

# **Meaningful Student Involvement Deep Assessment**



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## Introduction

After working with hundreds of schools over the last decade, I'm determined to spread the word about Meaningful Student Involvement further than ever before. This deep assessment should help.

This tool is meant to be a challenge to you. If you think your classroom, school, district, or state agency is involved in any of the following, this tool is meant for you:

- Meaningful Student Involvement
- Student Voice
- Listening to Students
- Students as Partners in School Change
- Student Engagement
- Student-Led Learning
- Flipped Classrooms
- Student/Adult Partnerships

Practitioners of service learning, experiential learning, student-driven technology usage, and other student-inclusive processes may appreciate this tool too.

In our rapidly changing world, massive school transformation is necessary. This tool intends to push your school or agency further. Thank you for using it.

—Adam Fletcher  
May 2013  
Olympia, Washington



## Motivation

**DEEP ASSESSMENT: Meaningful Student Involvement happens for a reason.**



1. Is the purpose of student involvement clearly defined?
2. Who identified that purpose?
3. Was their intention known to everyone involved?
4. Why does Meaningful Student Involvement matter in your classroom? In your school? In your district?
5. Who led the process of fostering Meaningful Student Involvement at your school?
  - Students requested it
  - Elected officials (superintendent, school board) initiated it
  - Teachers initiated it
  - Principals initiated it
  - District/state/federal policy directives
  - Trying to respond to internal or external student problems
6. What are the expected or delivered outcomes?
  - For students?
  - For teachers, principals, or other adults?
  - For the school culture?
  - For the education system?

For the larger community?

7. What is the positive and negative history of student involvement in your school?
8. Is student involvement part of a larger strategy to improve schools?



## **Culture**

### **DEEP ASSESSMENT: Creating the Culture to Support Meaningful Student Involvement**



1. Do all students feel safe to be meaningfully involved?
2. How are students meaningfully involved?
3. How are students respected?
4. How are students responded to?

## Student Readiness

### DEEP ASSESSMENT: Ensuring Student Readiness for Meaningful Student Involvement



5. Were students involved in determining the need for student involvement?
6. Are students aware of adults' intentions for involving students?
7. Have students reflected on learning? Schools? The education system? School improvement? Student voice?
8. What steps have been taken to ensure that the level of involvement is appropriate to the knowledge and ability of the students involved?
9. Describe the ways that the developmental needs of students are taken into account?
  - Are there skills-oriented learning opportunities focused on the task at hand, i.e. decision-making, problem-solving, action planning, evaluation, task completion, budgeting, self-management, curriculum design, research, community organizing, etc?
  - Are there knowledge-oriented learning opportunities focused on the task at hand, i.e. school improvement, supportive learning environments, equity and diversity awareness, standards-based learning, etc?
  - Is the self-image and confidence of students built appropriately?
  - Are "routines" rehearsed with adults?
10. Does the involvement opportunity allow for varying levels of engagement from students?

## Adult Readiness

### DEEP ASSESSMENT: Ensuring Adult Readiness for Meaningful Student Involvement



11. Have adults reflected on student voice?  
Meaningful Student Involvement?
12. Are adults aware of students' objectives for being involved?
13. Do adults feel fully informed about the issues, policies, programs, services, and/or activities that affect students?
14. Were adults involved in determining the need for student involvement?
15. Do adults feel fully informed about meaningful student involvement, student voice, and the students' role in the involvement opportunity?
16. How many adults are involved in ensuring student involvement in the opportunity?
17. How often do adults advocate on behalf of student partners to other adults in the system to persuade them to listen to students by listening to them, returning emails or phone calls, etc.
18. Do adults promote Meaningful Student Involvement in a way that...
  - Is fun or pleasant?
  - Promotes positive recognition for students?
  - Does not marginalize students to a limited role or set of issues?
  - Allows students to make mistakes?
  - Demonstrates trust in students?
  - Provides time to listen to students as part of this opportunity?

19. Do adults provide emotional support for Meaningful Student Involvement by:

- Paying attention to students feelings?
- Caring about their personal issues?
- Helping them with their problems?
- Discussing sensitive topics?



20. Are adults allies to students by:

- Offering suggestions at meetings?
- Providing students with a range of options to stimulate their ideas?
- Helping students organize their activities?
- Helping students facilitate at meetings?
- Providing timely information?
- Presenting information in real, concrete terms?

21. Do adults teach students about:

- Preparing agendas and taking minutes?
- Creating teams?
- Depersonalizing conflict?
- Understanding school improvement?
- Learning from the process as well as outcomes?

22. Do adults help students understand:

- The politics and personalities involved?
- The bureaucratic structures and policy constraints?

- The reasons why students (and other groups) have been excluded from decisions?
- Any underlying reasons for personal conflict at meetings?



