Teach the Teacher

Creating positive learning communities through student-led conversations.
Why should students lead conversations about learning?

THE COMPELLING CASE

The school lives of students are heavily dictated by adults. They are told what they can and can’t wear, where they need to be, at what time, the activities they’ll be engaging with, who they will sit with, and even what they need to do when they get home at the end of the school day.

Whilst these structures, rituals and rules are prevalent in many traditional education settings, a movement of schools across the world are starting to recognise the unique perspective that students can bring to the construction of their learning journey, and are developing systems to capture and use student voice for the benefit of all.

When students are active participants in their schools, communities and the education system, not only are they involved purposefully and meaningfully in their own learning, they are also building leadership, confidence and a sense of self-worth. This active engagement can have an impact well beyond a student’s graduation, providing them with strategies, skills and experience in creating positive change in classrooms and communities, and with authentic relationships with forward-thinking and open-minded teachers and school leaders, a precursor to strong mentoring relationships in the future.

Additionally, schools that are choosing to co-construct the learning experiences with young people are benefitting. When students are given agency and voice, and opportunities to integrate their perspectives into decision-making processes, their schools are more effective in the work they are trying to do, and the co-construction benefits both the students directly involved in the process and their peers.

Beyond having an active Student Council, one of the most significant ways schools are engaging students as “stakeholders in their own learning” is through developing school cultures where students and teachers can talk openly about learning and pedagogy that suits their collective needs best.

“Listening to young people doesn’t mean unilaterally considering their perspective, it means recognising that young people have a perspective on the world that adults can’t share, and that their perspective should be welcomed alongside the wisdom that adult perspectives bring.” - Brion-Meisels, 2016

The organisation behind the Teach the Teacher program, fundamentally believe that students have unique expertise and perspectives on learning, teaching, and schooling, and should have the opportunity to actively shape their own education. We are excited to profile their approach to student-led conversations about teaching and learning through the Teach the Teacher framework in this HundrED How To Guide.
Getting started: Creating conditions for student-led learning conversations.

If you’re just beginning your journey into incorporating student voice into the culture of your school meaningfully and purposefully, here are some techniques you might like to try to dip your toe in before you dive into the ocean.

1. ESTABLISH A STUDENT VOICE OR STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

Most schools across the world have some form of Student Council, a formal opportunity for students to provide feedback to the school leadership team about the vision and mission of the school, to offer suggestions for future school improvement, and to create a positive school culture and environment for current students. All too often, however, these Councils are reduced to a lunchtime meeting once a month where the next school disco is planned, or complaints about the current school uniform are fielded. Instead, Student Representative or Student Voice Councils should:

1. have an authentic role in school decision making;
2. support council members to understand the important role that students can and should have in the school and how to make this happen;
3. build the competence of student leaders at all year levels and allocate resources for training and succession planning.
For more tips about setting up a Student Voice Council or a Student Representative Council, head to VicSRC’s website.

2. GET FEEDBACK FROM STUDENTS REGULARLY AND LET THEM ANALYZE IT

There are plenty of surveying tools for teachers to use to garner feedback from students during class about lesson content and structure, and about the climate of the school. If you haven’t yet landed on the perfect tool to gather student feedback at your school, take a look at Loop, an app which helps to give all students a voice in the classroom.

Powerfully, in addition to seeking feedback from students based on adult-developed questions, you might like to try inviting your students to plan, conduct and analyze the surveys themselves. By placing students in the roles of Youth Researchers, they are empowered to create their own research questions, collect feedback and make observations, draw conclusions and suggest recommendations for the benefit of the whole school community.

3. INCLUDE AUTHENTIC STUDENT REPRESENTATION AT ALL LEVELS

Have you considered having a student as a member of your School Leadership Team? Do you have a Student Representative on your school Board? Are students involved in conversations had by the Curriculum Committee? Do you include students on interview panels for new staff members?

