Evaluating Perceptions of Student Voice and School Membership of 9th Grade Students and Teachers

Dan Beck

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EVALUATING PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENT VOICE AND SCHOOL MEMBERSHIP OF 9TH GRADE STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

A Dissertation
Submitted to the School of Education

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Education

By
Daniel Joseph Beck

December 2019
EVALUATING PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENT VOICE AND SCHOOL MEMBERSHIP OF 9TH GRADE STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

EVALUATING PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENT VOICE AND SCHOOL MEMBERSHIP OF

9TH GRADE STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

By

Daniel Joseph Beck

December 2019

Dissertation supervised by Connie Moss

Adolescence marks a developmental period of rapid cognitive, emotional, and physical growth where teenagers are tasked with establishing an identity and strong sense of self. Students and parents often report that transition to ninth grade is a formidable social challenge amidst increased academic demands and stress, and some research suggests that females have a more difficult time in the transition to high school than males. Student voice is a range of student opportunities to interact, collaborate, and partner with adults in an exploration of ideas and perspectives. However, student voice opportunities are often only available to a select group of students through school government and other smaller programs. School membership, or feeling that one belongs to the school community, is a key influencer that can improve student learning, confidence, and the overall school culture. Research suggests that student voice and school
membership are protective factors for the risks associated in adolescence. This study sought to evaluate 9th grade student and teachers perceptions of student voice and school membership to determine the importance of these constructs during the transition to high school. A mixed methods cross sectional design was utilized with 102 participants (n=73 students, n=29 teachers) at Upper St. Clair High School. Participants completed a self-report survey on perceptions of school membership and voice during the second semester. Analyses included descriptive statistics, multiple independent sample t-tests, bivariate correlations, and a summative content analyses with latent content analysis to interpret summarized findings of qualitative data. The sample of students reported to have limited opportunities for student voice but indicated voice is important. There were significantly different experiences and student perceptions of overall student voice (p<.001; d=1.24) and school membership (p=.003; d=.66) based on gender that were consistent across quantitative and qualitative analyses. Male students reported having more opportunities for student voice and higher feelings of school membership than female peers but also less desire for student voice, membership, and adult relationships than female peers. Qualitative analyses suggested that students value the expression of ideas in an open, genuine conversation with school adults more than partnership or power in school-wide decision making. Interestingly, content analyses found that students interpret student voice expression as a reflection of their self-worth and esteem. Teachers and students agreed that open, genuine conversations with students about ideas is student voice and more appropriate and valuable than partnership in school-wide decisions. Overall, this study highlighted the importance of student-teacher relationships beyond the instructor-learner role. The results suggest that school leaders should partner with teachers and students to design and operationalize a systematic, school-wide process for regular student voice expression for all students. School leaders and researchers
might also devote resources to fully explore the differences in student needs based on gender during the transition to high school.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Thank you to the school board and community of Upper St. Clair. I'm honored to serve as one of the Assistant Principals at the high school. Thank you to my district administration in their unwavering professional, personal, and financial support of my professional growth and development through Duquesne University. I have always felt that each district administrator has been in my corner when it comes to providing support and feedback.

Thank you to my colleagues at the high school. We have some of the hardest-working, compassionate, and empathetic adults that are committed to improving the lives of students with high quality education. Thank you to the students of Upper St. Clair. Each of you inspire me to serve with integrity, remind me the importance of humility, and help me stay young at heart. I appreciate all of the research study participants for providing their genuine perceptions and feedback on their experience teaching and learning in our high school.

I want to express my deepest appreciation and gratitude for my research assistant, Kimberly Battle, for conducting the recruitment and data collection on this project. This project would not have been successful without her.

Thank you to my doctoral committee, especially my chair Dr. Moss, for supporting me during this journey of personal and professional growth. The collective vision of Dr. Moss, Dr. Parke, and Dr. O'Toole has allowed me to continually persevere on this challenging journey. I've developed a new level of resilience because of each of these leaders, and I'm appreciative of every suggestion to continually improve this dissertation into what it has become.

Thank you to Duquesne University for my collective ten years spent here as a student. I have had outstanding professors through my undergraduate and graduate schooling. I would like
to express my sincere gratitude to Fr. Naos McCool, whom played an integral role in my development as a young teacher and leader. Duquesne University possesses vision and insight into social justice that I have integrated into my own values and philosophy.

Thank you to my family, the Becks and Battles, for their continual support and influence in developing an identity of serving others. Each of you have taught me to appreciate life, and each of you consistently remind me cherish every day. The support I have received from friends and family has been overflowing and allowed me to persevere with this challenge.

Thank you to my wife, Kelly, and son, Carter. I dedicate each page of this document to you both for the sacrifices that you made, for the encouragement you provided, and for the inspiration to take on this challenge.
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1.0 RATIONALE AND INTRODUCTION

Student voice is a construct that encompasses a range of student opportunities to interact and partner with adult-educators as they explore ideas and work collaboratively to influence their overall school experience (Fielding, 2001a, 2001b; Friend & Caruthers, 2015; Mitra, 2004, 2008; Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). It is not a well-defined construct and not consistently used. Many use the term to describe anytime a student is involved in school activities, but others define it as involving students as stakeholders in their school and learning (Fielding, 2001b; Friend & Caruthers, 2015; Mitra, 2004, 2008; Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). To some, it represents student government’s leadership in the selection of a new prom destination. To others, the term illustrates a student writing an editorial in the school newspaper. However, the literature suggests that student voice is a much more complex construct, and in fact, could be recognized as a spectrum of voice-oriented activity with adults that can help improve initiatives related to school improvement (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). While student voice can exist through formal structures, like Student Council or other advisory organizations, only a select group of students access those opportunities. Student voice has the potential to be incorporated into all adult-student interactions (Johnson, 1991). Unfortunately, the literature suggests that the voices of students are often disregarded (Cook-Sather, 2002).

It is well established that students need to feel a sense of community or membership in their school (O’Neel & Fulgini, 2013). Membership is a key influencer that contributes to students feeling safe and supported, supports or hinders learning, and impacts confidence and self-efficacy (Goodenow, 1993b; McMillan & Chavis, 1986; O’Neel & Fulgini, 2013). Research
suggests that school membership is a statistically significant protective factor for the emergence of mental health symptoms in adolescence, specifically anxiety for females, depression for males and females (Shochet, Dadds, Ham, & Montague, 2006). Further, research suggests that school membership changes as children grow and develop (O’Neel & Fulgini, 2013). School membership in early childhood is generally high while adolescence marks a decline in perceptions of belonging to a school community, especially for adolescent females (O’Neel & Fulgini, 2013). Student voice is one avenue to foster a sense of belonging to the school community by elevating students as valuable stakeholders in their learning experience.

Adolescence marks a period of rapid cognitive, emotional, and physical growth and development where teenagers are tasked with the transition to emancipation. Adolescents shift to peers for support as they seek independence from families and parents. This transition involves the development of advanced academic skills while also establishing a sense of identity and self-actualization (Erikson, 1997; Marcia, 1980). The exploration of independence and autonomy in and out of school oftentimes involves risk-taking behaviors and impulsive decision-making (Leather, 2009). The transition to high school during adolescence can also mean increased academic demands, stress, and decreased self-esteem (Khan Khan, Mahmood, & Zaib, 2019; Suldo & Shaunessy-Dedrick, 2013). Some research even suggests that female high school students have more difficulty navigating the transition to high school with more reported mental health symptoms, social challenges, and self-harming behaviors (Barrocas, Hankin, Young, & Abela, 2012; Williams, Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Wornell, & Finnegan, 2017). The support that adults in school provide may be a protective factor for safe and healthy development in the transition to high school, especially since meaningful relationships with adults may have the potential to decrease adolescent risk-taking behaviors (Allen & Bowles, 2012). The literature
suggests that students who identify themselves as belonging or connected to their high schools feel increased safety, motivation, and are more engaged in school culture (Eccles & Roeser, 2011; Osterman, 2000; Whitlock, 2006).

It is troubling to acknowledge that student opinions are often disregarded, as recent trends in education reveal pervasive low student engagement and belongingness at school (Gorski, 2013). This lack of engagement is associated with student dissatisfaction, drop-outs, and lower achievement (Delialioglu, 2012; Klem & Connell, 2004). This is especially problematic for diverse groups of students given additional home life stressors and challenges (Gorski, 2013). Engaging students in student voice opportunities may partially abate student dissatisfaction and low engagement, ultimately improving school culture and student efficacy. Initiatives focused on fostering student voice can intentionally strengthen collaborative relationships between students and adults (Stefanou, Stolk, Prince, Chen, & Lord, 2013). This has the potential to create positive experiences and fosters reflective thinking among students (Sungur & Tekkaya, 2006).

Empowering students to have a voice in the culture of any school system can prove challenging, as it opposes the traditional top-down hierarchy. School systems have a long history of structuring systems with adults in charge of decision-making (Taines, 2014). Only recently has the field begun to embrace a paradigm where students are acknowledged as potential knowledge generators and stakeholders, rather than passive recipients of others’ knowledge (Cook-Sather, 2002). Breaking these traditional barriers will take systematic acknowledgement of student voice to empower students. This can only happen when the adults in the school recognize students as stakeholders who have vested interests and concerns in the culture of their
school. This shift may ultimately improve students’ perception of school membership and aid their social and emotional development.

Given the construct of student voice and complexities associated with adolescent development, this study completed an initial step in this process to better understand the construct by assessing perceptions of student voice and school membership in a high school community, specifically Upper St. Clair High School (USCHS). Student and teacher stakeholders were recruited to collect perceptions of school membership and student voice opportunities at USCHS. This project provided information for school leaders to consider when attempting to support the developmental needs of adolescents with opportunities for agency and fostering genuine relationships with adults. Ultimately, the information gathered from this student may inform future initiatives that can serve as a protective factor for the risk-taking behaviors and impulsivity of high school students (Shulman & Cauffman, 2013).

1.1 UPPER ST. CLAIR HIGH SCHOOL

The story of Upper St. Clair (USC) School District is often cursorily explained through numbers and statistics. In the graduating class of 2018-2019, Upper St. Clair High School (USCHS) consists of 1,384 students who excel academically as evidenced by Keystone exam results, School Performance Profile scores, and SAT/ACT scores. USCHS finished first in the state of Pennsylvania with average composite SAT score and ACT score. In May 2018, 346 students completed 696 AP exams in 20 subjects, earning an 89% pass rate. Further, sixteen USC seniors were recently named semifinalists in the National Merit Scholarship Program, which is awarded to students who placed in the top 1% of all PSAT testing the prior year. The media has
recognized these statistics as well, with the *Pittsburgh Business Times* ranking our district as first among 102 school districts throughout the seven-county region and third among the Commonwealth’s 500 school districts. Additionally, the *U.S. News & World Report* ranked our high school highest in Allegheny County.

However, the statistics and reports of high achieving do not tell the story or culture of USCHS. The mission of any school system, according to Kozol (2012), is to bridge the gap between heart and mind. USC School District attempts to accomplish Kozol’s challenge through their tagline, “*Customizing Learning, Nurturing Potential, and Delivering Excellence.*” Educators at USC recognize that each student is unique, and they must be nurtured to reach their potential. USC teachers adapt based on interest and learning needs by delivering a differentiated and rigorous curriculum. They teach students the content knowledge and skills that is relevant to their lives, linking the cognitive and affective domains of learning together in classrooms. My colleagues and I strive to help students make connections, imagine new possibilities, and engage with knowledge in order to align practices with this tagline.

Our story is told through our mission statement, “Develop lifelong learners and responsible citizens for a global society.” In an ever-changing society, we believe that this can only be accomplished through the foundation of positive relationships. USCHS aims to have a student-centered learning environment where students, teachers, staff, and administrators work collaboratively to provide quality academic, arts, and athletic opportunities for all. Rather than an authoritarian style of leadership, our school embraces a culture of empowerment by encouraging and supporting staff and students as leaders. As one of the assistant principals in our building leadership team, I accept and embrace the responsibility of providing all students
with rigorous curricular opportunities, offering varied student activities, and facilitating support that nurtures students in the eighth to ninth grade transition.

1.1.1 USCHS Student Voice Curricular Opportunities

One way that USCHS shifts the traditional structure of school hierarchy is through the unique student voice curricular opportunities that are offered. Students can earn course credit toward their graduation through the (1) Leadership Academy, (2) SmartDesk, (3) Partners in PE & Partners in Shop, and (4) Peer Tutoring courses. These courses focus on adults and students forming relationships with each other, and they allow for opportunities for students to collaborate with adults. In these courses, students are encouraged to express their ideas for course feedback and development. Unfortunately, while these four unique curricular opportunities exist for all students 9-12, the enrollment numbers are low for the size of our student population.

Our Leadership Academy and student SmartDesk are examples of curricular work that illustrate the power of student agency in our school culture. First, the Leadership Academy is a week-long summer experience that utilizes experiential learning to expose students to leadership concepts and practices. Students partner with staff in planning and implementing group projects and hands-on activities, which aims to build confidence in the ability to serve in leadership roles. This course is offered each summer in 4 phases. In the summer of 2019, thirteen staff members supported 179 students. The number of student-participants decreases as they mature through high school years, as 54 students completed phase 1, 48 completed phase 2, 42 completed phase 3, and 32 completed phase 4. Students in phases 1-3 provide their feedback to staff through surveys reflecting on the program. This decline in enrollment is puzzling. It is possible that students desire more opportunities to meet with their teachers beyond the one-week in the summer. After
all, once students reach phase four of the Leadership Academy, they actually participate in meetings with teachers about decisions around curriculum. In addition, these students serve as consultants to staff as they develop and implement lessons around social skills, self-reflection, and problem-solving.

While the Leadership Academy offers an opportunity for students to earn a course credit during the summer, students can enroll in an elective such as our student-run SmartDesk during the school year. This course allows students to actively identify problems and generate solutions for problems associated with technology in school. By leveraging students’ vast technology abilities, the SmartDesk provides authentic opportunities to integrate, support, and implement technology. Specifically, students have helped fix glitches on student iPads, repair Promethean Boards in classrooms, and provide feedback to administration on professional development of our new Learning Management System for teachers. Students work alongside our school librarians and members of our Technology Department. They collectively organize responsibilities, meet bi-weekly in structured forums, and provide feedback and opinions related to technology. The students accept significant responsibility for outcomes. Both the Smartdesk and Leadership Academy provide opportunities for students to generate solutions to specific problems and share insight to the adults that support the programming. Yet, both programs appear to be tailored to students with particular interest and expertise.

Other USCHS student voice curricular opportunities include the Partners in SHOP and Peer-Tutoring programs. Our Partners in SHOP (Showing How Opportunity Pays) and Partners in PE allow students to earn credit for working with students with disabilities in a business and/or physical education class. Students are matched with a student with a disability in these programs and work with visionary teachers on specific tasks. The adult supervisors of these programs
request input and support of the partnered peers. The teachers and students have formed a partnership that greatly influences the success of the program and simultaneously enhance personal growth. Over the past four years, our Partners in SHOP course has increased from 13 to 63 students. Relatedly, our Partners in PE course has grown from 79 to 113. Similar to the Leadership Academy, students can enroll in this course more than once. As they increase in awareness and participation, they become more active in course design and student support.

Finally, our Peer Tutoring program was adopted into our Program of Studies in 2016-17. The high school resource center coordinator and a school counselor trains students to be tutors and carefully match them with individual students or small groups. Approximately 47 students have tutored each year, thus impacting hundreds of students’ lives. The peer-tutoring program has been expanded to our middle school after great success at the high school level. In the spring of 2017, our high school students began partnering with our middle schoolers. Currently, approximately 25 middle school students receive tutoring services and support from high school tutors. Students can enroll in this course multiple years, and if requested by teachers, they are actually able to act as classroom support. This program helps empower students as an intervention for students experiencing academic challenges. It asks peer tutors to serve as consultants as they provide feedback to the adults involved in the program, and they are always welcomed to express their ideas for continual improvement.

These specific examples of student voice initiatives that are currently offered at our school proportionally only include a small percentage of students. In addition, many of these students who currently take advantage of these curriculum-related opportunities are upper classmen. Nevertheless, the philosophical shift in these curricular areas has increased the productivity of the school. Classroom teachers have embraced the concept of students supporting
their peers and have requested for programmatic support within their classrooms during specific units and/or lessons. If utilized correctly, systemic student voice can benefit both the individual and the school.

1.1.2 USCHS Student Voice Extracurricular Opportunities

USCHS is often described as a high performing school. While we have many academically gifted students, the impact of a collaborative environment that focuses on nurturing leadership at all levels is truly what makes USCHS a great place to learn and grow. Our Student Government, Athletics, and 80+ Clubs all provide opportunities for students to have a voice in decision-making, to develop a membership in the culture, and to make the most of their high school experience.

Student Government is an important factor in high schools, as it provides a forum for civil discourse and consultation (McFarland & Starmanns, 2009). Student Government’s presence is felt in our high school on social media and in face-to-face dialogue. Student government holds successful fundraisers each year for organizations such as the Salvation Army and the local food bank. Further, the student government plans and coordinates many school events through close partnership with teacher and administrative supervisors. This partnership allows students to have a voice in standard operations, and it helps identify problems from the student perspective that adults might not have otherwise recognize. There are 75 students that currently participate in student council, as elected by their classmates (23 seniors, 18 juniors, 17 sophomores, and 17 freshmen).

Athletically, USCHS has a diverse program of offerings featuring 35 different teams (i.e. football, swimming, ultimate-frisbee, fencing). Last year, USCHS had 823 student-
athletes (460 male, 363 female), many of whom are coached by USCHS faculty. We currently have 24 coaches who teach at our high school. Our athletic coaches assign student captains, and students provide the coach feedback on team climate. This opportunity is often informal, but it still provides a forum for students to develop a student of leadership in the school setting.

Not all teachers want to be athletic coaches, but the literature indicates teachers should have other opportunities to positively influence students besides the classroom (Buckley, Chapman, Sheehan, & Cunningham, 2012; Collado et al., 2014). For this reason, teachers are encouraged to sponsor one of our 74 extracurricular clubs. Currently, 48 of our teachers supervise clubs. Whether it be the quiriness of a Cereal Club, to our award-winning Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) chapter, we seek to provide students with opportunities to enhance their experience through these opportunities to embrace their agency in addition to our formal classes. Depending upon the club, and the willingness of the supervising teacher, students can co-lead planning, decision making, and conduct activities.

Thus, there are many opportunities for students and teachers to collaborate and work with each other. Unfortunately, approximately half of our teachers do not engage in these supportive roles outside of the traditional school day. Would more adults help coach or supervise clubs if they recognized the impact that they have on student voice and membership? Ideally, a more systematic form of data collection could be implemented that helps administrators evaluate these extracurricular student voice opportunities and quantify the impact it has on USCHS students.

1.1.3 USCHS 8th to 9th Grade Transition

The literature suggests that the transition from eighth to ninth grade is challenging socially, emotionally, and academically (Akos & Galassi, 2004; Alspaugh, 1998; Cohen, &
It is the responsibility of high schools to consider resources to intentionally support students experiencing difficulty with the transition to high school. Our high school has a variety of supports in place to ease the transition for our freshmen, including Freshman Seminar, Freshman Rush, Junior-Freshman Mentoring.

Beginning in 2014, High School Counselors and Assistant Principals adopted a Freshman Seminar into the course of studies. Ninth grade students are introduced to topics that include good study habits, social-media awareness, post-secondary planning, and how to balance the demands of high school. Students also meet with the counselors in small groups, discussing organizational and philosophical strategies on how to start high school in a positive way. This required course takes place in the first nine weeks of the school year.

As previously mentioned, our high school offers 80+ clubs for students to get involved with. About one month into the school year, our activities’ office works with student leadership from each of the clubs to host “Rush” in our gymnasium. Each club offers booths, stations, and sign-ups for freshman to find ways to get involved.

Our Junior-Freshman Mentoring program’s mission is to Foster Genuine Care and Concern, as it aims to ease the transition for freshmen students to the high school setting. In addition to regular mentoring contact through homerooms, the program offers social opportunities that focus on teamwork, collaboration and school spirit. Sixty of our students are selected to serve as mentors to the freshman class. Juniors spend time with freshmen during homeroom every week as they develop trust with younger peers and share concerns with adult facilitators when problems arise. Interested students can then apply to be selected as senior-
mentors that oversee and support the junior mentors. They observe peer interactions and facilitate interventions to support the growth of juniors. Our junior-mentor program is supported through four adults whose schedules have been modified to assist the 60 students mentors.

Although these support programs are in place, there are not many opportunities for ninth grade students to express their opinions, to frame issues, or to guide group processes. Most students at our high school develop adult-student partnerships later in the USCHS experiences. Our high school acknowledges the importance of supporting ninth grade students without allowing them to play a role as active stakeholder in the process.

