ABSTRACT OF CAPSTONE

Joseph P. Harris

The Graduate School
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April 9, 2018
EMPOWERING TEACHERS TO EMPOWER STUDENTS THROUGH VOICE AND CHOICE

Abstract of the Capstone

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the College of Education At Morehead State University

By

Joseph P. Harris

Morehead, Kentucky

Committee Chair: Dr. Michael Kessinger, Assistant Professor

Morehead, Kentucky

April 9, 2018

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EMPOWERING TEACHERS TO EMPOWER STUDENTS THROUGH VOICE AND CHOICE

This Capstone project was the creation of a student voice and choice professional development series handbook for use in empowering teachers to integrate student voice and choice into the classroom.

KEYWORDS: Student Voice Choice Motivation
EMPOWERING TEACHERS TO EMPOWER STUDENTS THROUGH VOICE AND CHOICE

By

Joseph P. Harris

Approved by

___________________________
John H. Curry, PhD
Committee Member Date

___________________________
Cassandra Webb, EdD
Committee Member Date

___________________________
Michael W. Kessinger, EdD
Committee Chair Date

___________________________
Timothy L. Simpson, PhD
Interim Department Chair Date
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my wife and children, who have been patient and supportive throughout the entire process. I also dedicate this work to my former students who taught me the value of student voice and choice in my classroom. Finally, this work is dedicated to my dad who encouraged me to pursue this professional milestone.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Michael Kessinger. He has served as my advisor over the past decade through previous educational leadership degrees and as the Chair of my doctoral committee. Without his patience, support, and advice this work would have not been possible.

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Finally, I would like to acknowledge Dr. Cassandra Webb. As the Chief Academic Officer of my previous school district, she always encouraged me to think outside the box and supported my efforts to include student voice and choice in my classroom.
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Executive Summary

What is the core of the capstone?

Teaching a unit on Macbeth is a fairly common experience in a high school English class. During my first year of teaching, I worked hard to create a Macbeth unit which I thought was going to be fun and interesting. My seniors, however, were not engaged in the unit at all. I would assign work and several students would not give it their best efforts. Others told me repeatedly, “This is boring!”

One day during this unit, I was copying some handouts to use in class when I noticed another teacher had copied a survey. I went to that teacher and asked her, “Is this something I am supposed to do?” She explained to me that she voluntarily surveys her students as their feedback helps to guide her lesson plans and classroom environment. After a long discussion, I decided to administer the survey to my students. The responses were shocking! My students were not engaged because they all felt the unit was boring.

I took the data from the survey back to my students and asked them to explain why it was boring and how I could improve. I used their suggestions to revamp the unit and students who were completely tuned out before started engaging more in the classroom. This simple survey had an impact on not only that unit, but on my teaching and advocacy for student voice as I continually sought my students’ feedback to improve my instruction. Overtime, I became more interested in the research behind student voice and motivation, and I wanted to help other teachers leverage the untapped potential of student voice and choice.
Problem Statement

Educators are continually trying to find ways to motivate students in the classroom. One way systems across the world are working toward motivating students is through integrating student voice and choice into classrooms and schools. Perks and Middleton (2014) stated that “many educators struggle with questions about student motivation in the classroom” (p. 48) and that student voice is a powerful motivating tool because it can help “develop trusting relationships between students and teachers” (p. 52). Teachers and schools approach the integration of student voice and choice in a variety of ways. These include using student voice in school decision making through student voice teams and Student Government Associations, utilizing student voice in evaluations or program development through surveys, and using student voice within the classroom to impact instructional decisions.

Over the past several decades, Kentucky has reformed its K-12 educational system. As part of this reform, the Kentucky Department of Education led schools to implement new standards, new assessments, and a new Professional Growth and Effectiveness System (PGES). From 2009-2016, Kentucky schools were required to utilize a student voice survey in teacher evaluations as part of the Professional Growth and Effectiveness System (PGES) which were required through the 2009 Kentucky Senate Bill 1. With the passage of Kentucky’s 2017 Senate Bill 1, the statewide Professional Growth and Effectiveness System (PGES) requirements were removed, giving local districts more control over their evaluation systems. These
individual evaluation systems might or might not include student voice measures (Kentucky Department of Education, 2017). While student voice surveys became optional for district’s Certified Evaluation Plans (CEPS), Kentucky teachers are at least familiar with student voice in the classroom as it was a required part of the statewide evaluation system from 2009-2016.

While districts now have the option of including or not including student voice in the evaluation process, it is important for teachers to be equipped with the tools necessary to get the most out of student voice and choice in the classroom, and for schools to get the most out of student voice within the larger framework of the school. Advocates for including student voice and choice within schools include groups such as The Prichard Committee and The Gates Foundation; however, simply telling teachers to integrate student voice and choice is not enough. Toshalis and Nakkula (2012) state, “the movement to raise standards may fail if teachers are not supported to understand the connections among motivation, engagement, and student voice” (p. 2).

Providing teachers with appropriate and effective tools and professional development is a vital part of increasing student voice and choice within classrooms. Research indicates that student voice and choice within the classroom increases motivation and achievement (Fielding, 2001; Goodwillie, 1993; Levin 2000). Also, some schools have integrated student voice in change processes with positive results (Mitra, 2006).
Purpose of the Capstone

Through the #studentvoiceKY initiative (Harris, 2015), tools for integrating student voice and choice into the classroom were created and beta tested by Kentucky teachers. These tools are readily available for integration into the classroom for gathering student feedback (Harris, 2015).

Through the work of Jim Shipley and Associates for systems-based classrooms, continuous classroom improvement systems and tools such as Plan/Do/Study/Act (PDSA) and Plus/Deltas open the door for student voice and choice within classrooms (Shipley, 2017). The systems-based approach to continuous improvement, which includes PDSA and Plus/Deltas, has been integrated into a variety of districts and schools with positive results (Shipley, 2017), and has been partially integrated into Rowan County Schools.

The purpose of this capstone was to design a professional development series handbook. The modules in this series and handbook are focused on why student voice and choice are important, as well how to integrate student voice and choice tools into the classroom, and to provide an introduction and overview of existing student voice and choice tools. This professional development series handbook was designed for future implementation at Rowan County Middle School but could be used by any district seeking to include student voice and choice.

Guiding Questions

The design of the professional development series handbook answers the following guiding questions:
1. Why should teachers integrate student voice and choice into their classrooms?

2. How can teachers effectively integrate student voice and choice into their classrooms?

Definition of Terms

#studentvoiceky: An initiative that began in 2015 to promote the use of student voice and choice tools in Kentucky classrooms. The tools from this initiative were included in the professional development series and handbook in addition to other resources and tools.

Plan/Do/Study/Act: A continuous improvement process whereby teachers and students determine a learning plan, the strategies and activities to accomplish this plan, assess the learning and/or implementation of the plan and study the data generated from the assessment, and use this data to determine how to move forward in the learning cycle (Kentucky Department of Education, n.d.).

Plus/Deltas: A tool utilized to gather feedback and ideas for improvement. With this continuous classroom improvement tool, teachers ask students to provide feedback on what is and is not working in an instructional unit, with a specific learning strategy, or with any aspect of class or school. The tool is used to provide teachers with feedback to inform instruction and decision-making (Shipley, 2017).

Review of Literature

Student voice can be integrated throughout a school in different ways. Student voice teams can be formed to represent the student body in decision making. These teams could provide voice to dress codes, discipline code books, or might identify
issues within the school and plans of actions to address these issues such as bullying or gaps in academic achievement.

Schools can also integrate student voice into decision making by allowing students to be part of committees with other stakeholders. Student voice can be included in school-level decision making through students serving on leadership teams and presenting information and arguments for change in policies at Site Base Decision Making (SBDM) Council and Board of Education meetings.

Teachers who integrate student voice and choice into their classrooms, make the classroom an inviting atmosphere for students. Allowing choice in assignments or approaches to learning and utilizing student voice surveys and other tools are ways teachers can integrate voice into the classroom.

Why Integrate Student Voice? The impacts of the integration of student voice and choice studied at the classroom level shows positive results (Ayvazo & Aljadeff-Abergel, 2016; Bernhardt, 2009; Ferguson, Hanreddy & Draxton, 2011; Groff, 2014; Morgan & Wagner, 2013; Prior, 2011; Stefl-Mabry, Radlick, & Doane, 2010). In addition, the integration of student voice studied at the school level showed that student voice in school level decision-making can bring about positive change in a school (Griffith & Gill, 2006; Bron & Veugelers, 2014; Elwood, 2013; Friend & Caruthers, 2012; Mitra, 2006). Likewise, student voice has been integrated into higher education for quite some time with surveys for instructor, course, and departmental evaluations (Maunder, Cunliffe, Galvin, Mjali, & Rogers, 2013; Warner & Simmons, 2015).
Integrated into practice. Many schools and teachers across the world integrate student voice and choice into professional practices. Ferguson, Hanreddy, and Draxton (2011) found that “giving students a ‘voice’ for active participation in decision-making about their learning environment has great potential for increased engagement and motivation for learning” (p. 55).

Over the years, many educators and researchers have advocated for student voice and choice because they found voice and choice motivates students and engages them in learning (Ivey & Broaddus, 2001). Advocates for student choice in reading contend it helped struggling readers (Allington, 2012). Furthermore, one article pointed out the power of student voice: “Unfulfilled needs lead to self-destructive behaviors, but classroom strategies designed to meet students’ psychological needs can have self-affirming effects” (Schneider, 1996, p. 1).

Democratic society and policy making. Some believe that promoting student voice supports the development of student identities by arguing it develops students’ individual voices and better prepares students for a democratic society (Flutter & Rudduck, 2004). Mitra (2008) makes the argument that “to improve student achievement, it makes sense to go straight to the source—students” (p. 20). Some researchers have also found that tapping into student voice improved teacher practices (Daniels, Kalkman, & McCombs, 2001).

Others call for student voice to be integrated at a deeper level and feel that students should have a say in the policy that directly impacts them in classrooms and schools, but their voices are rarely heard in this area (Elwood, 2013). Another student
voice supporter believes students have a right to take a role in making educational decisions. (Cook-Sather, 2006). In a 2009 article, Cook-Sather draws from the work of Clark (1995), Davies (1982), Finders (1997), and Heshusius (1995) to state that

The work of authorizing student perspectives is essential because of the various ways that it can improve current educational practice, re-inform existing conversations about educational reform, and point to the discussions yet to be taking. Authorizing student perspectives can directly improve educational practice because when teachers listen to and learn from students, they can begin to see the world from those students’ perspectives. (p. 3)

Taking this a step further, another student voice researcher argued that including student voice at all levels of education is not just a best practice – it is a right (Lundy, 2007). In 1989, the United Nations General Assembly declared that every child has a right to express his or her views in issues that directly impact him or her, including his or her education. This is called “the normative argument and gives them the right to participate in decisions about their education” (Bron & Veugelers, 2014, p. 127).

**Voice and choice for all students.** Prior (2011) examined the research between what gifted students say needs to be happening in classrooms to meet their needs and what was actually happening and called for better student voice practices to be implemented. Students were interviewed and surveyed, and the results revealed that gifted students felt they need differentiation in the form of acceleration, and that is not always happening in classrooms. The recommendations of the research were to
give gifted students more choice in the classroom to meet their needs, motivating them more in the classroom. If students are allowed the opportunity to voice their concerns about instruction, such as whether or not a topic or activity is challenging them, then instructors can utilize this student feedback to design instruction that better meets the needs of the students.

While gifted students having a voice in their education is motivating, all students taking control of their own learning and educational decisions is also motivating factor that choice provides, especially in reading instruction (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). When given choice, Gabriel, Allington, and Billen (2012) found that “students will choose to conquer and enjoy texts that are challenging by any measure when they have the background knowledge, vocabulary, and interest” (p. 54). Likewise, Bomer (2011) examined student voice and concluded that when given choice, students show an increase in motivation.

In using student voice and choice to motivate students in the classroom, one middle school reading teacher implemented student interviewing processes and used the feedback for differentiating reading instruction while studying the impact on student motivation for students who struggled with reading (Groff, 2014). The results of the study suggested that student motivation did increase when student perceptions were used to gear reading toward their interests, and student reading abilities also increased over time.

While some teachers have integrated student voice and choice practices into their classrooms with positive results, some schools have weaved student voice into
their decision-making processes. One study suggests that when students take active roles as researchers and mentors for their peers and faculty members, then real change can happen (Watts & Youens, 2007). These changes can occur when students are allowed the opportunity to participate in curriculum design, peer tutoring opportunities, and when they have the opportunity to inform about issues within instruction, technology, and other aspects of the school.

**Co-designing curriculum.** A teacher at a secondary school allowed students to co-design lessons in collaboration with each other and the teacher that connected their own lives to the history taught in the classroom. As a class, they negotiated the parameters of an assignment together and the teacher noted this opened more dialogue between the students. It also opened the door for a deeper reflective process than when only the teacher designed the lessons. One lesson this history teacher took away from this experience was in realizing “the importance of centralizing students’ voices and experiences in the classroom” (Bernhardt, p. 66). Another lesson learned was “the opening of curricular space for student voice created a classroom setting which embodied feelings of collegiality, care, and personal investment” (Bernhardt, p. 66).

Schneider (2006) showed another example of how a teacher allowed student voice to shape the parameters of an assignment. The teacher gave students a blank map and said:

I’d like you to develop ideas for making the labeling as aesthetically beautiful and technically accurate as possible. We need to do this before we make a
single mark on the maps. Appoint a recorder and write down your ideas.