If students are truly key stakeholders in their learning, their voice at all levels of the school needs to be heard, and their participation in meetings should be active and valued.

4. START A CONVERSATION WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES

To support a culture where student voice is valued, VicSRC have a wide range of resources available to help start conversations about the importance of student-led learning conversations.

For an example of students speaking articulately about their needs, take a look at their footage of students speaking at the Annual VicSRC Congress on a range of issues from Learning and Assessment to Classroom Management to Student-Teacher Relationships.

If you’re ready to start a conversation about embedding Teach the Teacher processes into the school culture at your site, the Teach the Teacher Explainer video might be of interest as a conversation starter with your colleagues and School Leadership Team.
Written by students, the Teach the Teacher Program is a student-led professional learning program for teachers that enables students to address issues affecting them.

Teach the Teacher

Teach the Teacher provides a model for students, teachers and principals to connect, explore and share ideas in a constructive and judgement free environment, developing stronger and more effective student-teacher relationships. By giving students a greater say in their education, Teach the Teacher aims to create an inclusive culture where everyone’s voices are equally heard.

Over a 7-step process, students at your school will be given all of the tools, strategies and processes they need to lead the program, with the support of the School Leadership Team and a guiding teacher.

There are 3 models of Teach the Teacher based on the level of experience the school has with student voice. The Ignite stream is a bespoke program for schools with a diverse student population or an alternative learning setting. The Empower stream is for schools with active student voice practice and student leadership structure. The Sustain stream is a refresher course for schools who have previously participated in the program.

Teach the Teacher has been designed by VicSRC Student Executives and is a flexible process that is suitable for primary and secondary schools. It can be run with support from VicSRC or independently through engagement with an online course.
Students, teachers, principals and the VicSRC all play an active role in managing and supporting the Teach the Teacher program in schools across Victoria.

**Students** take the lead in organising all aspects of the Teach the Teacher program, from establishing a Teach the Teacher committee, representing other students, promoting the program and regularly attending meetings.

**Teachers** play a lead role in supporting their students to organise the Teach the Teacher program. They help students liaise with school leadership and the VicSRC, invite teachers to the professional learning session, distribute and collect evaluation, book training days and give general guidance and support.

**Principals** play an essential role in emphasising the importance of the Teach the Teacher program in reviewing school practices. They show their support by agreeing to run a Teach the Teacher program in their school, by encouraging the contribution of all participants, and by committing to seriously consider outcomes and recommended strategies. They might choose to make it part of the school’s strategic planning and ongoing professional development program, as VicSRC has seen at some schools.

**VicSRC** provides guidance and support to students and teachers in the planning, preparation and development of the Teach the Teacher program. They deliver a webinar and facilitate a workshop for the students so they feel confident and prepared for their professional learning session with their teachers. The VicSRC liaises directly with students, teachers, principals and government departments to ensure the Teach the Teacher program is a positive experience for everyone and promotes authentic student voice.

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**The Specifics**

These 7 steps are designed to be led over a 4-term school year, although you can take the process at a pace that best suits your school community.

**STEP ONE: What’s the big idea?**

Students and staff explore the Teach the Teacher website, see what other schools are doing and register their interest to get their school involved.

**STEP TWO: Begin the conversations**

Students form their committee, enrol in the online course and participate in a Teach the Teacher intro session.

**STEP THREE: Get ready for new ideas**

Students participate in a Teach the Teacher training workshop at school to help prepare and plan their Professional Development session with their teachers.

**STEP FOUR: Deliver the PD**

Students deliver their Teach the Teacher Professional Development Session for their teachers and start the collaboration.

**STEP FIVE: Plan for positive change**

Students debrief with the rest of their team to consolidate the ideas from the PD session and identify the steps, strategies and goals needed for making positive change.

**STEP SIX: Taking the next step**

Implementing their strategy. How can students and teachers continue to work together to create this positive change?