## **Relationships**

### **DEEP ASSESSMENT: Building Relationships to Support Meaningful Student Involvement**



23. How do students involved in Meaningful Student Involvement consult other students? How often? On what?
24. How do they seek guidance from adults? How often?
25. Does the student involvement opportunity have:
  - a. clearly stated goals?
  - b. a plan of action?
  - c. time limits /deadlines?
26. Are students expected to make representations on behalf of the whole group, even though they might not entirely agree?
27. How are students ensuring that their health/family/schoolwork/friends/do not suffer because they are involved?
28. Are students selected to be heard, and how does that happen?
29. Do, or how does, students report to other students?

## Action

### DEEP ASSESSMENT: Taking Action



30. Have students worked with adults to determine what constitutes *meaningful* student involvement?
31. Have students worked with adults to identify school issues, challenges, or problems?
32. Have students identified their own possible solutions or goals in their school?
33. Have students worked with adults to identify possible solutions or goals in their school?
34. Do students feel fully informed about issues that matter to them?
35. Have students learned about issues that matter to the whole schools? The larger community? The state?
36. Have students worked with adults to initiate project ideas and activities?
37. Are students meaningfully involved in identifying the problems, challenges, or needs to be addressed by school improvement?
38. Are students meaningfully involved in formulating the problem and analyzing the situation?
39. Are students meaningfully involved in creating school improvement policy?
40. Are students meaningfully involved in adopting school improvement policy?
41. Are students meaningfully involved in approving programs, services, and activities to implement school improvement?
42. Are students meaningfully involved in teaching adults about school improvement?

43. Are students meaningfully involved in monitoring school improvement?
44. Are students meaningfully involved in evaluating the impact of school improvement?
45. Are students meaningfully involved with adults and other community members in school improvement?



## Rigor

### DEEP ASSESSMENT: Ensuring Rigor in Meaningful Student Involvement



46. Are different types of students motivated and encouraged to be meaningfully involved throughout education? How?
  - a. differently-abled students
  - b. disengaged students
  - c. low-income students
  - d. different student sub-cultures
  - e. students from minority populations
47. Is there an active recruitment program?
48. Are current student leaders encouraged to nurture their successors?
49. Are the students given opportunities to learn the knowledge and skills critical to their successful involvement?
50. Is Meaningful Student Involvement visible in activities, programs, services and policy-making throughout the school? How or why not?
51. Are mentors assigned to coach Meaningful Student Involvement?
52. What resources does the school provide to support Meaningful Student Involvement?
  - f. training budgets
  - g. travel budgets
  - h. telephone/fax/e-mail budget or access
  - i. office space

53. Are students actively encouraged to speak at meetings?
54. Are there active measures within the school to promote a positive image of students among adults? What are those measures?
55. Are student issues addressed from a positive, present, and powerful perspective?
56. What steps are taken to prepare for turnover among the students and adults involved in Meaningful Student Involvement?
57. Describe the ways in which traditional processes were made more flexible to accommodate Meaningful Student Involvement.
58. Describe the ways in which the time lines/deadlines were adjusted to allow time for Meaningful Student Involvement.
59. Describe the ways in which the current process of Meaningful Student Involvement built upon existing student involvement opportunities.
60. Is there an elected/appointed official responsible for encouraging Meaningful Student Involvement?
61. Is/are there staff assigned to ensure that student involvement is meaningful?
62. Is/are there students assigned to ensure that student involvement is meaningful?
63. Are adults asked to volunteer to mentor individual students in the process of creating Meaningful Student Involvement?
64. Are students asked to volunteer to mentor individual students in the process of creating Meaningful Student Involvement?
65. Are there any parallel goals or can the mission of your school be enhanced by Meaningful Student Involvement? Describe the connections, if possible.





## **Relevance**

### **DEEP ASSESSMENT: Ensuring the Relevance of Meaningful Student Involvement**



66. What steps are taken to make the issues addressed by Meaningful Student Involvement relevant to students?
67. What capacities are explicitly developed among student and adults?
68. How is student learning from Meaningful Student Involvement assessed and/or acknowledged?
69. Does the student involvement opportunity have clear classroom learning connections?
70. How are students recognized for their involvement?
71. How is adult learning from Meaningful Student Involvement assessed and/or acknowledged?
72. What steps are made to ensure that recognition is relevant to students?
73. What steps/actions are taken to ensure Meaningful Student Involvement is fun?
74. What opportunities are provided for student to form friendships beyond Meaningful Student Involvement activities?

## **Sustainability**

### **DEEP ASSESSMENT: Sustaining Meaningful Student Involvement**



75. Are students meaningfully involved in training other students to be involved?
76. Is there an active process to recruit new students when others leave?
77. Are students satisfied with their involvement?  
How do you know?
78. Are students satisfied with adult involvement?  
How do you know?
79. Are adults satisfied with their involvement? How do you know?
80. Are adults satisfied with student involvement?  
How do you know?
81. What steps are taken to overcome student disengagement?
82. What steps are taken to overcome fluctuating involvement of students?
83. What steps are taken to overcome adult disengagement?
84. What steps are taken to overcome the fluctuating involvement of adults with students?
85. How does Meaningful Student Involvement affect students outside of the involvement opportunity?
86. Are students outside of the formal involvement opportunity aware of the opportunity?