1.1.4 What’s next?

Evaluating a school’s success is more complex than simply measuring achievement and graduation rates. Finding ways to measure student voice opportunities, student perceived school membership, and school culture is challenging. Currently, USCHS utilizes a structured curriculum recommendation process to evaluate the impact of specific programs. Programming such as the SmartDesk, Peer Tutoring, and Freshman Seminar were approved and regularly evaluated by the School Board of Directors through this process. Thus far, this process has resulted in informal anecdotes that suggest the above reviewed programs have proved positive. However, USCHS has not assessed if these programs and others foster a sense of school membership or facilitate student voice. While our intentions are to provide nurture and care to students who engage in the activities at USCHS, we do not incorporate student voice initiatives in this programming to increase membership or agency.
1.1.5 A School Culture of Student Voice

High school educators acknowledge that adolescence is a complex stage of development. Most will also agree that a student’s ability to feel a sense of membership and agency can impact learning. Yet, there continues to be hesitancy among adults to utilize students as stakeholders in school systems and decision making. Schools are likely to become more democratic if systematic ways to incorporate student voice are designed and implemented. School leaders should consider ways to partner with teachers to develop more opportunities for student voice and stakeholder involvement. Ultimately, the literature supports that shared responsibility and collective efficacy lead to major improvements in student learning (Hattie, 2016).

The current student aimed to evaluate USCHS ninth grade student and teacher perceptions of student voice, school membership, and the importance of adult-student relationships. The following research questions were evaluated in this study: (1) To what capacity do ninth grade students at USCHS have a sense of school membership and voice? (2) What is the relationship between perceptions of school membership and student voice? (3) What are ninth grade teacher and student perceptions of student voice at USCHS? Do they differ?

The study began with a literature review that is detailed in in Chapter Two. The chapter begins with an in-depth investigation of the developmental period of adolescence. The construct of student voice is then reviewed. Finally, the chapter concludes with a review of the concept of school membership and community. Chapter 3 includes a comprehensive context review of USC School District and High School as context for the current study’s methodology.
2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

This study explored student and teacher perceptions of student voice and membership with the hypothesis that adult and student relationships are necessary in the high school setting. The conceptual framework of this study included three areas (adolescent development, student voice, and school membership). Specifically, adolescent development provided context and understanding of the unique challenges and needs of this developmental period. Student voice was explored to determine the impact of voice on adolescent developmental needs. Finally, school membership was selected as an outcome of student voice initiatives.

The chapter begins by reviewing adolescent developmental theorists Erikson, Gilligan, Marcia, and Maslow to provide frameworks for interpreting the needs of high school students. Adolescents’ propensity toward risk taking and lack of executive functioning capacity is further complicated by the developmental task to establish personal identity (Erikson, 1997). Specifically, adolescents seek identity achievement through exploring independence, autonomy, and belonging. Adult support can play an important role during this process of seeking identity and independence (Allen & Bowles, 2012; Mitra, 2004). Research shows that meaningful relationships with adults have the potential to decrease adolescent risk-taking and problem behaviors (Collado, Felton, MacPherson, and Lejuez, 2014; Leather, 2009). Thus, high school educators can play an important role in adolescent development.

Subsequently, this chapter reviews student voice as a construct and target for high school initiatives that support adolescent development. Researchers define student voice in many ways. For the purpose of this study, student voice is defined as a range of student opportunities to interact, collaborate, and partner with adults in an exploration of ideas and perspectives. High
school educators can support adolescents’ exploration of independence, autonomy, and identity formation by providing intentional student voice initiatives that utilize students as stakeholders (Mitra, 2008; Whitlock, 2006). An organizational system for defining student voice initiatives on a spectrum is reviewed in this chapter (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). Examples of student voice initiatives in structured settings are detailed in this chapter as well.

Student voice initiatives have been shown to improve school belonging and school culture while addressing developmental needs (Groves & Welsh, 2010; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). Adolescents seek classroom and school environments that embrace belonging. Chapter 2 concludes with a review of school-wide outcomes of student voice initiatives, improved school belonging, and school culture. When high school educators intentionally value student perspective in stakeholder conversations, it is likely that educators will develop a collective efficacy geared toward growing school membership and improving school culture (Hattie, 2016; Kurz & Knight, 2004).

It is the intent of this literature review to synthesize the most important aspects of adolescent development, student voice, and membership. By doing this, school systems can serve students in a way that helps student development, and students can serve school systems in a way that allows students to foster a sense of membership in their school community.

2.1 ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

Adolescent students enter critical developmental stages during high school years (Erikson, 1997; Marcia, 1980). Successfully navigating these developmental stages and their pressures can help lead adolescents to self-actualization (Maslow, 1943). Educators can better
understand the changes that are occurring during adolescence by examining adolescent physical, social, and emotional development. Specifically, educators should recognize that impulsivity, risk-taking, and problem behaviors are common characteristics of adolescent behavior and development (Collado, Felton, MacPherson, and Lejuez, 2014). This understanding can help shape the role of adults in school systems to provide more effective levels of support for students (Anderman, 2002). This section of the literature focuses on two crucial theoretical lenses regarding adolescent development: identity achievement and self-actualization. The literature begins by examining the perspectives of Erik Erikson (1997), James Marcia (1980), and Carol Gilligan (1986) who collectively highlight the importance of establishing an identity and stable sense of self. Their perspectives, when coupled with Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (1943), suggest that self-esteem and self-actualization are necessary to establish a stable and sound identity at this age. The literature provides an examination on each theoretical perspective in connection with pertinent literature on adolescent behaviors. Finally, the section investigates the importance of adult roles in supporting adolescents as they pursue self-actualization and form their personal identities.

2.1.1 Erikson’s psychosocial stages

Erikson (1980, 1993, 1997) organizes human development into eight psychosocial stages. These stages include infancy, early childhood, play age, school age, adolescence, young adulthood, adulthood, and old age (Erikson, 1997). The stages of Erikson’s hierarchy work together to help shape the growth of a personality. Understanding Erikson’s work as a stage theory rather than an age theory is important to note. Humans proceed through the stages as they develop, with some moving through the stages at a quicker pace and a different age than
others. Erikson proposes an associated psychosocial crisis at each developmental stage that can cause a change in perspective. Psychosocial crises can be resolved in a positive outcome or negative outcome. Erikson theorizes that future challenges trace back to these psychosocial crises and transformations, each recognized as a resolution either positive or negative. Each resolution remains with the person as psychosocial baggage (1997), and individuals move to the next developmental stage regardless of the resolution of the psychosocial crisis.

Table 2.1 displays Erikson’s stage theory noting each stage along with its defining characteristic and psychosocial crises. This paper reviews the first five stages of Erikson’s hierarchy of psychosocial development because they most closely align with the developmental experiences and challenges affecting high school adolescent students.

**Table 2.1: Erikson’s Stage Theories and Characteristics (as adapted from: Erikson, 1997)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Psychosocial Crises</th>
<th>Radius of Significant Relations</th>
<th>Potential Strengths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infancy</td>
<td>Birth-18 months</td>
<td>Basic Trust vs. Basic Mistrust</td>
<td>Maternal Person</td>
<td>Hope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Childhood</td>
<td>2-3 years old</td>
<td>Autonomy vs. Shame, Doubt</td>
<td>Paternal Persons</td>
<td>Will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play Age</td>
<td>3-5 years old</td>
<td>Initiative vs. Guilt</td>
<td>Basic Family</td>
<td>Purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School age</td>
<td>5-12 years old</td>
<td>Industry vs. Inferiority</td>
<td>Neighborhood, School</td>
<td>Competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescence</td>
<td>12-18 years old</td>
<td>Identity vs. Identity Confusion</td>
<td>Peer Groups; Models of Leadership</td>
<td>Fidelity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Adulthood</td>
<td>18-40 years old</td>
<td>Intimacy vs. Isolation</td>
<td>Partners in friendship, sex, competition, cooperation</td>
<td>Love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adulthood</td>
<td>40-65 years old</td>
<td>Generativity vs. Stagnation</td>
<td>Divided Labor and shared household</td>
<td>Care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Age</td>
<td>65+ years old</td>
<td>Integrity vs. Despair</td>
<td>Mankind</td>
<td>Wisdom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Erikson’s psychosocial crises of Industry versus Inferiority, Identity versus Identity Confusion, and Intimacy versus Isolation are crucial to understanding young adolescents in high schools, occurring in school age, adolescence, and young adulthood respectively. Erikson explains that individuals grow and develop as they gain awareness of their social surroundings (1980). These psychosocial crises share a common denominator of navigating relationships with others. Adolescent’s interactions with family and teachers can be influenced from resolutions to previous stages psychosocial crises. It is important to consider the impact of previous stages of psychosocial development in order to understand adolescent development and the ways they shape the identities of high school students. In adolescence, understanding one’s role within one’s peer group has an enormous impact on self-identity. Without the intervention and support of caring adults, it is possible that many adolescents will emerge from these three stages without a positive sense of self.

The first stage of Erikson’s theory, Trust vs. Mistrust, usually occurs during the first 18 months of life depending on various developmental and social factors. During this stage, children are dependent on caregivers. According to Erikson, a child in this stage faces the psychosocial crisis of recognizing when trust is appropriate versus when danger looms. A successful resolution of this crisis can promote a sense of hope and trust, particularly when caregivers provide reliability, care, and affection. A lack of nurture, safety, and support from in a caregiver at this age can result in a negative outcome of mistrust that can follow the individual throughout development into adulthood. This outcome can lead to depressive conditions or an inability to trust others. Sometimes growing children discount, disregard, or reject human contact as a result. Of particular relevance to this study is that trust between students and teachers impacts school culture (Chapman, Buckley, Sheehan, & Shochet, 2013).
Specifically, this trusting relationship can prevent problem-behaviors. The section of the literature review that investigates the role adults play in adolescent development explores this crucial relationship in further detail.

Erikson’s (1997) second stage, Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt, commonly occurs in early childhood (ages two through three). During this stage, children develop a sense of personal control over their physical skills and develop a sense of independence. Erikson theorized that experiences during toilet training loom large and lead to either positive feelings of autonomy or negative feelings of self-doubt and shame. These feelings of self-doubt and shame can affect the child’s development and carry with him into future crisis. Previous stage’s establishment of trust is necessary as well, as adults must exude enough trust to support cooperative decision-making but do not allow the child’s desire to choose an action freely. Successful navigation of this stage can influence the developing child’s perception of success and failure in school by once again coloring the child’s view of relationships with adults. The adults in a school play an important role in facilitating student autonomy, a factor that is highly correlated with successful learning in school (Philips, 2011). This crucial role in supporting the successes of children is especially impactful in times of failure.

Positive outcomes from Erikson’s (1997) first two stages allow children to establish a foundation of trust and grow their self-confidence and autonomy. The third stage, Initiative vs. Guilt, builds upon the previous two stages and allows children to have increased confidence in the results of their actions. This stage occurs during the preschool years and generally spans ages three to five. During the Initiative vs. Guilt stage, developing children begin to acquire a sense of purpose and become eager to learn. They are focused, less defiant, and established with a sense of autonomy. Students can emerge from the psychosocial crisis of this stage either
confident and competent, or conversely, discouraged and inept. Ideally during this developmental stage, children should assert themselves without developing a sense of guilt about their choices. To support this outcome, adults should focus on successes and gains, not mistakes. Promoting a safety net in school is important to student development and allows all learners to grow confident in taking risks. This is particularly relevant to the high school setting where managing an overactive reward system makes it highly likely for students to exhibit risk-taking behaviors (Leather, 2009).

Erikson (1997) explains that Stage 4, School Age, appears during the ages of 5-12 years. Neighborhoods and schools become more influential in this ‘decisive’ phase during the psychosocial crisis of Industry vs. Inferiority. It is particularly influenced by what happens in the schools, where children in this age span encounter the most decisions regarding industry. Children recognize at this age that adults judge them in comparison to their peers. Thus, children can develop a sense of inferiority dependent on successful task completion. Children identify and establish a sense of social order as they equate themselves to each other. This identification involves awareness of intelligence, skin color, and parental background. Erikson warns that this stage can result in negative consequences, such as formalism, where children emphasize perfecting techniques instead of skill development. A related danger occurs when adults in the schools overemphasize work and achievement of certain skills, thus promoting “conformist” adherence to specific ways of doing things and exploitation by those in positions of power (Erikson, 1993, p. 261). Hence, schools could include students in decision-making structured around democratic values, thereby promoting a culture of collective membership. This review explores the important role of membership, and its influence on development, in detail later.
Erikson explains that the psychosocial crisis that adolescents face in the fifth stage is one of identity vs. role confusion (1997). He defines identity itself as (1) “the selective affirmation and repudiation of an individual’s childhood identifications;” and, (2) “the way in which the social process of the times identifies young individuals” (p. 72). The emergence of biological changes through puberty makes this stage especially difficult. Adolescents face these changes along with positive or negative baggage carried over from the resolutions of crises in earlier stages (Erikson, 1980). During the identity vs. role confusion stage, adolescents become aware of the fact that they should balance their own identity with a need to conform to their surroundings. This sense of awareness helps adolescents recognize their surroundings in a way that affects their perceptions of self-esteem. Adolescent identity grows positively with sincere recognition of accomplishment, or adolescent identity can negatively falter if adolescents feel deprived either by their culture or by surroundings.

Leading up to and including their high school years, the relationships that adolescents form with others has a greater impact on their identity because of the increased proportion of time that adolescents spend with people outside of their own families (Collins & Steinberg, 2006). Adolescents shift their focus and ideology away from parental figures and toward the ideals of mentors and leaders around them (Erikson, 1997). This process is referred to as fidelity and can lead to tension as adolescents make connections beyond family and begin to recognize conformity in society. Identity confusion, therefore, can occur during this phase because adolescents can temporarily over-identify with cliques and crowds, making adolescents intolerant and cruel (Erikson, 1980). Erikson explains that “winning the peace with these grim youths by convincingly demonstrating to them (by living it) a democratic identity which can be strong and yet tolerant, judicious and still determined” is an important role
society plays (1980, p.98). The psychosocial crisis of identity vs. identity confusion helps to explain the human evolution that integrates childhood needs in a transition toward adulthood. This psychosocial crisis plays out during the high school years and is influenced by the reactions and actions of both peers and adults.

2.1.2 Marcia: A path toward Identity Achievement

James Marcia responds to the work of Erikson in his investigation of the complexity and importance of identity development in adolescence (1980). Specifically, he recognizes identity as a major personality achievement of adolescence that is crucial to children becoming productive, content adults. Adolescence is the first time that, “physical development, cognitive skills, and social expectations coincide to enable young persons to sort through and synthesize their childhood identifications in order to construct a viable pathway toward their adulthood” (Marcia, 1980, p.160). He describes identity as “a self-structure – an internal, self-constructed, dynamic organization of drives, abilities, beliefs and individual history” (Marcia, 1980, p.159).

Marcia classifies adolescent identity development into four different statuses, including: Identity Achievement, Foreclosure, Identity Diffusion, and Moratorium. These stages are “defined in terms of the presence or absence of a decision-making period (crisis)” (Marcia, 1980, p. 161). This process happens in three different phases of adolescence (Marcia & Archer, 1993). First, early adolescence consists of a period of destructuring in which previous cognitive, psychosexual, and physiological accomplishments undergo transition. Adolescents then undergo restructuring, as they form new organizations of old and new skills and values. Finally, they experience consolidation, where they compose a discernible identity and test the world with its construction. Because schools provide constant opportunities for
students to challenge and reevaluate their choices and values, the concept of identity development should inform approaches to structures and systems at the high school level.

Marcia’s theory of Identify Status and the classifications that define his theory explain that people fluctuate between identity status and characteristics, depending on the issue. Table 2.2 depicts four different identity classifications that occur in the identity consolidation process.

**Table 2.2: Marcia’s Identity Status (as adapted from Marcia, 1980)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity Status</th>
<th>Crisis &amp; Commitment</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identity Achievement</td>
<td>Crisis and Commitment are both present</td>
<td>High self-esteem; high moral reasoning; best concept-achievement under stressful conditions; reflective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreclosure</td>
<td>Crisis is absent; commitment is present</td>
<td>Least anxious (for defensive reasons); most endorsing of authoritarian values; low sense of autonomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity Diffusion</td>
<td>Crisis could be present or absent; commitment is absent</td>
<td>Liable to for esteem change in response to external feedback; low sense of autonomy; impulsive; withdrawn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moratorium</td>
<td>Crisis is in crisis; commitment is present but vague</td>
<td>Most anxious; reflective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Identity Achievement* exists when adolescents have experienced decision-making periods and are in the pursuit of ideological goals. This stage is associated with high levels of moral reasoning as well as higher levels of self-esteem than other stages. Ideally, students can reach this stage through their interaction with peers and adults.
Adolescents who are experiencing identity Foreclosure status commit to ideological positions that are not their own. Often, this occurs when adolescents commit to parental views rather than develop their own views through self-exploration. Conforming to the views of others often leads to lower self-esteem and an overreliance on what others direct that the adolescent ‘should do.’ During Foreclosure status, adolescents are at risk of adopting authoritarian values.

Adolescents experiencing Identity Diffusion do not have ideological goals. The distinguishing factor in this phase is that individuals do not experience a sense of commitment and do not actively seek to realize their social identity. Within this phase, adolescents can display apathy in response to questions about social order because they have not experienced a reason to consider how or why they align with certain systems.

Finally, individuals in identity Moratorium status are actively exploring social identity and values. Thus, this stage characterizes identity crisis because individuals are in active exploration. Symptoms of anxiety are common during this exploration due to the flux nature of identity status during active exploration. Establishing consistent opportunities for students to try out new activities, as well as providing places of belonging, is incredibly important during this stage. Adolescents are continuously changing, so they are often dissatisfied.

Marcia’s exploration of identity development reinforces the importance of educators as students pursue of identity achievement during adolescence. Whereas some teachers might interpret a student’s behavior as a lack of motivation or apathy, teachers could consider that underlying reasons of this behavior could be a student who is currently experiencing identity diffusion. These challenges go beyond the subject area in school. In lieu of blaming behavior, educators could consider how to best support adolescents as they seek to find their role within
social order of the classroom and school system. On the other hand, the nature of identity-achieved students can be comforting to teachers as they work with groups of students. This is because of their willingness to be reflective in assignments, display high esteem and moral judgment. However, schools can better consider how to capitalize on embracing the agency of adolescents, especially when supporting group dynamics within a school system. If adults have awareness of these stages, they can consider how the high school social order forces adolescents to undergo the challenges of destructuring and restructuring. Therefore, school systems have the potential of recognizing this reality and possibly even fostering more supportive interventions as students seek identity achievement.

2.1.3 Gilligan: a gender-specific approach to female identity-development

Whereas Marcia and Erikson provide frameworks that are essential to understanding psychosocial development, Carol Gilligan (1986) takes a gender-specific approach that re-conceptualizes Erikson’s stage theory. Gilligan differentiates between modes of thinking and reactions in life crises to present a new paradigm for viewing female identity development. Gilligan’s work, *In a Different Voice*, emphasizes that Erikson viewed separation from others to be essential for progressing successfully through his eight stages (1993). Gilligan’s view is decidedly different. She criticizes Erikson’s view that separation from the mother is essential to progression from infancy to early childhood. Gilligan argues that instead of the masculine framework of developing through separation, girls and women develop components of femininity through attachment. Thus, Gilligan criticizes Erikson’s model as being male specific and contend that a relevant model of development should consider both genders.
Gilligan (1986) refers to women’s identity as being ‘fused’ or ‘interconnected’ through relationships with others. Therefore, women do not encounter developmental stages in a similar fashion to men. For example, men begin to acknowledge the importance of relationships and care during adolescence, whereas women recognize this much earlier in their development. Specifically, females see a world that encompasses relationships rather than a world where people stand alone. This “awareness of the connection between people gives rise to a recognition of responsibility for one another, a perception of the need for response” (Gilligan, 1986, p.30). Like Erikson, Gilligan recognizes adolescence as a critical stage for female development. During this phase, a female will “hold her identity in abeyance as she prepares to attract the man by whose name she will be known, by whose status she will be defined, the man who will rescue her from emptiness and loneliness…” (Gilligan, 1986, p. 12). For this reason, Gilligan references a moral domain that is different from men (Gilligan, 1986). She explains, “…moral judgments reflect a logic of social understanding and form a standard of self-evaluation” (Gilligan, 1986, p.4). Whereas men prefer to be isolated as they develop identity, women tend to see this isolation as selfish. To summarize, Hoover, Marcia, and Parris (1997) state, “Identity grows and is nurtured or frustrated in a complex bonding of self and society. It is not simply asserted or assigned” (p.21). Females view the development of relationships as a key responsibility and develop identity through gaining voice, perspective, and engaging with others.

Identity formation is a process for both males and females that is in the core of the individual and culture. Given these gender differences, high schools should consider these perceptual differences especially when fostering systems that help move adolescents through the various stages of identity development.
2.1.4 Maslow: Supporting a Path toward Self-Actualization

The work of Gilligan, Marcia, and Erikson is valuable when considering the development of identity, but the work of Maslow (1943) provides another informative lens for this developmental age. Maslow (1943) theorizes that people are motivated to achieve basic needs. People can only progress toward higher level needs such as belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization after fundamental needs are fulfilled. Maslow illustrates his theory as a hierarchy, which is displayed in Figure 2.1.

