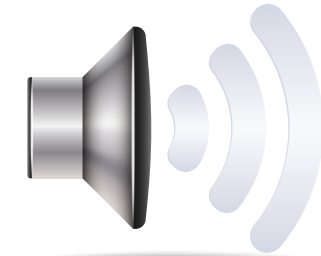


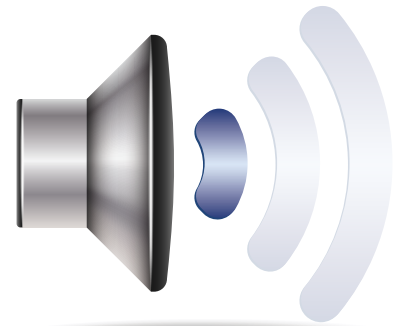
TURN UP THE VOLUME!

**Jack Arend**Associate Director,
AWSP

Students want to talk to **YOU!** They want to share their ideas, their needs, their stories and their dreams. They deeply desire to know their voice matters in all aspects of the school, beyond the theme for the next dance or what the reward will be when a fundraising goal is reached. Most importantly, they desire to have a connection with each and every adult in the building, especially **YOU** and your building leadership team.

At our recent AWSP professional learning event, *Launching Principal Leadership and Building Effective Leadership*, we invited a student panel to share their thoughts and perspectives on student voice. What happened during these sessions was truly amazing!

As the student panel began sharing responses to our prompts, I noticed laptops started to close, phones were turned off and one by one, the building leaders began to lean forward and move to the front of their chair. Students from Sumner High, Harrison Prep, Renton High and Kent-Meridian High were able to share simple things every principal could do to experience the power and impact of student voice in their building. What follows are the three prompts we used and a few of the panel responses:

**PRINCIPAL EVALUATION CRITERIA***Creating a Culture, Ensuring School Safety***QUESTION #1: WHAT MAKES A GREAT PRINCIPAL?****“Make time for the students.”**

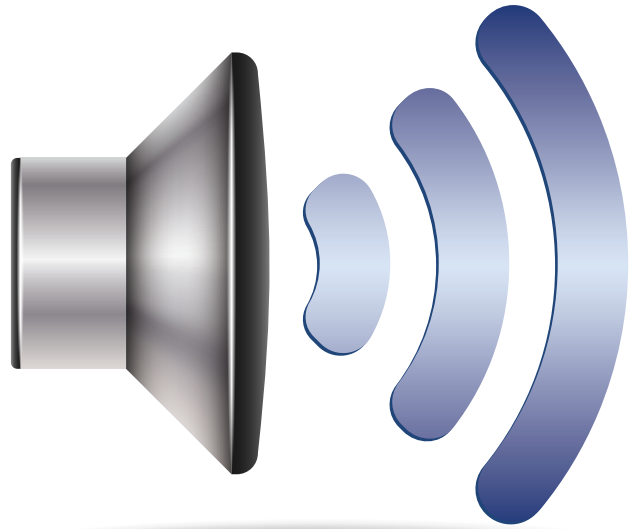
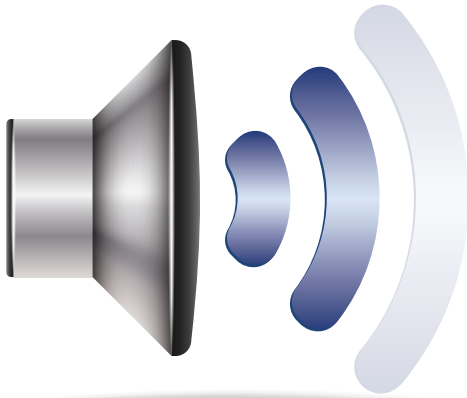
The students all shared how much they appreciate when a building leader stops what they are doing and spends time with students. Put down the clipboard, cell phone or radio and connect with the students.

“Know the names of your students.”

“When my principal greets me by name, it is more than polite or nice, it is proof they actually care about me.” Each student commented on the powerful impact when their building principal or assistant principal called them by their name. They all acknowledged what a huge job this can be for leaders and the significance of the message it sends to the entire student body.

“Be cohesive with your staff.”

Our panel shared it is quite noticeable to students if the principal and/or leadership team does not connect with the entire staff. They shared how much they enjoy hearing positive comments about the staff from their principal. What a great reminder that the students in our building hang onto every word we say, even if we think they are not listening.



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QUESTION #2: WHERE DO YOU FEEL STUDENT VOICE COULD BETTER BE USED IN YOUR SCHOOL?

“Ask what your students need to feel safe at school.” Students want to be involved with decisions around physical and emotional safety at their school. I wonder how student perception of emergency drills and procedures would help to influence the school safety plan? Do you have students on your safety committee?

“Ask your student body how they view their school.” One panelist shared that principals might be pleasantly surprised with how kids view their school, but shared they are rarely asked to provide input on what they like about their school and what they wish was different.

“Hold a Student Union or Town Hall Meeting and let the students share what is on their mind. No agenda, just ask us how we are doing, or what we think we might need to be successful.” Think of the questions you could ask and the

information you could receive in this type of setting. The feedback from the students in your school, regardless of age, could be very powerful and informative for you and your leadership. What a great way to provide space for student voice to be heard in your school.

QUESTION #3: I WISH MY PRINCIPAL KNEW...

“We care... a lot!”

“Being a student is just one of the many titles we have.” (Students are involved in clubs, hobbies, sports, musicians, jobs, tutoring, etc.)

“How we are doing... really! We want to tell you!”

Students want to have a relationship with all the adults in the building, and that includes the building leaders.

“We want to be treated like more than just a number. We are more than our test scores.”

Once you allow the volume to be turned up on student voice, there is no limit to the positive impact it can have on your school and your leadership. Students want to join with you to improve their school and are eagerly waiting for their voice to be heard. At the end of the day it is not about test scores, SMART goals, or budgets, but about whether you have listened to, learned from, and led with your students. ■

