POSITIVE CLIMATE FOR LEARNING – Empowering students and building school pride

Definition: Effective schools build a culture where teachers and students work together, and where student voice, agency and leadership are understood as inter-related factors that contribute to the notion of empowerment and sense of school pride.

Student voice is not simply about giving students the opportunity to communicate ideas and opinions; it's about students having the power to influence change. Authentic student voice provides opportunities for students to collaborate and make decisions with adults around what and how they learn and how their learning is assessed. This is known to lead to improved educational outcomes.

Student agency refers to the level of autonomy and power that a student experiences in the learning environment. Student voice and agency are intrinsically linked. Agency gives students the power to direct and take responsibility for their learning, creating independent and self-regulating learners.

Student leadership is not confined to a small group of individuals, as leadership potential is inherent within all learners. Student leadership includes listening to and being able to clarify the issues of the students they represent and advocating on their behalf. Student leaders have an increased sense of responsibility to help others and to model leadership principles and values. Trust, autonomy and relationships are enhanced through the development of leadership qualities.

Effective schools validate and embrace student voice, agency and leadership. They understand the importance of creating learning environments that promote independence, interdependence and self-motivation. They build productive and inclusive school cultures for all adults and students.

Effective teachers enable students to be active participants in their learning. They are responsive to student feedback and adapt their teaching practice to suit the needs of all students.

When students experience a sense of belonging and significance through voice, agency and leadership, they are likely to articulate their sense of empowerment and school pride.

The Essential Elements underpin FISO and provide a foundation for school improvement. They are evident (indicated by green shading) at the Evolving stage and are further articulated in the Embedding and Excelling stages in some dimensions.

Essential Element 4	Student voice, leadership, and agency in own learning activated so students have positive school experiences and can act as partners in school improvement		
Emerging	**Evolving**	**Embedding**	**Excelling**
The school activates student voice.			
A Student Representative Council (SRC) has been established. Student opinions are invited by SRC in relation to school activities such as fund-raising and student events. The school sees student voice as important in building student motivation and engagement and is developing its policies and practice Student views are expressed through formal channels such as the SRC or student focus groups.	The school ensures that a broad range of students have the opportunity to provide meaningful feedback, including those students who are disengaged or struggling to succeed. Authentic student voice is sought to enhance the quality of relationships and to inform teacher practice. The school has adequate processes to respond to student voice. The knowledge, skills and attitudes required to build authentic student voice are incorporated into classroom programs and practice. Students, through SRC, have a role in the school improvement processes	The school proactively involves SRC and other students in decision making about planning and improvement. The school provides professional learning for all staff to support the skills of dialogue, listening and responding to student voice. Students have meaningful input to many aspects of the school. Student surveys and other data are analysed by students and teachers to promote discussions and inform decisions. Student voice is evident in the school review improvement cycle through various touchpoints.	The school has highly developed structures to engage with, listen and respond to the full range of student perspectives and feedback. Teachers and students work collaboratively to reflect on and improve teaching and learning across the whole school. The school has deep knowledge of the levels and complexities of student voice and how it impacts on school culture. The school's improvement cycle has student voice deeply embedded in it as an integral and natural element. Schools can describe and demonstrate the impact of student voice, agency and leadership.
The school activates student agency			
Students have some limited opportunities to direct the path of their learning Students set some goals in narrow aspects of their learning. They are not highly aware of their own learning progress	Students have a range of opportunities to contribute to their learning. Teachers and students set individual learning goals together and teachers help students to identify their progress. Teachers provide scaffolding for students to solve their own problems. Through feedback, they provide support that enables students to develop agency by assessing their own work and solving their own problems. Some students share examples of their work through conferencing opportunities.	Some students and teachers have developed an authentic learning partnership and participate in three-way conferences. Examples are seen of students taking responsibility for their learning and becoming independent, self-regulating learners. Students have the opportunity to influence the curriculum. The school has implemented formal and informal processes for teachers and students to collaborate on school planning and improvement, and students are included in decision-making.	Students and teachers have an authentic learning partnership throughout the school. Students take responsibility for their learning and are, on the whole, independent and self-regulating learners. Students can track and measure their own learning growth. They can present a sophisticated understanding of their learning and achievements through three-way conferences. Students are involved in the design and implementation of school programs and policy and actively contribute ideas about student-led learning opportunities.
The school activates student leadership			

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The student leadership model consists of a small proportion of students who hold leadership positions. Student leaders are generally those students who are confident, articulate or recognised leaders. Opportunities exist for student leaders to have a formal presence at school events. Opinions from student leaders are invited in relation to school activities and events including student achievements, celebrations and sporting successes.	Students have access to a broad range of structured leadership roles in the school and training that provides them with opportunities to develop a range of skills, including communication and decision-making. Student leaders exert influence in the development of school rules, policies and the improvement of facilities through formal feedback processes and decision-making forums. The school demonstrates values and attitudes that support student leadership. Student leadership is included in the school's policy framework to enable young people to be active and empowered citizens who apply democratic principles and behaviours.	The school has a clear understanding of what student leadership involves and ensures its student representative models are inclusive. Students have access to a well-developed range of student leadership roles and forums that build their skills and capacity across the school community. Student leaders are drawn from a diverse range of student backgrounds and are not necessarily restricted to those who are articulate, and high achievers. Student leaders influence decision making on behalf of students across wide-ranging aspects of the school.	The school has sophisticated opportunities and structured models that promote school-wide, leadership practice. School structures are highly developed to ensure that student leadership is enmeshed in the fabric of the school. The school actively develops leadership skills in all students, and works with a variety of community stakeholders to provide opportunities for students to practise these skills. Student leaders can confidently represent their school and its students. They generate meaningful discussions on behalf of those students whose voices are less likely to be heard, who are disengaged or who lack the skills and confidence to express views and opinions.
The school builds school pride and connectedness			
The school infrastructure enhances a teaching and learning environment that engenders a feeling of pride and connectedness in students. Student achievement is celebrated at a classroom level. Discussions about students' achievements with peers, parents/carers and staff are positive and designed to build self-esteem and pride.	Regular opportunities for sharing and celebrating student and school achievements are planned to build pride and connectedness through school assemblies, classroom presentations and newsletters. Students demonstrate a sense of enjoyment in learning. They regard their teachers positively and feel they are taught in an engaging way.	Students feel well connected to their peers and to the school. The pride that students and staff feel about their school is highly evident to all who visit the school. Students take responsibility for the celebration of school achievements and are actively involved in the assurance of a safe and welcoming environment for all.	Students have a deep feeling that they belong at school. They have strong social ties and feel acceptance, care and support from others. They feel that they are truly a part of a school community. This sense of pride in the school and its culture is shared by teachers, students, parents and the broader community.