

# Elevating and Honoring Student Voice

Presented by Felicia Singleton & Marcus Jackson  
San Diego County Office of Education



Washington Office of Superintendent of  
**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**



# Closed Captioning

Closed captioning can be activated by clicking the cc button at the bottom of the screen.



# Introductions



**Felicia Singleton, Director, System of Supports**

*Student Services and Programs*

*San Diego County Office of Education*

Area of Focus: Equity Centered Multi-tiered System of Supports, PBIS, Restorative Justice Practices, SEL, Social Work Services



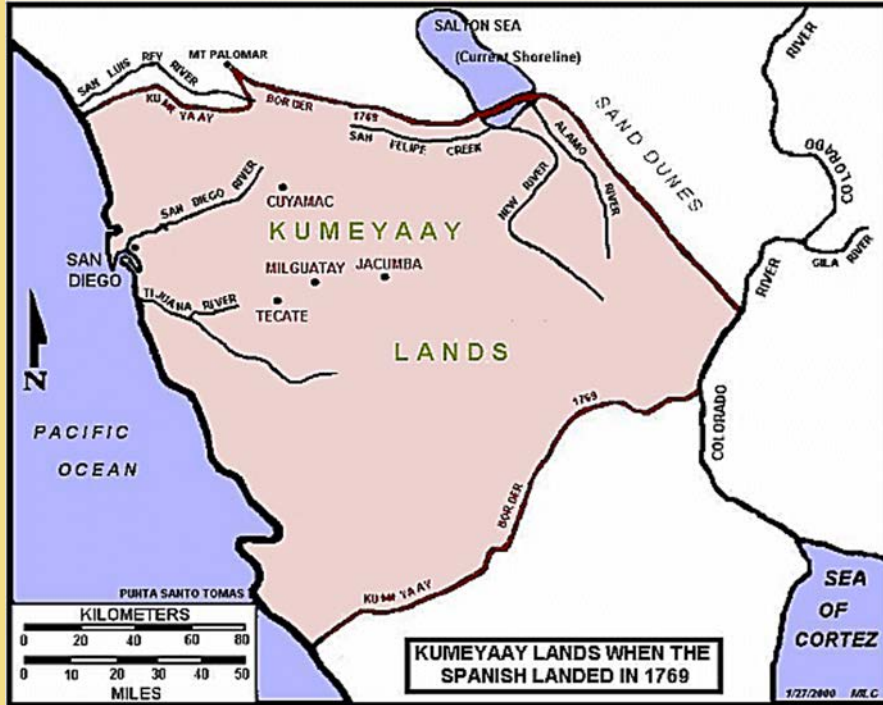
**Marcus Jackson, Executive Consultant**

*South County Special Education Local Plan Area*

*San Diego County Office of Education*

Area of Focus: Equity and Disproportionality, Multi-tiered System of Supports, PBIS, School Culture and Climate

# Land Acknowledgment





# Temperature Check



# Community Agreements

- Assume goodwill
- Be fully present
- *Share the air*
- Stay curious
- Listen and speak from the heart
- Breathe and take care of yourself
- Tell your *own* story

# Goals for our shared time

- Defining student voice
- Overview Hart's Ladder of Participation
- Share SDCOE's student voice journey
- Highlight student video excerpts
- Share ways to include student voice in differing contexts
- Q & A