(Schneider, p. 24)

Through allowing students the opportunity to brainstorm ideas on how to approach the assignment, the teacher had opened the door for students to use voice in approaching the assignment.

**Peer tutoring.** In this same article (Schneider, 2006), suggestions were made for how students can be used as teachers. At one school, one teacher allowed her students to become teachers by correcting mistakes on other students’ papers, while a teacher in another school allowed students to become the teacher as she takes on the role of the student to model appropriate behaviors, note-taking methods, and peer feedback. These are ways student voice can be implemented in elementary classrooms that get students to be active participants in the learning design process.

Ayvazo and Aljadeff-Abergel (2014) explain that in physical education classes, many students become antisocial because they are placed under physical and emotional demands that are much more stressful than in other classes. To provide the at-risk students with more support and voice in the classroom, class-wide peer tutoring (CWPT) was implemented, with the opportunity for peers to provide feedback to each other.

Once peers provided feedback to each other, they gave feedback about the modification of the program. The article stated that “at times modifications are more successful when teachers listen to students’ voices” (Ayvazo & Aljadeff-Abergel, 2014, p. 85). Students were asked “whether or not they enjoyed” the program,
“whether or not they would be interested in participating again” to compare “CWPT with the typical instruction method utilized in physical education, which was small group instruction led by an advanced student;” “which method they preferred,” and finally “what changes they would make to tailor it better to their needs” (Ayvazo & Aljadeff-Abergel, p. 85-86).

Based on the student voice data provided, recommendations were made to modify the peer tutoring program for other grade levels, for content, and for social skills (Ayvazo & Aljadeff-Abergel, 2014). By using student voice to modify existing classroom practices, teachers and schools can make changes that benefit all students including in the way students support each other through opportunities such as peer tutoring.

**Literacy instruction.** To motivate high school students to read more, one high school teacher “implemented a three-week choice reading unit with his sophomores” (Morgan & Wagner, 2013, p. 659). He found that when given choice, students were motivated to read and were engaged at deeper levels of learning. Students in one class used a journal to share their experiences with choice in reading. They rated it to be an overall positive experience as students were able to choose what they wanted to read, put it back if they did not like it and choose another read, and they would use the journal to apply what they were learning in class to the book they were reading (Morgan & Wagner, 2013). Simply allowing students the opportunity to change what they are reading if they do not enjoy it is one-way teachers can integrate student voice and choice to motivate students.
Another example of how student voice and choice can affect literacy instruction is presented through the work of Groff (2014). The theme of the article was to report how teachers implemented student-interviewing feedback for differentiating reading instruction. This showed the potential impacts student voice can have on reading instruction in urban middle schools. The study suggested that these techniques do increase student motivation and student reading interest (Groff, 2014). Soliciting student feedback through interviews can be applied to not only reading interests, but any strategy teachers are implementing in any classroom.

**Perceptions on technology.** Using student voice to inform professional learning for teachers is another way to integrate student voice into a school. Students can help teachers identify areas for growth in their instructional practices, and teachers can either seek professional learning on their own or can work with school leaders to design professional learning around overall growth areas for the school.

Technology teachers in one school studied student perceptions of teachers and the use of technology in learning (Stefli-Mabry, Radlick, & Doane, 2010). Focus groups and surveys were used to gather student perceptions. The data analysis showed that students used technology outside of school, but they felt not all teachers had high skill levels using the technology and could use some help. Likewise, they felt disconnected from their teachers (Stefli-Mabry et al.). The teachers used this feedback for professional development purposes, and this sets an example for how utilizing student voice to identify needs for teacher professional growth can work.
**Voice and choice at the school level.** While many teachers integrate student voice and choice into the classroom, schools have also been tapping into the power of student voice. At the school level, student voice includes the various ways schools provide students the opportunities to give voice to decisions that impact students (Fielding, 2001; Goodwillie, 1993; Levin, 2000).

For student voice to make an impact at the school level, school leaders must first place an emphasis on making students be *heard* (Mitra, 2003; Oldfather, 1995). After hearing student voices, students must become active participants (Lee & Zimmerman, 1999), active respondents, and co-researchers (Fielding, 2001). Hart (1992) explains that students need to be able to participate at varying levels in a process that brings students from being providers of voice to active participants in the change process in a school.

Likewise, students need the opportunity to be problem solvers in the schools (McLaughlin, 1999; Pittman & Wright, 1991), and to have leadership opportunities within the school system (Connel, Gambone, & Smith, 1998). This moves students from just providing voice to a more active role in change.

Mitra (2005) cautions that allowing students to be heard is much easier than actually planning for ways students can become leaders that bring about change in a school system (Mitra, 2005). To be successful, schools who are “just beginning to explore ways to increase student voice, listening to students is a natural first step” (Mitra, 2006, p. 9).
Mitra (2006) used a case study of Whitman High School who “began an inquiry-based process for collecting data to determine the focus of the school’s change effort” that included “asking students what they felt needed to be improved” (Mitra, 2006, p. 8). The school moved from allowing students to be “heard,” to allowing them to collaborate with adults by dividing “the focus group data” for small group work (Mitra, 2006, p. 8). According to the same source, “adults offered assistance to each group by asking probing questions” and “providing informal assistance” (Mitra, 2006, p. 8). Mitra (2006) also points out that once students collaborated with adults, the school built a capacity for student leadership through implementing a class where students “began to meet every day as a class to plan Student Forum activities” (p. 8).

Griffith and Gill (2006) studied student perception on school change, and also cite a study of one school in Texas that included student voice as part of the school improvement and change process over a four-year time period. To do this, the school utilized student interviews. Through the interviews, the school leaders learned that students felt the transition process needed work, there was the need for more positive mentoring and interactions with adults, and that the rules were something that was done to them rather than for them. Over a four-year period, the school used the student feedback from the interviews in the design process for change, and overtime student perceptions improved (Griffith & Gill, 2006).

Another study looked into student perceptions of transition into secondary grades with questionnaires (Ashton, 2008). The findings suggested that social issues
were most important to students in the transfer to secondary school and they worried about bullying, finding friends, getting lost in the school, who their teachers would be, growing up, and school choice (Ashton, 2008). Likewise, Ashton used student feedback to make suggestions on how secondary schools can improve the transition process for students. Ashton suggested that “there is no substitute for opportunities for children to find out for themselves about the issues that matter to them” through “talking to current students, talking to current staff and spending time in their new school” (p. 180). For schools who were unable to provide face-to-face two-way communication during the transition time, another researcher provided a case study of a school who tapped into the use of e-mail for this two-way communication (Morrison, 2000).

Friend and Caruthers (2012) discussed the need for embedding student voice within the reculturing and reconstructing processes of struggling schools, especially in urban contexts. The authors defined “recultured schools” as schools where “educators deconstruct what was and adopt new ways of thinking and behaving,” and “valuing student voice has the potential to support efforts to reculture schools” (Friend & Caruthers, p. 366). Friend and Caruthers also highlighted the work of McWilliam (1994) who stated “voices of students must be legitimated; their voices must become authentic and valued within the school” (p.372).

**Voice in higher education.** Higher education has used student feedback to inform instructional practices for quite some time in the form of student surveys administered at the end of the semester for each class. However, some higher
education institutions have experimented with the idea of using mid-term evaluations to give students more voice in their education (Warner & Simmons, 2015). The study showed that both the instructor and the student perceived mid-term evaluations as a positive addition to the classroom because students were able to provide feedback prior to the end of semester and instructors were able to make adjustments to meet the student needs prior to the end of the semester survey (Warner & Simmons).

Another way higher education institutions utilize student voice is through the research process to bring about change. Maunder, Cunliffe, Galvin, Mjali, & Rogers (2013) studied the transition process to college. In this study, students were included as researchers by including four students as co-authors. The purpose of the study was to inform the learning and teaching practice at a university based on a study of the transition from high school to the first year of college. Through interviewing and surveys, the data showed that students had formed beliefs about college from what others had said about college, and most had anxiety about the transition. In addition, most students believed it was important to find a way to fit into the social construct of the higher education institution and that it was the responsibility of the universities and colleges to provide more social constructs for student transition (Maunder, Cunliffe, Galvin, Mjali, & Rogers, 2013).

Wadhwani and Green (2013) examined another way higher education institutions can give students voice is in considering student voice in budget planning. The article stated that
rising tuition costs, mounting student debt, new academic technologies, and an increasingly global economic environment all represent challenges to the traditional college model. In the coming years, as administrators chart the long-term course of their institutions, it is crucial that they take student voices into consideration. Including students in budgeting talks is important because it allows students a voice in ‘real problems’ where their “undergraduate experience” and voice can provide real insight. (Wadhwani & Green, p. 38)

Seale (2010) argued that student voice work in higher education has been an “under-developed field” (p. 996). However, there has been quite a bit of student voice work at the higher education level in quality assurance (Shah & Nair, 2006; Williams & Cappuccino-Ansfield, 2007), but this fails to bring about a strong and trusting bond between staff and students (Seale, p. 996).

Through their research, Shah and Grebennikov (2013) showed that even though student voices are collected at the university level, the feedback must actually be made a priority to be used. To be able to incorporate the feedback, higher education professionals must be able to interpret and know how to use the feedback to improve. To do so, one article suggests “read them,” “scan for red flags,” “think ahead,” “show students how you have fulfilled the criteria on which you will be rated,” tease out useful data” and “look for improvement areas” (Perlmutter, 2011, p. 40).

**Summary of literature.** As has been shown within the literature, the student voice and choice movement is moving through classrooms, schools, and higher
education. It is clear that student perception data can provide valuable insight for educator, school, and institutional improvement. While this is true, using the appropriate tools to collect the data is important, and educators and administrators need to know how to integrate those tools.

At the classroom level, student voice and choice has been integrated and studied in a variety of settings, showing positive impacts of classroom culture and achievement. In these studies, different modes including surveys, interviews, and focus groups yielded student perception feedback.

Studies of integrating student voice and choice at the school level shows positive impacts on student motivation. The research cited in this literature review suggests that schools should listen to students and then act on their feedback. Gathering student voice whether it is through a team process, surveys, or interviews can provide valuable insight into what is working and is not working, and including students in the change process empowers them to become a deeper part of the school.

Higher education institutions often use student feedback in the instructional design process. Some higher education institutions utilize student voice in the evaluative process of instructors and in the research process to bring about change.

Allowing for student voice and choice is a way to help students feel like they belong but taking caution to ensure valid tools and feedback processes are used is important. Furthermore, moving beyond just collecting student feedback to actually using it to inform change is vital to a successful integration of student voice and choice into an organization.
Who was this capstone meant to impact?

This capstone was meant to impact Rowan County Middle School and any school wishing to integrate student voice and choice into classrooms. During the 2016-2017 school year, approximately 740 students were enrolled in grades 6-8 at Rowan County Middle School. The school was staffed with 38 teachers. During the same school year, Rowan County Middle School formed a student voice team. Students from all grade levels, both male and female, served on this team.

For several years, the school’s co-teaching teams were part of a training program through the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) called Co-Teaching for Gap Closure (CT4GC), where they received support in Jim Shipley’s Systems Approach to Continuous Improvement. These teachers had integrated Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) and Plus/Deltas into their classrooms in previous years, but in the 2016-2017 school year, all teachers at Rowan County Middle School partially utilized these tools.

The school was also designated a School to Watch with the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform. The team made suggestions for continuing the improvement process at Rowan County Middle School. One suggestion for improvement in the Schools to Watch feedback provided directly to the principal and assistant principal was for the school to take steps to better integrate student voice and choice into classrooms.

By utilizing the professional development series handbook in this capstone project, school leaders will be able to facilitate the integration of student voice and
choice into the classrooms. This handbook will be utilized in the future at Rowan County Middle School to prepare teachers to integrate student voice and choice into the classroom and will be accessible for other schools interested in integrating student voice and choice into classrooms.

**How was the capstone implemented?**

The implementation of this capstone project began by first analyzing research surrounding student voice and choice and its impact on student motivation and achievement. After the analysis of literature and data collected, a need for increased student voice and choice in classrooms at Rowan County Middle School became apparent, and during the Fall 2017 semester, the professional development series was developed with the expectation of it being utilized in the future.

The professional development series was designed to include a series of workshops intended to introduce student voice and choice to teachers and presenting them with ways to integrate student voice and choice into the classroom. The First Principles of Instruction (Merril, 2002) were studied and some were incorporated into the series through including problem-based scenarios, demonstration, guidance, and application time. This is evident in the way each workshop provides scenarios with problems teachers can solve together, examples of how other educators have integrated the topic, practical resources and tools, and planning time to integrate.

The professional development workshop series provides an overview of the importance of student voice and choice in the classroom, practical ways to integrate
student voice and choice, an overview of ready-to-use student voice and choice tools, and planning time for integration.

**Why were this capstone and related strategies selected?**

This capstone and related strategies were selected to design a professional development series that focuses on student voice, why it is important, and how to integrate voice and choice into the classroom. The professional development series was designed in the Fall 2017 semester and was planned to be implemented at a later date prior to the 2019-2020 school year. The goals of the professional development series were to increase awareness of the importance of student voice and choice, and to provide teachers practical ways to integrate voice and choice so students can be empowered to become more engaged and motivated learners. The capstone was grounded in the Constructivist Theory and the brain-based learning theory.

The constructivist theory and the self-determination theory have greatly influenced the student voice movement (Ferguson, Hanreddy, & Draxton, 2011).