![Figure 2.1: Maslow’s path toward self-actualization](image)

The five levels of Maslow’s hierarchy provide an explanation as to what motivates people in life, regardless of age or stage. His hierarchy recognizes the role of rewards and unconscious desires in life. If individuals are unable to have their needs met in the first physiological tier, it is unlikely that they would be motivated to meet the needs of others or reach for higher levels of self-development. Frequently referenced as hunger-satisfaction,
Maslow explains that the hungry person would have no other interests in life except for the search for and acquisition of food (1943). A utopia for this person would be nothing more than a place where there is plenty of food; all else would be unimportant. According to Maslow, it is only when someone satisfies the physiological hungers that dominate an organism that other needs emerge.

The second tier in Maslow’s hierarchy is safety. By exploring the actions of infants, Maslow learned that people need protection from outside elements, such as sensory stimulation or inadequate support. If something surprised infants, they clutched to parents. Humans in general would commonly prefer the known over the unknown because the known allows them to feel safe. Maslow compares neurotic adults to unsafe children in their desire for safety, as neurotic adults are continually seeking routines that prevent unexpected dangers from occurring. Regardless of age or stage in life, it is only after humans have a sense of control and order that they can explore the third level of the hierarchy, belonging.

Maslow explains that belonging and love is not synonymous with sex; rather, love is the hunger humans feel to form relationships with others. Specifically, relationship need includes identification with groups, including but not limited to family, friends, and professional relationships. Once humans have a sense of belonging, they can discover their esteem needs that define the fifth level of the hierarchy. Maslow explains that the desire for self-respect and self-esteem lead to self-confidence and worth. If one’s esteem goal is not met, the individual will encounter discouragement and possibly develop traumatic neurosis.

Finally, Maslow characterizes those who achieve the top tier of his hierarchy, self-actualization, as those individuals who realize their potential and continue to seek personal growth (1943). Maslow (1968) characterizes those who achieve self-actualization in thirteen
ways: (1) superior perception of reality; (2) increased acceptance of self, of others, and of nature; (3) increased spontaneity; (4) increase in problem-centering; (5) increased detachment and desire for privacy; (6) increased autonomy and resistance to enculturation; (7) greater freshness of appreciation and richness of emotional reaction; (8) higher frequency of peak experiences; (9) increased identification with the human species; (10) changed interpersonal relations; (11) more democratic character structure; (12) greatly increased creativeness; (13) certain chances in the value system (p. 32). In other words, Maslow saw achieving self-actualization as “being, rather than becoming” (p.382). Because the emergence of self-actualization rests upon achievement of the four lower levels of the hierarchy, a person who reaches self-actualization reaches a state of being satisfied.

Baumeister & Leary (1995) provide insights into adolescent developmental tasks that should consider Maslow’s hierarchy. They hypothesize that belonging is a construct that is essential to motivation and development and that individuals seek to form social bonds (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Through these emotional connections to their relationships, individuals can grow in motivation, cognition, and positive outlook. Without a sense of belonging, it is likely that individuals will be emotionally distressed, have increased stress, and develop health problems. Research tells us that certain developmental tasks that occur during adolescence can strengthen this sense of belonging (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). These tasks include (1) successful transition to high school, (2) learning the skills needed for academic achievement, (3) getting involved with extracurricular activities, (4) forming friendships, and (5) forming a sense of identity. According to Baumeister & Leary (1995), “patterns of group behavior and close relationships can be understood as serving the need to belong” (p.521). The developmentally appropriate tasks cannot occur without social interaction. Consequently, the
adults in high schools can help adolescents meet the various needs organized by Maslow’s hierarchy through opportunities for structured group interactions that foster the opportunity for people to belong.

2.1.5 Ninth Grade Transition to High School

Most teenagers living in the United States experience an important transition from middle school to high school amidst this challenging physical, emotional, and social developmental period. This transition typically involves shifting to a new physical building, earlier start time, advanced curriculum, and higher workload. Educators and researchers have explored this transition for many years, but there are conflicting conclusions about the high school transition. Some scholars have found that high school transition marks a clear decline in academic performance, attendance, and engagement (Benner, 2011; Roderick, 2003). Weiss & Bearman sought to understand if changing school buildings is the reason for declines in performance (2007). Their research suggested that students experienced a difficult transition between 8th and 9th grade regardless of moving schools, as students that stayed in the same building also experienced declines in performance. Weiss & Bearman’s work posed that the decline experienced between 8th and 9th grade could be developmental and not influenced by location or context (2007). Others indicate that students maintain performance during the high school transition but experience great social challenges, changes in friendships and social groups, and pressures to perform (Akos & Galassi, 2004). Similarly, researchers found that students in accelerated programs maintain performance and psychological functioning but reported more stress during this transition year (Suldo & Shaunessy -Derdrick, 2013). Students and parents report that the 9th grade transition is
a difficult challenge but can also provide opportunities for starting over socially and academically (Akos & Galassi, 2014).

In sum, the challenges associated with the 9th grade transition does not appear to be uniform across students. It is possible that some of these differences are due to differences in school district demographics, as low-income, Black males have extremely high drop-out rates during this transition year. Others have suggested that 9th grade transition challenges are different based on gender, as 9th grade females are the most likely to engage in non-suicidal self-injury than any other year in middle or high school (Barrocas, Hankin, Young, & Abela, 2012). Researchers also found that cyberbullying has a highest prevalence for 9th grade females, which is linked to symptoms of depression, suicidal ideation, and suicidal attempts (Williams, Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Wornell, & Finnegan, 2017). Researchers and educators do not have a clear understanding of the mechanisms behind challenges experienced during the 9th grade transition. It is still unclear if these challenges are developmental, specific to this transition, or mostly context specific. However, we know enough to document that, at the minimum, certain groups of 9th grade students (i.e. Black males, females, and other disadvantages group) have increased challenges when transitioning from middle to high school and tend to engage in higher risk behaviors during that time period.

2.1.6 Risk Taking, Impulsivity, and Problem Behaviors in Adolescence

Adolescence is a time during which physical and mental capabilities increase (Willoughby, Good, Adachi, Hamza, & Tavernier, 2013), and adolescents tend to engage in a variety of harmful risk-taking behaviors linked to an overactive reward system (Shulman & Cauffman, 2013). When attempting to understand the increase in criminal behavior in
adolescence compared to other age groups, Shulman & Cauffman (2013) attributed the increase condition to reward bias in adolescent risk appraisal. They define reward bias as “the tendency to perceive greater rewards, fewer costs, and less danger associated with risk activities” (Shulman & Cauffman, 2013, p. 414).

Shulman & Cauffman (2013) conducted two studies involving large data sets to explore the hypothesis that reward bias is larger in adolescence than in other age groups. This hypothesis was tested in the context of court-involved participants. Their first study involved 910 participants who were between 10 and thirty years old. Shulman & Cauffman recruited participants from five geographic locations (Denver, Colorado; Irvine, California; Los Angeles, California; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Washington, D.C.). Gender was evenly split (49% male, 51% female) and ethnically diverse (29% African American, 24% White, 22% Hispanic, 15% Asian, and 10% other) (2013). Measures included a self-report of a four-item subscale derived from the Risk Behavior Subscale of the Benthin Risk Perception Measure (BRPM), as well as four subscales of the modified BRPM for the reward bias in risk perception (Benthin, Slovic, & Severson, 1993). Age was a primary variable in this study. Participants were coded into the following age groups: 10-11 were coded as preadolescence, 12-13 as early adolescence, 14-15 as middle adolescence, 16-17 as later adolescence, 18-21 as late adolescence, 22-25 as early adulthood, and 26-30 as adulthood (Shulman & Cauffman, 2013).

Results showed that reward bias and the relationship with law-breaking behavior was significantly stronger in middle adolescence than other age groups. The second study included 1,357 participants who were court-involved (39% female; 40% Black, 24% Hispanic, 35% non-Hispanic White, 2% other) drawn from four geographic locations: Los Angeles, California (29 %), Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (28%); Virginia (27%); and Florida (16%). Shulman &
Cauffman used the same measure of reward bias in risk perception as the first study (2013). The researchers concluded that the court-involved youth, ages 12-13, exhibited higher levels of reward bias than community youth. This finding supported the hypothesis that adolescence is biased toward reward, and this bias can translate into criminal risk-taking behavior. In conclusion, the study suggested that adolescents are developmentally immature, impulsive, and need the support of systems instead of simply punitive consequences (Shulman & Cauffman, 2013).

Similarly, the research of Collado, Felton, MacPherson, and Lejuez (2014) maintained that early adolescents are sensation seeking, impulsive, and have a propensity toward risk-taking. The researchers hypothesized that boys would score higher in these areas. Their original sample included 277 recruited adolescents from the Washington D.C. area (44% female, 66% male), and 49% self-identified as white, 35% as black, 3% as Latino, 1% as Asian, and 11% as other. The researchers collected data in waves of assessments, based upon participant age. The study coupled demographics with a balloon analogue risk task and two self-reporting scales: Eysenck Impulsivity Subscale, version 7 (Eysenck, Pearson, Easting, & Allsopp, 1985) and Brief Sensation Seeking Scale (Hoyle, Stephenson, Palmgreen, Lorch, & Donohew, 2002), respectively. By using multi-level modeling, researchers examined the trajectories of individual adolescents (Collado et al., 2014). Researchers described four major themes derived from this data collection: (1) sensation seeking did increase from early-to middle-adolescence; (2) levels of impulsivity seem to peak when youth are in ages 13-17 then subsequently decline; (3) risk-taking did increase as well, but it stabilized thereafter; and (4) race and gender did not appear to be significant indicators of possibly disinhibition.
The findings of both Collado et al. (2014) and Shulman & Cauffman (2013) provide clarity to some of the concerns that arise during adolescent development. Informed by these results, it appears that adults should consider the impact that they have on adolescents during this developmental stage. School systems could examine purposeful intentional intervention with students, especially when it comes to encouraging adolescents to avoid dangerous risk-taking behaviors.

### 2.1.7 Importance of Adults in Adolescent Development

The research of Buckley et al. (2012) examined factors associated with decreasing risk-taking that can be interpreted in context with the risk-taking research of Shulman & Cauffman (2013) and Collado et al. (2014). Specifically, Buckley and colleagues considered whether relationships with and support from parents, teachers, and friends influence adolescent decision-making and intervention success. Participants in the study included 207 Australian (83%) and New Zealand (11%) students who had a mean age of 13.5 years, with half being male. On two separate occasions separated by three months, students entered self-reports using a questionnaire booklet. The study measures included a shortened version of the School as a Caring Community Profile-II (Lickona & Davidson, 2003) and the Parental Bonding Instrument (Parker, Tupling, & Brown, 1979) along with a single item measure for intervening behavior that was adopted from focus group findings.

The themes from the surveys highlighted several trends among adolescents. First, the researchers discovered that adolescents who had a high level of support from their teachers or peers intervened when friends engaged in risk-taking behaviors. Interestingly, parents were not a protective factor when compared to teachers and peers. This may be because adolescents are
tasked with establishing an identity/stable sense of self outside of their parents. Second, teachers who fostered support of students helped promote positive relationships in schools as well as an appreciation of safety. These finding suggest that even though adolescent students are especially impulsive and frequently engage in risk-taking behavior (Collado et al., 2014), school systems can play a critical role in decreasing the likelihood of these behaviors (Buckley et al., 2012).

Whereas the work of Collado et al., (2014) and Buckley et al. (2012) focused on student self-reporting, Chapman, Buckley, Sheehan, and Shochet (2013) studied the perceptions of teachers in order to examine student connectedness or membership as it relates with student behavior. Chapman et al. (2013) built on previous investigations that found that teacher support played a large role in the students’ perspectives on their sense of membership (Goodenow, 1993b). Chapman et al. (2013), like Buckley et al. (2012), conducted their study in Australia. The study included fourteen school staff (eight females, six males) who participated in interviews. The participants included twelve Health and Physical Education teachers, one school-based counselor, and one school-based health nurse. The semi-structured interviews were transcribed by the researchers, and the analysis resulted in four concluding themes that found that connectedness was derived from (1) fairness and discipline, (2) a sense of value and teacher support, (3) feeling a sense of belonging while in school, and (4) involving oneself in experiences that successfully engaged one in school. Teachers reported a belief that that positive and trusting relationships could prevent problem-behavior in class. Further, teachers assumed that students who participated in extracurricular activities did not have the time and were therefore less likely to engage in risk-taking behaviors. Finally, teachers believed that there was an innate need for students to connect with their teachers.
In conclusion, the reviewed studies showed that students were more likely to exhibit risk-taking during adolescence (Collado et al., 2014). In addition, they revealed that both students and teachers perceived that relationships and connectedness could improve behaviors and outcomes (Buckley et al., 2012; Chapman et al., 2013; Eccles et al. 1997). Moreover, the findings strongly align with Maslow’s (1943) hierarchal explanation that the need for belonging and esteem are fundamental in the pursuit of self-actualization.

### 2.2 WHAT IS STUDENT VOICE?

*Student voice* encompasses a range of student opportunities to interact, collaborate, and partner with teachers and school administration in exploring ideas and perspectives (Mitra, 2004, 2008; Mitra, Serriere, & Stoicovy, 2012; Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). Student voice initiatives foster a partnership between school adults and students to improve the school experience by developing autonomy, competence, and a sense of school membership (Mitra et al., 2012). These initiatives provide a structured setting and opportunity that allow stakeholders within a school to acknowledge and understand the student perspective on a specific mission or possible outcome. Therefore, *student voice* is used to empower and support adolescents as they seek identity achievement and independence.

This review first traces the theoretical background of student voice to provide an overview of the construct and then explore the spectrum of practices that are associated with student voice initiatives. To explore the complexity of the construct of student voice, the review explores the construct of student voice by analyzing the pertinent literature and is organized in three subsections, including: (1) a brief background on the derivation of this term, (2) the role of
the school leader, and (3) the significance of teachers’ agency. This section of the review concludes with an analysis of student voice initiatives relating to school improvement.

2.2.1 Background of Student Voice

The literature on student voice reveals inconsistencies of the construct definition. While some research defines voice as feedback (Johnson, 1991), others suggest that voice exists through formal structures, such as the school newspaper or advisory organizations. It also exists in informal outlets, as found in small group learning activities in the classroom or during extracurricular activities. Yet, adults presume that they know the perspective of young people and often disregard student voice (Fielding, 2001a; Fielding, 2001b). It is this disconnect that makes initiative-promoting, intentional student voice a charged topic.

Cook-Sather (2002) supports Fielding (2001a; 2001b) in outlining the efforts to recognize and authorize student perspective. Specifically, she states that this student voice authorization can take place within the classroom. Students can act as knowledge generators rather than simple recipients of others’ knowledge. For this process to be successful, students must have an opportunity to explore their ideas with pedagogical support and convey their perspective to school officials.

This process, however, is even more challenging at the administrative level. Logistical, psychological, intellectual, and personal challenges exist in questioning established beliefs and practices. Students affect the hierarchy of schools when they are empowered. Truly listening to students involves formulating a response from school officials. Although this does not necessarily mean doing what the students prescribe, it does mean that school officials need to be open to the possibility of seeing new aspects of issues. Finally, she encourages a review of the
terms of conversations. This requires schools to examine the types of conversations that exist, who participates in them, and how they are structured in order to view school systems differently (Cook-Sather, 2002).

2.2.1.1 Spectrum of Student Voice

Two prominent research groups provide student voice frameworks that can be helpful for school systems to consider (Fielding, 2001a, 2001b; Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012).

Fielding (2001a; 2001b) detailed a hierarchy to conceptualize student involvement and voice that included 4 categories: (1) data sources, (2) active respondents, (3) co-researchers, and/or (4) consultants. When students are data sources, teachers are the data collectors and seek feedback from student perspectives. Teachers acknowledge student knowledge, review samples of their work, and disseminate meaning. Students become the active respondents when they engage other students and hear each other’s voices in discussion. Students in the role of co-researcher learn alongside teachers and present viewpoints to educational stakeholders. For example, student co-researchers learn about data review and specific aspects of professional development, such as topics like and the school’s assessment and profiling system. Student co-researchers present research, methods, and results to educational stakeholders. The role of student co-researchers ultimately grows into student consultants. As a student consultant, students initiate and facilitate dialogue to engage with teachers and peers. In using this framework, research has shown students exploring such issues as curriculum of career-education, quality of school meals, and their own life skill development. Student consultants can establish a culture of open-dialogue and inclusiveness that can ultimately positively impact curriculum and pedagogy.
Similar to the research of Fielding (2001a, 2001b), Toshalis & Nakkula (2012) also acknowledged the role that students can play in affecting school culture. They developed “The Spectrum of Student Voice Oriented Activity” that provides a framework to examine the role of students within their school system. Figure 2.2 displays this spectrum and illustrates the progression from expression as the lowest level of student voice to leadership at the highest level. As students move across the spectrum, they grow from articulating their perspectives and acting as data sources to directing collective activities and emerging as change agents. This spectrum can inform student-voice initiatives by providing all students with an increased capacity to engage in their high school and foster greater school membership. Schools can provide students with opportunities to grow beginning with students articulating their perspective and progressing to empowering them to direct collective activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expression</th>
<th>Consultation</th>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Partnership</th>
<th>Activism</th>
<th>Leadership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering</td>
<td>Being asked for their</td>
<td>Attending</td>
<td>Formalized</td>
<td>Identifying</td>
<td>(Co-) planning, making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opinions,</td>
<td>opinion, providing</td>
<td>meetings or events</td>
<td>role in decision</td>
<td>problems, generating</td>
<td>decisions and accepting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>create art,</td>
<td>feedback, serving on a</td>
<td>in which decisions</td>
<td>making, standard</td>
<td>solutions, organizing</td>
<td>significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>celebrating,</td>
<td>focus group, completing a</td>
<td>are made, frequent</td>
<td>operations require (not</td>
<td>responsibilities, agitating</td>
<td>responsibility for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>complaining,</td>
<td>survey</td>
<td>inclusion when issues</td>
<td>just invite)</td>
<td>and/or educating for</td>
<td>outcomes, (co-) guiding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>praising,</td>
<td></td>
<td>are frames and actions</td>
<td>student involvement,</td>
<td>change both in and outside of</td>
<td>group processes, (co-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>objecting</td>
<td></td>
<td>planned</td>
<td>adults are trained in how</td>
<td>the school contexts</td>
<td>conducting activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>to work collaboratively</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>with youth partners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2.2**: Spectrum of student voice, reprinted with permission (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012)
2.2.2 Linking leadership to student voice

Once school leaders have an understanding of the complexity of human development, as well as the environmental factors that influence this process, they can then begin to strategically consider ways of embracing student voice. Student voice can provide the transformative means to construct systems of students, teachers, and other educational stakeholders to work together in process and toward outcome (Fielding, 2001b). “Student voice is sought primarily through insistent imperatives of accountability rather than enduring commitments to democratic agency” (Fielding, 2001b, p.123). Fielding was not the first person to notice that this was important. As John Dewey (1916) described in *Democracy & Education*, “If humanity has made some headway in realizing that the ultimate value of every institution is its distinctly human effect…we may well believe that this lesson has been learned largely though dealing with the young” (p. 11). Yet it was not until the 1970s that student power began to grow, as students began to have a presence in school governance (Levin, 2000). Schools, like other institutions, often do not elicit input from lower levels of the structural hierarchy, such as students (Johnson, 1991). The words of Kozol (1991) in *Savage Inequalities* on the importance of the student perspective to schools are still relevant today, “Voices of children, frankly, have been missing from the whole discussion. This seems unfortunate because children often are more interesting and perceptive than the grown-ups are about the day-to-day realities of life in school” (p. 5-6).

As Kozol (1991) and Dewey (1916) remind us, students are the missing link in creating a democratic school system and provide context for leaders to develop what Mintrop (2016) describes as a theory of action. Leaders act as designers when they consider how to influence an
organization. To make effective decisions, school leaders must define the problem, address goals of the considered action, examine the problem’s symptoms and causes, understand the change process, and recognize the organizational context within which the change will unfold. Similar to Bronfenbrenner (1977), Mintrop (2016) explains that there are three levels of influence when it comes to the decision-making process. Mintrop conceptualizes the *macro* level as societal and institutional influences, the *meso* level as organizational factors, and the *micro* level as influences by individuals and their relationships with one another. This approach helps school leaders adopt the crucial view of students as integral parts of the system.

Bronfenbrenner (1977) and Mintrop (2016) both acknowledge the complexity of systems when considering a theory of action. However, the research of Fielding (2001b) takes theoretical considerations and helps make the abstract more practical by providing questions that act as points of inquiry. Table 2.3 provides questions that can serve as a framework to consider when establishing the conditions for student voice and setting in motion the theory of action.

