School Voices Research-Practice Partnership: A Guide for Schools

The School Voices Research-Practice Partnership (School Voices RPP) is an initiative that started between **University of Southampton** researchers and schools **(hub schools)** in the city of Southampton (**St John's Primary and Nursery School, St Mary's CE Primary School, Redbridge Primary School).**

The purpose

The **purpose** of the School Voices Research-Practice Partnership (RPP) is:

To support schools in **responding to student diversity** to **improve learning outcomes for all**. This will be achieved by focusing on **students' voices and dialogues** between teachers and children and young people through participatory research approaches.

The planning process

The following steps will help you with planning the work in your school:

1. Identify who will be involved in the process. Ideally, trios of teachers and their classes can work together, but this may not always be possible.
2. What is your **area of focus**?
   There are three ways to decide your area of focus:
   a) Based on discussions between teachers and headteachers.
   b) Involve students in your schools in identifying the area of focus.
   c) Involve both adults and students in identifying the area of focus.

Students voting for the most important issues according to them

3. Based on the area of focus, formulate an **initial research question** e.g.
   - How can we ensure that our recently arrived students from other countries have friends to play with at playtime?
   - How can we support students who struggle with speaking in front of the class with confidence?
   - How can we help all students develop their writing skills?
4. Have some **success indicators** based on your area of focus (e.g. all children/students have someone to play with, the most reluctant speakers are able to express their views in front of their classmates). However, allow for

flexibility, since new indicators may emerge later, based on the areas that will be identified by students themselves.

5. Agree which **participatory methods/techniques** (e.g. Diamond nine ranking activity, sticky notes, interviews etc.) you will use to explore your research question and choose one of the two routes below for introducing these:

   a) **Teachers leading student voice activities.** This can be done during lesson time with whole classes or outside lesson time.

For ideas about various student voice activities download for free:
Guide_RespondingtoDiversity (p.12-21 and p.23)
Students'VoicesToolkit_ReHaRe

   b) **Some students being trained as researchers**, who then lead activities (e.g. observations, interviews with other students etc.). If you will train student researchers decide on the criteria for selecting those students. It is good to link such decisions to your research focus. For example, if your focus is on students who are from other countries, or who are not confident, it would be good to choose students researchers who are perceived to belong in this group. Ensuring gender balance and knowing the personalities of students and how these may affect the group dynamics should also be considered.

For ideas about training student researchers read this document:
PreparingstudentstobeResearchers_ReHaRe

Training pupil researchers

Pupil Ambassadors creating the items for the Diamond 9 ranking activity

Student researchers carrying out the diamond 9 ranking activity

Photo elicitation with the pupil researchers

Students using coloured paper to express emotions

6. Have a plan about the timeline of the activities. A chart clearly showing when the work is taking place over the coming months is helpful, especially if you are developing student researchers who will observe lessons in other classes that need to be informed

about these visits in advance. Always allow for flexibility in your plan.

7. Analyse students' perspectives that are gathered through the participatory research activities. Decide who is involved in the analysis, including students themselves, especially if you trained some as researchers.

8. Take actions based on the analysis and discussions with students and communicate to all students about these actions and how they relate to their suggestions.

9. Review your success indicators and monitor progress in relation to those.

10. Identify successes that emerged through the process, as well as challenges.

Pupil researchers carrying out classroom observations

Pupil researchers and teachers having dialogues about learning and teaching

Support

Support to schools that wish to introduce these ideas in their contexts is offered by the university researchers and the leads of the hub schools. The support takes different forms at different stages, such as occasional visits to each of the schools from university staff and other key members from the hub schools or via emails. School

network meetings are also an important source of support.

The hub school leads and the university researchers are taking the role **of critical friends,** both supporting and challenging in a constructive manner.

Specific roles of the hub schools:

- The leads of the hub schools will help with supporting and ensuring that the new schools are progressing with the work, considering the complexities of each context. However, each school is leading their own study, based on their chosen focus.

- If the new schools have specific questions about the implementation of the approaches, they can reach out to the leads.

- The leads of the hub schools can also help with devising a pragmatic schedule to complete the work.

- Occasional visits can be carried out by the leads to support and monitor progress in each of the schools, to the extent that this is possible.

- Expanding the approaches in their own schools.

Specific roles of the university researchers:

- Researchers are there to support and monitor the processes in each school. At the start, they will advise alongside the leads of the hub schools about the refinement of the research question/s.

- Visits will be carried out to understand each of the contexts better.

- Observe lessons, or sessions where student voice activities are introduced, training of student researchers is carried out, discussions between teachers and students are taking place.

- May carry out video recordings with teachers', parents' and students' agreements.

- May carry out interviews with teachers and students to explore their ideas about

the whole process and identify implications for practice.

Network meetings

An important element of the process is schools supporting one another and learning from one another. Three network meetings are planned every year. One at the start of the process, where new schools are trained at the university on how to use the suggested approaches. The training is led by university researchers, the hub schools' leads and leads from other schools that participated in the process before.

There are two more network meetings in the year where colleagues from the various schools get together to discuss progress in their schools, and share ideas with the other schools. These network meetigs are a central feature of the process and act as support mechanism, as well as being a source of inspiration. More meetings can be organised, if schools are available.

Network meetings amongst colleagues from various schools

Free Resources

Useful material that you can draw ideas from, based on earlier research. You can download these for free:

Two booklets (named below) and a **video** from the research study **"Responding to diversity by engaging with students' voices: a strategy for teacher development"** (funded by the **European Union**):

- A Guide
- Accounts of Practice

Six booklets (named below) and the **video** from the research study: **"Reaching the 'hard to reach': inclusive responses to diversity through child-teacher dialogue"** (funded by the **European Union**):

- Inclusive Inquiry Guide
- Preparing students to be Researchers: A Guidance Manual
- Accounts of Developments in the five country networks
- Students' Voices Toolkit
- Guidance Document for monitoring Teachers' Thinking and Practices
- Guidance Document for monitoring Students' Engagement

AccountsofPractice_PupilVoiceSouthamptonSchools - from a research study funded by **Research England - Participatory Research Fund, UKRI**).

Our Website

To find out more visit our website: www.schoolvoices.soton.ac.uk

You can watch videos and download for free all the resources that we prepare on: https://schoolvoices.soton.ac.uk/resources/

Our website is updated regularly.

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