Student Empowerment at Rainbow P-12.

Empowering students through voice, agency and leadership.

1. **Rationale**

We acknowledge that the students at Rainbow P-12 College have unique perspectives on learning, teaching and schooling and that they should have the opportunity to actively shape their own education.

Student voice, agency and leadership involves our students actively participating in their schools, communities and the education system, contributing to decision making processes and collectively influencing outcomes by putting forward their views, concerns and ideas.

1. **Definitions**

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| **The Continua of Practice includes the following definitions of student voice, agency and leadership:** |
| **Student voice** is not simply about giving students the opportunity to communicate ideas and opinions; it is about students having the power to influence change. Authentic student voice provides opportunities for students to collaborate and make decisions with adults around what and how they learn and how their learning is assessed. This is known to lead to improved educational outcomes. |
| **Student agency** refers to the level of autonomy and power that a student experiences in the learning environment. Student voice and agency are intrinsically linked. Agency gives students the power to direct and take responsibility for their learning, creating independent and self-regulating learners. |
| **Student leadership** is not confined to a small group of individuals, as leadership potential is inherent within all learners. Student leadership includes listening to and being able to clarify the issues of the students they represent and advocating on their behalf. Student leaders have an increased sense of responsibility to help others and to model leadership principles and values. Trust, autonomy and relationships are enhanced through the development of leadership qualities. |

1. **Structures, processes and practices.**

At Rainbow P-12 College we endeavour to provide the structures, processes and practices that empower students and values and nurtures their student voice, agency and leadership in the following ways (organised in alphabetical order):

| Structure | Elements of empowerment  (A :Agency L: Leadership V:Voice) | Year levels | Processes involved | Outcomes |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Attitude to schools Survey | A V | Gr4-12 | * Completed in May of each year * Whole school approach to delivery * Results discussed at staff meeting * Results discussed with students of specific cohorts * Plan of attack will be formulated for areas of concern with student input | * To highlight strengths and areas of improvement from the student perspective * Act on areas of concern by discussing results with students * Encourage discussions on how to shape the learning environment |
| Avocados | V L | All | * Each teacher has a small group of students from prep-12 * Meet each Thursday during homeroom time * Chance for students to informally discuss issues and offer suggestions | * Students feel comfortable to raise ideas and concerns in an informal setting * Senior students role model character strengths and supportive leadership |
| Bus Captain | L | Yr7-12 | * Elected by bus co-ordinator in conjunction with bus drivers at the start of each year * Monitor student behaviour and requests on designated school bus * Liaise and report to Bus co-ordinator and Principal when necessary | * Provide opportunities to develop communication and leadership skills |
| Duke of Edinburgh | A V L | Yr8-9 | * Class at Year 8/9 or Year 9 level * Students expected to complete Bronze level * Supported by Advance funding * Students come up with 3 goals including one focusing on community service and volunteering. | * Provide scaffolding and support to students to develop confidence in goal setting * Allow students to take on leadership roles in the school and wider community |
| Hands On learning (HOL) | A V L | Yr7-10.. | * Students nominate and undertake an interview to become part of the program * Students involved in Hands on tasks around the school and in the local community | * Students have a say in what projects they take on and what contributions they make to the school |
| Homeroom | A V | Yr7-12 | * Meet 3 times a week (9-9:20am) * Have designated homeroom teachers * An informal chance to raise ideas and concerns, voice opinions and offer suggestions | * Students feel comfortable to raise ideas and concerns in an informal setting |
| Our Space sessions | A V | All | * Part of the Pos.Ed umbrella * Run in the last week of each term * Each year level/group given responsibility of a specific area of the school and use the session to look after, beautify the area | * Encourage a sense of pride in the school * Students have a say in what the physical environment looks like |
| Parent-Teacher interviews | A | All | * Encourage students to attend and participate in interviews * Encourage students to ask questions and seek clarification | * Opportunity for students to be more involved in and take responsibility for their own learning |
| Pivot Surveys | A V | All? | * Completed twice a year (March & September) * Results discussed at staff meeting * Staff encouraged to discuss results on KLA and individual basis * Staff expected to discuss results with students and together come up with a plan of attack to address areas of concern | * Opportunity for students to have a say in each class about the what, how and when of their learning |
| School Captains  Junior & Senior | A V L | Yr 12 | * Elected at the end of preceding year * 3 phase application (if more than one nomination)   Letter – interview – vote   * Lead general assemblies each week * Represent the school both in and outside of the school * Role model expected behaviour * Address issues of concern with the student body * Run the Student forums | * Co-ordinated and visual representation of student leadership * Role modelling leadership skills * Provide an organised approach to discussing ideas, concerns and suggestions |
| School Council student reps. | A V L | Yr7-12 | * Elected by peers for a two year period * Full voting rights on School Council * Represent the student perspective | * Provide a student perspective on School Council |
| School for Student leadership (SSL) | A L | Yr 9 | * If school selected students nominate for position * Students work as a team to organise a Community learning project (CLP) back at school * Transfer of leadership skills and qualities once back at school | * Transfer of leadership skills developed on SSL back at Rainbow |
| SRC  Junior Council & Senior SRC | V L | All | * President elected from Year 11 cohort * Main purpose is to provide activities and food, improve the learning and physical environment for students and raise funds for local and community organisations | * Provide insight into leadership skills and how to communicate effectively and run a meeting * Provide an opportunity for students to have a say in what the school does and what it looks like |
| Student Action teams (SAT) | A L V | All | * Organised on a needs basis for events that arise (drought, bushfires, koalas) | * Opportunity for students to develop leadership and organisational skills * Students supported in following passions and exhibit character strengths |
| Student Forums | A V | All | * Held once a month during homeroom time * Run by school captains * A member of the leadership team will be present at ever meeting * Students encouraged to write down concerns, issues and suggestions and place in suggestion box prior to meeting * Only items from the suggestion box will be raised at each meeting (logistics) * Leadership to take minutes which will be circulated to school captains & staff | * To provide a formalised and organised way to voice ideas, concerns and ask questions |
| Student led Conferences (SLC) | A V | All | * Students organise and present their work to parents/carers twice a year * Students lead the conference | * To provide support and encourage more student involvement in their own learning |
| Suggestion box | A V | All | * There is a suggestion box in both the junior and senior schools * All suggestions to be tabled at student forum that is held once a month | * To provide an organised and formal way of voicing ideas, concerns, suggestions and to ask questions |
| Wellbeing Action team (WBAT) | A V | Gr5-12 | * Meet once a term to discuss wellbeing issues * Team made up of students, parents and staff * Based on Be You model of wellbeing team * Students highlight and discuss needs and issues that arise in the area of student wellbeing | * To provide an opportunity to discuss wellbeing issues, programs, support and concerns |
| Wellbeing survey | A V | Gr3-12 | * New in 2021 * Completed twice a year to monitor student wellbeing * Results to be discussed at all levels including at WBAT meeting | * To monitor the wellbeing of students and discuss any strengths and areas of concern |