**Table 2.3**: Fielding’s Questions for examining conditions of student voice; Fielding (2001b)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Points of Inquiry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Speaking  | • *Who* is allowed to speak?  
           | • *To whom* are they allowed to speak?  
           | • *What* are they allowed to speak about?  
           | • *What language* is encouraged / allowed? |
| Listening | • *Who* is listening?  
           | • *Why* are they listening?  
           | • *How* are they listening? |
| Skills    | • Are the skills of dialogue *encouraged and supported* through training or other appropriate means?  
           | • Are those skills understood, developed, and practiced within the *context of democratic values and dispositions*?  
           | • Are those skills themselves *transformed* by those values and dispositions? |
| Attitudes & dispositions | - How do those involved *regard each other*?
| | - To what degrees are the *principles of equal value* and the *dispositions of care* felt reciprocally and demonstrated through the reality of daily encounter? |
| Systems Organizational Culture | - *How often* does dialogue and encounter in which student voice is centrally important occur?
| | - *Who decides*?
| | - How do the systems enshrining the value and necessity of student voice mesh with or *relate to other organizational arrangements* (particularly those involving adults)? |
| Spaces | - *Where* are the public spaces (physical and metaphorical) in which these encounters might take place?
| | - *Who controls* them?
| | - *What values* shape their being and their use? |
| Action | - *What action* is taken?
| | - *Who feels responsible*?
| | - *What happens* if aspirates and good intentions are not realized? |

Fielding’s (2001b) work is rooted in transformative approaches to students and teachers as they work together and form a collective sense of responsibility and agency. Hattie (2003) acknowledges that the role of the principal is to create a culture of psychological safety and of high student responsiveness. The principal’s role is to make sure that students are always the focus of discussion. By helping shape this culture, they indirectly affect learning. Trust, respect, optimism, and intentionality are four propositions that school systems can foster (Hattie, 2009). Fielding’s (2001b) questions help shape the framework of school leaders when arranging practices that acknowledge and promote student voice. The questions are designed and derived from the transformative notion that, “at the heart of education lies the commitment to teaching and learning as a genuinely shared responsibility” (Fielding, 2001b, p.137). If Fielding’s (2001b)
comments about the heart of education are true, Hattie (2016) provides a three-year professional learning trajectory to help the school leader shape a culture of increased shared responsibility and capability. He explains that in year one, it is the responsibility of the school leader to help develop baseline data. In year two, professional learning and development should be derived from this data as collective efforts focus on priority areas. Year three allows for focus and priority areas to be investigated again and refocused.

Fielding’s (2001b) questions from Table 2.3 are designed to solicit the conditions within a school system and affect school leaders as they work to developing a baseline data collection and promotion of a culture that embraces student voice. Furthermore, Fielding’s questions align with social cognitive theory as they advance a view of students as producers of experiences and shapers of events (2001b; Bandura, 2000). These self-efficacy beliefs influence the settings and activities that transpire, as well as how much effort and commitment people will put into specific initiatives. Social cognitive theory is especially applicable to a leader’s sense of agency and the belief that it is possible to “produce desired effects and forestall undesired ones by actions” (Bandura, 2000, p. 75). School leaders should consider relevant beliefs, attitudes, and practices that shape the collective agency of teachers. Therefore, school leaders and teachers can be motivated to the mission, resilient to adversity, and successful in their pursuit of accomplishments. When successful, this process of collective leadership leads to “strength of power with others rather than power over others” (Preskill & Brookfield, 2009, p.89). Because Hattie (2016) explains that a main responsibility of the school leader is focusing on priority areas, it makes sense to consider the role and mindset of teachers when moving forward with the initial collection of baseline data.
2.2.3 Collective teacher efficacy and student voice

When beginning new initiatives, school leadership must recognize the complexity of the systems they seek to change and be comfortable with including the staff in the process (Brookfield & Preskill, 2009). Therefore, principals must foster school community engagement that facilitates organizational-based thinking and inquiry-guided reflection (Huggins, Klar, Hammons, & Buskey, 2016). By focusing on these elements, school leadership can distribute decision-making, which in turn empowers teachers and builds a school-wide capacity to shift culture.

Teachers make a difference in student achievement (Hattie, 2003, 2009). Hattie (2003) identifies five major dimensions of excellent teachers (p.5):

- Identify essential representations of their subject
- Guide learning through classroom interactions
- Monitor learning and provide feedback
- Attend to affective attributes
- Influence student outcomes

Teachers play a major role in supporting student development and influencing student achievement. Teachers can positively affect achievement by displaying passion for their work by celebrating their students’ successes and providing helpful interventions when students fail. Teachers are not only accountable for teaching content, but they are also responsible for ensuring that their students learn it. It is important to recognize Hattie’s (2003) fourth characteristic of excellent teachers of attending to affective attributes of students. Part of this characteristic is the level of respect that teachers have for their students. Teachers display respect for students in their receptivity to their students’ perspectives, ideas, and emotions.
Building upon previous research on the importance of affective attributes in teachers, Hattie (2009) conducted a meta-analysis of the factors that impact student achievement. Table 2.4 details domains of teacher influence on student achievement and the associated effect size. In fact, teachers are the main in six of the top ten influencers of student achievement. While the student controls his self-reporting of grades and other Piagetian programming, the teacher is the one who provides formative assessment that helps students recognize these elements. Further, while the school might have control over the macro elements of behavior and course acceleration, the teacher is the one who provides the interventions when appropriate, delivers feedback, and provides clarity. Additionally, Hattie’s work demonstrates the importance of the teacher-student relationship in influencing student achievement. He states, “building relations with students implies agency, efficacy, respect by the teacher for what the child brings to class and allowing the experiences of the child to be recognized in the classroom” (Hattie, 2009, p.118).

**Table 2.4: Meta-Analyses of influences on student achievement (Hattie, 2009)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Influence</th>
<th>Cohen’s d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Self-report grades</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Piagetian programs</td>
<td>1.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Providing formative evaluation</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Micro teaching</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Acceleration</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Behavioral</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Comprehensive interventions for learning disabled students</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>Teacher clarity</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The role of the teacher must be of utmost importance when analyzing and improving school systems (Hattie, 2009). When teachers recognize the importance of their relationships with students, teachers can begin to embrace the change process in schools. This process, however, can be challenging. Hattie (2016) provides the Visible Learning impact cycle as one way to help identify student outcomes. The cycle includes the consideration of teachers’ knowledge & skills, identification of new change initiatives, evaluation of change initiatives, and continuous revising for improvement.

The profess of considering knowledge and skills of teachers and school leaders is the core of social cognitive theory. Bandura (2006) explains that “social systems are the product of human activity, and social systems, in turn, help to organize, guide, and regulate human affairs” (p. 165). Teachers are active contributors to the school culture and system. Specifically, teachers display properties of human agency in four ways: intentionality, forethought, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness. Teachers accommodate self-interests when contributing to a vision and, if led, can construct courses of action that align with goals and behaviors of the collective group. After all, teachers influence students by how they “relate, teach, and model social and emotional constructs and manage the classroom” (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). The success of implementing such programs and initiatives is dependent on the efficacy of teachers and the environment they create.
The work of Kurz & Knight (2003) supports the importance of efficacy in school systems. They worked with 113 high school teachers located in a small city in Texas. The high school had 2,140 students (14 % of which were considered economically disadvantage). Ethnic distribution of the student body was as follows: 77 % white, seven percent Hispanic, six % Asian/Pacific Islander, and less than one % Native American. To analyze the high school, the researchers used the Teacher Efficacy Scale (Gibson & Dembo, 1984), the Collective Teacher Efficacy Instrument (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000), and the Organizational Coupling Structure Inventory-Term Form (Logan, Ellett, & Licata, 1993). Researchers examined the relationship among individual efficacy, collective efficacy, and goal consensus/vision (Kurz & Knight, 2003). There was a moderate correlation between collective teacher efficacy and individual teacher efficacy. This could be due to teachers lacking knowledge of what is going on in other classrooms. Therefore, while teachers could have strong beliefs about being able to affect student achievement, teachers might not feel as confident in their colleagues. Researchers also concluded that a positive, moderate relationship was found between collective efficacy and goal consensus. This again stresses the importance of leadership framing the vision and goals of the change process.

In order to build capacity for collective efficacy, Hattie (2016) defines mind frames as something kept on display as a constant reminder of the staff. For example, he provides an example from a school located in Australia where staffrooms and classrooms have their mind frame posted: “As educators we believe we are change agents: we see ourselves as change agents, we are enablers NOT Barriers; it is about raising the self-esteem of our kids, ourselves, and our school community; we need to be flexible in regard to the different cultural groups in our school community, the diversity of groups” (Hattie, p. 71). Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy (2000) define this
belief as a school that fosters organizational agency. The school displays an “intentional pursuit of a course of action” (p.483), and therefore acts a school pursuing educational goals. These shared beliefs lead to a collective efficacy and allow teachers to work together in ways together that produce results.

In the case of student-voice initiatives, it is critical that teachers see that interactions with students can help increase effective and excellent teaching (Hattie, 2003; 2009). Having teachers recognize the importance of their relationships with students also helps to grow a collective efficacy in enterprises like student voice initiatives. Bovill et al., (2011) recognizes that there are challenges for teachers and students as they partner on conversations about teaching and learning. Teachers’ sense of agency and efficacy can surface in school culture and can prove challenging for teachers as they move beyond their traditional roles in the classroom.

Hattie (2016) further supports Bovill et al., (2011) as he provides a powerful example of collective teacher efficacy through the example of Gustav Vasaskolan, a school located in Sweden. At this school, teachers identified as pedagogs work with students throughout the day to understand their thinking, to use common language, and to consider authentic teaching strategies. These pedagogs, in fact, serve as an intervention for students and the school system as they take on sharing the responsibility of teaching and learning with students. Teachers worked to understand the student mindset, to consider the feedback that fostered learning, and to create instructional approaches that helped students become more active learners. However, this process was successful due to teachers working together in an attempt to understand student learning and outcomes, and their actions changed based upon their efforts of working together. Conversations with parents changed, and shared ownership of the action plan keeps getting renewed.
2.2.4 Student Voice, Membership, and School Improvement Initiatives

Literature suggests that educators can partner with students in the school improvement process (Kirby & Gardner, 2010; Mitra, 2004, 2008; York & Kirchner, 2015). Student-educator partnerships can help educators consider school beliefs, practices, and philosophies, and in doing so, these partnerships can illicit student perspectives that can help with decision-making (Friend & Caruthers, 2015). These partnerships support a shift from conventional reform to that of “culturally sustaining pedagogical practice and democratic decision-making processes that empower students and build upon strength and diverse backgrounds” (Friend & Caruthers, 2015, p.17).

The shift from conventional reform to student-centered efforts is particularly relevant to student voice opportunities. Whitlock identified three school districts in the Northeast U.S. and had 350 students complete surveys (2006). The survey was comprised of 110 items comprised of a 5-point Likert scale with responses that ranged from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). There was also one open-ended question that asked, “What can your school do to be a good place for students to spend time and learn?” This question helped guide the 11 focus groups in discussions, as it clustered ideas that were broad. Teachers randomly selected 108 students across grade levels. 36 students were from 8th grade, 31 were from 10th grade, and 41 were from 12th grade. Participants consisted of 49 % boys, 51 % girls. All of the participants were high moderate to high socioeconomic status.

Whitlock (2006) sought answers to the following questions: (1) What can a school do to be a good place for students to spend time and learn?; (2) What makes students feel cared for at school?; (3) What does respect for students look like?; (4) What makes students want to do their best at school?; (5) How do you feel when an adult respects you?; (6) What makes a class
interesting?; and (7) How safe do students feel at their school? Results suggested that school connectedness consists of four domains: adult-youth relations, institution-youth relations, school curriculum & engagement practices, and the ability to cope with academic pressures. Students within and across grades discussed conditions that aligned with one of these domains. Adult-youth relations showed the greatest complexity across grades, as six qualitative themes (assistance, visibility, emotional accessibility, multidimensional, benefit of doubt, and status) and 65 passages were associated with this domain. Interestingly, the 8th and 9th graders expressed this in more frequency than the 10th graders. Whitlock linked connectedness to perceived development support in the school. Connectedness was associated with students feeling developmentally supported through opportunities for meaningful relationships with teachers and safe. Finally, institutional policies and practices, as well as perceived academic pressures, contributed to connectedness.

The work of Whitlock (2006) provides insight into domains of school connectedness, as and Mitra et al. (2012) found similar results. Although Mitra et al. (2012) conducted research at an elementary school, the results illustrate that even young students can verbalize the importance of teachers in a school setting. Mitra et al. completed a mixed-methods study that included a ten-item survey, followed by formal interviews and observations with students and adults. Within the elementary school, every teacher was invited to reflect in group interviews that focused on the small-school gatherings. The principal was a firm believer in democratic principles in school decision making, so she provided time to structure small-school gatherings for students to be able to raise issues that were important to them, discuss community building, and foster service-learning. Within the study, teachers lead small-school gatherings. The study showed that opt-in strategies for teachers helped slowly integrate student voice into school culture. Students and
adults concluded that power must be relinquished and trusting relationships between staff and students must exist. Levin (2000) describes this change process as students no longer being the raw material to be shaped by teachers, but instead students become the shapers of themselves and each other. Therefore, it is important to recognize that students at a very young age recognize that institutional policies and practices can, in fact, contribute to the student school experience (Whitlock, 2006).

Finally, Friend and Caruthers (2015) conducted research of their own on the importance of sustaining democratic decision-making processes to empower students. They interviewed elementary students (n=144) and secondary students (n=28) in Midwestern urban schools (three elementary and two high schools). In this study, researchers sought ways for student voice to contribute to school reform. Friend and Caruthers asked four questions in semi-structured interviews: What are things you like about school?; What are some of the things you do not like about school?; What would you change if you were in charge of school?; and If you could talk to teachers, what would you say to them? In addition, qualitative data was also collected in student focus groups. The data collected from this research show the importance of the teachers in school systems. Specifically, students expressed that the role of teachers as authoritative figures impacts their impression of school. Therefore, student-teacher conversations and the posturing of these interactions must start with less sensitive topics.

The research of Friend and Caruthers (2015), Mitra et. al (2012), and Whitlock (2006) address one piece of the framework, known as Systematic Data Collection. Researchers provided examples on ways to collect data in this cycle, such as: student surveys and focus groups; individual student interviews; student-produced videos or publications; photographs or art-based inquiry; student blogs, social media, or wikis; and students involvement on decision-making
committees. As Figure 2.3 shows, advocacy and inquiry operate on a continuous cycle. This cycle can be applicable to other research when considering how to incorporate student voice into school improvement.

![Systematic Data Collection Framework](image)

**Figure 2.3** Systematic Data Collection Framework, reprinted with permission; Friend and Caruthers (2015)

The work of Kirby and Gardner (2010) puts at-risk students at the forefront, as they investigated their concerns to understand student frustration in their systematic data collection and collaborative data analysis. They held fourteen different focus group sessions with fourth-year students at an urban, low socioeconomic high school and partnered with students to help inform school-change initiatives. They conducted research due to concerns about the number of
students who were not engaged in learning, and therefore not graduating. Participating twelfth grade students, all from the same high school in St. Johns, New Foundland, reported that their school system itself was not designed for students to be successful. They also noted that academic and sociocultural practices impacted their learning and that being recognized as “at-risk” negatively impacted their success. Students suggested to the researchers that: (1) Course/program scheduling, flexibility, and graduation requirements could be adjusted to better suit the needs for students; (2) Students could participate in the curriculum review process; and (3) Students desire to feel a sense of respect, belonging, and partnership in the school process. Providing students opportunities to engage with school leadership through structured initiatives has the potential to support the students’ development and the creation of a more supportive school culture.

The research of Halx (2014), like that of Kirby and Gardner (2010), involved working with at-risk students, as adults attempted to listen to student perspectives and experiences in school. Halx (2014) identified three south Texas high schools with low socioeconomic status. Eight 20-year-old, Latino males were asked three questions: 1) How do the student participants feel about school and the education they are receiving?; (2) What do the student participants think about their status in society and their chance to advance within it someday?; and (3) How would the student participants feel about learning through a more critical pedagogy? This investigation derived three qualitative themes through the written-word exercises, taped interviews, and field notes. The Latino students could express their feelings about school, their status in society, and their awareness of critical pedagogy. The results of Halx’s work found that: (1) Students were unable to articulate a macro view of their own social status and they had only a superficial view of class stratification: (2) They believed the education they were receiving was
the education they needed, regardless of their marginalization. They were unable to articulate educational aspects they needed to be more successful, believing passivity through the educational process is expected; and (3) They sought opportunities to advance, develop power, and have influence but did not know how. Students reinforce the need for educational support, as they believe that their current education is a valuable part of their development for them to have power and influence in society. If schools listen to these insights, systems can develop a more crucial pedagogy.

Like the work of Halx (2014), Pazey, Helig, Cole, & Sumbera (2014) also recognized the importance of acknowledging and learning from at-risk students. Specifically, Pazey et al. identified students who were in alternative schools, as the traditional schools had not met their developmental needs or engaged them (2014). Researchers worked with six special education students in 1995 and six in 2012 to determine how they perceived high stakes testing and accountability and understood the impact of school reform efforts on their educational experience. They compared field notes as well as conducted individual interviews and focus groups. Details of this sample included two 12th grade, African American students; two 11th grade, African American students; and two 10th grade, Mexican-American students. Both the 1995 and 2012 qualitative data showed similar themes. First, there was a conflict between what students believed they had already accomplished and what they were required to do. Next, they were confused about learning and testing. The students already had anxiety about demonstrating that they deserved a diploma; this anxiety was heightened when they had to demonstrate the necessary knowledge to show competence. Finally, students explained that there seemed to be a lack of concern on the behalf of school administration regarding social and emotional needs. The conclusions of Pazey and colleagues work is important for administrators to recognize, as the
many facets of a students’ development can sometimes lead them to alternative schools and programs (2014; Philips, 2011; Wilkins, 2008).

Although Pazey et al. (2014) did not necessarily seek out the importance of social and emotional needs in their students, these needs ended up being an important outcome of their work. Simmons, Graham, & Thomas (2014), on the other hand, intended to find out how social and emotional ‘wellbeing’ can help positively impact the school experience. They worked with three regional and diverse school systems in Australia, identifying 606 students. Student ages ranged as follows: 6-8 years old n=139; 10-12 years old n=150; 13-14 years old n=160; 16-17 years old n=150. Focus group sizes ranged from 1 to 16 students. Researchers sought to develop an understanding of ‘wellbeing’ in schools, identify how to recognize wellbeing and advance understanding and improvements in relation to student ‘wellbeing’, generate new knowledge for policy, programs, and practice in school in order to positively impact student wellbeing. Outcomes included: first that pedagogy practices need to be customized through curricular offerings, authentic practices, and directly connected to their wellbeing. Second, the school environment, particularly the socio-emotional and physical, are connected. The way schools use their space plays a role in their wellbeing. Third, like the research of Friend and Caruthers (2015), Mitra et. al (2012), and Whitlock (2006), the relationships among adults and students includes the need for better communication, respect, and equality. Finally, students actively seek agency and want to influence change in schools. Therefore, student voice can lead to a more democratic environment.

In order for students to contribute to a democratic environment, they must see themselves as being able to influence change. Kehoe (2015) investigated students learning about their role as change agents. He found that (1) power is needed to act as a change agent, so students must
be provided this opportunity, (2) when empowered, students can become uncomfortable and lack confidence, and (3) school factors can influence their sense of agency.

Through listening to the voices of students in their initiatives, researchers uncovered themes that show that students can articulate views on the learning process (Groves & Welsh, 2010; Halx, 2014; Philips, 2011; Simmons et al., 2014). First, connecting instructional strategies and curriculum to “real world,” relevant, experiences would help student learning (Groves & Welsh, 2010; McNaohn & Zyngler, 2009; Philips, 2011; Simmons et al., 2015). Second, students believe that learning is connected to their relationship with their teachers (Groves & Welsh, 2010; Whitlock, 2006). Third, students also expressed the need for school systems to foster opportunities for educators to recognize the social and emotional learning (SEL) and wellbeing of students in order for learning to occur (Halx, 2014; Kirby & Gardner, 2010; McNaohn & Zyngler; 2009; Pazey et al., 2014; Whitlock, 2006). Finally, students can articulate their status in the larger picture of educational and societal systems (Halx, 2014). Embedding student voice into curriculum and class routine, as well as the overall policy development process, will allow opportunities for student voice to be exposed (Halx, 2014; Pazey et al., 2014).

2.3 SCHOOL MEMBERSHIP

This section of the review investigates the construct of school membership and community as a potential large-scale outcome of student voice initiatives. For the purpose of this review, school membership includes the following related concepts: school membership, school connectedness, and belonging (Allen & Bowles, 2012; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Goodenow, 1993b; McNeely, Nonnemaker, Blum, 2002; O’Neel & Fuligni, 2013; Rowe,
Stewart, & Patterson, 2007; Whitlock, 2006). The review is framed by the understanding that developing membership hinges on four main elements of a community: (1) providing students with a sense of membership, (2) providing students with an opportunity to have influence, (3) integrating and fulfilling students’ personal needs, and (4) sharing an emotional connection (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). Each element is examined in turn.