*According to *Motivation in Social Constructivist Theory*:

Constructivist Theory provides a framework for conceptualizing motivation as socially negotiated by the participants in the classroom. In such a conceptualization, motivation is inseparable from the instructional process and the classroom environment. The culturally determined joint activity between student and social context results in an internal state of interest and cognitive and affective engagement, and motivated behaviors, both of which can be considered cultural norms (Sivan, 1986, p. 209)
Self-determination theory identifies “the existence of distinct types of motivation (i.e., external, introjected, identified, integrated, and intrinsic)” (Moran, Diefendorff, Kim, & Liu, 2012, p. 354). This theory and the constructivist theory have impacted the student voice movement since the 1980s as researchers studied how students can be motivated by educators who design curriculum in a way that engages students in their own learning (Ferguson, Hanreddy, & Draxton, 2011).

Another growing trend in education that has influenced the student voice movement is brain-based learning. Brain based learning has a major focus on student choice through learning preferences and is important for students because it teaches them to tap into how they learn best (Lock & Prigge, 2002). Teachers can utilize the brain-based learning theory through integrating learning preference inventories and designing instruction to meet the learner preferences within the classroom. Collecting student feedback on how they prefer to learn a topic of study or collecting student perception data on how well certain strategies worked or did not work can be important information for teachers seeking to integrate brain-based learning into the classroom.

The professional development series was grounded in the constructivist, self-determination, and brain-based learning theories. The series centers around teaching teachers how to integrate student voice and choice into the classroom. Doing so can empower students to own their own learning through assisting teachers in identifying what is working and is not working in the instructional process.
When was the capstone implemented?

The professional development series handbook was designed during the Fall 2017 semester through the development of a professional learning series on integrating student voice and choice into the classroom. The professional development series was made available for implementation in the Fall 2018 semester.

The professional development series provided an introduction to the research and theories behind student voice and choice, an overview of the student voice and choice tools created through #studentvoiceKY, and practical ways teachers can integrate student voice and choice into the classroom. The handbook to the professional development series provided training modules including slides with notes for facilitators to consider when implementing. The handbook also included ready to use tools for integrating student voice and choice into classrooms.

Limitations of the study

One assumption in this capstone was that teachers wanted to integrate student voice and choice into the classroom. If teachers do not buy into the idea that student voice and choice are important, then the capstone would not impact classrooms. This is why module one in the professional development series and handbook introduces why student voice and choice are important. Furthermore, module two is about using systems and continuous improvement processes to create a classroom environment where student voice and choice are welcomed. The whole series is scaffolded to take a participant from introductory/novice level ideas about student voice and choice to integrating student voice and choice tools into the classroom.
**Reflections**

While this professional development series and handbook provides a strong foundation for integrating student voice and choice into the classroom, implications for further research exist. Studying the impact on student motivation or on student achievement because of teachers integrating what was learned during the series is one opportunity to extend the research. Another research implication is to consider how administrators could effectively support teachers during the implementation process, and how teachers can support each other.

**Capstone project overview**

The capstone project was a professional development handbook for supporting school leaders in facilitating teachers to integrate student voice and choice into the classrooms. The handbook included a preface that provides context to the work and four modules. Each module contains learning objectives, a slide show and notes to guide the facilitator in the presentation of each module, as well as resources. The modules are designed to be presented in order with each module building on the last. Facilitators should plan for at least one hour for each module.

**Module 1.** “Why Is Student Voice and Choice Important?” is the module that introduces participants to background information on integrating student voice and choice into the classroom and lays the foundation for future modules. This module is important to present first to a group of teachers who do not have much experience with student voice and choice, or who are skeptical about how student voice and choice can be a benefit in the classroom.
The learning objectives for this module include:

1. This session will explore the reasons why student voice and choice are important.

2. This session will contain planning time for next steps of professional development needs to be able to integrate student voice and choice into the classroom.

The objectives for this module can be accomplished through participants exploring research and theory behind student voice and choice in the classroom that supports why it is important for teachers to integrate voice and choice into the classroom. By exploring the research and theory behind the importance of student voice and choice and being presented with scenarios that are related to the research and are applicable to their own classrooms, participants can leave the workshop with a better understanding of why student voice and choice should be integrated into their own classrooms. Also, participants are provided time to collaborate with colleagues and plan for integration into the classroom as well as assist the facilitator with feedback to inform future workshops and training needs.

Module 1 is intended to be facilitated face-to-face. The materials needed for this module include chart paper, sticky notes, a slide show that is included in the handbook, and colored dot stickers. The slide show contains information and activities for the facilitator to use to guide the work in the workshop. The chart paper and colored dot stickers are needed so the facilitator can list student voice and choice topics that will be explored in the workshop and the colored dot stickers are for
participants to use to self-assess their understanding and experience on the chart paper. Sticky notes are needed in this module for participants to complete a Plus/Delta.

**Module 2.** “Embedding Student Voice from Day 1 – Systems Based Classrooms” is a module whereby participants will be introduced to systems-based classroom components including Plan/Do/Study/Act and Plus/Delta. Participants will plan for integrating these components into the classroom. The learning objectives for this module include:

1. This session will explore Plan/Do/Study/Act, Mission Statements, and Plus/Deltas as part of a systems-based classroom and will contain planning time to use these components in a classroom.

2. This session will explore how to integrate Plus/Delta into the classroom.

The objectives for this module will be accomplished as the facilitator should present information about systems-based classrooms, will model each component such as Plan/Do/Study/Act and Plus/Deltas, and will provide participants time to collaborate and plan for integration of the tools into the classroom. The Plan/Do/Study/Act process is a continuous improvement process. During this process, teachers guide students through reviewing the plan (or target) for a lesson or unit of study. Teachers then introduce strategies and activities the teacher and student will do to accomplish this plan, study the formative or summative data generated during the lesson to determine what worked and did not work, and then act upon this data in determining the next steps for classroom instruction.
A Plus/Delta can be utilized during the study portion of Plan/Do/Study/Act. In addition, it can be used during any portion of a lesson or activity to gather student perception on what is working or is not working, what they liked or did not like about the lesson or activity, or what they learned and areas of confusion or concern.

Mission Statements are broad statements students create and post in the classroom to guide the learning mission for the classroom. These are simple statements that set the tone for learning throughout the year.

Module 2 is intended to be facilitated face-to-face. The materials needed for this module include the slide show from the handbook as well as sticky notes. The slideshow is needed to guide the progression of information and activities in the workshop through the presentation of material and the sticky notes are needed for participants to complete a Plus/Delta.

Module 3. “Empowering Students Through Voice and Choice” is a module in which participants will be introduced to ways other teachers have integrated student voice and choice into classrooms and will also be introduced to #studentvoiceKY student voice and choice tools. The learning objective for this module includes:

1. This session will explore how teachers can authentically integrate student voice and tools into the classroom.

The goal for this module will be accomplished through the facilitator presenting practical ways for participants to integrate student voice and choice into the classroom. Teachers will explore videos and will read about how others have utilized student voice surveys in the classroom. The participants will gain access to a
variety of ready to use resources including reflection tickets, surveys, lesson plans, and mini-lessons. Participants will spend time becoming familiar with the resources and will spend time collaborating and planning for integration into the classroom.

Module 3 is intended to be facilitated face-to-face. The materials needed for this module include the slide show contained in the handbook, sticky notes, and copies of the #studentvoiceKY tools and resources provided in the handbook. These tools and resources include reflection tickets, student voice surveys, lesson plans, and mini-lessons. The slideshow contains a progression of information, resources, and activities for the facilitator to use to guide the work during this module. Sticky notes are needed for participants to complete a Plus/Delta. The #studentvoiceKY tools are needed so that participants can become familiar with practical and easy ways to integrate student voice and choice into the classroom and to plan for integrating some of these tools.

**Module 4.** “Student Choice,” is the final module in the handbook. This module guides participants to ways in which they can integrate student choice into the classroom. The learning objective for this module includes:

1. This session will explore ways to integrate student choice into lessons and unit planning.

The goal for this module will be accomplished through the facilitator presenting information about student choice. The participants will read several articles with practical ways to integrate student choice into the classroom. Some of these ways include student choice boards and student choice in assignment responses.
and assessment responses. In addition, participants will collaborate and plan for integrating student choice into upcoming lesson plans.

Module 4 is intended to be facilitated face-to-face. The materials needed for this module include links to articles, the slideshow included in the handbook, sticky notes, and school curriculum resources including unit plans and/or lesson plans. The articles are needed for participants to read and discuss to identify ways student choice can be integrated into a classroom. The slideshow will be used by the facilitator to present information and activities for the participants. The participants will need sticky notes to complete a Plus/Delta. Participants will bring their curriculum resources such as lesson plans and unit plans and will spend time collaborating and planning to integrate student voice and choice into upcoming lessons.

**Summary of capstone project.** The capstone project consists of a professional development series handbook. School leaders or teachers who facilitate workshops may use the handbook. The professional development series is broken into four modules, each estimated to last around one hour. These workshops will introduce participants to background information on student voice and choice and provide them with resources and tools to integrate student voice and choice into the classroom.
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Student Voice and Choice

Professional Development Series Handbook

Joseph P. Harris
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Preface

Rowan County Middle School was named a School to Watch (STW) by the National Forum for Accelerating Middle School Reform in 2017. The review team who designated the school a School to Watch (STW) also provided growth areas for continuous improvement. One of those areas for growth was to integrate student voice and choice at deeper levels in the school alongside a deeper implementation of Jim Shipley’s Systems Based classroom through Plan/Do/Study/Act (PDSA) and Plus/Deltas. At the heart of the Shipley system is fostering a motivating classroom environment based on data as well as student voice and choice.

According to Perks and Middleton (2014), systems across the world are working toward motivating students is through integrating student voice and choice into classrooms and schools. Perks and Middleton (2014) indicated that student voice is a powerful motivating tool because it helps “develop trusting relationships between students and teachers” (p. 52).

While the feedback from Schools to Watch (STW) lent itself to Rowan County Middle School taking steps to increase motivation in classrooms through voice and choice, simply telling teachers to integrate was not enough. Toshalis and Nakkula (2012) noted “the movement to raise standards may fail if teachers are not supported to understand the connections among motivation, engagement, and student voice” (p. 2). Providing teachers with the appropriate resources and professional development is a vital part of increasing student voice and choice within classrooms.
This professional development series handbook was designed with the goal of supporting teachers as they integrate student voice and choice into their classrooms. This professional development series handbook was designed on the topic of student voice and choice. The professional development series handbook consists of four modules and guiding notes for the facilitator to use when leading the professional learning sessions. Each module contains a workshop style presentation to introduce the background and theory on why student voice and choice is important, to introduce teachers to classroom systems that promote student voice and choice, and to provide teachers with resources for integrating student voice and choice into the classroom. Each workshop is approximately one hour in length but can easily be expanded to fit the needs of the teachers participating. During each workshop, participants will be presented with student voice and choice information. Moreover, participants will explore scenarios to promote practical application. Also included in each module is planning time for teachers to collaborate with other teachers on how to best integrate student voice and choice into the classroom.

**Implementation**

The professional development series should be implemented over the course of a few months. This will give teachers time to integrate what was learned during each workshop before moving to the next. It is important that the first two workshops be conducted either before the school year begins, or shortly thereafter. This is important because these two workshops set the groundwork for creating classrooms that foster student voice and choice. The other workshops may be presented after
school or during PLC time, with at least enough time between the two for teachers to integrate the material into their classrooms.

**Overview**

Module 1 explores why student voice and choice are important. This module lays the groundwork for teachers to learn how to integrate student voice and choice into their classrooms, explores theory, and contains classroom application activities.

Systems-based classrooms are introduced in Module 2. Through the work of Jim Shipley and Associates, continuous classroom improvement systems and resources such as Plan/Do/Study/Act and Plus/Deltas are tools that open the door for student voice and choice within classrooms. The systems-based approach to continuous improvement, which includes PDSA and Plus/Deltas, has been integrated into a variety of districts and schools with positive results (Shipley, 2017).

Module 3 introduces practical student voice and choice resources teachers can integrate into the classroom. Through the #studentvoiceKY initiative (Harris, 2015), tools for integrating student voice and choice into the classroom were created and beta tested by Kentucky teachers. These tools are readily available for integration into the classroom for gathering student feedback and are part of this professional development series.

Module 4 explores resources for integrating student choice into the classroom. Teachers are also given time to plan and collaborate for implementation. At the end of this last module in the series, participants will determine whether more training
should be planned and will set a goal for where they will be in the implementation process by the end of the school year.

While the workshops and this accompanying handbook were initially designed with Rowan County Middle School teachers in mind, it can easily be adapted to fit the needs of any middle or high school.

The following pages include an overview for each module, the accompanying slide show, and resources to be utilized in the presentation.
## Module 1 - 1 hour

### WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Workshop Title: Why is Student Voice and Choice Important?</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Learning Outcomes:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• This session will communicate the reasons why student voice and choice are important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• This session will contain planning time for next steps of professional development needs to be able to integrate student voice and choice into the classroom.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Delivery Mode:</strong> Facilitated Face-to-Face</td>
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<td><strong>Focus Area:</strong> Background on the importance of student voice and choice</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Skill Level:</strong> Novice</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Format:</strong> Presentation and Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Description:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>In this workshop, participants will be introduced to some of the research surrounding student voice and choice in the classroom and its impacts on student motivation, impacts on struggling students, and some of the ways student voice and choice can be integrated into classrooms.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Materials:**

- Excerpts from Measures of Effective Teaching research (The MET Study) for participants to read.
- Slide show for presentation of research, information, and activities.
- Chart paper with student voice and choice topics listed for use in the Consenogram as well as a Plus/Delta.
- Colored dot stickers for participants to use in self-assessing with the Consenogram.
- Sticky notes for participants to complete a Plus/Delta.

