Assessing the Conditions for Student Voice
Fielding, M. (2001) Forum. 43(2)

Speaking

- Who is allowed to speak?

- To whom are they allowed to speak?

- What are they allowed to speak about?

- What language is encouraged / allowed?

- Who decides the answer to these questions?

- How are those decisions made?

- How, when, where, to whom and how often are those decisions communicated?

Listening

- Who is listening?

- Why are they listening?

- How are they listening?

Skills

- Are the skills of dialogue encouraged and supported through training or other appropriate means?

- Are those skills understood, developed and practised within the context of democratic values and dispositions?

- Are those skills themselves transformed by those values and dispositions?

Attitudes & Dispositions

- How do those involved regard each other?

- To what degree are the principle of equal value and the dispositions of care felt reciprocally and demonstrated through the reality of daily encounter?

Systems

- How often does dialogue and encounter in which student voice is centrally important occur?

- Who decides?

- How do the systems enshrining the value and necessity of student voice mesh with or relate to other organisational arrangements (particularly those involving adults)?

Organisational Culture

- Do the cultural norms and values of the school proclaim the centrality of student voice

within the context of education as a shared responsibility and shared achievement?

- Do the practices, traditions and routine daily encounters demonstrate values supportive of student voice?

Spaces

- Where are the public spaces (physical and metaphorical) in which these encounters might take place?
- Who controls them?
- What values shape their being and their use?

Action

- What action is taken?
- Who feels responsible?
- What happens if aspirations and good intentions are not realised?

The Future

- Do we need new structures?
- Do we need new ways of relating to each other?

Resources

- [**SoundOut.org**](#)
- [**What Kids Can Do**](#)
- [**Girls Speak Out**](#)
- [**The Free Child Project**](#)
- [**Students at the Center**](#)