### 2.3.1 Providing Students with a Sense of Membership

The first element that schools must provide students with as they engage in a community is a sense of membership. McMillan & Chavis (1986) note five attributes that are necessary for someone to feel invested in becoming a member of something: (1) boundaries, (2) emotional safety, (3) acceptance/identification/willingness to sacrifice, (4) investment of feelings, and (5) common symbol system. First, boundaries are set for members in order for this investment to occur. These boundaries could be the walls of a building or the zoning districts within a county. In both cases, they do separate people from one through a physical space or identification, which allows individuals to identify with their surroundings. Second, these boundaries, in turn, create a sense of emotional safety that allows feelings to be exposed and a sense of intimacy to grow. Third, members then have a feeling of acceptance and identification, therefore displaying a willingness to sacrifice for the group. Fourth, by identifying with the group, they invest feelings that allow membership to grow in meaning and value. Finally, there is a common symbol system. This symbol system creates and maintains group boundaries, and therefore creates social distance between those who are and are not members.
These five common attributes of membership can contribute to the functionality of school systems. Some attributes occur naturally in high schools. For example, 500 elected school boards govern Pennsylvania school entities, creating "political subdivisions" of the Commonwealth set by geographical boundaries (attribute 1). Further, high schools consist of colors, mascots, and an actual school facility itself. These attributes create distance from those who are not part of the high school, and they naturally form common symbols recognizable to the students (attribute 5). On the other hand, other attributes take more strategic review for school systems to implement. School policies and practices impact the development of a sense of emotional safety and intimacy in the school (attribute 2), encouragement of identification with the school system (attribute 3), and creation of a collective agency to the school (attribute 4).

Understanding that certain attributes naturally occur in school settings while others must be intentionally fostered, Osterman (2000) builds upon the research of McMillan and Chavis (1986) to seek answers to three critical questions: Is the sense of belonging important in an educational setting?; Do students currently experience themselves as members of a community?; and how do schools influence students’ sense of community? Osterman’s (2000) meta-analysis resulted in several conclusions. He found that students who experience acceptance are not only more motivated and engaged, but the quality of the students’ learning also improves. Second, Osterman discovered that classrooms and schools often influence students’ feelings and can, consequently, affect engagement. Belongingness “involves drastic changes in the cultural values, norms, policies, and practices that dominate school, particularly at the secondary level” (Osterman, 2000, p.360). Therefore, instructional policies and practices can influence a students’ sense of community.
A stage-environment perspective is one way for high schools to explore which polices and practices have a higher probability of fostering a system that functions more like a community. Eccles & Roeser (2009) built on the stage-environment perspective referenced in Eccles, Midgley, Wigfield, Buchanan, Reuman, Flanagan, & Iver (1993) that investigated “how behavior, motivation, and mental health are influenced by the fit between the characteristics individuals bring to their social environments and the characteristics of these social environments” (p. 91). Eccles & Roeser (2009) explored classrooms, school buildings, school districts and secondary school transition, and schools as embedded organizations in the larger community. Most pertinent to this study, the researchers found that the school climate in buildings that promote a sense of community and influence adolescent development are characterized by six specific attributes: (1) general school climate, (2) academic tracks and curricular differentiation, (3) school size, (4) extracurricular activities, (5) unsupervised spaces, and, (6) school start and stop times. School systems can better conceptualize ways to integrate the attributes of McMillan and Chavis’ (1986) attributes of membership with these six attributes that promote a sense of community and influence adolescent development.

While Whitlock (2006) did not examine the specific perspective of stage-fit in adolescence, the study did explore similar attributes through data that align with the characteristics of membership. The research suggested that a sense of belonging could encourage students to make connections to school and gain a sense of competence by critiquing school initiatives and the school environment. The research took place in three school districts in the Northeast U.S. that were of moderate to high socioeconomic status. Data were collected through student surveys and focus groups to answer the following seven questions: (1) What can your school do to be a good place for students to spend time and learn?
(2) What makes you feel cared for at school? (3) What does respect look like? (4) What makes you want to do your best at school? (5) How do you when an adult respect you? (6) What makes a class really interesting? (7) How safe do you feel at your school? Students (N=350) completed a 110-item survey that initially provided a baseline of data. They then conducted 11 focus groups with 108 focus group participants. These participants varied by grade (n= 36 8th grade, n=31 10th grade, n=41 12th grade; 49% boys, 51% girls). They helped provide data that triangulated qualitative and quantitative themes when exploring the aforementioned questions.

The researchers found that school connectedness consists of (a) adult-youth relations, (b) institution-youth relations, (c) school curriculum and engagement practices, and (d) the ability to cope with academic pressures. School connectedness is associated with students feeling developmentally supported through opportunities for meaningful relationships with teachers, feeling safe, and being both academically and creatively engaged. Similar to the research of Eccles and Roeser (2009), institutional policies and practices, as well as perceived academic pressures, contribute to this connectedness. Students who reported membership were more positive, engaged, and had a stronger sense of self-acceptance.

High schools are places that could embrace components of McMillan and Chavis’s (1986) attributes of membership (Osterman, 2000). This is due to the natural boundaries that exist between districts and the many symbols and traditions that high schools embrace. However, in order to capitalize on the other attributes of membership, schools should consider the ways their policies and practices help students create emotional attachment and identify with their environment (Whitlock, 2006). By reflecting on stage-environment fit, as well as seeking to understand the student perspective, high schools should view adolescents as contributors to their community.
2.3.2 Students as Stakeholders

In order for students to develop membership in the community, they must have influence as a contributing stakeholder. McMillan & Chavis (1986) identify four propositions about the role of people in the development of a community. I have adapted these to correlate with high school students and schools. (1) Students will be attached to their school community if they feel they are influential. (2) Conformity and community influence individual students on the strength of the bond they form. (3) Conformity can serve as an opportunity for students to come together as an indicator of cohesiveness. (4) Influence of students on the school community and the school community on students operate concurrently. Providing students an opportunity to act as stakeholders, keeping these propositions in mind, can be an important task in the development of a school community. After all, school systems are multilevel institutions that influence students’ academic, social-emotional, and behavioral development through organizational, social, and instructional processes (Eccles & Roeser, 2011). They are central contexts of development (Lee & Burkam, 2003). Although problem-solving and facilitation skills must be used to keep the organization focused, the interaction of youth and adults can creative a partnership that helps shift school culture (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012).

Shifting the culture of a high school involves empowering students to become practitioners of reform. Thomson & Gunter (2005) explored the idea of having eight students act as researchers by developing, piloting, and reviewing a survey related to reform. These eight students focused on the aspect of school that led them to feeling over-tested, and they were continually comparing themselves to each other. Students talked about the role of cliques and how cliques had the potential to shape the culture of the building. The students then partnered with the administration to create a School Development Team that enlisted students
as researchers, specifically addressing issues of (1) bullying and safety, (2) career exploration, (3) teaching pedagogy and learning. Students were empowered through this purposeful initiative. They became co-developers in this research, and they affected as the decision-making process as they explored and confronted issues that were important to them. This research provides an example of a high school fostering equitable relationships between students and adults by providing opportunities to engage student voice. By allowing students to influence school reform and culture through authentic dialogue with administrators, staff, and stakeholders, students also recognize that they have influence in a way that operates concurrently in the partnership and the formation of a community.

York & Kirshner (2015) categorize the process that Thomson & Gunter (2005) used in their research as positioning students through systemic agency. Positioning students in school settings develops from listening to students, learning from their perspective of the school experience, and reflecting the discourse among adults and students (Cook-Sather, 2006; York & Kirshner, 2015). Systemic agency is the process of recruiting students together for the same initiative, coordinating responsibilities toward the same goal, and making collective decisions. The narratives allow educators to therefore position students as actual agents of change, helping express their perspective and actually working toward directing the collective activities (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). In the research of Thomson & Gunter (2005), as well as York & Kirshner (2015), school leaders provided students the opportunity to have them recruit their peers to a common cause, coordinate student responsibilities, manage interpersonal dynamics, and make collective decisions.

York & Kirshner (2015) examined two different high schools, located in Denver, Colorado, that were involved in a three-year grant surrounding Critical Civic Inquiry. This
grant was intended to draw upon designed based research, as they studied and refined theory in real learning environments. Through semi-structured interviews, observed classroom interactions, reviewed student work, and analyzed informal conversation with historically marginalized students in Smith High School (n=9) and Central High School (n=14), researchers sought to develop strategies for students to partner with adults in problem solving. Both schools reported that positioning took place at the classroom level and school level. Smith High School adults reported ‘lower-track’ students as incompetent at the classroom and school level, undermining students’ opportunities to engage in collective agency. On the other hand, Central High School adults visibly provided students with the opportunity to grow in collective agency at both the classroom and school level. Adults referred to students as researchers and change agents, as they collected data on the problems and gave presentations on their outcome. Therefore, adult relationships matter (Klem & Connell, 2004). Adults impact the ability of students to learn from the process of collective action, the complexity of systems, and the change process. Nonetheless, the research of York & Kirshner (2015) suffices to say that young people taking collective action can allow students to critique abstract problems, grow the agency of students, and to shape their own collective lives.

2.3.3 Integrating and Fulfilling Personal Needs

When high schools provide adolescents with the opportunity to take collective action and grow a sense of agency, high schools will naturally begin to integrate processes for students to fulfill their personal needs. This aligns with the third component that McMillan & Chavis (1986) reference in the definition of community, that is, the role of reinforcement. The status of being a member, when coupled with sharing values grounded in similar needs,
priorities, and goals, is essential. Membership fosters a belief that joining together will help the individual receive the reinforcement necessary to achieve his/her pursuits while still being able to contribute to the needs of the community. Mitra (2008) examined this idea in the context of schools and aptly referred to it as youth partnership.

Mitra (2008) explored the partnerships in 13 diverse urban schools in the San Francisco Bay Area. Researchers interviewed adults and students from all 13 schools that had received grant funding from a local foundation to build upon student voice initiatives in their schools. All schools consisted of youth and adults in each group working together to develop and implement projects, and the youth shared leadership responsibilities with adults. Examples of topics included: (1) Fighting for substantive student representation on the district school board; (2) creating youth driven dialogues and taking action, including creating more course electives; and (3) helping peers through conflict mediation and issue workshops included suicide, body image, and racism. Collectively, students and adults focused on group processes that enabled the enactment of their activities. Outcomes of these partnerships illustrated that youth-adult partnership is ‘not business as usual.’ It takes a school wide effort, as fostering collaboration must include a shift in priorities around a common goal. Therefore, teacher student collaboration can be transformative to the relationships among students and adults within the institutional school setting. Mitra’s research (2008) also derives as that visible victories must exist in the school system itself. Sustaining morale and participation in the partnership must include clear goals, be authentic, and be meaningful to the group. Finally, dedicated time for collaboration must exist. This is a major obstacle since the high schools are not always democratically structured, nor is the allotted time for collaboration between students and adults.
for these types of initiatives. Nonetheless, being intentional in these efforts will allow students to meet the fulfillment of their needs.

2.3.4 Shared Emotional Connection

As students are contribute to the needs of the school, they will begin to develop an emotional connection to the process. This, in turn, aligns with the final component that McMillan & Chavis (1986) reference in the development of a community. McMillan & Chavis state, “Strong communities are those that offer members positive ways to interact, important events to share and ways to resolve them positively, opportunities to honor members, opportunities to invest in the community, and opportunities to experience a spiritual bond among members” (p. 13). Therefore, school systems should consider ways to recognize the contributions of students as stakeholders as school systems fulfill the needs of the students themselves and the collective high school system.

Philips (2011) explores the role of emotions in learning through conducting interviews, focus groups, and classroom observations at a low socioeconomic, Pacific Northwest, alternative school. Through conducting interviews with males (five 9th and 10th graders and six 11th and 12th graders), researchers sought to explore four questions: (1) Is there a connection between understanding the purpose of learning subject matter and a student’s academic success in school?; (2) How do emotional states affect learning?; (3) How do informal learning processes connect and help us understand how students might learn better in formal environments?; and (4) Is social learning, both in and out of the classroom, consequential for students and, if so, in what ways? Researchers concluded that (1) Social and emotional learning should not be ignored in the education of these students; fostering a positive and social
experience is crucial. Further, autonomy is necessary for at-risk students, and giving students authority over their learning is motivational. These opportunities can help grow a successful learning experience for the student and teacher alike. Finally, learning must be relevant, and students must see it as such. Otherwise, students will not be engaged or motivated to participate in learning.

The research of Mitra (2004) shows the difference between two initiatives at a low socioeconomic school located in Northern California. One student partnership was referred to as the Pupil School Collaborative (n= 13 Latino students) while the other was referred to as the Student Forum (n=30 students from a cross section of the student population). While both partnerships included students working on initiatives, they were independent of each other. The Pupil School Collaborative sought to offer advice and support to Latino students, whereas the Student Forum sought to build communication and establish school-wide efforts between students and teachers. Students or adults did not invest in the Pupil School Collaborative, and meetings did not happen on a consistent basis. Ultimately, an emotional bond was not formed. On the other hand, the Student Forum partnership resulted in students developing a sense of agency. They wanted to be heard and work with adults in the change process. Further, they developed a sense of belonging, as the teachers provided democratic opportunities to engage with the students. Finally, they critiqued the environment together through developing problem solving skills and growth in public speaking.
2.4 SUMMARY

As high schools evolve, collaborative adult and student relationships grow even more necessary in the high school setting (York & Kirshner, 2015). This chapter reviewed three areas to arrive at an understanding of why adult and student relationships are important for schools should consider maximizing students as stakeholders.

Adolescence is a critical developmental stage, thus making the high school years formidable (Erikson, 1997; Marcia, 1980). Adult support can be crucial for students as they encounter challenges during adolescence (Buckley et al., 2012). After all, given the amount of time that adolescents spend in high school and away from their families, both peers and adults greatly influence their identity and development (Collins & Steinberg, 2006). Since adolescents often engage in risky behaviors the role meaningful relationships with adults becomes even more important (Collado et al., 2014).

A possible solution to the needs of adolescents during this critical period of risk taking and identity development includes acknowledging, embracing, and supporting student voice. For the purpose of this study, the definition of student voice is adults and students working together in an exploration of ideas and perspectives. Toshalis & Nakkula (2012) developed “The Spectrum of Student Voice Oriented Activity” that displays a continuum of student voice opportunities. High schools can use this spectrum when determining how to involve students as active stakeholders. It examines the role of students within a school system while exploring aspects identity and development at the same time. Many studies suggest that students value the agency that adults provide them with in these initiatives (Friend & Caruthers, 2015; Mitra et. al, 2012; Whitlock, 2006). In addition, studies also suggest that teachers can learn from student
Researchers have found that student voice initiatives improve students’ sense of membership in their school (Cook-Sather, 2006; York & Kirshner, 2015). For the purpose of this study, school membership is when students’ personal needs are integrated and fulfilled while sharing an emotional connection to the school experience. Students that are active stakeholders in school processes develop an efficacy associated with improving school culture and feel a sense of membership. Schools can foster membership when educators intentionally value student perspective and engage adolescents in conversation (Mitra, 2008; Whitlock, 2006). Research suggests that teachers can develop a collective efficacy if they uniformly strive to work together for a common cause, such as increasing school membership by implementing student voice initiatives (Hattie, 2016). This change in teacher behavior, and the student perspective of their school, can eventually help shift the culture of a building (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012).

Chapter Three includes a context review of USCHS and the diverse students’ perspectives in that school. Following the context review, an overview of the proposed dissertation project and methodology are detailed.
3.0 RESEARCH PROJECT

This chapter details the research questions and methods utilized in this research study. This chapter includes a context review of the local school district where the proposed study occurred. Bronfenbrenner’s Ecology Theory of Human Development (1977) is presented as a framework to describe the complexities of community influences for adolescents in this specific school context. Following the context review, this chapter presents the research questions and design of the research study. Finally, this chapter outlines the analytic plan utilized for this project.

3.1 CONTEXT REVIEW OF UPPER ST. CLAIR HIGH SCHOOL

Cook-Sather (2002) and Fielding (2001) provide an overview of theoretical challenges in structuring student voice initiatives. Specifically, student voice often does not always consider attitudes or values of who is speaking or who is listening, nor does it consider the frequency with which initiatives occur. The context of a school district and its community can be helpful when evaluating and interpreting aspects of logistical, psychological, intellectual, and personal challenges that might exist within a school. Further, one should be aware of context, as it can prove valuable when interpreting research data. After all, the structure and method of deploying student voice initiatives is dependent upon institutional context. Bronfenbrenner’s ‘Ecology of Human Development’ (1977) provides a framework for understanding the complexities of systems, direct and indirect, that affect the human experience. Deploying an initiative in school
requires leadership to consider the complexities of the individuals within the aspects of culture. Therefore, this framework has utility for assisting school leaders as they deploy initiatives, interpret data, and conceptualize outcomes.

3.1.1 Bronfenbrenner’s Ecology of Human Development

Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1979, 1994) conceives that human development goes beyond direct observation of behavior and instead must take into account aspects of the environment. His ‘Ecology of Human Development’ provides a framework for understanding the complexities of systems that affect the human experience. His framework explains that human development occurs “between a growing organism and the changing immediate environment in which it lives, as this process is affected by relations obtaining within and between these immediate settings, as well as the larger social context” (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p. 514). Bronfenbrenner conceptualizes human development as the interactions within and between five subsystems of an environment (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem). He indicates that there are direct factors, such as one’s personal relationships with family and peers, that influence a person as well as indirect factors (i.e. institutional and cultural norms). These factors influence each other and contribute to one’s psychosocial development. Figure 3.1 provides a visual of Bronfenbrenner’s ‘Ecology of Human Development’, as he organizes person-environment interactions into five layered subsystems.
This model of human development can be applied to the high school context when interpreting adolescent development, needs, and influences. The initial layer outside of the individual, referred to as the microsystem, includes interactions between a person and their immediate environmental settings. Bronfenbrenner defines a setting as “a place with particular features in which the participants engage in particular activities in particular roles (e.g., daughter, parent, teacher, employee) for particular period of time” (p. 514). Therefore, an adolescent’s setting could include home, school, athletic field, or work. These microsystem settings contribute to a person’s socialization and relationships. Further, there are different individuals that impact an adolescent within each microsystem setting. For instance, at a school setting, adolescents
interact with teachers, administrators, peers, and staff through different roles. The microsystem includes multiple settings and interactions with different individuals within a setting.

The mesosystem layer consists of interactions between different immediate settings. Bronfenbrenner (1977) refers to this as “the interrelations among major settings containing the developing person at a particular point in his or her life” (p. 515). For instance, how an individual navigates influences between school, home, and work. Mesosystems essentially connect different settings of a child together that would otherwise not exist or be related. Bronfenbrenner (1979) later theorized that interactions within this system are particularly important for one’s development – especially schools and families. Ideally, there is open and productive communication between a school and home life for a child so as to provide continuous positive developmental influences.

The third subsystem in this theory of human development is the exosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). The exosystem is broader than the microsystem and mesosystem, as it embraces indirect environments influencing an individual. Indirect environments consist of social structures that are formal (such as government agencies) and informal (such as neighborhoods). These indirect environments do not necessarily influence an individual directly on a daily basis but influence the settings in which an individual interacts. For instance, state laws might not directly play a role in how a high school student communicates with learning support teachers in school but influences the IEP services this student receives.

The fourth subsystem, the macrosystem, refers to the “overarching institutional patterns of the culture” (Bronfenbrenner, 1977, p.515). The macrosystem can include cultural values of a local community or neighborhood as well as country or global cultural influences. In the context of an adolescent high school student, the mission and values of the attending school
district influence the culture of the school and students. Bronfenbrenner highlights that patterns of the institutional, local, and national cultures influence individual’s ideologies and overall development.

Bronfenbrenner (1994) later theorized that a fifth system extends beyond the environment into the final dimension of time. This system, known as the chronosystem, “encompasses change or consistency over time not only in the characteristics of the person but also of the environment in which that person lives (e.g., changes over the life course in family structure, socioeconomic status, employment, place of residence)” (p. 40). This subsystem acknowledges changes over time that occur in an individual as well as an individual’s immediate settings, surrounding environments, and global cultures. These changes over time impact an individual growth and development. It becomes challenging to measure and analyze this change without investigating comparisons of two groups over time.

Interactions among the mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem directly affect the individual’s microsystem, as changes or problems in these systems influence the others. Interactions within and between each system become a nested environment that influences an individual’s growth and development. Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) ‘Ecology of Human Development’ could be applied to school system settings to better understand the many complexities that influencing a growing and developing child. To explore the context for this study in more comprehensive fashion, the context review applies the first four layers of Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) ecological systems theory to adolescent students attending the USCHS. Although the context review that follows does not represent a comprehensive examination of each subsystem, factors are presented to illuminate elements that influence an adolescent student’s growth and development at USCHS.
3.1.2 The Microsystem & Mesosystem of Upper St. Clair School High School

The microsystem consists of patterns of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relationships in an individual’s immediate environment. Adolescents in this country are required to attend school until emancipation. Thus, high school is an immediate environmental setting for adolescents. USCHS is a public high school located in a suburban community of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. It serves approximately 1,400 students in ninth through twelfth grade. While the gender of the 1,384 students is close in dissemination (572 females and 712 males), other aspects such as race are not, as seen in Table 3.1. Given what Erikson (1997) stated about identity vs. role confusion, this microsystem could be possibly more challenging for these students as they are balancing awareness of their own identity with that of conforming to their surroundings.