**Procedure:**

- Participants will complete a Consenogram.
- Participants will discuss a teacher from their past and how they integrated voice and choice into the classroom. Participants will consider how this might be applied to their own classrooms.
- Facilitator should present overview of research surrounding student voice and choice.
- Participants will discuss scenario situations in relation to each research point.

Participants will complete a Consenogram to determine next steps in training and implementation needs.
Slides to accompany Module 1:

Slide 1

Why is Student Voice and Choice Important?

Facilitator notes:

To begin the workshop, the facilitator might include an icebreaker activity here. This icebreaker activity would be facilitator choice. This workshop is intended to be an introductory session for those who are not familiar with student voice and choice in the classroom and/or who are skeptical. If working with a group of participants who are beyond the novice level of student voice and choice implementation, the facilitator may choose to adapt or skip this module. Also, the facilitator might choose to have teachers discuss the value they have found in integrating student voice and choice into the classroom and share ideas. This will depend on facilitator choice after examining the context of the school where this work is being integrated.
Facilitator notes:

The facilitator should review the learning outcomes with participants and ask if participants have any expectations or questions they want answered during the workshop. The facilitator should use this time to chart on the chart paper all the expectations and questions. The facilitator should return to this chart throughout the workshop, and as he/she sees the topic of discussion relating back to it.
Facilitator notes:

The facilitator should ask participants to pair up or work with those sitting around them to discuss the questions on the slideshow. The facilitator should set a timer for two minutes and when the timer sounds, the facilitator should ask participants to share. (A watch, a timer on a phone, or an online timer may be used). The facilitator should guide the discussion by posing each question and either asking for volunteers to share or soliciting thoughts from each group. The facilitator might chart or ask a participant to chart ideas from the discussion.

Participants might have various answers for the three questions depending on whether or not they have already read about or integrated some student voice and choice into the classroom. If teachers have a strong understanding of student voice and choice, the facilitator might ask teachers to share what they are already doing in their classrooms so that other participants will have the chance to learn.
Facilitator notes:

The facilitator should need to become familiar with using Consensograms prior to the workshop. Prior to the workshop, the facilitator should prepare the chart. To do so, the facilitator should use one of the templates provided online. The facilitator should display the chart for the participants and have each participant place colored dots stickers above the corresponding topic. The facilitator should need to explain what each of the colored dots stand for as teachers self-assess (on the slideshow). Once all dots are placed, the facilitator should ask the participants to review the charts and ask them to discuss and interpret the data.

The facilitator should also explain that a Consensogram could be used in a lesson to gauge the perception of students. According to the website, http://www.theteachertoolkit.com/index.php/tool/consensogram, a Consensogram can be used to:
- Help to determine levels of understanding
- Allow students an opportunity to express their feelings about a certain subject
- Provide the teacher with quick information/data so instruction can be modified or differentiated
- Send the message to students that their ideas, beliefs, and feelings are important and valued

The facilitator might display the website and different templates, as well as view the video on Consensograms with participants:
Slide 5

**Discussion**

- Think back to your favorite teacher and least favorite teacher. What did each teacher do differently than other teachers? How does this impact you as a teacher now?
- Did you have a class or teacher where you were given voice and choice? How did this teacher provide opportunities for voice and choice, and how might you apply this to your classroom?

**Facilitator notes:**

The facilitator should give one to two minutes for think time and then allow participants to work with a partner or those around them to discuss these questions. The facilitator could have participants share with the whole group, chart responses and conduct a gallery walk, or use a technology platform to poll and display responses. The responses should be centered on what the participants previous teachers did to foster student voice and choice in the classroom, and should be displayed and discussed so the whole group can gain ideas.
Facilitator notes:

Depending on the level of familiarity of the group, the facilitator may choose to omit this activity as it is intended to give background information about how the MET study promotes student voice through surveys. The facilitator should project the excerpts on the screen for teachers to review and discuss. The facilitator might also provide copies of the excerpts and allow either individual reading or response to the questions or table group discussions. The facilitator should give five minutes for this activity.

1. The findings of the report were that in classrooms where tripod surveys were used to gauge student perception, student motivation increased.

2. The Tripod survey is designed to gather student perception data on what is and is not working in a classroom. Participants might use a Tripod Survey in class by asking students to complete one of the pre-made surveys and then reviewing the data with students. The teacher and students could brainstorm ways to increase positive responses to the surveys.
EMPOWERING TEACHERS TO EMPOWER STUDENTS

Slide 7

Student Voice and Choice = Motivation

- You have planned a lesson you feel is excellent. About halfway through the lesson, you notice many of your students seem bored and are tuning you out. A few students have even laid their heads down on their desk.

1. Have you ever experienced something similar in your teaching? Discuss what you did to engage and motivate students.

- “Giving students a ‘voice’ for active participation in decision-making about their learning environment has great potential for increased engagement and motivation for learning” (p. 55). (Ferguson, Hardreddy, & Draxton, 2011)

- Perkins and Middleton (2014) state, “Many educators struggle with questions about student motivation in the classroom” (p. 48) and that student voice is a powerful motivating tool because it can help “...develop trusting relationships between students and teachers” (p. 52).

Facilitator notes:

The facilitator should read the quotes from research found on this slide. The quotes are about student voice and choice motivating students. The facilitator should introduce the quotes, briefly discuss or have participants summarize and discuss, and then should allow participants two to three minutes to discuss the scenario. The facilitator should then facilitate a short whole group discussion to wrap up this activity by asking each table group or partner group to share responses to the question. The facilitator should keep the discussion focused on engaging and motivating students.
The Constructivist Theory and student voice...

**Constructivist Theory**
- The constructivist theory... greatly influenced the student voice movement (Ferguson, Hanreddy, & Draxton, 2011).
- "...constructivist theory provides a framework for conceptualizing motivation as socially negotiated by the participants in the classroom..." (Sivan, 1986, p. 209)
  - Motivation is influenced by all voices being heard in designing instruction and the classroom environment
  - Engagement and motivation increases because it becomes a cultural norm that students are part of the decision-making process in their own education. (Sivan, 1986, 209)

**Classroom Application**
- Collaborate with your table on the following questions:
  - What would students constructing their own learning in your class look like?
  - What is the next lesson or unit you will be teaching?
  - How might you include opportunities for students to construct their own learning through voice and choice?

**Facilitator notes:**

As with the previous slide, the facilitator should discuss the quotes from research on student voice and choice and the Constructivist Theory and will allow participants time to respond to the scenario. These responses can be independent, partnered, or whole group, depending upon facilitator choice. The facilitator should provide two to three minutes for discussion of the scenario, and then facilitate a whole group discussion to wrap up this activity. To facilitate the discussion, the facilitator should ask table groups or partners to share responses to each of the questions, allowing participants to ask each other questions or extend discussion to another group.
Brain-based learning theory and student voice...

Brain-based learning theory
- Major focus on student choice
- Major focus on learning preference
- Allows students to tap into their learning styles to learn
- (Locke & Prigge, 2002).

Classroom Application
- In thinking about the same upcoming lesson plan/unit, how might you plan to include opportunities for students to participate based on their learning preferences?
- What resources can you utilize to determine a student’s learning preference/style?

Facilitator notes:
The facilitator should provide an overview of brain-based learning theory from the slide and will allow participants time to respond to the scenario. These responses can be independent, partnered, or whole group, depending upon facilitator choice. The facilitator should allow at least ten minutes planning time for this activity. The facilitator should then wrap up this activity by spending a few minutes asking participants to share what they have planned and might allow participants to partner up and give each other feedback on what they have planned.
Struggling Students

- “Unfulfilled needs lead to self-destructive behaviors, but classroom strategies designed to meet students’ psychological needs can have self-affirming effects” (Schneider, 1995, p. 2).
- Gabriel, Allington, and Billen (2012) found that when given choice: “students will choose to conquer and enjoy texts that are challenging by any measure...when they have the background knowledge, vocabulary, and interest” (p. 54).

Scenario
- Think of one student in your classes who needs extra support, and/or is a struggling reader. In planning for your next lesson plan or unit, what are some ways you could provide student choice in reading or other assignments for this student?

Facilitator notes:

The facilitator should highlight quotes from research on student voice and choice influencing struggling students and will allow participants time to respond to the scenario. These responses can be independent, partnered, or whole group, depending upon facilitator choice. The facilitator should allow at least ten minutes planning time for participants and then spend a few minutes asking participants to share their ideas with the whole group. Once again, the facilitator might allow participants to partner up and give each other feedback on what they have planned.
Facilitator notes:

The facilitator should return to the same Consensogram used at the beginning of the module and ask teachers to use different colored dot stickers to respond to the Consensogram again. The facilitator should review the data with the group and discuss any changes, while discussing how effective the workshop was in meeting the needs of participants. Areas where participants have placed a green sticker should be reviewed. In reviewing, the facilitator should guide the participants to determine and list next steps for the facilitator to address in future workshops. Possible questions to guide this discussion might include:

1. Based on the green stickers, which topics should we further explore in future workshops?
2. What specific questions or concerns do you have with these topics, or what do you want to know?

### Consensogram: Use the colored dots to respond to the questions and/or topics posted on chart paper around the room.

#### Colored Dots
- After this workshop:
- Red- I fully understand this topic and know how to integrate it into my classroom.
- Pink- I better understand the topic and how to integrate it into my classroom.
- Green- In future sessions, I would like to learn more about this topic.

#### Questions/Topics on Chart Paper
- Motivating students
- Student choice
- Brain-based learning
- Student voice surveys
- Lesson planning for student voice and choice
Slide 12

Quick Poll: In the next session, which of the following would you like to focus on?

- More information about student voice and choice research/theories?
- Student voice and choice tools and practical applications?
- More time to plan for integrating voice and choice into your classroom?

Facilitator note:

This poll could be conducted as a whole group through discussion, with paper and pencil, or through a technology platform. The results from this poll should be used to plan for the next workshop through adapting the slide show and activities to meet participant voice and choice.
Facilitator notes:

The facilitator should provide opportunities for questions and wrap up the workshop by reviewing the next steps determined from the Consensogram as well as a brief overview of the next workshop/module.
# MODULE 2 – 1 HOUR

## WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

**Workshop Title:** Embedding Student Voice from Day 1- Systems Based Classrooms

**Learning Outcomes:**
- This session will explain Plan/Do/Study/Act, Mission Statements, and Plus/Deltas as part of systems based classroom and will contain planning time to use these components in a classroom.
- This session will explore how to integrate Plus/Deltas into the classroom.

**Delivery Mode:** Facilitated Face-to-Face

**Focus Area:** Systems-based Classroom Resources

**Skill Level:** Novice

**Format:** Presentation, Discussion, and Planning

**Description:**
In this workshop, teachers will be introduced to systems-based classroom components including Plan/Do/Study/Act and Plus/Delta. Participants will plan for integrating these components into the classroom.

**Materials:**
- Slide show for presentation of research, information, and activities.
- Sticky notes for participants to complete a Plus/Delta.
Procedure:

- Facilitator should review Consenogram from last workshop.
- Facilitator should provide overview of systems-based classroom resources.
- Participants will complete a Plus/Delta.
- Participants will spend time planning for integration of these components into their classrooms.

Participants will complete a Plus/Delta.
Slides to accompany Module 2:

Slide 1

Embedding Student Voice From Day 1 Through Systems Based Classrooms

Facilitator notes:

This workshop is intended to introduce participants to systems-based classrooms and how it ties to student voice and choice. The facilitator should explain this to the participants here and determine through discussion or Consensogram how familiar participants are with components of a systems-based classroom. If participants are already familiar with Plan/Do/Study/Act, mission and goal statements, and how to integrate these into the classroom, this module might be modified or skipped.
Slide 2

Learner Outcome:

- This session will explore Plan/Do/Study/Act, Mission Statements, and Plus/Deltas as part of a systems-based classroom and will contain planning time to use these components in a classroom.
- This session will explore how to integrate Plus/Delta into the classroom.

