

THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE



STORY GUIDE



This
is NOT an
ASSIGNMENT!

CONVERSATION QUESTIONS

1. Can you tell me about one of your best days in school?
2. Who or what were the heroes that helped you have that best day?
3. Can you tell me about one of the days that didn't go so well?
4. Who or what were the villains on this day?
5. Who or what were the heroes that could have helped you have a better experience?

HAPPY / PROUD

ACCOMPLISHED

BELONGING

EXCITED

KNOWN AND SEEN

RESPECTED

ENCOURAGED

CONFIDENT

RELAXED



Who are your

HEROES?



Friends

POSITIVE FEEDBACK

Art



CUSTODIANS

Partner Work

COMMUNICATION



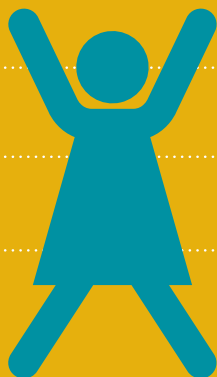
STRETCH BREAKS

Recess

Resources



Books



Who are your

VILLAINS?

Stress

PROCRASTINATION

Bus



Misunderstandings

UNCLEAR INSTRUCTIONS

Lunchrooms



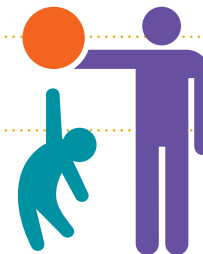
BATHROOMS

Busy Work

Bells

Distractions

Bullies



BURNOUT



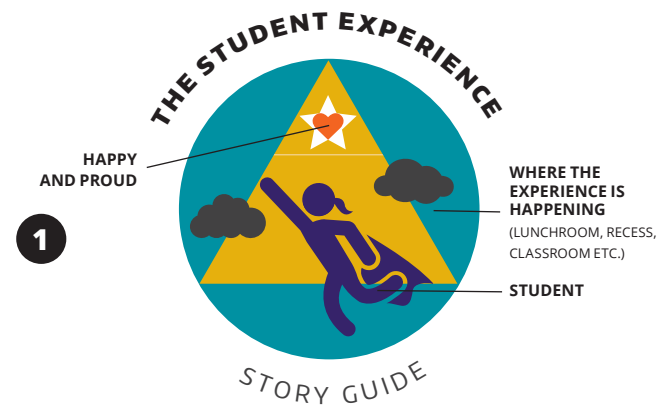
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Things to Know

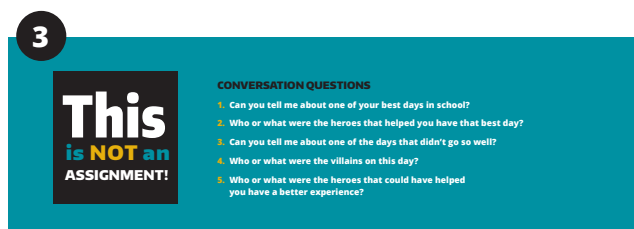
The Student Experience Story Guide was created and designed by K-12 students, many of whom haven't always had the best experiences in school. The information in the guide comes from their stories and experiences. The guide is a recommendation to adults on having conversations with students that reveal students' experiences in school, both broadly and in specific classes or settings. The annotations at right describe what students intended in the design of the guide.



1 The students see the journey of having a good experience in school as a triangle. Students see themselves at the bottom of the triangle attempting to get to the top.



2 Each student's heroes and villains are unique. A villain for one student can be a hero for another. The lunchroom is an example of a hero or a villain depending on the student. It's important for students to understand that heroes and villains can be people, places, behaviors or anything else that impacts their experiences.



3 Students want the guide to support authentic conversations between adults and students. Students don't want the guide to become an assignment. Use these questions to start a conversation with a student.



4 Happy and proud are the themes of each student's story. Students say that on their best days in school, they experience the feelings on this list.



LISTENING

TO CHANGE STUDENT EXPERIENCE



Listening is the first step of using the Student Experience Story Guide.

Listening is a practice that adults will want to develop to have conversations that surface students' experiences in school.

Consider the following skills as a way to develop a practice of listening:

- 1 Manage interpretation, which means listening to what students say instead of applying meaning or analysis to what they say.
- 2 Refrain from fixing or solving problems during the conversation.

As you're listening, keep in mind how easy it is to fall into the trap of interpretation and misunderstanding. For example, one adult said that a student was "probably feeling a lack of confidence about school because their older brother was considered a high-achieving student" — despite the student never mentioning feeling a lack of confidence nor their brother in the original story. The adult listener centered their prior knowledge in the story rather than listening to what the student was saying.

It's also easy to begin fixing or solving problems while students are sharing their stories. Fixing or solving problems interrupts the practice of deep listening and shifts the conversation to the adult.

Becoming a better listener changes the role of the student in the conversation. The student develops more ownership and agency over their school experience as they tell their authentic story — and experience shifts in the learning environment that lets them know they're being seen and heard.

The cycle (left) outlines how the practice of listening can help change the student experience in school.

Additional Recommendations



Try this.

Share the purpose of the conversation with students before you begin.

Ask students to relate their story to words and images within the guide. For example, “Which words describe how you felt about your experience?” “What were your heroes and villains in your experience?”

Encourage students to tell stories about their school and classroom experiences. Try asking questions like, “What makes you happy and proud in school?” “What makes you happy and proud in math class?”

Accept the story as the student tells it and be mindful of your facial expressions and body language.

Seek out the stories of students who are often unheard and historically underserved, including students of color, multilingual students and students who receive special education services.

Take the time to meet with students one-on-one.

Go deep. Make depth matter more than efficiency.

Ask students how the conversation went at the end.

Use the Student Experience Story Guide in day-to-day interactions with students.

Keep listening. Students’ stories can change throughout the year.



Be careful not to...

Ignore power dynamics that influence the environment, such as having conversations in the principal’s office.

Drive the conversation by interrupting or asking leading questions.

Meet with students in a group if trust hasn’t been already established across the group.

Default to surveys to hear from more students. Surveys can be oriented to adults and don’t change the role of the student in the conversation.

Turn the Student Experience Story Guide into a one-time activity or an assignment. This was very important to the students who created the guide.



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