

# Youth Voices Cards

**Tuning in to the youth  
voice requires asking  
good questions.**

**XQ**

# Great ideas for transforming your high school will come from many places—especially young people.

- They're sure to provide one of the richest sources of insight.
- You'll want to speak with young people who represent the full range of learners served by your school.
- You'll want to understand their true needs—and how your school might inspire them to stretch their ambitions.
- You'll want to spend time analyzing what you hear.

**Think about what you want to learn from the young people you'll meet. Look through these cards and choose a few questions to kick off your conversations, or come up with your own questions.**

## How To Use These Cards

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### These cards are intended to amplify student voice.

It's important for adults to guide student conversations, but they should hold back immediate responses until they've first heard from students.

Avoid conflating, correcting, interrupting, or rushing students as they speak.

It's OK if you don't get to every card, or if you run out of time. Create the space to return and continue.

Lastly, enjoy the time and space with students. It's necessary and important work. You're helping to make their ideas possible.

# Your Future

XQ

**What kind of future do you see for yourself?**

**Now, imagine that the possibilities are infinite. What other ambitions do you have for your future?**

# Your Future

XQ

**How do you want your life to be like or different from the lives of the people who raised you or the people around you?**

# Your Future

XQ

**What do you want school to provide to help you pursue your dreams?**

**What is your school doing to help you with your dream today? What is your school not doing for you today?**

# Your Future

XQ

**Do you see yourself continuing your education beyond high school with college or post-secondary career certification?**

**How well is your high school preparing you for post-secondary education and the career you want?**

# Your Future

XQ

**What kind of job or career do you want to pursue?**

**Why does it interest you?  
What do you think you need to know—and be able to do—in order to get that career?**

# Your Future

XQ

**What does the American Dream mean to you?**

**Is it attainable?  
What do you need to  
achieve it? What stands  
in your way? How can  
high school help?**



# Your Future

XQ

**Who are the role models  
you admire most?**

**What do you admire  
about them? What  
stands out for you—their  
successful careers,  
their characters, their  
commitments,  
other things? What  
did it take for them to  
be successful?**

# Your Future

XQ

**How do you define  
success for yourself?**

**What would help you  
achieve that success?  
Where can you go to find  
that help?**

# Your Future

XQ

**Think of a question you would like to ask young people about their future.**

**Write your question here:**

# Your Future

XQ

**Think of a question you would like to ask young people about their future.**

**Write your question here:**

# Your P@ssion

XQ

**Tell me about something  
you're really interested in  
right now.**

**How might that topic,  
subject, or issue play a  
role in your future?**

# Your P@ssion

XQ<sup>®</sup>

**What is something you  
really care about?**

**Why does it matter to  
you? How can you keep  
learning more about it?**

# Your P@ssion

XQ

**If you had to choose one thing to do for the rest of your life, what would it be?**

**Why does that energize you? What will it take to truly master it?**

# Your P@ssion

XQ

**What is something you  
would love to teach?**

**Why does it fascinate  
you? Why do other  
people need to learn  
about it?**



# Your P@ssion

XQ

**What are you an expert at?**

**Where did you learn about it, and what did it take to become an expert? What did it feel like along the way to becoming an expert?**

# Your P@ssion

XQ

**Finish the sentence:  
"I feel alive when**

\_\_\_\_\_."

# Your P@ssion

XQ

**Tell me about something  
you learned recently  
that you found truly  
interesting.**

**What did you learn?  
What was so fascinating  
about it? What else  
do you want to learn  
about it?**

# Your P@ssion

XQ

**What do you wake up  
thinking about every  
morning?**

# Your P@ssion



**Think of a question you would like to ask young people about their interests and what makes them passionate.**

**Write your question here:**

# Your P@ssion



**Think of a question you would like to ask young people about their interests and what makes them passionate.**

**Write your question here:**

# Your Experience

XQ

Do you feel like you belong, that you are noticed, known, and cared about as an individual at your school? Why or why not?

**What would you do to make sure that students feel like they belong, that they are noticed, known, and cared about as individuals at your school?**

# Your Experience

XQ

In what ways, if any do you feel like you have a voice in your own learning and in decisions about your school?

**What would you do to make sure students have a voice in their own learning and in decisions about your school?**



# Your Experience

XQ

In what ways does your school or its educators engage with community partners—meaning organizations or companies in your city?

**How would you want your school/educators to engage students with outside partners to work together to solve problems in the community?**

# Your Experience

XQ

Do you feel like your school is safe, equitable, inclusive, and fair? Why or why not?

**What would you do to make sure your school is safe, equitable, inclusive, and fair?**

# Your Experience

XQ

What opportunities does your school provide you to learn and make decisions about your post-secondary plan?

**In what ways would you like your school to introduce you to experiences that await after graduation?**

# Your Experience

XQ

Does your learning connect to the real world and help you build the knowledge and skills you need for the future?

**What would you do to make sure that your learning is connected to the real world and helps you build the knowledge and skills you need for the future?**

# Your Experience

XQ

Does your school offer learning opportunities beyond the walls of the traditional building?

**Where else in your community could learning take place?**

# Your Experience

XQ

Does your school treat time flexibly to allow for deeper learning and give students the time they need to master subjects?