Facilitator notes:

The facilitator should review the learning outcomes with participants. The facilitator should ask for and clarify any questions about the learning objectives. The facilitator might also ask participants to complete a short personal goal on what participants wish to gain from the module.
Facilitator notes:

The facilitator should review the results of the previous workshop’s Consensogram. If the previous workshop was skipped, the facilitator might choose to introduce a Consensogram here and assess participants understanding of systems-based classrooms through rating understanding of mission statements, goal setting, PDSA, and Plus/Delta.
Embedding Student Voice from Day One

- Provide overview of Shipley/Baldridge Systems Based Classroom Online Resources
  http://www.jimshipley.net/resources.htm
- Provide overview of KDE’s website on Continuous Classroom Improvement, including resources:
  https://education.ky.gov/school/stratclsgap/contassessment/Pages/Systems-of-Continuous-Improvement.aspx

Facilitator notes:

The facilitator should show teachers how to access these two resources and will provide a brief overview. The facilitator should allow participants ten minutes to review the resources and generate any questions or plan for utilizing. The facilitator should circulate the room as participants explore the resources and answer any questions that might arise. Some of these questions might be posed to the whole-group for discussion or ideas.
Facilitator notes:

The facilitator should review this slide with participants, explaining the PDSA process from the slide. The facilitator might show examples of PDSA from classrooms already utilizing it within the school or might come up with his/her own example to show participants. The facilitator should stress that PDSA will look different in different classrooms but should be the basis for examining the assessment results for specific learning objectives/targets and for integrating student voice into planning on how to act on this data.
Facilitator notes:

Similar to the slide before, the facilitator should review this slide with participants, explaining the PDSA process. The facilitator may choose to show more examples of PDSA or allow participants time to plan for integrating PDSA into their own classrooms. This could be done by asking participants to think about the next learning objective/target they will be teaching, how they will be assessing it, how they will act on the assessment, and how they might solicit student thoughts and interest on how to best approach the target. If allowing time to plan, the facilitator should allow ten minutes to plan and discuss with partners, table groups, or the whole group.
Facilitator notes:

The facilitator should show this video from the slideshow to participants. The facilitator should ask participants to share two takeaways and one question. The facilitator should chart these responses and facilitate whole-group discussion to answer the questions generated.
How are you using PDSA in your classroom?

- Ask for volunteers to share about their experience with PDSA in their classrooms.
- Create a parking lot with sticky notes on PDSA questions to be answered either by the end of this workshop or in an upcoming workshop.

Facilitator notes:

If participants have not used PDSA in their classrooms, this slide may be removed or changed. One way to change this slide would be to show examples of how other schools are using PDSA, or to again ask participants to spend some time planning for the integration of PDSA into the classroom.

To create a parking lot, the facilitator should designate a piece of chart paper or an area on the wall for participants to write questions on sticky notes and post. The facilitator should review the questions with the group, answering as many as possible. Those which cannot be answered should be answered at a later time in a future workshop or Professional Learning Community (PLC) meeting.
More resources on PDSA

- http://www.solanocounty.com/depts/ph/quality_improvement_program/what_is_continuous_quality_improvement_(cqi)_.asp

Facilitator notes:

The facilitator should provide an overview of the PDSA resources from the electronic source. The facilitator might ask participants to spend time exploring these resources on their own if a computer lab or mobile cart is available. If not, the facilitator might ask participants to complete this review later.
Slide 10

**Review of PDSA**

- **Plan**- What is our Learning Target?
- **Do**- Allow students to choose the strategies you will apply to master this target.
- **Study**- Use plus/delta & data from assessments to determine whether or not the strategies and instruction were successful.
- **Act**- What are the next steps for teacher? For students?

**Facilitator notes:**

The facilitator should review this slide as a summary of PDSA. The facilitator should again ask participants to spend time planning and discussing how they will integrate the PDSA cycle into their own classrooms. The facilitator should allow five to ten minutes for planning and discussion time. At this point, participants might be partnered up to provide feedback to each other on their plans to integrate PDSA.
Facilitator notes:

The facilitator should review this slide and the next slide to share the examples of a classroom mission statement and classroom goal. The facilitator should ask participants to come up with a hypothetical classroom and a generic mission statement and goal. Mission statements should be broad and relate to the overarching expectations of the classroom. The facilitator should explain to participants how the mission statement and goal should be created with student participation and might have participants role play in small groups with one participant being the teacher and the others being students. The participants could come up with their own hypothetical classroom/content area for this activity.
Facilitator notes:

The facilitator should review this slide and explain that these questions can be used with students to write classroom mission and goal statements. The facilitator should explain that a mission statement is not a goal, so data does not need to be present in the statement and that the mission statement should be a broad statement to focus the class on core values for success. An example of a mission statement is shown in the picture. In this mission statement, the teacher and students utilized general yet empowering words such as “commit” and “improve.” Specific skills are not mentioned as that would be more of a goal statement. Instead, the general “Math performance” is listed. The facilitator should remind participants that a mission statement is used to focus and encourage student success in a broad sense.
Slide 13

What is a Plus/Delta?

- Explain the process and ask teachers to identify ways it could be used within the classroom.

Facilitator notes:

The facilitator should explain that a Plus/Delta is a quick poll asking for one positive/strong component and one area for improvement. The facilitator should share that one way to integrate this into the classroom would be to ask students to evaluate a lesson, strategy, or activity through providing voice about what worked and what did not work. The facilitator might model how to complete a Plus/Delta and ask participants to practice by completing a Plus/Delta on the workshop so far.
Facilitator notes:

The facilitator should share these questions and explain they could be used as a Plus/Delta to gather student voice in the classroom and to plan for student choice in the classroom. The facilitator should ask participants to share other questions they think might be used to gather Plus/Deltas in the classroom and display these questions.
Facilitator notes:

The facilitator should share this template with participants and will explain how it might be used in the classroom to gather student voice and choice.
Facilitator notes:

Now that each Plus/Delta template has been shared, the facilitator should allow teachers a few minutes to discuss which template they like best and how they might include this in their own classrooms. The facilitator should set a timer for five to ten minutes and ask participants either to work individually or collaboratively to plan ways to integrate a Plus/Delta into upcoming units or lesson plans. When the timer sounds, the facilitator should ask participants to share their thoughts during planning time with the whole group and to provide feedback to each other.
Complete a Plus/Delta

- **Plus**: What worked in this workshop for you?
- **Delta**: What didn’t work? What would you like to learn more about in upcoming workshops?
- **Next Steps**: Where do we go from here? (We will work through these together).

**Facilitator notes:**

Participants will complete a Plus/Delta using sticky notes and posting them to a Plus/Delta on chart paper. The facilitator should remind participants that a “Plus” might be something that worked well and a “Delta” might be something that did not work well that could be changed in future workshops or might be something participants are still confused about or want to learn more. The facilitator should read the Plus/Delta responses to participants and will use whole-group discussion to determine next steps for integration into the classrooms of the school. Next steps might include ideas for what participants would want to see in future workshops.
Wrap Up

- Explain Plan/Do/Study/Act and Plus/Delta to your table partners.
- If you have questions, post to parking lot.
- Review parking lot.
- Next Steps?

Facilitator notes:

The facilitator should give participants around five minutes to take turns explaining Plan/Do/Study/Act and Plus/Deltas to their partners or table groups. The facilitator should circulate and listen, clarifying any misconceptions. The facilitator should give time for participants to ask questions and will respond.
**MODULE 3 – 1 HOUR**

**WORKSHOP OVERVIEW**

**Workshop Title:** Empowering Students Through Voice and Choice

**Learning Outcomes:**
- This session will explore how teachers can authentically integrate student voice and resources into the classroom.

**Delivery Mode:** Facilitated Face-to-Face

**Focus Area:**
- Introduction to specific ways student voice and choice can be integrated into the classroom.

**Skill level:** Intermediate

**Format:** Presentation and Discussion

**Description:**
- In this session, participants will be introduced to ways other teachers have integrated student voice and choice into classrooms and will also be introduced to #studentvoiceKY student voice and choice resources.

**Materials:**
- Slideshow for presentation of research, information, resources and resources.
- Sticky notes for participants to complete a Plus/Delta.
- #studentvoiceKY resources for participants to explore and plan for integrating into the classroom.
**Procedure:**

- Facilitator should review the Plus/Delta data from last workshop and explain how it was used.
- Teachers will watch videos of how other teachers have utilized student voice and choice and participants will respond to discussion questions.
- Facilitator should introduce #studentvoiceKY resources
- Each table group will choose a tool from #studentvoiceKY to discuss, adapt, and plan for implementation in the classroom.
- Teachers will present their plans for implementation to the whole group.

Participants will complete a Plus/Delta and work together to determine next steps- “Where Do We Go From Here?”
Slides to accompany Module 3:

Slide 1

Empowering Students Through Voice and Choice

Facilitator notes:

The facilitator might choose to do a fun activity here to break the ice.
Facilitator notes:

The facilitator should remind participants about the process used in both the Plus/Delta and Consensogram in previous workshops. The facilitator should also display the results from these and will explain how they were used to modify existing workshops or plan for new ones.
Facilitator notes:

The facilitator should review the learning outcome for this workshop. The facilitator might ask participants to review the learning target/objective and come up with their own expectations for what they wish to gain from the workshop. These expectations should be displayed and discussed by the participants.
Slide 4

**Student Voice in the Classroom**

- **How did the principal use the results to help Mr. Ronevich improve?**
- **How did Mr. Ronevich use the results to improve his teaching?**

**Facilitator notes:**

The facilitator should show the video. The facilitator should then ask participants to respond to the questions on the slide. The facilitator should give two minutes for partner discussion and then facilitate whole-group discussion by asking each partner group to share their thoughts from discussion time.
Facilitator notes:

The facilitator should show video and will then give participants two minutes to respond to the questions with their partners. The facilitator should then ask participants to share their thoughts with the whole group, and give the opportunity for others to extend, question, or clarify thoughts presented as each group shares.
Examine #studentvoiceKY tools

- Choose one of these tools and discuss with your table how you might adapt it to fit your classroom needs.
- Come up with a plan for integrating these tools into your classroom.

Facilitator notes:

At this point, the facilitator should distribute copies of all the #studentvoiceKY resources. This includes reflection tickets, surveys, lessons, and mini-lessons. The facilitator should provide teachers five to ten minutes to look through these resources and become familiar with them. The facilitator should then ask participants to each choose one of the resources and discuss it with table groups. The facilitator should ask participants to spend fifteen minutes collaborating with other participants on ways to integrate these resources (or into upcoming lessons. The facilitator might ask participants to share through charting or whole-group discussion.
Wrap Up

- Teachers will share their plans for integrating student voice tools into their classrooms. Teachers will chart their ideas on an anchor chart which can be referred to throughout the year during implementation.
- Teachers will complete a Plus/Delta on the workshop and we will work through “Next Steps” together in planning for future sessions and support.

Facilitator notes:

If participants have not already shared their plans for integrating these resources into the classroom, the facilitator should ask them to share here and to provide feedback to each other. This might be done with partners, table groups, or whole group.
Facilitator notes:

The facilitator should ask participants to complete a Plus/Delta over today’s workshop. The facilitator might choose to review with the participants the process for completing a Plus/Delta from the last workshop. The facilitator should display this Plus/Delta on chart paper and distribute sticky notes for participants to complete the Plus/Delta and post to the chart paper. Once participants have completed the Plus/Delta, the facilitator should review the feedback and work with the participants to determine next steps in the next workshop and in the school implementation of student voice and choice. The facilitator should also explain this template might be used for the Plus/Delta in the classroom.
Module 3 Resources

The following are resources to be provided to teachers during the Module 3 workshop on “Empowering Students Through Voice and Choice”. Also, participants should be given an electronic copy through email so they can print their own copies and edit as necessary.
Explanation: This quick learning preference slip allows a student to choose how he/she will demonstrate mastery of a learning target. One way a teacher might utilize this slip is after introducing several strategies or activities, list those on the board and ask students to complete this quick learning preference choice. Another way to utilize this tool would be to adapt it into a choice board of topics for students on approaching an assignment. More information on choice boards can be found here:

| Learning Preference Reflection Ticket |

| My learning preference is ________________.

To demonstrate mastery of this learning target, I would like to do the following:
#studentvoiceKY Resource 2

**Reflection Tickets**

**Explanation:** Reflection tickets can be used like an exit ticket/slip and ask the students to quickly reflect over how well a specific strategy or activity helped them move toward mastery of a learning target. Also, it allows room for student suggestions on how to improve the implementation of the strategy or can be adapted to include student choice for the future. These could be used after the introduction of a strategy and like an exit ticket/slip, should only take a few minutes of class time to complete.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflection Ticket 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How well did the strategy/activity help move you toward mastery of the learning target?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Circle one:</strong> It worked/It Didn’t Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomorrow this might work better if</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflection Ticket 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Yes/No) This strategy or activity helped me better understand the learning target.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Yes/No) I feel I am ready to move on to another target.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If no, circle what you think might help you better understand:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Reflection Ticket 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weekly Reflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Something that really worked for me this week was:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One reason I think this did work for me was:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something that didn’t work well for me this week was:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One reason I think this did not work for me was:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next week, I would really like to do more of the following:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
#studentvoiceKY Resource 3

**Student Voice Surveys**

**Explanation:** A teacher might elect to convert these surveys or reflection tickets into a Google Form, which will populate the responses/data. You can find directions on creating a Google Form here: https://support.google.com/docs/answer/87809?hl=en

Also, teachers might elect to adapt or shorten these surveys, use them as Text Polls in class, or even as classroom discussion starters.

**Survey 1:** For questions 1-5, circle true or false and explain your answer.

1) True/False: My teacher cares about me.  
   Explain or provide a suggestion for improvement:

2) True/False: I learn something in this class every day.  
   Explain or provide a suggestion for improvement:

3) True/False: The teacher keeps distractions in this class to a minimum.  
   Explain or provide a suggestion for improvement:

4) True/False: I understand what is expected of me in this class.  
   Explain or provide a suggestion for improvement:

5) True/False: I understand what the teacher is looking for in my work.  
   Explain or provide a suggestion for improvement:

For questions 6-10, complete each statement:

6) Something my teacher does that helps me learn is

7) Something my peers do in this class that helps me learn is

8) Something I love about this class is

9) Something I don’t enjoy about this class is

10) One suggestion I would make to improve this class is
Survey 2: Test/End of Unit Reflection Student Survey

1. I felt prepared for today’s test
   Yes                      No                    Somewhat

2. In the future, something my teacher could do to help me feel better prepared for an exam is

3. In the future, something I will do to feel better prepared for an exam is

4. In the future, something my peers could do to help me feel better prepared for an exam is

5. One strategy my teacher used that helped me master this content is

6. One strategy I used on my own to master this content is

7. During this unit, something I noticed about the way I learn is

8. If I could change one thing pertaining to this class during the past two weeks, it would be

9. One positive about this class is

10. Something else I would like my teacher to know is
#studentvoiceKY Resource 4

Lesson Plans

Explanation: The following series of lesson plans are ready made plans teachers can adapt for their own classrooms. These plans are written using the lesson plan format for Rowan County Middle School. These are not referenced in the slides, but copies can be given to teachers. Lessons 1, 2, and 3 are meant to be used during the first days of school and in sequence to set up the framework for a socially negotiated classroom between the teacher and students. In other words, these lessons lay the foundation for a classroom where students have voice and choice.