Table 3.5: USCHS Student Population Identified By Race (2018-2019 School Year)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>9th Grade – 314</th>
<th>10th Grade – 379</th>
<th>11th Grade – 331</th>
<th>12th Grade – 355</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or Alaskan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>311</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or Other Pacific</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islander</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

USCHS has active school sponsored sports, clubs, and activities. These school sponsored programs provide different roles to meet each student’s needs. USCHS has 823 student-athletes.
(460 male, 363 female) and over 70 clubs with varying student involvement, depending upon the time of year.

Students at USCHS have access to interactions with teachers, administrators, school staff, and peers. All of these varied relationships influence a student’s microsystem at USC. USCHS administrators highly value personalized relationships between adults and students. Administrators acknowledge the great potential impact these microsystem relationships have on a developing adolescent, especially within the context of establishing self-identity and minimizing risk taking behaviors.

Moving outward, the mesosystem consists of the linkages between different settings such as the school social and home (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner (1979) theorized long ago that schools have become more isolated from the home. Schools are no longer neighborhood based, and staff often commute rather than live in the school district where they work. This results in parents and teachers being less likely to know each other or engage in activities outside of the child’s classroom education. This minimizes the interaction between school and home. He further explains that this narrow-mindedness can exist within the school itself, as students “have little connection with the school as a common community for which members share active responsibility” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 848). Therefore, school can actually breed alienation between family, school, peer groups, neighborhoods, and the world of work, if the school is not intentional in fostering these interconnections in the communities where they are located.

A common way to describe the interconnections between microsystems to form the mesosystem is through an example. A student from a single-parent household entering into a classroom at USCHS will have one of the 42 male teachers or 59 female teachers. This student, based upon his or her familial microsystem, could react positively or negatively to the gender,
based on how his or her home microsystem functions. Further, his or her parent is one of the 442 current members of the Parent Teacher Student Organization (PTSO). His or her parent may or may not have interactions with their child’s teachers depending on the involvement of that teacher. These linkages between home and school form an example of this student’s mesosystem.

This same student could have this teacher as a coach, as we currently have 24 coaches who teach at our high school. The student’s interaction with this adult as a teacher and coach provides an example of a mesosystem as an academic and athletic microsystem interact. Given some of the previously reviewed research on the influence adults have on students, one can conclude (Buckley et al., 2012; Collado et al., 2014) that this example of a mesosystem could positively influence the student. For this reason, teachers are encouraged to sponsor one of our 74 clubs (48 of our teachers supervise clubs, whereas 53 do not).

3.1.2.1 USCHS initiatives & teachers influencing microsystem and mesosystems

Before acknowledging the next subsystems of Bronfenbrenner’s theory, it is appropriate to review the context of faculty at USCHS further. Specifically, the teachers at USCHS have been involved in various initiatives over the course of my tenure at the district. Therefore, teacher efforts, mindset, and professionalism certainly impact mesosystems, and in turn, our students.

The curriculum recommendation process at USC School District is transparent. It allows the community to be cognizant of school happenings and to be part of the redesign process. It involves stakeholders modifying curriculum & instructional strategies together. These processes take place in January and June and is outlined on the district website as follows: (1) Curriculum leaders and department chairs prepare recommendations as a result of ongoing work with teachers, administrators, students and parents. (2) Preliminary panel meetings are held and recommendations are reviewed by leadership teams at the elementary, middle school and high
school levels. (3) At a final panel, the revised and/or edited recommendations are reviewed again by K-12 discipline teams and Central Office administrators. (4) The Assistant Superintendent and Director of Curriculum & Professional Development review the recommendations with a community curriculum input committee. (5) The Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent and Director of Curriculum & Professional Development prepare administrative reactions to the recommendations. (6) The recommendations are presented to the School Board for review and/or final approval. (Curriculum overview, 2017)

In February of 2015, select teachers volunteered to collaborate under our district’s Curriculum Recommendation Process to communicate their ideas to ‘reimagine the high school experience’. The high school leadership team proposed the following initiative to central administration and school board: Research alternative models to the traditional high school experience to provide better means to develop the interests and meet the needs of 21st century high school students. The school board and central administration agreed that the school schedule has become inefficient and ineffective. Together, we determined four goals in the shift to flexible scheduling, real-world learning experience, customizing the support and opportunities for all students, and developing business and community partnerships. In 2015, USC School District adopted these goals into a new Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan adopted the title, Re-Imagining the High School Experience, as derived from the curriculum recommendation process. Table 3.2 provides the goals and definition of each goal, followed by a description of accomplishments so far into the process.

Table 3.6: Upper St. Clair School District Strategic Plan 2015-2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Definition of Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional Learning Communities</td>
<td>Establish a systematic process for teachers to collaborate, plan and deliver instruction that</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Time & Schedule

Customize structures and learning opportunities to meet the academic and developmental needs of each learner by creatively using time, schedules, and resources.

Social & Emotional Learning

Provide a comprehensive school experience in which students feel healthy, safe, engaged, supported, challenged, and empowered.

Technology

Leverage technology to create learning opportunities that empower students to become active learners in a dynamic and interconnected world.

### 3.1.2.1.1 Time & Schedule

Prior to my arrival as assistant principal, teachers mapped curriculum using Wiggins & McTighe’s *Understanding by Design* Framework (2006). *Understanding by Design* (UbD) provides a guide to assessment, instruction, and curriculum for each unit taught. Teachers work in teams using UbD theory, grounded in planning backwards, and developed curriculum with the assessment in mind. They designed instruction and formative feedback that aligned with curriculum and the summative assessment. In addition, Pennsylvania’ adopted the Teacher Effectiveness model. This model utilizes Charlotte Danielson’s *Framework for Teaching* and a constructivist paradigm with aim to create a shift in instructional strategies and assessment (2013). The PA Teacher Effectiveness model includes four separate domains: Planning & Preparing, Classroom Environment, Instruction, & Professional Responsibilities. USC School District formalized use of this model in the 2016/2017 school year. Thus, USCHS continues to move toward authentic practices that embrace learning-centered instructional strategies.
Coupling the authentic practices and strategies with Danielson’s *Framework for Teaching* has shifting teaching responsibilities to being more constructivist-minded, which in turn has required more flexibility in the traditional school day.

In accordance with authentic practices around Wiggins & McTighe *Understanding by Design* Framework, as well as Danielson’s *Framework for Teaching*, teachers have been involved in efforts in which they became teacher-researchers and practitioners. Specifically, they have developed Performance-Based Assessments based on Problem Based Learning (PBL) and Project Based Learning (PjBL) models. Our teachers have undergone professional development on these learning strategies, as research has shown that they are associated with higher motivation, engagement, and authentic learning (Stefanou et al., 2013; Sungur & Tekkaya, 2006; Wijnia, Loyens, Derous, 2011).

### 3.1.2.1.2 Technology

In addition to teacher efforts around curriculum development, our 9th grade staff at the high school adopted a 1-1 Learning Initiative in the 2016-2017 school year. Throughout 2017-2018 and 2018-2019, as our entire high school adopted the 1-1 Learning Initiative, staff have continued to undergo professional development as they consider authentic practices that develop active learners in a dynamic and interconnected world. Similar to the process of considering and reflecting upon the goal of *Time & Schedule*, teachers have continued to consider how infrastructure can provide students with opportunities to use tools and resources in creative ways to demonstrate learning.

In alignment and preparation of the 1-1 Learning Initiative, ¼ of our teachers have prototyped hybrid courses and hybrid experiences. In addition, these teachers have worked alongside staff to migrate content under a new Learning Management System. The
administrative team embedded intentional use of professional development and in-service time to support these processes.

3.1.2.1.3 Social & Emotional Learning

The high school leadership team began exploring the competence domains that the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has established as a school framework associated with Social & Emotional Learning (Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning, 2011). The competence domains include knowledge, skills, and dispositions that comprise intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cognitive domains. The five domains and a brief description under each are detailed in Table 3.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self Awareness</td>
<td>Assessing one’s strengths and limitations, having positive mindsets, and possessing a sense of self-efficacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Management</td>
<td>Regulating emotions and behaviors, managing stress, and persevering through challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Awareness</td>
<td>Taking perspectives and empathizing with those with different background or cultures; recognizing and understanding social norms for behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Skills</td>
<td>Establishing and maintaining healthy and rewarding relationships; communicating clearly, listening actively, and seeking help when needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible Decision Making</td>
<td>Making constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse settings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The process to evaluate these competencies and develop initiatives to facilitate these domains
has not yet begun. As a result, teachers have yet to engage in a thorough understanding of these competencies, nor have they undergone any professional development.

**Professional Learning Communities:** The district adopted Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in grades K-8. However, given the complexity of the high school schedule, this has not yet been implemented at the high school level. In August of 2016, selected teachers entered into a pilot phase to integrate PLCs at the high school. The high school administrative team included the belief statements for growing learners in faculty meetings. Figure 3.2 depicts the goals of the piloted PLC.

![USC’s Beliefs for Growing Learners](image)

**Figure 3.4:** USC’s Beliefs for Growing Learners

In April of 2017, teachers that participated in the pilot PLC phase convened to discuss progress, lessons learned, and goals for the future. Given the success of the pilot phase, all teachers were
participants in PLC’s in the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 school years. The role of teacher feedback and input has been essential to make this time meaningful, and thus, have attempted to build upon each other’s ideas with iterations that best suits our colleagues.

3.1.3 The Exosystem & Macrosystem of Upper St. Clair School High School

Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) next subsystem is the exosystem and includes larger environment with which individual settings are situated. The exosystem impacts a student’s environment, which, in turn, indirectly impacts daily influences on growth and development within particular settings. In the application of Bronfenbrenner’s theory to adolescent students at USCHS, this constitutes examining the characteristics of the surrounding community.

Table 3.4 provides demographic information from the township of USC. Data indicates that USC Township is an educated, predominantly white, suburban neighborhood with affluent socioeconomic status. While a student would not routinely consider this information, components of this exosystem certainly affect the mesosystem and microsystem. For example, parents’ employment could determine how often students are supervised and home on weekends, availability of basic needs, and even family vacations during the summer. These factors impact parents and students alike, as individuals of this community are accustomed to high achieving norms and expectations. This is often observed on the individual student level, as many USCHS students hold themselves to an elite level and expect themselves to attain standards consistent with their parents and this high socioeconomic status surrounding community.

Table 3.8: Exosystem characteristics of USCHS students and surrounding community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Descriptor</th>
<th>Descriptor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median Household Income</td>
<td>$112,929</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Educational Attainment: percent high school graduate or higher 99%
Median Housing Value $264,900
Median Income by gender
Male – $77,878
Female – $27,378
Race
91.1% white alone
.8% black alone
5.7% Asian alone
1% two or more races
1.3% Hispanic or Latino

Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) fourth layer, the macrosystem, consists of the broader policies, norms, and cultural values. The macrosystem includes small and broad cultural circles. For instance, individuals may identify with an ethnic culture, city, state, and country. Similarly, cultural influences can be setting specific, such as at the school level. The macrosystem will be applied, in this example, to the setting specific school level of USCHS.

USC School District was founded upon Local School Board Policy 1001. The policy guides all development and modifications to classroom instruction and curriculum recommendations. While students do not have access to these processes, the local school board policy guides all procedures at the school level. The mission statement, vision statement, and district tagline are also aspects of the macrosystem or district culture that influence environment at the school level through attitudes and ideologies. Table 3.5 illustrate the cultural norms and attitudes of USCHS reflected through the mission statement, vision statement, and district tagline.

Table 3.9: USCHS Norms & Cultural Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policies, Norms, Cultural Values</th>
<th>Upper St. Clair School District Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mission Statement</td>
<td>Developing lifelong learners and responsible citizens for a global society is the mission of the USC School District, served by a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
responsive and innovative staff who in partnership with the community provides learning experiences that nurture the uniqueness of each child and promotes happiness and success.

Vision Statement

The USC School District prepares our students to be successful contributors to an ever-changing global society by providing a nurturing, engaging, and challenging learning environment.

District Tagline

Customizing Learning, Nurturing Potential, Delivering Excellence

USC adopted their tagline and released a description in the monthly newsletter (Tagline, 2011) before my arrival as an assistant principal. However, this mantra of the district is one that is referenced throughout classrooms, visible in any front office, and is read before board meetings. It is at the core of building and district decision-making, impacting all other systems within the ecological framework. Table 3.6 details the three-part district tagline.

Table 3.10: USC District Tagline Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tagline</th>
<th>Upper St. Clair School District Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customizing Learning</td>
<td>Requires that, to the fullest extent possible, each child is taught at the appropriate learning level, matching his/her individual learning style, and using content of high interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurturing Potential</td>
<td>Recognizes that every child comes to school with unique potential to be a successful student and citizen. Our educators must nurture these unique and varied talents of the whole child so that every student grows to his or her fullest potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delivering Excellence</td>
<td>Has been the USC standard since the inception of the School District. Our goal is to always meet or exceed a standard of excellence in all that we do.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bronfenbrenner’s theory suggests that all subsystems interact with each other and ultimately significantly impact an individual’s growth and development. In the context of school settings, adolescents at USCHS are held to an elite standard. These standards can be seen throughout each level or system. Students self-impose standards of excellence (individual), expect them of each other (microsystem), are held to high achievement by teachers and staff through consistent high performing state-wide testing (microsystem and mesosystem), live in a community of high income (exosystem), and attend a school with a pervasive culture demanding excellence (macrosystem). This cultural norm and expectation is embedded within USC district’s mission and tagline.

This cultural demand for excellence is reflected in USCHS data. The average Grade Point Average (GPA) for all students at our high school is 3.37, unweighted. Average GPAs differ slightly among grade level (9th grade = 3.34 10th grade = 3.29; 11th grade = 3.39; 12th grade = 3.37). These average GPAs suggest that USCHS is a high achieving school, with a graduation rate of 99%. This high-achieving expectation is embedded throughout every subsystem that influences an USC student. This can have positive and negative implications for the individual. For instance, a student that is not high achieving at USC might have difficulty establishing a secure identity and negatively impact self-confidence. On the other hand, this community of students has access to resources and environmental supports that other communities may not experience. This example demonstrates the profound implications that school environment has on an individual, especially given the psychosocial crisis that adolescents face in Erikson’s (1997) fifth stage (Identity versus Role Confusion).
Bronfenbrenner’s (1977) theory of ecology of human development provides a framework for understanding the complexities of systems at USCHS, School District, and community. School leaders can use this theory to better understand the many factors that impact research and data collection within the high school and school district. By understanding aspects of the environment, leadership can incorporate the influencing factors of a student’s growth and development in its decision-making.

3.2 RATIONALE AND SIGNIFICANCE

Adolescence is a critical developmental stage during the high school years. It is well-documented that adolescents are impacted by relationships with peers and adults as they navigate their independence, take risks, and exploration of self-identity (Erikson, 1993). Recent research suggests that adolescents benefit from adult relationships as supports for this risk-taking developmental period of seeking independence (Erikson, 1993; Leather, 2009). As adolescents’ experience change in perspective, adults can influence resolutions to crisis during these stages and actually play a critical role in decreasing likelihood of impulsive risk-taking behaviors (Collado et al., 2014). Equally as important, adults have the potential to guide students in their decision-making periods, as many are pursuing of ideological goals (Marcia, 1980). Researchers have suggested that teachers can be more of a protective factor when compared to parents for these behaviors (Buckley et al., 2012).

It is becoming clear that relationships with adults are important in a school setting for this developmental time-period. However, relationships provided in the school setting are often hierarchal by nature with a top-down power differential. Given adolescents affinity for
independence, empowerment, and the desire to find oneself, it is likely that this age group would benefit most from collaborative adult partnerships. Student voice encompasses a range of opportunities to interact, collaborate, and partner with adults in an exploration of ideas and perspectives. One can consider engaging students in student voice initiatives in order to provide opportunities to influence development, facilitate identity exploration, and reduce risk-taking behaviors. However, student voice partnerships are often resisted given the traditional hierarchy model in schools (Cook-Sather, 2002).

This research study explored the relationships between students’ perceived membership in their school, relationships with adults, and stakeholder partnership with adults in the school. This project increased our understanding of the need for adult-student relationships in the high school setting and explored differences based on gender. The results of this study will inform future school-wide initiatives that cultivate student-adult relationships and student voice initiatives.

### 3.3 CURRENT STUDY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study explored USC ninth grade students’ and teachers’ perceptions of student voice and membership. This study evaluated the following research questions: (1) To what capacity do ninth grade students at USCHS have a sense of school membership and voice? (2) What is the relationship between perceptions of school membership and student voice? (3) Do ninth grade student and teacher perceptions of student voice differ?
3.4 METHODOLOGY

3.4.1 Design and Overall Study Approach

The study utilized a cross-sectional study design comprised of both quantitative and qualitative analyses. The study recruited ninth grade students and ninth grade teachers from USCHS. Participants completed a survey on perceptions of school membership and student stakeholder involvement (student voice).

3.4.2 Participants and Eligibility

Ninth grade students and ninth grade teachers were approached for inclusion in this study (maximum n = 324 students; n=41 teachers; N= 365).

Inclusion Criteria: 9th grade high school student at USC school district in the graduating class of 2021. Current 9th grade high school teachers at USC school district.

Exclusion Criteria: Students attending high school classes that were in the graduating classes 2022 or beyond. Students attending high school that were in the graduating classes of 2020 or earlier. High school teachers that did not currently teach 9th grade classes. High school curriculum leader teachers that did not teach a 9th grade specific class. Individuals not able to read or write in English.
3.4.3 Procedure

Potential eligible student participants and parents were invited to participate in this research study. Potential student participants were approached about the study in health and/or physical education class. Potential student participants were given consent and ascent forms to share and complete with parents. Potential teacher participants received a presentation about the study during a professional development seminar and were given informed consent forms to complete and join the study.

A research assistant not employed by Upper St Clair School District collected all consent forms, administered the survey, tracked survey completion, and maintained all identifiable information to ensure confidentiality within the school. Participation in the study did not impact performance evaluations or relationships with staff or administrators at USC school district. Participants were entered a lottery for two Pittsburgh Penguins tickets as incentive for participation.

Upon consenting to participate in the study, students and teachers were notified via email about the dates for data collection. Student participants completed the survey during a designated health or physical education class. This practice was consistent with USCHS’s routine procedures for school-wide events and assessments. Students received the Qualtrics survey via their school email. Following completion of the assessment survey, participants were entered into the lottery.

Teacher participants completed the survey during professional development time. Teachers received the Qualtrics survey via their school email address. Following completion of the assessment survey, participants were entered into the lottery.
3.4.4 Measures

3.4.4.1 Demographics, School Services, & Discipline

The following demographic information was collected of students: age, gender, and race. Participants were given the option to select “Do not wish to report” for that targeted demographic information. Student participants were asked to report involvement in any school sanctioned clubs and sports. See Appendix B for these items.

Teacher participants completed similar demographic information, including gender and race. Teacher participants were asked to identify 9th grade courses taught and participation with any school sanctioned sports, clubs, or activity groups. See Appendix C for these items.

3.4.4.2 School Membership

Student participants completed Goodenow’s (1993a) Psychological Sense of School Membership scale. The Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale includes 18 items, rated on a 5-point Likert scale. The instrument is designed to measure youths’ perceptions of belonging and psychological engagement in school. The initial development and validation of the scale was administered to adolescents in a suburban middle school (n = 454) and two multi-ethnic urban junior high schools (n = 301). Researchers reported establishing high reliability for the total score (α = .88) (Goodenow, 1993a). More recent research indicates that the Psychological Sense of School Membership survey has consistently demonstrated to have three distinct subfactors within the scale (Ye & Wallace, 2014). The factor structure includes the following subfactors: (1) identification and participation in school, (2) perception of fitting in among peers, and (3) generalized connection to teachers (Ye & Wallace, 2014). See Appendix B for these items.
A teacher equivalent to the Psychological Sense of School Membership survey as created for the purpose of this study. Teacher participants completed 18 comparable items on their perception of 9th grade students’ school membership. See Appendix C for these items.

3.4.4.3 Student Voice

Student voice was examined in a few ways in this study. First, the Toshalis & Nakkula’s (2012) Spectrum of Student Voice was utilized to create questions for both student and teacher participants to complete. The spectrum of student voice proposed by Toshalis & Nakkula includes 6 levels of student voice, with 1 being the lowest level and 6 being the highest and most influential level of student voice. These levels were made into 6 questions for student and teacher participants. The six items include a descriptor for the spectrum of student voice level and a five-point Likert-scale to indicate the frequency of occurrence. See Appendix B.

