Explore Protocol

Description in the Youth Voice Guide

The first stage of youth engagement process is one of **exploration**, a process for mapping current resources, groups, activities, and networks, as well as conducting a scan of existing student participation, with attention to inequities in access.

Definitions of core youth-centered concepts:

Youth Voice – an expression of youth ideas, thoughts, and beliefs through equitable opportunities in which youth expressions are respected and heard.

Youth Engagement – an equitable access and opportunity for youth to participate in activities that are related to their schools, communities, and self.

Youth Leadership – when youth are a genuine part of the decision-making process, identifying and implementing projects of their choice, and gaining the knowledge and skills to better advance the development of their schools, communities, and self.

Framework for Youth Voice, Engagement, and Leadership in Community Schools

Opportunities and resources refer to the approaches and support that youth can have when expressing their thoughts, engaging in programs and activities, and leading the efforts in their schools and communities.

Leading knowledge and skills refer to the capacity and strategies youth can acquire throughout leadership-building program/ project/activities.

Equity refers to the equity procedure schools and communities utilize to advance youth voice, engagement, and leadership in the field.

Part 1

Please describe how your school centers youth leadership, voice, and engagement according to the definitions above. Detail the specific policies, structures, and practices that are provided to youth to ensure they are part of decision-making at their school.

	Opportunities & Resources	Knowledge & Skills for Leadership	Equity
Policies	Ex: One youth is invited to sit in on the leadership council (though they cannot vote). We also have a policy that youth co-lead, with teachers, all community service projects	Ex. We have a new course taught by a teacher, on student leadership	Ex. We have several policies against discrimination of youth of color and youth with disabilities that include access to courses and access to extra-curricular activities.
Structures	Ex. We have a youth governing council that has a teacher advisor and a small budget.	Ex. Youth Governing council Course on youth leadership	Ex. We have race and gender-based student groups to support students
Practices	Ex. We have a large group of older students who are interested in youth leadership activities like tutoring, student government, and school policy	Ex. Several youth have used money from the youth governing council to attend a youth summit each year held at our state's capital.	Ex. The Youth Governing Council just voted to allow all students to have access to AP and IB courses.

Part 2

Create a metaphor that physically shows how youth voice, leadership, and engagement plays at your school based on your mapping exercise above.

Ex. Our metaphor is a mountain. Use voice. Integrated. Into all aspects. Of school and district policies. At the top of the mountain. Our school is currently. 1/10 of the way up the mountain. With some starter policies. And more importantly. We finally have adults (teachers and administrators), who are listening to youth more closely.