Lesson Plans

Standards:

Essential Vocabulary/Questions: Plan/Do/Study/Act, Plus/Delta, Mission Statement, SMART Goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day/Date: 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plan</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can contribute to the development of classroom norms and expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Teacher will insert own get to know you activities with students. (Slide 1)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activity 1:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Slide 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quick Poll for Students-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q1- What motivates you in class?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2- What is something you’d like to see happen in class this year? (Specific strategies, activities, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3- What would you like to get out of this class this year?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Teacher choice: Teachers may have students respond in a variety of different ways including orally, with post it notes, in writing, and/or text polls.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher will give students 2 minutes to think about and respond to each question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will post/text/share their responses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teacher will facilitate discussion of what motivates students in class and will work to create a class list of motivational ideas (this can later be used to build a class strategy bank).

Teacher will chart student responses of what they’d like to see in class and use this as an anchor chart throughout the year to build in student choice.

**Activity 2:**
Teacher will ask students to list 3 year-long expectations for self, peers, and teacher. Teacher will time students, and then ask them to share out their responses as he/she charts responses for expectations, adding only new expectations to the list.

Once the expectations are listed, teacher will facilitate discussion to narrow down the broad list of expectations into 3 classroom expectations for peers and teacher and will post these in the room.

**Activity 3:**
Teacher will explain the definition and meaning of classroom norms as-
“Norms are what needs to happen every day to make sure we live up to our expectations. To make sure we meet our expectations of each other, when you enter the classroom, what needs to happen? When we have classroom discussions, what norms should we follow? When turning in work, what norms should we follow? In other words, how much we all act and behave every day?”

Teacher will pair up students. Teacher will share directions: Students will work together to create classroom norms for each expectation. Teacher will time students and will walk around the room, monitoring and facilitating discussion as needed. Once teacher has given students the time to write norms, he/she will bring the class back into a whole group discussion. Teacher may use any discussion facilitation technique he/she chooses but will need to create another chart of student created norms.

Once all voices have been heard and norms are listed, teacher will go through the list, working with students to narrow down the list into a manageable number of norms. Teacher will then add his/her own norms to the list. These norms will be posted, taught and practiced as the classroom expectations/rules. *(Note: A norm can be added at any time throughout the year and can be created or modified for any activity. Norms will need to be reviewed and practiced often).*

**Closure:**

**Exit Slip:**
List one or two norms you are confused about
OR
List a norm you feel we left off the list.

**Study:**
Exit Slip Data Suggests:
EMPOWERING TEACHERS TO EMPOWER STUDENTS

**Act:**
Teacher will complete this section after studying the exit slip data.

---

**Day/Date: 2**

**Plan:**
I can co-develop a mission statement for my classroom.

**Introduction:**

**Norms**- Teacher will review exit slip data with students, facilitating discussion to explain norms students were confused about, or to determine whether or not other norms suggested in the exit slip should be added.

**Activity 1:**
Teacher will lead the class through a review of each classroom expectation and norm. Students will practice the norms, including how to enter/exit the classroom, etc.

**Activity 2:**
Teacher will explain that a “Mission Statement is a brief statement about our class that everyone believes in and envisions for all of us.” Teacher may share some examples.

Teacher will bring students back to the list they made about motivation (from the Quick Poll yesterday), and ask students to work in table groups to draft a Classroom Mission Statement. Students may use their ideas shared during the Quick Poll and/or the guiding questions from the power point to guide their drafting:

1. What major skills should everyone gain from this class (example- critical thinking, stronger writing, etc.)
2. What do you believe we can achieve together?

Teacher will time students, and once time is up, will ask groups to write their mission statements on the board.

Once all groups have written their mission statements on the board, the teacher will review each statement with the class and will take a class vote (this can also be done anonymously through a text poll) on which mission statement best fits the class.

With the winning Mission Statement, the teacher will facilitate a discussion on the semantics, while narrowing down the statement.

Teacher will post the Mission Statement.

**Activity 3:**
Teacher will begin pre-assessing students. (The amount of time/days here is up to the teacher. Once pre-assessments have been scored, teacher should move to the next lesson plan in this series).
**Study:**  
Teacher will list pre-assessment data and inferences from it.

**Act:**  
Teacher will list next steps based on data. What interventions will take place? What extensions need to be in place? What modifications or accommodations? What strategies and activities?
Day/Date: 3

Plan
I can set goals for my own learning and make plans to meet them.

Do

Introduction:
Teacher will introduce students to the Plan/Do/Study/Act grid posted in the room.

Teacher will ask students to review the learning target with students and will explain that “Every day, our learning target is our PLAN.”

Teacher will explain that the “Do” portion is the “strategies and activities we use to master our Plan or learning targets.” Teacher will also explain this is where students will have some voice and choice in choosing strategies and activities, and in providing feedback through a Plus/Delta on what is and is not working. Teacher will need to explain and model how to appropriately complete a Plus/Delta.

Teacher will explain the “Study” portion of the grid is for classroom data from formative and summative assessments. Also, the teacher will explain that student voice will be studied when students provide feedback on what strategies did and did not work (through Plus/Delta).

Teacher will explain the Act portion is “the next steps” the teacher will need to take, the class will need to take, and students will need to take individually to either master the missing concepts or extend their learning.

Activity 1:
Teacher will review the “Do” portion of the grid for today, which should include a list of strategies and activities for mastering the learning target of the day. These strategies and activities may include more, but should include these:

1. Analyze pre-assessment data
2. Set goals
3. Plan for next steps
   *Other strategies and activities as teacher needs them.
   (Note: As PDSA becomes more integrated into the classroom, the Study/Act and Plus/Deltas should start driving more and more of the strategies and activities found in the “Do” section each day.)

Teacher will review the overall class data from the pre-assessment and will list this data under the “Study” section on the board. Teacher will facilitate a discussion about what the data shows and means and will ask students to practice completing a Plus/Delta on the strategies that worked and did not work during the last learning cycle.

Once students have posted their Plus/Deltas, the teacher will carefully review the Plus/Delta with the class, asking for suggestions on how to move forward in reteaching, reinforcing, or extending the learning of the class. Teacher will facilitate the discussion toward reaching a general consensus on “next steps.” Here, the teacher should add “goal setting,” to the discussion.
Teacher will move to the “Act” section of the board and will list the next steps for the class.

**Activity 2:**
Teacher will explain the SMART Goal criteria to students.

Teacher will model setting a SMART Goal.

Teacher will ask students to set a SMART Goal for the entire class based on the pre-assessment data. (This can be done in pairs, table groups, or through whole group discussion).

Once a SMART Goal is created, the teacher will post this goal under the Mission Statement.

Teacher will handback individual student pre-assessments and will ask students to set their individual SMART Goals. (This can be kept in the data notebook, if students are keeping a data notebook).

**Activity 3:**
Teacher will ask students to reflect over the SMART goal for the classroom as well as their individual goals and to make a plan for how to be successful in meeting this goal.

After timing students, teacher will facilitate a discussion and come up with a classroom plan for success in meeting this goal.

**Closure:**

Exit Slip-
What is something I am still confused about from today?

**Study:**
Students are still confused about:

**Act:**
Students will need:
#studentvoiceKY Resource 5

Mini lessons

Explanation: The following are mini-tasks/lessons which teachers can insert as is or edit and insert in daily lesson plans at any time. These are not referenced in the slides for the module but can be shared with teachers as an additional resource.

Mini Lesson 1

Using Survey Results

Introduction:

Teacher will review each question of the student voice survey with students, clarifying what each question is asking, and providing examples of what this might look like in the classroom. (This is to make sure students understand each question and provide accurate feedback).

Activity 1:

Teacher will ask students to answer survey questions.

(If the survey is paper/pencil, this step will need to be completed later. However, if students completed an electronic version that provided immediate data analysis, teacher could move to Activity 2 immediately)

Activity 2:

Teacher will display data from student voice survey. (Teacher may choose to display a few areas). Either in pairs, groups, or as a whole group, the teacher will lead the class through any or all of these questions as they apply:
1. Based on the student voice survey feedback, what are some ways we could improve the classroom-learning environment in this area?

2. What would you like to see more of in this area?

3. What would you like to see less of in this area?

4. In the next week, what can I do differently to improve?

5. In the next month, what could I do differently to improve?

6. In the next week, what could students do differently to improve the learning environment?

7. In the next month, what could students do differently to improve the learning environment?
Mini-Lesson 2

Integrating a Reflection Ticket from #studentvoiceKY

(A reflection ticket should be used near the end of a lesson, at the end of a series of lessons, or after a strategy has been implemented and the teacher wants feedback on how to improve.)

Introduction:

Teacher will review the reflection ticket with students, clarifying its purpose and what is being asked.

Activity 1:

Teacher will ask students to complete the reflection ticket and turn it in when they are dismissed from class.

(Teacher will collect reflection tickets as an exit ticket as students are being dismissed from class. Teacher will quickly review the reflection tickets. Teacher may make decisions based on the reflection ticket but should quickly share the decision with students at the beginning of the next lesson and explain that the reflection tickets led teacher to decision, or the teacher may choose to bring some concerns back to students asking for clarification or extension of their ideas on the reflection tickets).
Mini-Lesson 3

Designing Survey Questions with Students

Activity 1:

Teacher will group students into groups of 3-4 using a purposeful grouping activity of the teacher’s choice. Teacher will assign the following roles and explain the roles:

- **Leader** - will read directions aloud and lead the group through discussion.
- **Timekeeper** - will keep track of time and keep group on task.
- **Scribe** - will take notes for the group.
- **Reporter** - will present the group’s ideas.

Once students are assigned roles, group leaders will read the following directions from a slide show:

> “What questions should your teacher ask you that would help him/her improve the classroom learning environment? Why? Make a list of those questions.”

Timekeepers will set their phones/watches to 5 minutes and will begin the countdown for discussion while scribes list the questions the group comes up with during discussion. At the end of the five minutes, each reporter will share the questions while the teacher makes a list of questions on the board.

*Teacher will utilize these questions to form a student voice survey. This can be done with the class or the teacher can do this individually.*
## Module 4

### WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

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<th><strong>Workshop Title:</strong> Student Choice</th>
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### Learning Outcomes:

- This session will explore ways to integrate student choice into lessons and unit planning.

### Delivery Mode: Facilitated Face-to-Face

### Focus Area: Student Choice in the classroom

### Skill Level: Intermediate

### Format: Presentation, Discussion, and Planning

### Description:

In this workshop, participants will learn how to integrate student choice into the classroom through exploring resources and collaborative discussion and planning.

### Materials:

- Slideshow for presentation of research, information, activities, and resources.
- Link to articles and copies of articles for participants to read and discuss.
- Sticky notes for participants to complete a Plus/Delta.
- Teachers will need to bring unit or lesson plans for collaborative planning time.
Procedure:

- Teachers will read several articles and respond to discussion questions for each.
- Teachers will be introduced to Tic-Tac-Toe Boards and will plan for integration into the classroom.
- Teachers will plan for student choice in an upcoming writing assignment or assessment.
- Teachers will read another article and will collaborate with their table groups to share ideas about how to incorporate student choice into their classrooms and will be provided planning time.
- Teachers will have planning time for integrating student voice.

Facilitator and participants will wrap up this series of workshops by planning for the future of student voice and choice at the school. To do this, participants will discuss these questions:

- Do you need more training? If so, what topics?
- How is the implementation of student voice and choice going in your classroom?
- What other resources can I provide for you?
- By the end of this school year, where do we want to be with student voice and choice in our school?
Slides to accompany Module 4:

Slide 1

Student Choice Workshop

Facilitator notes:

The facilitator might choose to include a fun activity here to break the ice.
In this session....

- This session will explore ways to integrate student choice into lessons and unit planning.

Facilitator notes:

Here, the facilitator should review the learning outcome for the workshop and remind teachers to have lesson and/or unit plans available for later in the workshop.
Facilitator notes:

The facilitator should provide copies of Appendix A: What Happens When Students Control Their Own Education? Participants should be given three minutes to read the article and identify one takeaway and one question. Participants will share and discuss with the whole group. In addition, this might be provided electronically if participants have access to electronics and the internet. The facilitator should provide participants three minutes to read the article and then to identify one takeaway and one question. The facilitator should ask participants to share their takeaways and discuss whole group. Participants will then share their questions, which should be displayed and discussed whole group.
Facilitator notes:

The facilitator should provide a copy of Appendix B: Spatial Learner Tic-Tac-Toe Board and Appendix C: General Tic-Tac-Toe Board to the participants. The facilitator should explain that the purpose of a Tic-Tac-Toe board is to allow student choices in how he/she responds to an assignment. The Tic-Tac-Toe board assignment choices should be rigorous and appropriate for the skill being practices or assessed.