# What is student voice?

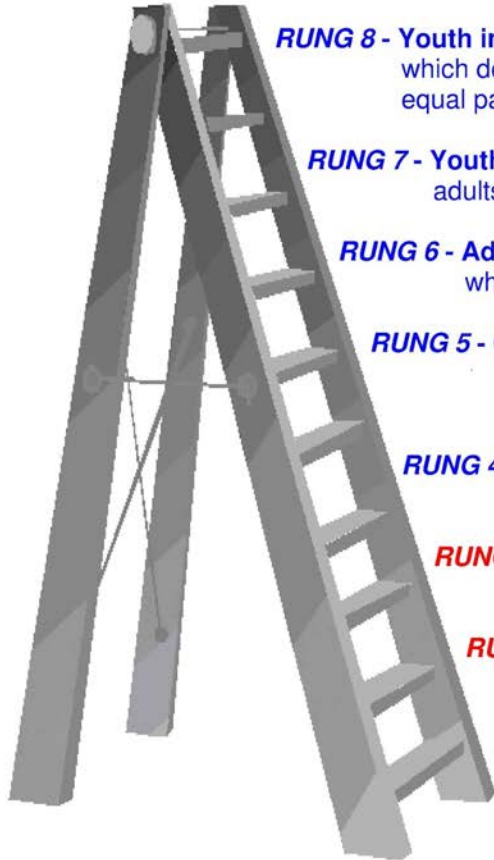




# Evidence of student voice

- Students engaged in ongoing, meaningful discourse with adults about critical issues pertaining to the improvement of their school.
- Students involved in actions that address current school improvement challenges.
- Students and adults sharing decision making power, playing the roles of both teacher and learner, and viewing each other as assets and resources.

## ROGER HART'S LADDER OF PARTICIPATION



**RUNG 8 - Youth initiated shared decisions with adults:** Youth-led activities, in which decision making is shared between youth and adults working as equal partners.

**RUNG 7 - Youth initiated and directed:** Youth-led activities with little input from adults.

**RUNG 6 - Adult initiated shared decisions with youth:** Adult-led activities, in which **decision** making is shared with youth.

**RUNG 5 - Consulted and informed:** Adult-led activities, in which youth are consulted and informed about how their input will be used and the outcomes of adult decisions.

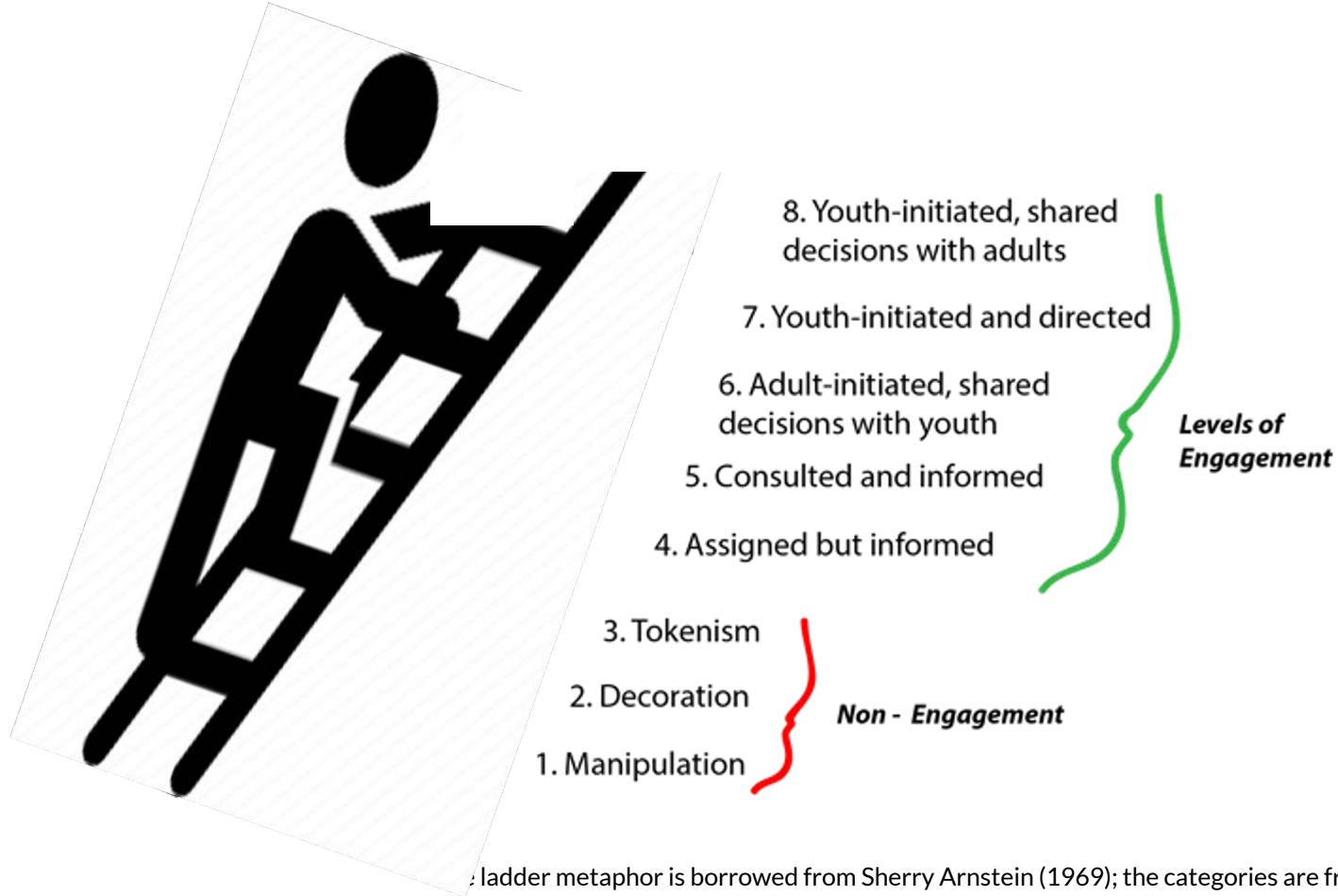
**RUNG 4 - Assigned, but informed:** Adult-led activities, in which youth understand purpose, decision-making process, and have a role.