## **Barriers**

### **DEEP ASSESSMENT: Addressing the Barriers to Meaningful Student Involvement**



87. Are barriers to Student-Adult Partnerships being addressed?
88. What steps are taken to ensure that student involvement is meaningful?
89. Do students understand the intentions of the process, decision, or outcomes?
90. Do students know who made the decisions about Meaningful Student Involvement and why they were made?
91. Is the process and are the results of Meaningful Student Involvement recorded, reported in writing, and distributed?
92. Do students involved receive a report (verbal or in writing) on the outcomes of Meaningful Student Involvement?
93. Were false and negative assumptions about students' abilities to participate deliberately addressed by students and/or adults?
94. Are all adults clear about the class or school's intent to foster Meaningful Student Involvement?
95. Do adults support Meaningful Student Involvement?
96. Do adults provide good examples of Meaningful Student Involvement?
97. How was students' inexperience addressed?
98. Did students work on issues that they clearly identify as important?
99. Did students work on issues that their school clearly identifies as important?

100. Did students start with short-term goals and activities?
101. Have students and adults identified and, when possible, corrected negative experiences students have had with student involvement?
102. What steps were taken to reduce the resistance from adults?
103. Has there been a written policy statement developed from the governing body supporting and advocating for Meaningful Student Involvement?
104. Has there been a memo/document from the school leader stating their support, encouragement, and commitment to Meaningful Student Involvement?
105. Has the principal or superintendent introduced Meaningful Student Involvement to school leaders?
106. Have there been social events organized to increase positive interactions between students and adults?
107. Have joint workshops with students and adults been held?
108. Has a plan been put in place to infuse students throughout the mainstream, core activities of the class or school?
109. Have steps been taken to help students fit into adult structures?
110. Have students been placed on in a previously adult-only group with support from a designated adult?
111. Does someone meet with students before meetings to help them clarify their objectives for the meeting?
112. Do students feel comfortable about asking for clarification?



113. What steps have been taken to make the location and times of meetings convenient to students?
- a. Consulting with the students involved about times/dates of meetings
  - b. Choosing locations that are accessible to students and public transportation
114. Are there any other initiatives or changes going on in the class or school (new programs, restructuring, etc.) that will compete for attention with the goals and processes of Meaningful Student Involvement?
115. How are the student members selected so that they are credible to the student body?
116. How do you know that they are credible?
117. How often have there been problems when student members have not been able to complete their assignment on time? What steps were taken to avoid these problems in the future?

## Evaluation

### DEEP ASSESSMENT: Evaluating the Outcomes of Meaningful Student Involvement



118. How does the class or school provide for formal and informal feedback from students on Meaningful Student Involvement?
119. Are the events, activities, and numbers of students measured?
120. Are the levels, motivations, and impacts of students and adults involved monitored and reported?
121. Are the quantitative effects of Meaningful Student Involvement measured, monitored, and reported?
- Grades
  - attendance records
  - dropout rates
  - number of student participants in a given activity
  - Others
122. Are the numerical effects of Meaningful Student Involvement measured, monitored, and reported?
123. Are students other than those directly involved in an opportunity involved in the assessment as independent evaluators?
124. Are there formal evaluations of Meaningful Student Involvement completed by students and adults?
125. Are the summative impacts of Meaningful Student Involvement recognized?
- creation of new curriculum or programs

- creation of an administrative support structure
- training of professionals made mandatory or more widespread
- teaching of peers or younger students
- development or dissemination of materials
- more student voice in instruction
- student educational desires assessed, documented
- more, better involvement opportunities
- more appropriate, student-friendly policies, rules, or guidelines adapted
- more accessible or student-convenient services
- nontraditional or new student leaders identified
- new social norms established among students
- new social norms established among students and adults
- student involvement vehicle created
- student involvement groups created and sustained through policy, positions, or funds
- student voice workshops or information for parents offered
- new dedicated space(s) for students
- new or more policies, positions, and/or ongoing funding for student programs, policies, services or activities
- self-managed programs by students, for students



- student-managed programs by students, for students and adults
  - meaningful student involvement in school planning
  - meaningful student involvement in educational evaluation
  - meaningful student involvement in classroom teaching
  - meaningful student involvement throughout school decision-making
  - meaningful student involvement in education advocacy
  - change in compositions of adult committees and boards to meaningfully involve students
  - required student involvement in all decisions
  - creation or development of student advisory structures
  - change in consultative structures to include students
126. Is there a report including the summative effects of Meaningful Student Involvement developed?
127. Are the summative results of Meaningful Student Involvement collected and distributed to students and adults?

For free scoring and an  
evaluation, please email your  
completed Assessment to  
Adam Fletcher at  
[adam@soundout.org](mailto:adam@soundout.org)

## **About SoundOut**

For more than a decade, SoundOut has supported K-12 schools, districts, and state education agencies across the United States and around the world. The focus of our training, tools, and technical assistance is Meaningful Student Involvement.

We would love to support your school or agency. Please contact our office today to discuss the possibilities.

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