Student voice opportunities were also evaluated with a series of open-ended questions designed for this study. Student and teacher participants completed open-ended questions regarding the amount, type, importance, and perception of opportunities students have to be stakeholders at USCHS. See Appendix C.
3.5 ANALYTIC PLAN

3.5.1 Research Question 1: USCHS 9th Grade Students’ Student Voice and Membership

The primary aim of this research study was to assess the extent to which USCHS 9th grade students feel that they have a sense of school membership and student voice. The following points of inquiry guided the quantitative and qualitative analyses: (1) What percentage of 9th grade students report being involved as student voice stakeholders at USCHS? (2) How do 9th grade students classify their involvement as stakeholders at USCHS and does this differ based on gender or race? (3) How often do 9th grade students participate as stakeholders at USCHS? (4) To what extent do 9th grade students report feeling school membership at their school and does this differ based on gender or race? All statistical analyses were computed using SPSS, Version 26 (SPSS, Inc). Demographic information was evaluated using frequency counts and percentages.

The Spectrum of Student Voice questions were initially analyzed in two ways. First, descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations), frequency counts, and percentages were calculated for all questions and reported contexts. Next, scores were dichotomized into endorsed and not endorsed. Scores of 3, 4, or 5 indicated endorsed. Scores of 1 or 2 indicated not endorsed. The dichotomized student voice scores were analyzed using descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations), frequency counts, and percentages.

The Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM) was analyzed in several ways as well. First, PSSM scores were analyzed with a total sum score scores and descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations), frequency counts, and percentages were calculated. In addition,
PSSM ratings were analyzed based on the three established subscales, including: identification and participation in school (PSSM Subscale 1); perception of fitting in among peers (PSSM Subscale 2); generalized connection to teachers (PSSM Subscale 3). PSSM subscales were summed and descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations), frequency counts, and percentages were calculated.

Student voice questions and PSSM total and subscale scores were also analyzed to determine if there were significant differences in scores based on gender or race. The dependent variables were mean scores from the Spectrum of Student Voice and PSSM. The independent variables were race and gender were dichotomized. The gender dependent variable was evaluated by male and female. It was not possible to quantitatively analyze the non-binary student in this analysis due to too small of a group (n=1). Race/ethnicity was dichotomized into two groups, Caucasian and non-Caucasian, due to the low representation of any minority categories in this sample. Parametric assumptions of normality were evaluated with descriptive statistics. Histograms, boxplots, and qq plots were evaluated for the presence of major outliers. Homogeneity of variance was examined with Levene’s test of homogeneity (p>.05 = homogeneity) (Portney & Watkins, 2009). Four independent t-tests were calculated to determine if there was a significant difference between groups. The Welch t-test of unequal variances was computed when the homogeneity assumption was violated. T-test results were interpreted with the t-statistic at p<.05 significance level. Effect sizes (Cohen’s d) were calculated with the mean, standard deviation, and sample sizes by using computations for unequal sample sizes (Hedges & Olkin, 1985). Cohen’s d effect size values were interpreted as the following: small d=(.2, .49); medium d = (.5, .79); large d ≥.8.

Student perceptions of student voice and membership were also evaluated qualitatively
with a series of corresponding open-ended questions. The following questions were selected for analysis for this research question: (1) Do you feel that you help decide what goes on in USCHS? Please explain. (2) How important is it to you to have adults listen and act on your ideas? (3) Do you think that adults at USCHS need to listen and act on your ideas more often? Responses to these questions were analyzed using a summative content analysis approach, which included identifying key words and themes by hand, quantifying those themes with frequency counts, and including a latent content analysis to interpret the summarized findings (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The latent content analysis also included analyzing the emerging themes for systematic differences on demographic variables (gender, race/ethnicity, club or sport involvement) between students.

3.5.2 Research Question 2: Relationship between Student Voice and School Membership

The second aim of this research study was to evaluate the relationship between 9th grade student perceptions of student voice and school membership. The following point of inquiry guided the analysis of this research aim: Is there a strong positive relationship between student perceived school membership and student stakeholder involvement \((r > .5)\)?

Two variables were evaluated to assess this research question, the six Spectrum of Student Voice questions and the PSSM total and three subscales. Parametric assumptions of normality were evaluated with descriptive statistics and kurtosis. Histograms, boxplots, and qq plots were evaluated for the presence of major outliers. The relationship was evaluated using Pearson’s \(r\) bivariate correlations. Pearson’s \(r\) values were interpreted with \(p < .05\) significance level and small \(r = (.1, .29)\); medium \(r = (.3, .49)\); large \(r \geq .5\).
3.5.3 Research Question 3: Student vs. Teacher Perceptions on Student Voice

The tertiary aim of this research study was to assess whether ninth grade student and teacher perceptions of student voice differ. The following points of inquiry guided the quantitative and qualitative analyses: (1) Do 9th grade students and teachers view student stakeholder involvement the same? (2) Do 9th grade students and teachers differentiate adult student relationships from stakeholder involvement in similar ways? (3) Do 9th grade students and teachers view current student’s school membership the same?

Student and teacher versions of the Spectrum of Student Voice questions and PSSM were quantitatively compared to determine if there were significant differences in perceptions of voice or school membership. First, descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations), frequency counts, and percentages were calculated for all Spectrum of Student Voice questions and reported contexts for both teacher and student participants. Teacher and student versions of the PSSM were analyzed with a total sum score scores and descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations), frequency counts, and percentages were calculated.

Next, independent sample t-tests were calculated to determine if there was a significant difference between groups. The dependent variables were mean scores from the Spectrum of Student Voice and PSSM. The independent groups were students and teachers. Parametric assumptions of normality were evaluated with descriptive statistics. Histograms, boxplots, and qq plots were evaluated for the presence of major outliers. Homogeneity of variance was examined with Levene’s test of homogeneity (p>.05 = homogeneity) (Portney & Watkins, 2009). The Welch t-test of unequal variances was computed when the homogeneity assumption was violated. T-test results were interpreted with the t-statistic at p<.05 significance level. Effect sizes (Cohen’s d) were calculated with the mean, standard deviation, and sample sizes by using...
computations for unequal sample sizes (Hedges & Olkin, 1985). Cohen’s $d$ effect size values were interpreted as the following: small $d=(.2, .49)$; medium $d = (.5, .79)$; large $d \geq .8$.

Differences between student and teacher perceptions of student voice and adult-student relationships were also evaluated qualitatively with a series of corresponding open-ended questions. The following student questions were selected for a qualitative analysis of this research question: Explain the difference, if there is one, between adults listening and acting on your ideas and having relationships with adults at USCHS? The following comparative teacher questions were selected for a qualitative analysis of this research question: (1) Do you think students feel that they help decide what goes on at USCHS? Please explain. (2) Do you think it is important to students that adults at USCHS listen and act on their ideas more often? (3) In your opinion, are there contexts where students should not be stakeholders in USCHS? (4) Explain the difference, if there is one, between adults listening and acting on student ideas and having relationships with students at USCHS? Responses to these questions were analyzed using a summative content analysis approach, which included reading every open-ended response, identifying key words and themes, quantifying those themes, and including a latent content analysis to interpret the summarized findings (Heish & Shannon, 2005). The themes and interpretations of the two groups, students and teachers, were compared and interpreted following the initial summative content analysis.
4.0 RESULTS

4.1 SAMPLE

This study sample consisted of 73 9th grade student participants and 29 9th grade teacher participants. This sample comprised 23% of the USCHS 9th grade student body population and 71% of the USCHS 9th grade teacher population.

The student sample consisted of 67% female, 23% male, and 1% non-binary participants, with 83.3% of participants identified as Caucasian, 8.3% identified as African American, 5.5% identified as Hispanic or Latino, 2.7% identified as Native American/American Indian, 1.4% identified as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and 12.3% identified as ‘Other. The entire sample was between 14 and 15 years of age, with 59% of participants were 14 years of age and 41% were 15 years of age. The teacher sample consisted of 62.1% female and 37.9% male, with 100% of participants identified as Caucasian. Participant demographics are detailed in Table 4.1.

Table 4.11: Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>23 (31.5%)</td>
<td>11 (37.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>49 (67.1%)</td>
<td>18 (62.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-binary</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Age
Student and teacher involvement in school clubs and sports is detailed in Table 4.2. The majority of the student participants reported to participate in 2 or more school clubs (60.3%). Of the remaining participants, 12.3% of the study sample reported to participate in zero school clubs and 27.4% indicated to participate in one school club. The majority of the study sample reported to participate in at least one school sport (71.1%). Almost half of the teacher sample did not participate in any school clubs (44.8%), and 34.5% of teachers participated in one club, 10.3% participated in two clubs, and two individuals (6.8%) participate in three school clubs. The large majority of teacher participants do not participate in any school sports (82.8%).

### Table 4.12: Participant club and sport involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Students Frequency (%)</th>
<th>Teachers Frequency (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>10 (83.3%)</td>
<td>29 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>1 (8.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American/American Indian</td>
<td>2 (2.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>4 (5.5%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islands</td>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9 (12.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student club and sport involvement were descriptively analyzed by gender. Table 4.3 displays the frequency and percentages of club and sport involvement by gender. Independent t-tests indicated no significant differences in club ($p=1.77$) or sport ($p=.45$) involvement based on gender.

**Table 4.13:** Student club and sport involvement by gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
<th>Frequency (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clubs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 (12.3%)</td>
<td>13 (44.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 (27.4%)</td>
<td>10 (34.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 (23.3%)</td>
<td>3 (10.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 (21.9%)</td>
<td>2 (6.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 (8.2%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (4.1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 (1.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 (28.8%)</td>
<td>24 (82.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 (54.8%)</td>
<td>3 (10.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 (12.3%)</td>
<td>1 (3.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (4.1%)</td>
<td>1 (3.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clubs</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sports</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>21 (28.8%)</th>
<th>9 (39.1%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>40 (54.8%)</td>
<td>10 (43.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9 (12.3%)</td>
<td>3 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3 (4.1%)</td>
<td>1 (4.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2  RESEARCH QUESTION 1: USCHS 9TH GRADE STUDENTS’ STUDENT VOICE AND MEMBERSHIP

4.2.1 Student Quantitative Perceptions of Stakeholder Involvement

Student perceptions of student voice were evaluated with six questions based on the Spectrum of Student Voice using a 5-point Likert scale (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). Student voice scores were dichotomized into endorsed (3, 4, or 5) and not endorsed (1 or 2). Consistent with the Spectrum of Student Voice, each subsequent question represented a higher level of student voice. Thus, it is expected that students would endorse less leadership than expression.

Much of the student sample endorsed feeling that adults in the high school allow them to express themselves (84.9%), with only 15.1% of participants did not endorse feeling the ability to express themselves (Table 4.4). Less than half (42.5%) of the study sample endorsed feeling that adults in the high school requested consultation. A large majority of the sample did not endorse feeling that they participate as stakeholders (84.9%), partner in decisions (86.3%), are involved in school activism (72.6%), or school leadership (78.1%).

Table 4.14: Student voice dichotomized frequency ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not endorsed</th>
<th>Endorsed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n (%)</td>
<td>n (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression</td>
<td>11 (15.1%)</td>
<td>62 (84.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>42 (57.5%)</td>
<td>31 (42.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate as stakeholder</td>
<td>62 (84.9%)</td>
<td>11 (15.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Partnership in decisions
63 (86.3%) 10 (13.7)

School activism
53 (72.6%) 20 (27.4%)

School leadership
57 (78.1%) 16 (21.9%)

Student voice scores were also analyzed as discrete numbers and summed for an overall student voice score. Independent t-tests were run to determine if there were significant differences in perceptions of student voice based on gender or race/ethnicity (Table 4.5). It was not possible to quantitatively analyze the non-binary student in this analysis due to too small of a group (n=1). Assumptions of normality and homogeneity were met for overall student voice ($F=2.95, p=.091$), consultation ($F=2.05, p=.157$), and school leadership ($F=3.02, p=.087$). Assumptions of homogeneity were violated for expression ($F=6.96, p=.01$), participate as stakeholder ($F=4.78, p=.032$), partnership in decisions ($F=11.34, p<.001$), and school activism ($F=12.46, p<.001$), and, as a result, Welch’s $t$ for unequal variances was used.

Results indicated significant differences in overall student voice based on gender ($t=2.99, p<.01$), with a large effect size ($d=1.24$). Specifically, male student participants reported significantly higher student voice ($M=16.2$) than females ($M=12.4$). Significant differences between male and female student participants were not found on questions on expression ($p=.155$), participation as stakeholder ($p=.099$), and school leadership ($p=.323$). Male student participants ($M=3.2$) reported significantly more requests for consultation than female participants ($M=2.3, t=2.65, p=.006$) with a medium effect size ($d=.701$). Male student participants ($M=2.2$) reported significantly more requests to partner in school decisions than female participants ($M=1.41, t=2.49, p=.019$) with a medium effect size ($d=.745$). Male student
participants \((M=2.7)\) reported significantly more involvement in school activism than female student participants \((M=1.86, t=2.34, p=.027)\) with a medium effect size \((d=.686)\).

Race and ethnicity categories were dichotomized into Caucasian and non-Caucasian given there was a low percentage of people that identified with a minority race and ethnicity. This dichotomy was analyzed to determine if there were significant differences on overall student voice based on race or ethnicity. There were no significant differences on overall student voice based on race/ethnicity \((p=.82)\). Significant differences between categories of race/ethnicity among student participants were not found on questions on any of the student voice questions (expression, \(p=.509\); consultation, \(p=.918\); stakeholder, \(p=.59\); decisions, \(p=.905\); activism, \(p=.48\); leadership, \(p=.834\)).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.15: Student voice ratings by gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female ((n=49))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall student voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate as stakeholder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership in decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School activism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School leadership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2.2 Student Qualitative Perceptions of Stakeholder Involvement

The question “Do you feel that you help decide what goes on in USCHS? Please explain” was analyzed to identify common phrases and themes related to student participants’ perceptions of student voice. Overall, the large majority of students that responded to this question indicated that they did not feel that they help make decisions at USCHS. This does not, necessarily, mean that all of the student participants are concerned with the lack of voice though, as a subset of students indicated that they have voice or are content with the amount of voice. Specifically, three themes emerged amongst this open-ended question. The following interpreted themes emerged: (1) students do not believe they are authorized to help make decisions; (2) students report there is no system for student involvement in decisions; (3) students are content with the amount of voice in the school (Table 4.6). There were not any clear patterns to the themes or keywords based on gender or race/ethnicity. There were a few patterns related to club or sport involvement that are detailed below.

Table 4.16: Emerging themes and keywords for ‘Do you feel that you help decide what goes on in USCHS?’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keywords &amp; Phrases</th>
<th>Not authorized to help make decisions</th>
<th>No System to voice opinions</th>
<th>Content with amount of student voice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9th grade Freashman Teachers</td>
<td>not asking</td>
<td>classroom</td>
<td>teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position</td>
<td>time</td>
<td>Student Council</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The lack of authorization to make decisions was an overall theme in this question, with 68.5% of the responses wrote that they are not involved or allowed to make decisions. One notable example of this overall theme is from a female student that is involved in over 5 large clubs within the school. She shared, “Not really. I think if I moved away, this school would be completely the same”. Within this theme, there were several keywords that provide context for interpretation of the lack of authorization. These keywords, including ‘9th grade’, ‘Freshman’, ‘Student Council’, ‘position’, and ‘teachers’, suggest that there are latent contextual themes that provide explanation for answers. Several students mentioned their class rank as an explanation. The following responses reflect the notion of less voice as a 9th grader: “No, I’m just a freshman”; “no, maybe whenever I am older, but right now I don’t feel like I make a difference”; “I don’t feel that I can help decide what goes on in the USCHS as much due to being a 9th grader. I believe that since we are the newest kids in the school, our opinion is unvalued.” Within these responses mentioning 9th grade, some students indicated that they do not want to have voice because they are new to the school. For example, two male students shared, “as a Freshman, I show up for classes. I don’t want/need a say” and “No, I don’t because I’m new and just trying to do good in the school.” Other students mention that students aren’t given authority for decision power with keywords about adults or inferior positions. The lack of authority and confidence was described with the following responses: “no, I think the big decisions are made by adults/teachers”; “I am not in a decision making position”; “I’m not in a position where I have the authority to make decisions”; “I don’t really feel like it’s my place to”. Overall, these answers suggest that 9th grade students are acutely aware that they are the newest members of
the high school community with the least amount of decision-making power compared to older peers and adults.

The second overall theme of this question was that there is no system or way for students to be involved in school decisions. Within this theme, the keywords ‘not asking’, ‘classroom’, ‘time’ and ‘Student Council’ provide context for interpreting this theme. Several students indicated that they are not asked for opinions. Three females that are involved in more than one school club indicated, “no because no one asks me anything”, “No there is no way to give any feedback for the school. Also, no one is asking for it”, and “Instead of students making decisions, the school just tells students what is going on”. These responses suggest that opportunity for voice is not dependent on school involvement. Another female student summarized this theme; “I do not. Students are not, if ever, given opportunities to decide what happens at the high school, whether it relates to the course work, classes, lessons, or opportunities. These are decided by faculty.”. Several students indicated that there isn’t time or opportunity to talk to adults outside of the classroom. For example, “Not really because there isn’t any time that I get to talk to an adult outside of class” and “Not really, there aren’t any opportunities or any time to actually decide anything”. Of particular note, twenty-one (n=17 female; n=4 male) individuals indicated that Student Council is the only way to have voice and decision-making power in the school. For example, one male student stated, “I’m in 9th grade and not in Student Council, so no” and as another female stated, “No that is student council’s job.” This theme was represented by a large number of students involved in athletics but not school clubs. The following phrases were from student-athletes not involved in clubs: “Not necessarily, because I feel as though all the responsibility is left up to Student Council, and that the students do not directly get a say”; “No, I am not part of Student Council or other things that help decide what goes on in the high
“No. I think if I were in Student Council then I might have more of a say”; “No because I am not involved in Student Council”. Student Council was also mentioned several times by students that believe they do have the ability to influence decisions in the school. For example, “I do because I am in Student Council. However, if I was not in Student Council, I would not have any say in what goes on”, “Yes, I am a part of Student Council and I help make decisions that benefit the school”, and “I feel because I am in Student Council I have a way to state my idea on the topics at hand but others might not.” One individual did comment on the lack of voice within Student Council, “The only platform I have to voice my opinion is Student Council and even there, the upperclassman usually shut down our ideas or simply don’t even care in the first place”. The language used in these responses lead to the interpretation that students view Student Council as the only way to have authorization in the USCHS decision making. In sum, students that are involved with Student Council believe they help make a difference. Yet, those that do not feel that they have decision making power believe that this is left to adults and Student Council.

The final overall theme is contentment with the level of involvement to make decisions at the high school. A small number of students (n=13; 18%) indicated that they do help decide what goes on in USCHS. Seven students said they have influence over school-wide decisions, which was described with the following phrases: “Yes, I feel that the school gives multiple opportunities for the students to be involved in what goes on throughout the school”; “I was involved with a very big decision that I was allowed to make for the school”; “I am a student at USC and I help decide a little bit each day what kind of culture we will have”. Four students indicated that they helped making decisions in clubs, sports, or in the classroom as opposed to the overall school. For example, “I can help some decisions for more expressive areas, such as
on a sports team or club, but for larger decisions in the school not really”; “I probably have some impact on my fellow classmates and a few of my teachers”.

A few students indicated that they do not feel that they have voice but are not concerned with the lack of decision-making power. These individuals stated, “I don’t really want to have a say”; “Not really, but I don’t want to”. This theme represents the smallest number of participants in the sample but supports that some students are content with the level of involvement in decisions at the high school.

Overall, the qualitative responses from student participants closely reflect the quantitative responses to the Spectrum of Student Voice survey. The large majority (86.3%) of participants indicated that they do not partner in decisions on the survey. Student responses were consistent, as 77% individuals indicated that they did not feel that they were involved in decisions on the open-ended response questions. The themes that emerged with this question suggest that 9th grade students feel that they have less voice due to their age and grade level, aren’t asked for opinions, and there are limited opportunities for sharing voice outside of Student Council.

The question “How important is it to you to have adults listen and act on your ideas” was also analyzed to identify common phrases and themes related to student participants’ perceptions of student voice. Overall, the large majority (66%) of students that responded to this question indicated that it was important or very important that adults listen and act on ideas, with only 15 students indicating that it was not important (20%). Many of the students used keyword phrases such as “very”, “somewhat”, “not really”, and “fairly” to describe the level of importance to have adults listen and act on ideas. These keywords were organized into five overall themes of (1) adults listening and acting my ideas is very important; (2) adults listening and acting my ideas is important; (3) adults listening and acting on my ideas is somewhat or not important; (4)
Listening is important but acting is less important (Table 4.7). There were not any clear patterns to the themes or keywords based on gender or race/ethnicity.