**STEP SEVEN: Making a last impact**

Students directly involved in the process report to all stakeholders (students, teachers, principals and VicSRC) about how they are enacting change.

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“It has been an eye-opener for me because it has allowed me to appreciate the art of teaching and learning.”

- Year 12 Student
The Impact

Teach the Teacher started in 2011 as an initiative that was developed through a VicSRC Student Conference, with the launching of the first pilot program the same year. Since then, approximately 150 schools across Australia have successfully engaged with it.

Students benefit from taking part in Teach the Teacher in a variety of ways. Many gain confidence to speak up more in a classroom and wider school setting, most discover a greater empathy towards teachers, and all have a heightened awareness of how they and their classmates are being taught.

– Zack Pretlove, SRC Advisor, Melbourne Girls’ College

Schools like Mount Waverley Secondary College and Roxburgh College in Victoria have used the Teach the Teacher model effectively to engage students and teachers in collaborative conversations about growth mindset and mental health awareness, respectively.

In 2015, Mount Waverley Secondary College set up a committee of 9 engaged students from Year 11 and 12 to lead the program. They collaborated with Scoresby Secondary College and followed the 7-step Teach the Teacher process together. Based on information collected from student surveys, the group decided that the focus for these schools in 2015 was on teacher feedback for learners. They ran the PD sessions for teachers after doing a lot of groundwork (including reading ‘Visible Teaching’ by John Hattie) and then presented a range of theories and activities to engage in conversation about feedback techniques with the teachers present in the room. As a result of using the Teach the Teacher process, Mount Waverley Secondary College experienced shifts not only in teacher efficacy around feedback and increased insights for teachers about what students find most valuable, but also a sense of connectedness, pride and camaraderie between students and teachers.

“I have learnt so much about the hardships of teachers, the challenges they face, and the art of teaching. I have also learnt so much about the behind-the-scenes work of educators, the research behind all the learning and teaching techniques implemented and the complex field of education research.”

– Madu Balashanmugan, Teacher the Teacher Team, Mt Waverley Secondary

For a comprehensive series of case studies featuring schools that have used the Teach the Teacher model, visit the Teach The Teacher website.

How do I get involved?

The Teach the Teacher program is suitable for primary and secondary school students with the support of their SRC Coordinator (or likewise). Most schools engage between 5 and 25 students directly in the process each year, ultimately benefiting every learner at the school. Whilst Teach the Teacher was developed in Victoria, Australia, VicSRC want to ensure that many students and teachers can benefit from the program as possible through the following two options:

OPTION ONE: THE FACE-TO-FACE TEACH THE TEACHER PROGRAM

This is suited for schools across Australia and involves face-to-face workshops that are supported by VicSRC. All VIC program costs can be found on the Teach the Teacher website, with VicSRC members receiving a discount to participate in the program. For interstate program delivery costs, contact the VicSRC Projects Coordinator. To support schools to run Teach the Teacher, VicSRC welcomes clusters of 3 schools to work together to reduce the cost to schools. Decide whether you’re best suited to take part in the Ignite, Empower or Sustain stream based on your school context and experience with authentically listening to student voice. Then register your interest via the Teach the Teacher website and someone will get back to you with more information and with your next steps.

OPTION TWO: THE ONLINE TEACH THE TEACHER PROGRAM

This option is suited to schools outside of Victoria and is open to schools both nationally and across the world. The online course is available via the Teach the Teacher website, and consists of a series of modules that follow the 7-step Teach the Teacher process.

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A VICTORIA SPOTLIGHT HUNDRED INNOVATION

Teach the Teacher: Professional learning for teachers, by students.

EST. 2014 IN VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA. AGE GROUP: 5-13 YRS.

To see Teach the Teacher in action, head to https://youtube.be/HHXGUKRC3A4

More information about this innovation and others can be found at hundred.org and educationchangemakers.com/resources/hundred

HUNDRED.ORG
EDUCATIONCHANGEMAKERS.COM