

8 QUESTIONS SCHOOL LEADERS CAN ASK TO ELEVATE STUDENT VOICE



Understanding the student experience is essential for building a school culture that supports well-being, engagement, and growth. But too often, student voice is collected reactively—after challenges surface or decisions are already made. These eight questions are designed to change that. They help school leaders go beyond academic metrics and hear directly from students about what's working, what's challenging, and what truly matters. You don't necessarily need a spreadsheet or a formal process to begin—just curiosity and a willingness to listen.

1. *What words or feelings come to mind when you're heading to school on a Monday morning?*
2. *What makes it hard to find balance between school, life, and your well-being at this school?*
3. *If you were a teacher, what's one change you'd make to reduce student stress or pressure?*
4. *Can you describe something a teacher did that made you feel seen or understood as a learner?*
5. *Do you feel comfortable asking for help when you need it? Why or why not?*
6. *What helps you feel less overwhelmed when school gets stressful?*
7. *How much voice or choice do you feel you have in your learning?*
8. *What's one thing you wish adults at school better understood about student life?*

FIVE WAYS TO ASK THESE QUESTIONS

Student Listening Circles: Use the questions in small group discussions during advisory, leadership classes, or student council meetings. Create space for students to speak freely, and follow up with action.

Parent & Community Communication: Share themes from student feedback in newsletters, board presentations, or town halls to highlight a commitment to listening and continuous improvement.

1:1 Check-Ins: Share the questions with advisors, counselors, or grade-level deans as prompts for meaningful one-on-one conversations.

Feedback Forms: Turn the questions into an anonymous digital or paper feedback form. Use the results to help drive school improvement plans.

Faculty Meeting Reflections: Share student responses with the staff to spark a discussion about how classroom practices or policies affect students.

BONUS TIPS



CLOSE THE LOOP

When students share, let them know it matters. It shows you're not just collecting input, you're acting on it. Try using these phrases:

"We heard you - and here's what we're trying."

"Here's how your feedback is guiding our next steps."



KEEP IT GOING

Great conversations don't just happen once. Revisit these questions from time to time to show that listening is part of your culture, not a one-time initiative.

Challenge Success is a non-profit affiliated with the Stanford Graduate School of Education. We partner with K-12 school communities to elevate student voice and implement research-based, equity-centered strategies that improve well-being, engagement, and belonging. Our vision is that educational systems value each student for their unique identities, assets, and individual definitions of success and effectively prepare them for the variety of opportunities and challenges they will encounter in school and beyond.