**RUNG 3 - Tokenism:** Adult-led activities, in which youth may be consulted with minimal opportunities for feedback.

**RUNG 2 - Decoration:** Adult-led activities, in which youth understand purpose, but have no input in how they are planned.

**RUNG 1 - Manipulation:** Adult-led activities, in which youth do as directed without understanding of the purpose for the activities.

# The Goal.....



The ladder metaphor is borrowed from Sherry Arnstein (1969); the categories are from Roger Hart (1992).

# Why listen to student voice?

- Bring fresh perspectives to school topics and problems.
- Create a synergy of ideas for improvement that transcends what either students or educators could accomplish alone.
- Demonstrate that students possess valuable knowledge and perspectives about topics, challenges, and solutions.
- Raise issues of equity and other difficult topics that may go unnoticed, misunderstood, or avoided by adults.
- Provide educators with greater access to information about, and relationships with marginalized student groups, families, and community groups.



30% of California students report meaningful participation in school.

CalSCHLS, 2019

“We are in the system over 12 years.  
Why don’t we have a say?”

“If we are supposed to have an effect  
on the world, why can’t we have an  
effect on the school system?”



# To what extent is student voice honored in your system?

1- Not at all

2- In some contexts

3- We are working on incorporating it into all aspects of our system

4- Student voice is at the center of all decisions that impact students

# Our Student Voice Journey



**BLACK  
STUDENT  
EXPERIENCE  
PANEL**

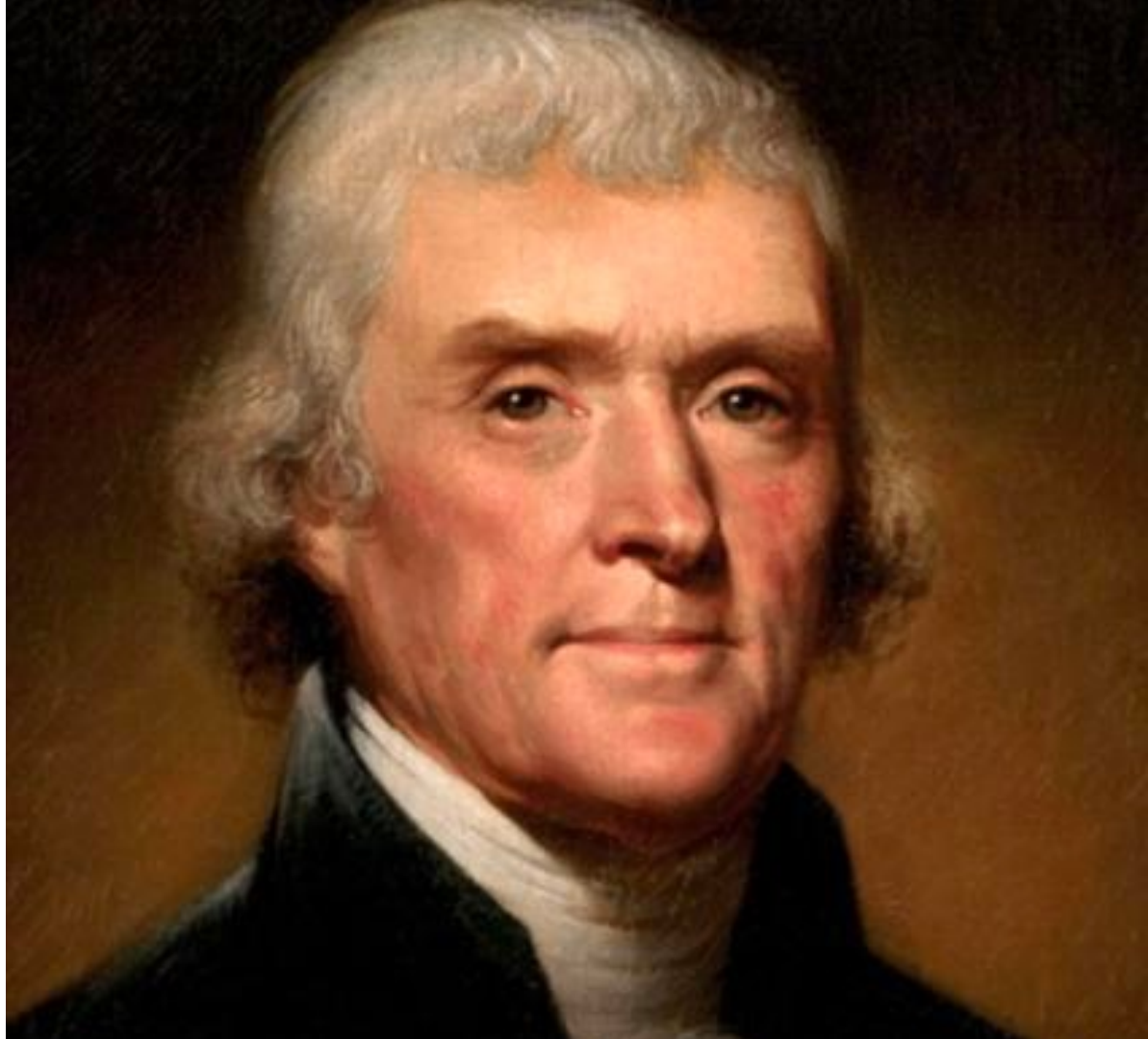
**VIRTUAL  
JULY 15 AT  
10 A.M.**

  
san diego county office of  
**EDUCATION**  
FUTURE WITHOUT BOUNDARIES™