**If you could design your ideal schedule, what would it look like?**

# Your Experience

XQ

Does your school  
make the most of what  
technology has to offer?

**How would you like to  
see technology used in  
your school and your  
learning?**

# Your Dream School

XQ

Tell me about a time in school when you felt really inspired to learn.

**What was that experience like? How could teachers create more moments that inspire you to learn?**



# Your Dream School

XQ

If you were a school principal, what is one thing you'd change?

**How would that make high school better for students? What would you do to get your students excited about learning?**

# Your Dream School

XQ

If you could add one class that would make you really excited to go to school, what would it be?

**How would that class prepare you for the future?**

# Your Dream School

XQ

If you could add one class that would make you really excited to go to school, what would it be?

**How would that class prepare you for the future?**

# Your Dream School

XQ

Get into your  
imagination. Build a  
dream school.

**What would it be like to  
go there? What kind of  
future would it prepare  
you for?**

# Your Dream School

XQ

If you could build a school that was specifically designed for how you learn, what would it look like? Sound like? Feel like?

**Take me through a day at that school...**

# Your Dream School

XQ

What will getting a  
high school diploma do  
for you?

How will it set you up  
for the next step toward  
achieving your dreams?

# Your Dream School

XQ

How would your dream high school better prepare you for college, a career and a contributor to your community?

**What do you think you need to be ready for college?**

# Your Dream School

XQ

**During what part of the day do you learn the most?**

**What does learning mean to you? What does it mean to your family?**



# Your Dream School

XQ

**Think of a question you want to ask young people about the high school of their dreams. What are the ingredients? What do they want that's different from their current or traditional high school?**

**Write your question here:**

# Your Dream School

XQ

**Think of a question you want to ask young people about the high school of their dreams. What are the ingredients? What do they want that's different from their current or traditional high school?**

**Write your question here:**

## Taking the Next Steps

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**LISTEN AND LEARN:** Take time to learn more from our youth. Reflect on what they have shared and how you can continue to empower their voices.

**ACT TOGETHER:** Collaborate with students to identify ways to make positive changes in your school and community. Empower them to take the lead and encourage more adults to engage with our youth.

**REFLECT ON YOUR PRACTICE:** Consider how your teaching or leadership style impacts students. Think about how to be more inclusive, supportive, and intentional.

**AMPLIFY POSSIBILITIES:** Find opportunities to amplify the voices of the youth in your community, whether it's in meetings, on social media, or in decision-making processes. Set the expectation of how they're necessary for real change.

**KEEP GOING:** Make a commitment to continuously engage with the youth in your school and community. Their needs and perspectives may evolve over time, and it's important to stay connected.

## Keep It Going

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**You've engaged and you want to keep going. What's next? Here are some starters you can choose from to help you dive deeper and keep the collaboration flourishing:**

**YOUR MENTAL HEALTH:** How do you take care of your mental health? What support do you need from your school to improve your mental well-being?

**YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM:** Who supports you in your learning journey? How can schools better support students like you?

**YOUR CHALLENGES:** What are the biggest challenges you face in your daily life? How can your school or community help address these challenges?

**YOUR CULTURE:** How does your culture influence your learning and experiences at school? How can schools be more inclusive and respectful of different cultures?

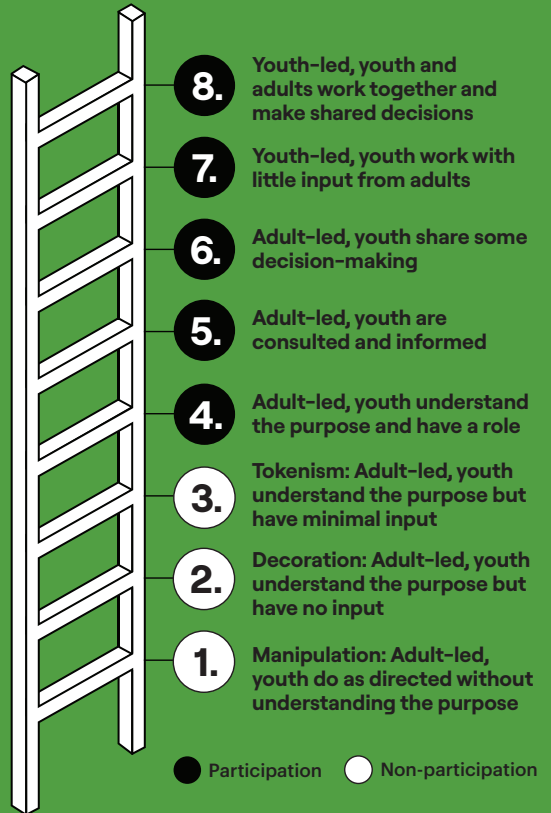
**YOUR IDENTITY:** How does your identity (e.g., gender, race, sexuality) impact your experiences at school? What can schools do to create a more inclusive environment for all students?

# Empower Youth Participation

## Use the Ladder of Youth Participation as a guide to assess and improve youth engagement in your school.

This ladder outlines different levels of participation, from low to high.

Aim to create a more student-centered school model by actively involving youth in decision-making processes and empowering them to take the lead.



*Adapted from Roger Hart's Ladder of Children's Participation (1992)*