After providing a copy of Appendix D: Let It Go: Giving Students Choices, the facilitator should provide three minutes to five minutes for participants to read the article and to provide a two-sentence summary to share with table partners. This article further explains the use of Tic-Tac-Toe boards in class. Finally, the facilitator should allow time for participants to create a Tic-Tac-Toe board for an upcoming assignment or lesson plan.
Facilitator notes:

The facilitator should explain that student choice could be as simple as providing choice on writing prompts or assessment responses. The facilitator should ask teachers to share examples of how they might already be doing this in the classroom and provide a few minutes time for teachers to work on revising an assignment or assessment to include choice. The facilitator might then take a few minutes to ask teachers to share the work they just completed and to provide feedback to each other.
Slide 6

**7 Ways to Hack Your Classroom for Student Choice**

- Teachers will read this article:
  - http://www.edudemic.com/7-ways-to-hack-your-classroom/
- Teachers will collaborate with their table groups to share ideas about how to incorporate student choice into their classrooms, and will be provided planning time.

**Facilitator notes:**

The facilitator should provide copies of Appendix E: “7 Ways to Hack Your Classroom to Include Student Choice.” The facilitator should give participants five minutes to read the article and generate ideas on how to incorporate student choice into their classrooms. The facilitator should then ask participants to work with their table groups to share and collaborate on ideas. After this, the facilitator should facilitate a whole group discussion, asking teachers to share their ideas with the whole group and to provide feedback to one another.
Wrap Up

• Questions
• Other Ideas?
• Next Steps?
  – Do you need more training? If so, what topics?
  – How is the implementation of student voice and choice going in your classroom?
  – What other resources can I provide for you?
  – By the end of this school year, where do we want to be with student voice and choice at RCMS?

Facilitator notes:

The facilitator should answer questions and ask teachers to work through the questions as a whole group to plan for next-steps.
Appendices
Appendix A

What Happens When Students Control Their Own Education?

By Emily Richmond, October 24, 2014

In an 11th-grade English class at Pittsfield Middle High School in rural New Hampshire, Jenny Wellington’s students were gathered in a circle debating Henry David Thoreau’s positions on personal responsibility.

“Do you think Thoreau really was about ‘every man for himself?’” asked one 16-year-old boy.

“He lived alone in the woods and didn’t want to pay taxes,” another student shots back. “So, yeah.”

Sitting off to the side, Wellington took rapid notes. When she noticed the conversation being dominated by a couple of voices, she politely suggested someone else chime in. Otherwise, she stayed out of the way and let the discussion take shape.

Welcome to student-centered learning (http://www.ewa.org/student-centered-learning) at Pittsfield, a grade 7–12 campus in its third year of an innovative approach to education.

“There used to be a lot more of teachers talking at you—it didn’t matter if you were ready to move on. When the teacher was done with the topic that was it,” said Noah Manteau, a senior this year at Pittsfield. “This is so much better.”

Educators, researchers, and policymakers at the state and national level are keeping close tabs on Pittsfield, which has become an incubator for a critical experiment in school reform. The goal: a stronger connection between academic learning and the kind of real-world experience that advocates say can translate into postsecondary success.

Pittsfield, a former mill town, has about 4,500 predominately white residents, and the Middle High School serves about 260 residents. Fifty-six percent of them qualify for free or reduced-price meals. Student-centered learning is fully in place in the high school, and elements of it are being phased in at the middle-school level. The long-term plan is to eventually add it to the nearby elementary school.

Pittsfield’s superintendent, John Freeman, is among the first to acknowledge that adopting student-centered learning was a bold move. Student performance on
statewide assessments has long been uneven, and teachers and administrators know there is still significant work to be done. But test scores are just one indicator, and based on multiple other measures, including higher graduation and college-going rates, Freeman feels confident that student-centered learning is moving Pittsfield in the right direction.

“There used to be a lot more of teachers talking at you. “This is so much better.”

At Pittsfield, student-led discussions, small-group work, and individual projects dominate. The traditional grading system has been replaced with a matrix of “competencies,” detailing the skills and knowledge students are expected to master in each class. Students are graded on a scale of 1 to 4—with 2.5 considered “proficient”—and those numbers are converted into letter grades for their transcripts. Teachers meet at regular intervals to review how closely their instruction is aligning with the competencies; they use an online database to continually track individual student growth. Additional online classes allow students to further challenge themselves and earn college credit. Family engagement is considered a key part of each student’s progress. And the Extended Learning Opportunities (ELO) program allows students to earn credit for workplace experiences that reinforce their academic studies, such as interning at a dentist’s office or the local radio station.

All of this means students are shouldering more responsibility for their own learning. And they are expected to develop the kind of critical thinking skills—not just rote knowledge—required for "real world" success. As a result, advocates of student-centered learning say it provides superior preparation for both college and career.

As senior Ryan Marquis put it, “I had to switch from ‘Here’s your study guide and here’s your answer sheet’ to ‘How do you want to learn the content, and how can we support you?’”

* * *

Student-centered learning in Pittsfield—located in the Suncook Valley about 40 minutes north of Manchester—began to take shape in 2008, when the district asked for community input on ways to improve local schools and found overwhelming support for more personalized approaches. The following year, Pittsfield's high school was rated one of the state’s lowest-performing, based on students’ standardized test scores. The one benefit of that dismal ranking was that it later qualified Pittsfield for a $1 million federal School Improvement Grant (SIG).

This set in motion intensive public-private partnerships and the creation of a community-working group to help come up with a new instructional approach. After
extensive research, planning, and conversations with parents, the district opted for the student-centered learning model, and the plan was implemented in January 2012.

“People in our community wanted schools to be places where students’ passions and interests were recognized, and their deficits and weaknesses addressed,” said Freeman. “We’re thinking not just about what happens within these walls, but preparing them for success at least seven years beyond high school graduation.”

Around the same time, the district was considering how to implement New Hampshire’s mandate that high schools use a competency-based model, rather than traditional seat-time hours, to award course credit. New Hampshire had also adopted the Common Core State Standards, which set grade-level expectations for what students know and can do, but do not dictate classroom instruction.

“They all get feedback from me every time, after every discussion. That’s hard data for them, and they love it.”

Rather than becoming competing forces, this unique combination of circumstances provided Pittsfield with enviable synergies, education experts say. “One of the downfalls of personalized learning has often been a regression to the lowest standard,” said Sonja Santelises, vice president of K-12 policy and practice for the Washington, D.C.-based think tank Education Trust. The confluence of the Common Core, high school competencies, and student-centered learning in Pittsfield, said Santelises, offered “a rare opportunity” to set high expectations for learning that are supported by a rigorous and innovative instructional framework. At the same time, she added, the community’s buy-in has been critical, particularly during the earliest planning stages. Accountability must also be a top priority, Santelises said: Teachers should be continually checking students’ progress against the standards and adjusting instruction accordingly.

“These are not just nice things to have—they’re absolutely essential to have if you’re going to bring about meaningful change,” Santelises said.

***

What is student-centered learning? In its broadest sense, it describes an approach where teachers function more as coaches than lecturers. While it’s gaining momentum nationally, the definition is still evolving. The term is sometimes used—incorrectly, say the model’s advocates—to describe any kind of free-form learning that is not “teacher centered.” The New England-based Nellie Mae Education Foundation defines the model as personalized instruction that allows students to advance at their own rate, with opportunities for “anywhere, anytime” learning
outside the confines of the traditional school day and building. Students must also have input in determining how they will learn, choosing among opportunities such as online classes and independent study. Project-based learning, (http://edglossary.org/project-based-learning, in which students build connections between the academic course content and their own interests and career goals, is another popular route.

According to Rebecca Wolfe, director of the nonprofit Jobs for the Future’s Students at the Center project, student-centered learning shares the Common Core is underlying goal: helping students develop their critical thinking skills while better preparing them for the real-world challenges of college and career. “They are absolutely complementary—and should be part of the same whole—when done right,” Wolfe said.

Student-centered learning is not without its critics. Some question the philosophical premise, while others worry about the potentially daunting logistical requirements. There are also concerns that student-centered learning can result in a chaotic classroom environment, and that some students won’t progress quickly enough to cover the required curriculum. Learners who already trail their peers could be the most vulnerable.

“The idea of ‘student-centered everything’ is one of those orthodoxies where it’s easy to fall off the end of the cliff,” said Robert Pondiscio, senior fellow and vice president for external affairs at the Thomas B. Fordham Institute in Washington, D.C. “It works a lot better in the content areas than in skills-based instruction like reading comprehension, for example.”

As for letting students demonstrate proficiency by non-traditional means, Pondiscio said “as long as the projects are rigorous and challenging, I see no problem with allowing students to produce work product that interests and engages them—provided it’s aligned to the content expectations.”

They are expected to develop the kind of critical thinking skills, required for real-world success.

Recent research from the Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education found the student-centered model is working in unexpected places, including urban high schools with high percentages of minority and low-income students. Consider a June 2014 study (https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/scope-pub-student-centered-research-brief.pdf) looking at student-centered learning in four northern California public high schools, all smaller, open-enrollment campuses. The Stanford researchers concluded that regular assessments were helping teachers better monitor
student progress and adjust instruction accordingly. Students were also finding ways to connect their learning to their own interests and the wider community outside of school.

“Students in the study schools exhibited greater gains in achievement than their peers, had higher graduation rates, were better prepared for college, and showed greater persistence in college,” said Stanford University Professor and SCOPE Faculty Director Linda Darling-Hammond in a statement (https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/news/articles/1217) about the new research. “Student-centered learning proves to be especially beneficial to economically disadvantaged students and students whose parents have not attended college.”

At Pittsfield, the shift to student-led discussions was a fairly steep learning curve for everyone, including teacher Jenny Wellington. To build her lesson on Thoreau, Wellington first turned to the school’s “competencies,” which are drawn from the state’s Common Core standards. For the 11th grade, that means students should be able to interpret the literature they read, and craft arguments using the text as evidence. Wellington uses a mix of student-led discussions, small group work, writing assignments and the occasional traditional test to measure the progress of the class.

“I’m giving them a point of focus but I’m not telling them what to think,” Wellington said. “My role is to make sure they are following through with a thought or an idea and not just jumping around. Once they hit on something they have to go deeper—and find support for their position from the text.”

The students keep track of how often each of them contributes to the conversation, setting goals both for themselves and for the class overall. For the most part, Wellington remains on the sidelines, although she occasionally stops the conversation for an in-class writing assignment to give quieter students an extra moment to collect their thoughts and consider what they want to say.

“When I have really strong student dominating the discussions, I’ll tell them privately to hang back a little,” Wellington said. “They all get feedback from me every time, after every discussion. That’s hard data for them, and they love it.”

There have been unexpected developments: When Wellington used a traditional multiple-choice test to measure students’ grasp of the content at the end of a subject unit, many of them scored poorly on some of the basic facts of Thoreau’s biography. But their written responses to the essay portion of the test, asking them to explain and interpret transcendentalism, were a different kind of surprise. “They blew me out of
“the water,” Wellington said. “Their understanding was clearly deeper than just those facts.”

In an age when Google’s search engine is as close as a cell phone, “I would question whether a student knowing the year Thoreau died is really essential,” said Robert Rothman, a senior fellow at the Alliance for Excellent Education, a Washington, D.C.-based organization focused on high school transformation. “If students didn’t know that he lived in the 19th century, that might be problem. If you’re going to talk about transcendentalism you need to know facts about it, and about the people who espoused it, to provide evidence for your conclusions.”

There are other education theorists who take this argument even further, insisting that there’s little need for much of the rote learning that takes place in public schools. However, “there’s a danger of going from one extreme to another,” Rothman said. “Just testing students on basic facts doesn’t help students develop those deeper understanding and learning. And just having them show they can communicate and write longer essays without some basis in knowledge isn’t going to help them, either.”

***

Like many of the nation’s public schools, both large and small, Pittsfield must contend with a high-need student population and a post-recession struggle for adequate funding. Until recently, those challenges were exacerbated by a culture of low expectations for students, say Pittsfield teachers. In 2013, Pittsfield’s 11th graders had a proficiency rate of 61 percent for reading on the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) exam; the statewide average for reading was 77 percent. In math, Pittsfield’s proficiency rate of 36 percent was the same as the state average, but that’s almost double the 19 percent that the school reported for the 2008-09 school year. Until 2011, Pittsfield had been on upward trend for several years, but during the past two school years, scores have fallen.

The district has also been challenged by system-wide instability. Pittsfield has a higher-than-average number of residential rental properties, which means it has more student turnover than many of the state’s other small towns, said Superintendent Freeman, who took the helm in 2008 after nine years as one of the district's principals. Teacher turnover has also been high: Since 2011, about 60 percent of the teachers and administrators at the middle-high school have been replaced, in part because some staff members rejected the shift to student-centered learning. Freeman said the school has also taken a more aggressive approach to evaluating the performance and potential of non-tenured teachers.
“To let go of the idea that I have to be center stage all the time has been incredibly freeing. I feel like I’m a better teacher.”

Test scores aside, Pittsfield has improved in key areas since it launched its student-led curriculum. According to the National Student Clearinghouse, Pittsfield’s dropout rate in 2013 was 2.3 percent, down from 3.6 percent in 2010. During the same three-year period, the graduation rate climbed to 80 percent from 75 percent. And the college-going rate jumped to 60 percent from 47 percent.