In 1779 Thomas Jefferson proposed a two-track educational system for the laboring and the learned.

In his words, “scholarship would allow a very few of the laboring class to advance by "raking a few geniuses from the rubbish.”



# Leveraging the Opportunity





- Utilized a restorative approach to build community and create a safe space
- Established community norms and agreements
- Brought those who inspired or motivated them into the “room”



Young, Gifted and Black

# Video Debrief

Think about what the students are saying they need (from teachers, school, society...)

How could you capture student voice in your school/district?

# San Diego County Office of Education Student Voice Series

Asian Student Panel

LatinX Student Panel

Native American Student Panel

Middle East Northern Africa (MENA  
Region)

LGBTQ

Students with Disabilities

# Including Student Voice



- Build safe, inclusive environment to listen and learn
- Process for deep conversations to address inequities
- Storytelling or poetry
- Sharing family traditions
- Ideas for projects
- Ambitions or goals
- Discuss Insecurities or challenges
- Sharing hopes or fears

Create space for students to creatively share their culture from their perspective



# Meaningful implementation of student voice strategies

- Diverse student perspectives
- Clear expectations, goals and processes for both students and adults
- Adult-student trust
- Scaffolding for students
- Scaffolding for adults



# Honoring Student Voice at the School Level

- Empower students to drive their learning and foster a positive school climate
- Administer student surveys in a strategic manner to increase participation rates, utilize the results to inform strategy and operations, and create informal information-gathering tools and polls to inform classroom decisions
- Create student governments with meaningful authority