1. **Role of the Teacher in the Classroom Context**

The teacher’s task is to create a safe learning environment, an environment built on trust and respect that empowers students to share thoughts, ideas, beliefs and opinions.

When teachers are willing to listen to and learn from their students and provide consistent opportunities for them to use their voices, students develop a sense of ownership for how and what they learn.

All teachers and students need to be able to formulate, articulate and share their ideas with one another.

Some students do not always have the skills for, and understanding of, how to use their voice in meaningful ways. Some students need more practice formulating their opinions than others. But teachers can ensure that every student benefits from learning opportunities that build skills and understandings about student voice, agency and leadership.

Areas of focus may include :

* Student choice in regards to topic
* Student input into how the class will be organized
* Discussion with students on the forms of assessment, timelines etc
* Working together to build a rubrics
* Discussion of PIVOT results
* Student feedback

Using **the FISO improvement cycle**, the following questions may support teachers to reflect on the current status of student voice, agency and leadership in their classrooms. They may also assist teachers to identify where to take action and to evaluate the outcomes of action.

Appendix

1. Role of SRC
2. **School captain information sheet**
3. **Evaluation sheet for evidence of student voice and agency**

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|  | Structures | Processes | Practice | Physical environment |
| Whole school |  |  |  |  |
| Year level |  |  |  |  |
| Class |  |  |  |  |
| Individual |  |  |  |  |

**Resource List**

**Amplify : empowering students through voice, agency and leadership** DET 2018

**Sole Toolkit** Sugata Mitra

**Student Action teams : learning in the community.** Australian Youth Research centre 2003

**Student Voice and the Education State : A resource for Victorian Schools** VicSRC 2016

**Student Voice Resource Kit**

**Student Voice Strategy a Day** PIVOT