Laureen Avery of UCLA’s Center X also points out that the school is no longer in the bottom 5 percent of the state’s high schools. Avery is the lead evaluator of the school’s Investing in Innovation (i3) grant, a $5 million federal investment it shares with a network of 12 other New England campuses (http://www.thenewenglandnetwork.net/); the Nellie Mae Education Foundation and the Rural School and Community Trust have each contributed an additional $500,000 to the group of schools, and Nellie Mae, located in Quincy, Mass., has awarded a separate $2 million grant to Pittsfield specifically to put student-centered learning into place.

“I’ve never seen any school—big or little—pay such close attention to student data,” Avery said. “They have a really well-developed way of tracking progress. Yes, Pittsfield is a unique, small school. But they’re succeeding with processes that could be transferrable to another campus.”

Paul Leather, New Hampshire’s deputy education commissioner, emphasizes that a student-led program like Pittsfield’s could not have worked without strong leaders, supported teachers, and an engaged community. “You can have the best ideas in the world,” Leather said. “But ultimately, it all comes down to implementation.”

To that end, Freeman has worked hard to carve out time for professional development. He has also eliminated the principal position and instead installed two deans at the helm: one for curriculum and instruction and one for building management. That clear delineation of duties means the first dean can focus on supporting classroom teachers while the second deals with the day-to-day tasks involved in running the school.

For Jenny Wellington, who has spent 12 years teaching—six in New York City public schools, two years at the University of New Hampshire, and four at Pittsfield—it’s still a daily challenge to manage everything student-centered learning requires. The academic, social and emotional needs of her Pittsfield students are not dissimilar to those of her former pupils in the Bronx, Wellington said.
But she says the changes at Pittsfield have made it easier for her to respond to those challenges. She regularly visits her colleagues’ classrooms, gleaning ideas about how to get students to steer their own learning and looking for opportunities for joint projects. This fall, for example, biology students will be expected to write a persuasive essay about the use of human stem cells in research—an essay that will also be evaluated by their English teacher.

“I’ve learned to step back more and let the students lead,” Wellington said. “To let go of the idea that I have to be center stage all the time has been incredibly freeing. I feel like I’m a better teacher.”

This story was produced by The Hechinger Report (http://hechingerreport.org/), a nonprofit, nonpartisan education-news outlet affiliated with Teachers College, Columbia University.
Appendix B

**Spatial Learner Tic-Tac-Toe**

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<th>Graph</th>
<th>Cartoon</th>
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<tr>
<td>Film</td>
<td>Photo Essay</td>
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<tr>
<td>Art Gallery</td>
<td>Bulletin Board</td>
<td>Web Page</td>
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## Appendix C

**General Tic-Tac-Toe**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Scrapbook</th>
<th>Film</th>
<th>Work Package</th>
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<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Essay</td>
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<td>Diorama</td>
<td>Bulletin Board</td>
<td>Collage</td>
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Appendix D

Let it go: Giving students choices

Empower students by giving them choices in how they learn and how they demonstrate that learning. In schools around the country, the push for technology integration is all the rage. Buzz phrases such as “bring your own device,” “digital-age learning,” and “engage students with technology” are making headlines, but what is true technology integration?

Effective technology integration is not about installing the coolest new app, trying a fun website, or blogging about which tablet is the best. It is about instruction. It is about giving students the opportunity to learn with powerful tools that transform the way they learn and how they show what they have learned.

In Forsyth County, we begin our design process by first looking at what standards need to be taught. Teachers revisit and incorporate the 4 C’s of digital age learning: collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and communication (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, http://www.p21.org/about-us/our-mission). We work to intertwine these skills into our content instruction to prepare our students to compete in a global environment.

In addition, we have an unspoken 5th C in Forsyth that we embed into instruction to engage students and further prepare them for the real world: choice.

In our context, this means giving students a choice of how they learn and demonstrate their learning to truly empower them.

Allowing students to decide how they are going to learn content is one of the ways we give our students choice. Teachers design instruction using a variety of course materials such as videos, text-based resources, podcasts, hands-on modules, or human interactions. Students consider their learning preferences and decide which mode of instruction best suits their needs.


In traditional classrooms, student work often looks the same: every student creates a poster to hang in the hallway, or every student writes a five-paragraph essay with the same font style and size.
If a student prefers to build a web page over designing a poster or prefers to create a book trailer instead of writing a traditional essay, has that student not learned as much as those who did create posters and write essays? No! It means the student chooses to express themselves in a way that is different from their peers and their teacher's expectations.

When teachers give students choices as to how they will show what they have learned, students become better problems solvers, more creative, and more engaged.

How can teachers promote choice in the classroom? In Forsyth, one of the ways we do this is by using choice boards. Our teachers use tic-tac-toe style boards where they offer choices of activities, and each student must choose a set number of activities to complete. Student selections can consist of different small activities or options within a larger project or presentation.

![Choice Board Example](image)

The teachers who are more comfortable with a student-centered approach share with students the standard they are working to master and allow students to choose how to learn the standard and how to show what they have learned. The teacher becomes the facilitator or coach, posing questions to steer students in the right direction, challenging those who can do more to go farther, and providing additional support for those who need assistance.

As Benjamin Franklin stated, “Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I remember. Involve me and I learn.”

Allowing students to be involved in their learning gives them the tools to be much more successful.

As students are involved in making choices in their education, they gain more responsibility, real-life skills, and independence. That is true 21st Century education!
Appendix E

7 Ways to Hack Your Classroom to Include Student Choice

By Amanda Ronan (http://www.edudemic.com/author/amandaronan/) on March 20, 2015

For a long time, when educators discussed differentiating instruction and meeting students’ individual needs, they did so through the framework of Learning Styles. However, in the last few years the idea of student achievement being impacted by lessons taught to their particular learning style has been debunked. No scientific, educational research has proven the validity of teaching for student learning styles; in fact, this blog post collected 10 statements from educational researchers (http://reedgillespie.blogspot.com/2014/01/10-statements-debunking-using-of.html) that actually disprove the use of such approaches. We covered the same topic in The Myth of Learning Styles, where we made the point that, “Instructors should not just take into consideration a learner’s style, but also their background and interests.” This suggestion is based in solid research, which documents the positive relationship between student interest and academic success. The more engaged a student is in their schoolwork, the more motivated they are to learn and grow, and the more academically successful they become.

Teachers do a lot to maintain student interest. The use of technology and different classroom models, like blended learning, are strategies that increase student engagement. However, there are simpler ways to hold students’ interests, especially if you don’t have the financial or administrative support needed for high-tech engagement models. The key to student interest is simple: it’s choice.

The psychological effects of feeling a sense of control are well-documented and include greater levels of happiness and activity and lower levels of stress and anxiety. Educational research has shown that choice leads to more confident, more capable, and more interested students. Alfie Kohn’s classic article, “Choices for Children” (http://www.alfiekohn.org/article/choices-children/) cites the findings of a number of studies on student choice. In so doing, he describes a study that showed that giving second graders choice in learning tasks leads to great task completion in less time. Another study concluded that high school students asked to write up chemistry problems without step-by-step instructions completed better write-ups, and later remembered the material better than those who had been told exactly what to do.

While the practice of teaching to learning styles may be fading from popularity, the notion of including student choice is gaining momentum. Students may no longer be labeled “kinesthetic learners” but that doesn’t mean they don’t still want to do
projects that include movement. Giving students choice taps into their personal preferences and their preferred ways of interacting with learning materials. Including more options for student choice in your classroom is simple. We’ve compiled 7 ways to include students in the decision-making process. Start implementing these suggestions one at a time, and soon you’ll see a whole new level of engagement!

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**7 Ways to Hack Your Classroom to Include More Student Choice**

1. **Seating:** Letting students choose their own seats is a big step toward encouraging them to be responsible for their own learning. Students must choose to sit near people who will help, rather than hurt, their learning. To ease students into making responsible seating choices, it is a good idea to give them guidelines about how to do so. You might require that an even number of boys and girls sit at a table together, or that students sit next to someone new each day. Helping students to identify their learning goals will also guide them in their choice. Check out this video from The Teaching Channel ([https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/unique-student-seating-strategy](https://www.teachingchannel.org/videos/unique-student-seating-strategy)) that features students in a Kindergarten class who are given choice about where to sit. The teacher in the video gives a very clear explanation about how she helps young students make responsible seating choices.
2. **Homework:** Getting some students to complete homework is a constant battle for both parents and teachers but incorporating choice in one of any number of ways can help. If you give math worksheets or use pages in a math textbook, let students complete any 5 items, rather than having to do every problem. In reading homework, choice might take the form of letting students read any book they so desire and set individual page count goals per night. Spelling or vocabulary homework can be a list of 7 possible ways to work with the words, like writing them in sentences, or finding them in real-world contexts, and asking students to choose 4 of the activities to be completed by the end of the week. In their study titled, “The Effectiveness and Relative Importance of Choice in the Classroom,” educational researchers Erika Patall, Harris Cooper, and Susan R Wynn found that choice in homework gave students more motivation to complete assignments, as well as better rates of completion, and better academic performance.

3. **Choice boards for classwork:** Choice boards for student work are nothing new to teachers that are already well versed in differentiation strategies. These boards come in many varieties, like menus, tic-tac-toe boards, baseball boards, and choice lists. Each of these boards lists multiple activities for students to complete. Some activities are worth more points or are considered nonnegotiable, while others are worth fewer points or are optional. Generally, students must collect a certain number of points, or as with the tic-tac-toe board, complete three activities in a row, for the assignment to be completed. The Dare to Differentiate website on choice boards (https://daretodifferentiate.wikispaces.com/Choice+Boards) is an amazing resource that offers blank boards, completed example boards for certain skills, and videos on how classes implement choice boards.

4. **Summative projects:** Projects are supposed to be fun, creative ways for students to present learning. Yet, when a student is told exactly what form a project should take and exactly what topics it should cover, that leaves little creative work. However, through essays, posters, presentations, blog posts, songs, creative stories, dramatic scenes, and videos, there are so many that ways students can demonstrate what they have learned after reading a book or completing a unit of study. The simplest way to introduce choice in projects is to let students choose how they want to prove their learning. You can still create a rubric that outlines what content you are looking for but make it general enough that students can engage with the material in any way they choose. Rubistar (http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php) is an easy-to-use, online rubric generator that can help you get started!
5. **Learning celebrations:** How often do you celebrate student work? Some teachers hold poetry slams or “coffee shops” and invite parents and other classes to see the products of their students’ hard work. Turn a classroom into a museum with work exhibits or hold a fair or expo. Ask students to become involved in the planning of celebrations. Start off with a new unit with the simple question, “How should we celebrate all of this work when we’re finished?” Giving students a big, public end goal, especially one that they’re invested in the planning of, will ignite their enthusiasm. This article from Responsive Classroom (https://www.responsiveclassroom.org/article/learning-celebrations) has a few good tips for setting up learning celebrations.

6. **Assessments:** Giving students choice in testing is not something you see in many classrooms. Many teachers feel that they should model their classroom assessments after standardized testing as a way to prepare students for what to expect. And while that may be a great test-prep strategy, is it also the best way to see if students have mastered the material? That’s debatable. One simple way to start with choice in testing is to tell students that they must answer any 15 out of the 20 questions. If you want to make sure they answer at least one question from each topic, group your tests into sections and tell students to choose any 3 of 5 questions from each section. You might also consider adding a variety of question types, like constructed response, multiple choice with multiple correct answers, true/false and yes/no items. In doing so, you are giving students even more choice and modeling your classroom tests after Common Core assessments, especially if you build your tests online. This article from Education World (http://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/profdev048.shtml) explains one teacher’s way of giving choice during testing.

7. **Unstructured innovation time:** Major companies like 3M and Google give their employees time during their scheduled workweek to innovate. Employees are allowed to work on projects that excite them, that may or may not be directly related to their specific job. Thanks to this innovation time we now have Post-its and Gmail. Imagine what your students could do if you gave them some unstructured innovation time. This idea may not fly in many schools, but what about tying it to research standards? Let students study what they want to study, do their research, build what they want to build, and go through the inquiry cycle, just like 3M and Google employees do. The 20-Time in Education website (http://www.20timeineducation.com/) has everything you need to get started implementing some innovative work time for your students.
References

http://integratingstudentvoice.weebly.com

http://www.jimshipley.net/resources/links/


VITA

Joseph P. Harris

EDUCATION

May, 2009 Bachelor of Arts
Morehead State University
Morehead, Kentucky

December, 2011 Master of Arts
Georgetown College
Morehead, Kentucky

May, 2015 Educational Specialist
Morehead State University
Morehead, Kentucky

Pending Doctor of Education
Morehead State University
Morehead, Kentucky

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES

July 2016-Present Assistant Principal
Rowan County Middle School
Morehead, Kentucky

January 2017-Present Adjunct Professor
Georgetown College
Georgetown, Kentucky

July 2015-July 2016 Teacher Leader
Kentucky Department of Education
Frankfort, Kentucky

May 2011-June 2016 Teacher
Lawrence County High School
Louisa, Kentucky
May 2009-June 2011  Teacher  
Greenup County High School  
Greenup, Kentucky

HONORS

April 2017  Outstanding Graduate Student in Foundational and Graduate Studies  
Morehead State University  
Morehead, Kentucky

July 2013  Kentucky Teacher Fellowship  
Hope Street Group  
Frankfort, KY