- Provide governments with meaningful authority
- Offer professional development to help teachers and administrators shift mindsets and build skills to effectively implement student voice strategies
- Restructure school schedules to build in time for students and teachers to share perspectives and discuss school policies

# Honoring Student Voice at the District Level

- Support state-required surveys and develop district-level student surveys to gather information about instruction and school climate
- Include students on governing bodies and create advisory committees to engage more student perspectives in important decisions

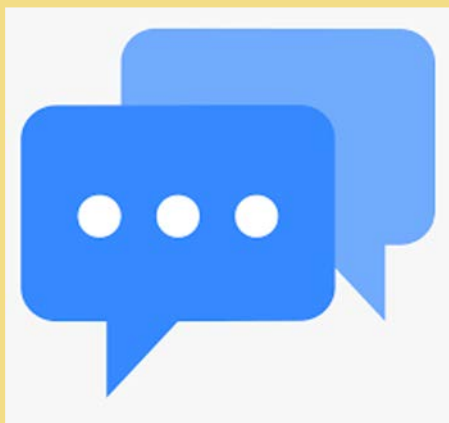
- Create specific initiatives to engage student groups that are historically marginalized
- Encourage schools to build time for student-educator collaboration and enable personalized learning
- Offer student-led conferences and provide training to teachers on how to conduct them

# Honoring Student Voice at the State Level

- **Include a voting student member on the state board**
- **Create student advisory committees for state policymakers**

- **Require statewide surveys to collect information on students' attitude toward school and their community and make the results public**
- **Encourage student-centered learning**

# Call to Action



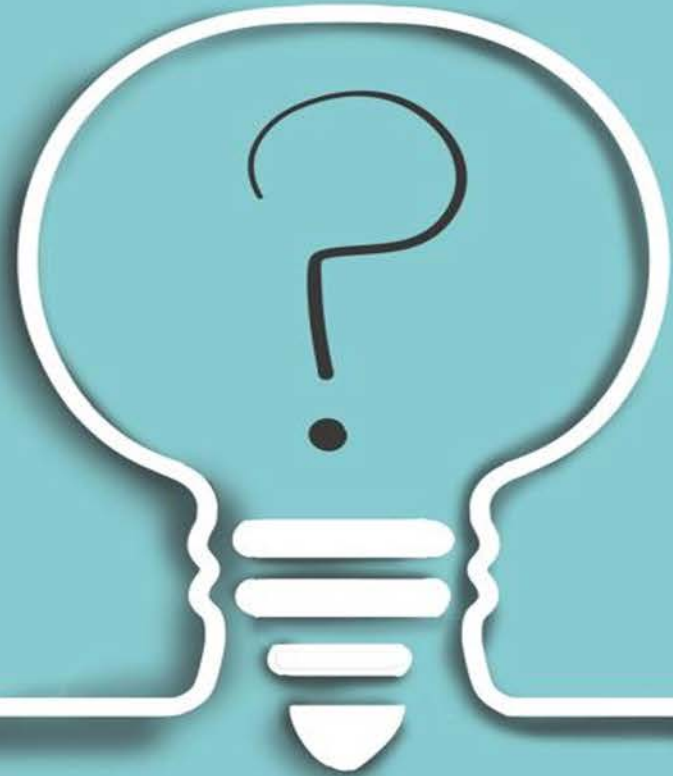
In the chat, give a response to the two bulleted items:

What is something you can try tomorrow to ensure that you are including student voice in your school/district?

What impact do you think your inclusion of student voice will have on your students in the next 30 days?

***“If we create the equitable settings to empower **our** students, we create the opportunities to inspire our students”***

Questions?



# Thank you!

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Marcus Jackson | [marcus.jackson@sdcoe.net](mailto:marcus.jackson@sdcoe.net)



# Session Resources

SDCOE Student  
Voice Videos

LGBTQIA Student  
Voice Panel

Students with  
Disabilities Student  
Video

Hart's Ladder of  
Participation

Speak Out and  
Listen Up!

Elevating Student  
Voice in Education

3 Ways Student  
Voice Can Elevate  
Motivation and  
Engagement

5 Ways to Include  
Student Voice in  
Policymaking

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