

Child Participation Case study

How a primary school teacher ensures that children are given a voice in decision-making on what happens in the classroom every day

1) Background information

This is an account of how a primary school teacher gives children a voice in decision-making on what happens in the classroom every day. The school she works in is a Dublin DEIS school and the children in her class are Senior Infants (6 – 7 years old).

2) How we gave space, voice, audience and influence to young people's views

SPACE: How we ensured a safe and inclusive space to hear the views of young people at

Things we considered	What we did
How I make sure that children and young people feel safe to express their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none">I use comfortable, familiar spaces and follow the rules of circle time, with Talking Ted as our 'talking object'. We agree on talking rules before children share their thoughts to ensure that they feel safe to give their views.
How I allow enough time to listen to and hear their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none">We have a 'welcome meeting' each morning, during which I outline the day's timetable. I let them know what topic we will be discussing in our 'talking time'. This gives the children time to gather their thoughts and opinions on the topic and empowers them to share their views.
How I make sure that all children or young people are heard	<ul style="list-style-type: none">We use an 'ideas box' into which they post ideas on our talking topic (in writing or drawing).The idea box helps reluctant talkers and allows controversial opinions to be shared anonymously.At the end of each day, the idea box is opened and each idea is further addressed ensuring that all voices are heard.

VOICE: How we gave young people a voice in decisions

Things we considered	What we did
How I support children and young people to give their views and be heard	<ul style="list-style-type: none">I give children information on the talking topic before the conversation starts. We use books in the library on the general topic, explore the topic in a variety of ways during Aistear or visit the physical space/activity being discussed.
How they can raise things that matter to them	<ul style="list-style-type: none">We use a flip chart to note ideas that come up during the day that they would like to explore in more detail.

Child Participation Case study

	I find this a way of acknowledging and respecting children's ideas and a clever way of banking topics that are important to children.
How I offer them different ways of giving their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I try to make sure each child is heard by using a variety of media. • I find that different ways of sharing inspires children to think about topics in new ways (drawing, photography, map-making, puppets, voice recording apps, book creator app).

AUDIENCE: How we made sure that there was an audience (decision-makers) for young people's views

Things we considered	What we did
How I show children and young people that you are ready and willing to listen to views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I always show respect by listening with my ears, eyes and face. <p>I often repeat back what I have heard to show that I have been listening and to ensure that I have heard their views correctly.</p>
How I make sure that they understand what you can do with their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recently I asked the children how we could improve our school yard. They took photographs of things they would like to change, things that could be improved and things they would like to stay the same. • I explained that their opinions would result in changes, but that not all ideas could be implemented, such as having a zoo in the yard!!!

INFLUENCE: How we made sure that young people's views were taken seriously

Things we considered	What we did
How they know the level of influence they can have	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I explain that all their opinions are important and will be listened to. • I am careful to inform children how much influence they can have on decisions. <p>I ensure that children understand exactly what areas they can influence and in what way.</p>
How I give them feedback	I always give the children feedback in the same medium they gave their views. For example, if they used photographs to represent their views I use photographs to present feedback to them.

Child Participation Case study

How I share with them the impact of their views on decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I give children information about how the audience received their views.• I let them know what decision was made and how their views influenced the decision.
How I explain the reasons for decisions taken	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I am very honest with children about the reasons for the decision taken.• In my experience, children appreciate being given the reasons for decisions taken.

