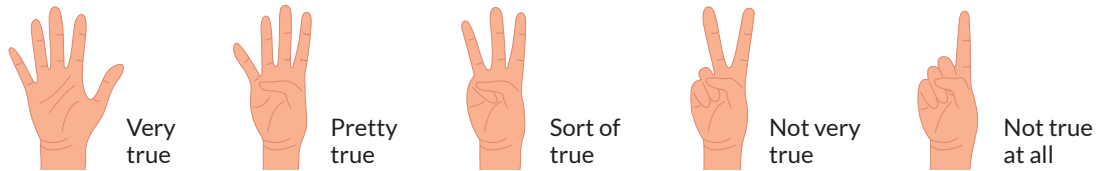
**Audience:** Children have a right to an audience and those hearing the child's voice should have some ability to effect change (Lundy, 2007).

**Influence:** Purposeful listening enables adults to be open to what is articulated and, where appropriate, to act for the benefit of the child. Lundy (2007) stresses the importance of children knowing and feeling that their voice has influence and is respected. This will promote a culture where voice is appreciated.

## Practical strategies to engage student voice:

Ideas on how to gather student voice (apply the Lundy model when using any of these approaches to ensure it is a meaningful experience for students):

- Ross Greene's Five-Finger Strategy



- Likert scales



- Moving towards choices – eye gaze or walking, e.g. basketball one side of the room and football other side
- Suggestion boxes
- **Getting to Know Me Tool**: engaging with staff, parents and students to ensure student voice is heard
- Create a **decision-making profile**
- Writing things down – providing multiple means for the student to do this, including templates
- Drawing a picture
- Using video or photographs
- Gestures and facial expressions (when it is clear through the student's advocates how these should be interpreted)
- Using visuals (such as **The Blob Tree**)

Watch the video on Padlet to see how St Aidan's CS in Tallaght, Dublin use their 'Spotlite Project' (Student Perspective on Teaching and Learning in the Educational Space) to elicit and act upon student voices in their school.

## Reading and further resources



[Hub na nÓg Student Voice Participation Resources](#)



[Unicef Guidelines for Setting Up a Student Council](#)



[Creating Child Friendly Versions of Policies](#)



[Learner Voice Research Project](#)



[A Practical Guide to Including Seldom Heard Children and Young People in Decision Making](#)



[Tusla Child and Youth Participation Toolkit](#)

## NCSE TPL



The Spotlite Project