**Table 17**: Themes and keywords for ‘How important is it to you to have adults listen and act on your ideas?’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keywords</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Somewhat or Not Important</th>
<th>Listening Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Value/Confidence</td>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Consider</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adults Care</td>
<td>Learning/Motivate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Listen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Body</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The largest theme that emerged from the data was that it is very important for USCHS adults to listen and act on ideas. Specifically, thirty-seven percent of students (N=27, n = 19 female; n = 8 male), or 39% of females and 35% of males, stated that it was very important for adults to listen and act on ideas. Many students indicated that it was very important without any elaboration. Examples of those responses include the following: “very important”; “very”; “very important. Teachers need to have an idea of what students want”. For those that elaborated on the response, the keywords ‘valued’, ‘care’, ‘control’, ‘learning’, and ‘environment’ emerged to provide context for interpretation. Students indicated that listening and acting on ideas results in feeling valued; “It’s important because then that would help me gain confidence on what I am doing”; “Very. It makes me feel valued and like my ideas are good and worthy”; “If they listen to my ideas, I feel needed and like I am making a difference”; “It is very important for adults to listen and act on an idea of mine because it shows that we do have a say in what happens and we do have a chance to make a difference”. These responses suggest that student voice is interpreted as value and internalized into self-efficacy and confidence. One student that was involved in several sports and clubs also indicated that adults acting on ideas is interpreted as
value and importance, “I would like to have some of my ideas presented although I don’t feel as though I am important enough to give input”. The value keywords suggest that adults listening and acting on ideas may impact self-esteem, confidence, and perceived self-worth or value both positively and negatively. Other very important responses suggest that students interpret listening and acting on ideas as a demonstration of care from adults. A female student athlete shared that “it is important to know that adults listen and act on ideas to show they want to care and are willing to help”. The keyword analysis suggests that a large subset of adolescents in this study sample internalize adults reactions and interpret them as reflections on self-worth, confidence, value, and care.

The second largest theme that emerged from the data was that it is important for USCHS adults to listen and act on ideas. Approximately one-third of the sample (29%; n=4 male; n=17 female) stated that it was important for adults to listen and act on ideas. Keywords suggest that student voice impacted students’ motivation and learning. For instance, “I always like to feel that people are listening to an idea that I think is good, and it helps to motivate me to come up with more ideas”; “It is important [...] because I feel that I should be more in control of my learning experience. Several students used the keyword ‘environment’ when responding to the question. Students indicated that adult allowing students to have voice influences the total school experience and environment. Specifically, students described the impact on school environment with the following response: “It is extremely important [...] because it shows that they care about us and our well-being in the school environment”; “It is very important [...] because it shows that we do have a say in what happens and we do have a chance to make a difference; “It is important because it gives the students the ability to voice their opinion and try to make their learning environment enjoyable”; “It is important [...] because it shows that we can make a
difference on our environment; “It is important for adults to hear what lowerclassman have to say as we are new to the school and have fresh ideas”. Finally, two students indicated that they felt adults need to listen to the study body as a whole but individual attention is less important; “I think it is fairly important for adults in the building to listen to the student body as a whole and to act upon it” and “It is important for them to act on the opinions of the general student body less than the individual ideas of students”. This subset of participants suggests that at least a third of the sample view student voice as important for learning outcomes and establishing a safe and productive learning environment.

An interesting theme emerged from the data where 8% of students differentiated the impact of adults listening and adults acting on their ideas. Multiple students indicated that they understood their ideas might not be executed but they prefer that adults listen and consider their ideas. Students elaborated that if adults do listen, and occasionally act upon student ideas, the culture of the building can be influenced. The keywords and phrase that emerged within this theme included ‘consider’, ‘listen’, and ‘not act’. Students that used the keyword ‘consider’ or ‘encourage’ shared the following responses: “It is extremely important to me that adults within the school listen. I am less passionate about whether they act or not but listening and considering an idea is highly appreciated”; “It is important to know that they consider it”; “I think it is pretty important. I appreciate when people listen to me and consider my ideas”; “I don’t think that it is that the adult has to act on it, but they should encourage them”. It appears that students feel it is very important to be heard and considered with the awareness that action is not always warranted. Many students stressed the importance of listening without using the keyword consider. These individuals also acknowledged that action is not as important. These responses include the following: “not that important for them to act upon them but listening is important”;
“Important to listen to, not act on”; “I would like adults to at least listen to my ideas, especially about curriculum or opportunities”; “I think it is, overall, important to have adults listen to ideas”; “It is very important that adults listen to my ideas because I feel that I should have some control of my learning experience”. “It’s important to me that adults take into account the students’ opinions and do not just say what is right and wrong”. Thus, students view it as very important for adults to listen to their thoughts and ideas. It seems that students are insightful to recognize that their ideas and perspective cannot always be acted upon. These responses suggest that students appreciate having the opportunity for voice and acknowledging that adults will have to make the final decision about what’s best for students, classrooms, and the school.

Less than 10% of the study sample (n = 5 female; n = 2 male) stated that it was somewhat important to have adults listen and act on ideas. Responses within this theme did not include much elaboration or additional keywords. Responses included, “As long as they help me learn what I need to know, I am happy”; “Not a top priority,” “fairly important,” and “not extremely important.” Similarly, the theme of ‘not important’ was only representative of 12% of the sample (n = 4 female; n = 5 male) and students did not elaborate on that response. Example responses include: “Not important,” “not at all” or “not very important.” Overall, roughly 22% of the study sample indicated that student voice was somewhat or not important without additional keywords to interpret.

Finally, the question “Do you think that adults at USCHS need to listen and act on your ideas more often? If yes, it what scenarios?” was analyzed to identify and interpret themes and keywords related to student perceptions of student voice. The responses to this question were not consistent with the other student voice questions. Only half of student responses indicated that more student voice was needed in comparison to 66% of students responses indicated that it
was important in previous open-ended responses. Two overall themes emerged from the data, (1) agreement and (2) disagreement that more student voice was needed. Female students tended to indicate more voice is needed while male students tended to report there are enough opportunities for voice, which is reflective of the significant differences in gender on the Spectrum of Student Voice survey. Students that indicated more voice was needed provided suggestions and settings to incorporate student ideas. These keywords were organized into the following settings: ‘technology’, ‘counseling’, classroom’, and ‘Freshman Seminar’. Many of the students that did not feel more student voice was needed did not elaborate on their responses. However, there were two keywords, ‘listening’ and ‘don’t care’ that were repeated at least once in the negative responses. Table 4.8 details the themes and keywords for the question “Do you think USCHS adults need to listen and act on your ideas more often? If so, in what scenarios?”.

Table 18: Themes and keywords for ‘Do you think USCHS adults need to listen and act on your ideas more?’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keywords &amp; Suggested Settings</th>
<th>Agreement More Needed</th>
<th>Disagreement More Not Needed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td></td>
<td>Listening/attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling/Mental Health</td>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshman Seminar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom/Teaching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first overall theme that emerged were students that indicated more student voice was needed. Approximately 50% of students (n = 32 female; n = 4 male) agreed that more listening and acting to student ideas was warranted. Most notably, females comprised the large majority
of responses that requested more opportunity for voice. The students provided suggestions for more opportunity for voice in decision making related to technology, counseling and mental health, classroom and teaching strategies, and Freshman Seminar curriculum.

A subset of students, 11% of those that recommended more voice, specifically requested that the school include students before making technology decisions. These students expressed dissatisfaction for the chromebooks provided and required across the student body. Example responses include, “Yes, in instances like what technology we use”; “Yes, in terms of what things our school should purchase. I don’t like the chromebooks and wish that students would have made that choice”; “The chromebooks should have been decided by the students. We were all perfectly fine and used to the iPads that we used through middle school.”; “Yes, we got chromebooks that no one wanted”. These students did not believe they were appropriately consulted or provided opportunities to solicit feedback on decisions related to technology. It is possible that this was a specific focus due to the transition to high school and added barrier of learning new technology.

Several female students wrote very detailed responses related to mental health needs and dissatisfaction with the Freshman Seminar course taught by the counseling office. These keywords were distinguished from other teaching suggestions due to the specificity of the dissatisfaction rather than general teaching suggestions. A female student involved in multiple clubs and multiple sports requested to have more mental health support, “mental health help and weekly counselor meetings”. Suggestions for Freshman Seminar included the following abbreviated quotes: “I think antisemitism needs to be a bigger focus and put into the curriculum”; “counselors taught incorrect curriculum [...] learning styles taught were inaccurate [...] I believe that action should be taken when false things are taught, or when
necessary things are ignored, like parts of Sex Ed’; “Personality tests contribute nothing to our learning and are a waste of time [...] Rather than finding ‘learning styles’ students should develop effective study habits”. These suggestions are related to a course designed specifically to help students transition from 8th to 9th grade. Interpretations from these responses suggest that co-development of curriculum with students is warranted, specifically when students are requesting content, like sexual education, that is specific to the developmental needs of adolescence.

The majority of students that desire more opportunities for voice indicated that increased influence in classroom decisions and teaching methods could lead to improved responsiveness to students’ academic needs. This was expressed generally by comments such as, “Yes, in the classroom”; “I believe that adults should give students more chance to listen to students ideas, especially in class”. However, many students had specific comments related to homework and teaching to student’s personal learning style. Students referenced homework and workload with the following responses: “Yes, probably on what we are learning and how much work we receive because some deadlines are overwhelming”; “I understand the importance of homework, but some teachers have assigned ridiculous amounts of homework.”; “Yes, homework amount”; “Sometimes teachers do not consider how much work they are given or how much preparation is needed for their class [...] Half the time I work vigorously in class and I still have to spent 2 hours on it at home, so it’s not a manageable assignment to assign for one 50-minute period”.

The students that commented about workload were female and involved in multiple clubs and multiple sporting teams. A large number of students commented about teaching methods, with the desire that teachers would utilize a variety of teaching methods to fit the needs of each student. The following responses suggest students do not feel that learning needs are met in
every classroom: “yes, in teaching styles”; “Yes, if a majority of the class is unprepared for a test, then do not give the test”; “yes, I think adults should consider different teaching methods adapting to the needs of the class”; and “Allow kids to learn in different way if they need to and not just teach one way”. Students mentioned performance in context of learning style decisions as well. One male suggested, “If there was a quiz that not everyone did well on, the teacher could listen to the student’s ideas and create a better quiz with less things causing confusion”.

Students, overall, expressed the interpretation that teachers have total control over learning, which may be in conflict with the learning styles taught in Freshman Seminar. Students shared the following responses: “I think that some teachers should ask opinions on how to improve the curriculum and better the ways that we can learn”; “Most teachers simply just teach how they want and not what the students think would be the most beneficial”; “Yes, in cases where students want to adapt the teacher’s teaching style to their own learning style so that they learn most effective”; “I feel that we should have input on the way that we are taught and way that we learn”. Given the number of specific references to learning styles, it is possible that the learning style curriculum taught in Freshman Seminar is in conflict with the teaching methods utilized in the students core classes. Overall, students are voicing a desire to express ways to self-regulate their own learning. Finally, seven students (n = 5 female; n = 2 male) used keywords to indicate there is no opportunity to present their ideas to adults. This response was consistently reported across all the student voice open-ended questions. The lack of opportunity to express ideas was written in the following responses: “There aren’t ways to present ideas.”; “Students have ways to improve school, but they do not have the opportunity to share them.”; “We don’t get to actually talk about them, so to have some more communication would help”. Further, even when there are opportunities to be more engaged, students acknowledge that they don’t know how to join,
as one stated, “A new student committee was formed, but I wasn’t given the opportunity to join and help”. Students also provided scenarios of where adults at USCHS could listen and act on ideas more often in a more macro sense regarding school improvement. Students spoke generally, with one male stating “Students need to have a voice because we see things different than the staff” and a female saying, “I think it would make our school a better place if the students were heard more.” There were times in their explanation where students provided examples of them not being heard by the adult, stating “I feel like some of the time they don’t listen because they don’t believe it could really make a change” or “When we say something like well this didn’t work so what we did this and they encourage it rather than shoot it down.” Overall, the students that expressed the desire for more student voice were mostly female and involved in multiple school-sponsored clubs and sporting teams. These individuals, presumably are among the most involved students in the school, feel that adults need to listen to ideas related to technology, mental health, the Freshman Seminar transition curriculum, and teaching methods.

Approximately one-third of the students that provided open-ended responses (N=25; n = 10 female; n = 15 male; 34%) stated that it was not important for adults listen and act on ideas more often. Interestingly, most of the males that participated in the study responded that in this category (65% of the total sample). Many of the responses did not include additional text to analyze for keywords and interpretation. However, two young men elaborated on a response with the following responses: “No, I personally think the level of attention I get from adults seems noticeable but not overwhelming” and “No, they are very good at listening and acting on ideas.” Otherwise, the remaining young men simply staying “no” or “I don’t care”. The significant difference in quantitative student voice scores between male and female students is represented
here in the discrepancy between male students indicating there is plenty of voice and females reported more opportunity for voice is needed.

4.2.3 Student Perceptions of School Membership

Student perceptions of school membership were evaluated using the Psychological Sense of School Membership (PSSM) scale (Goodenow, 1993a). The scores were analyzed with a total sum score. In additional participant ratings were analyzed based on the three established subscales, including: identification and participation in school (PSSM Subscale 1); perception of fitting in among peers (PSSM Subscale 2); generalized connection to teachers (PSSM Subscale 3). Given the significant differences in student voice based on gender, student responses were analyzed by the same gender and race/ethnicity dichotomies. It was not possible to quantitatively analyze the non-binary student in this analysis due to too small of a group (n=1). Independent t-tests were run to determine if there were significant differences in perceptions of school membership based on student gender and race/ethnicity (Table 4.9). Assumptions of normality and homogeneity were met for total school membership ($F=2.2, p=.142$), identification and participation in school ($F=.72, p=.399$), and perception of fitting in with peers ($F=2.29, p=.134$). Assumptions of homogeneity were violated for generalized connection to teachers ($F=5.62, p=.021$), and, as a result, Welch’s $t$ for unequal variances was used for that subscale.

Results indicated significant differences in overall school membership based on gender ($t=3.07, p<.01$), with a medium effect size ($d=.66$). Specifically, male student participants reported significantly higher student voice ($M=71.4$) than females ($M=65.45$). Significant differences between male and female student participants were not found on the perception of
fitting in with peers subscale. This suggests that any differences in student voice or school membership is not due to peer interactions. Male student participants ($M=24.42$) reported significantly identification and participation in school than female participants ($M=21.9$, $t=2.66$, $p=.01$) with a medium effect size ($d=.639$). Male student participants ($M=14.6$) reported significantly more generalized connection to teachers than female participants ($M=13.4$, $t=2.56$, $p=.013$) with a medium effect size ($d=.563$).

There were no significant differences on overall school membership based on race/ethnicity ($p=.201$). Significant differences between race/ethnicity were not found on any of the PSSM subscales (identification & participation in school, $p=.924$; perception of fitting in among peers, $p=.102$; generalized connection to teachers, $p=.939$).

**Table 4.19**: Student school membership ratings by gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female (n=49)</th>
<th>Male (n = 23)</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$-value</th>
<th>Cohen's $d$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall membership (PSSM)</td>
<td>65.45 (10.02)</td>
<td>71.4 (6.3)</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification &amp; participation in school (PSSM, 1)</td>
<td>21.9 (4.13)</td>
<td>24.42 (3.5)</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>.639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived of fitting in among peers (PSSM, 2)</td>
<td>18.2 (3.95)</td>
<td>19.6 (2.6)</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>.082</td>
<td>.391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generalized connection to teachers (PSSM, 3)</td>
<td>13.4 (2.37)</td>
<td>14.6 (1.49)</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>.563</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PSSM overall range (18, 90); PSSM subscale 1 range (6, 30); PSSM subscale 2 range (5, 25); PSSM subscale 3 (4, 20)
4.3 RESEARCH QUESTION 2: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STUDENT VOICE AND SCHOOL MEMBERSHIP

The relationship between perceptions of school membership and student voice was examined using a Pearson’s $r$ bivariate correlations. Mean scores on the PSSM, spectrum of student voice scale was compared with a bivariate correlation. Given a significant relationship between total $M$ on these scales, a Pearson’s $r$ bivariate correlation matrix was run to compare student voice to each of the three PSSM subscales as well. Assumptions of normality and homoscedasticity were met for all variables.

The overall student voice ($M = 13.6$) demonstrated a moderate, positive correlation with overall school membership ($M= 67.1$, $r=.419$, $p<.05$). Given the large sample size (n=73), some of the bivariate correlations were statistically significant but small in magnitude. School membership subscale 1 (identification and participation in school) demonstrated a small, positive correlation with overall student voice ($r=.229$, $p<.05$). School membership subscale 2 (fitting in with peers) demonstrated a moderate, positive correlation with overall student voice ($r=.358$, $p<.05$). School membership subscale 3 (generalized connection to teachers) demonstrated a moderate, positive correlation with overall student voice ($r=.315$, $p<.05$).

These results suggest that there is an established positive correlational relationship between student voice and membership. However, these results also suggest that these are two distinct constructs.
4.4 RESEARCH QUESTION 3: STUDENT VERSUS TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENT VOICE AND SCHOOL MEMBERSHIP

4.4.1 Student versus Teacher Quantitative Perceptions of Stakeholder Involvement

Independent t-tests were run to determine if there were significant differences in perceptions of student voice between students and teachers. Assumptions of normality and homogeneity were met for overall student voice \((F=0.75, p=0.188)\), consultation \((F=1.16, p=0.283)\), partnership in decisions \((F=0.057, p=0.812)\), and school activism \((F=3.17, p=0.078)\). Assumptions of homogeneity were violated for expression \((F=7.26, p=0.008)\), participate as stakeholder \((F=10.02, p=0.002)\), activism, and school leadership \((F=7.21, p=0.009)\), and, as a result, Welch’s \(t\) for unequal variances were used for those subscales.

Results indicated significant differences in teacher and student ratings of overall student voice \((t=-3.99, p<0.001)\), with a large effect size \((d=0.881)\) (Table 4.10). Specifically, teachers reported that they felt students had significantly more opportunities for student voice \((M=17.89)\) than students felt that they had \((M=13.6)\). Significant differences between teacher and student participants were not found on the school activism question, suggesting that teachers and students view relationships between teachers and students the same. Teachers \((M=4.5)\) reported significantly more instances of allowing students to express themselves than students reported \((M=3.75, t=8.1, p<0.001)\) with a large effect size \((d=0.884)\). Teachers \((M=3.2)\) reported significantly more instances of requesting students’ consultation than students reported \((M=2.6, t=-2.13, p=0.035)\) with a small effect size \((d=0.467)\). Teachers \((M=2.76)\) reported significantly more instances of inviting students to participate as stakeholders than students reported \((M=2.75, t=-3.27, p=0.002)\) with a large effect size \((d=0.824)\). Teachers \((M=2.6)\) reported significantly more
instances of requesting students to partner in school decisions than students reported ($M=1.65$, $t=-3.84$, $p<.001$) with a large effect size ($d=.863$). Teachers ($M=2.6$) reported significantly more instances of relying on students’ school leadership than students reported ($M=1.74$, $t=-2.62$, $p=.012$) with a medium effect size ($d=.654$).

Table 20: Student and teacher student voice ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Student (n=73)</th>
<th>Teacher (n = 29)</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p-value</th>
<th>Cohen’s d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall student voice</td>
<td>13.6 (4.8)</td>
<td>17.89 (5.04)</td>
<td>-3.99</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>.881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression</td>
<td>3.75 (1.0)</td>
<td>4.5 (.51)</td>
<td>-4.82</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>.884</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>2.6 (1.35)</td>
<td>3.2 (1.1)</td>
<td>-2.13</td>
<td>.035</td>
<td>.467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate as stakeholder</td>
<td>1.75 (1.1)</td>
<td>2.76 (1.5)</td>
<td>-3.27</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership in decisions</td>
<td>1.65 (1.13)</td>
<td>2.6 (1.02)</td>
<td>-3.84</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>.863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School activism</td>
<td>2.11 (1.3)</td>
<td>2.28 (1.71)</td>
<td>-.537</td>
<td>.592</td>
<td>.119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School leadership</td>
<td>1.74 (1.2)</td>
<td>2.6 (1.57)</td>
<td>-2.62</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>.654</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall range (6, 30); Expression, consultation, participate, partnership, activism, leadership range (1, 5)
4.4.2 Student versus Teacher Qualitative Perceptions of Stakeholder Involvement

The quantitative analyses of the Spectrum of Student Voice survey questions indicated significant differences between student and teacher perceptions of 9th grade student voice opportunity. Overall, the same discrepancy was present in the open-ended qualitative questions. Teachers had smaller percentages of responders that indicated need for student voice. However, despite this numerical discrepancy, those teachers that expressed value in student voice reflected the same themes and keywords as student responses.

The question “Do you think students feel that they help decide what goes on in USCHS?” was compared to the student question “Do you feel that you help what decide what goes on in USCHS?”. Student responses were reported above (Table x), but overall, approximately 68.5% of students felt they do not help make decisions, 18% of students do feel that they help make decisions, 8% of students felt that sometimes they help make decisions, and 5.5% that did not wish to answer the question. In comparison, teacher responses were more challenging to interpret because many teachers responded with their own personal opinion if students have voice rather than if they thought students feel that they have voice. Approximately one-third of teacher participants (34.5%) indicated that students either have voice or they feel students feel they have voice, while 42% of teachers indicated that only a small group of students likely feel that they have voice, and 20% of teacher participants indicated that students don’t feel that they have voice. Keyword analyses in teacher responses reflect similar interpreted themes as student responses. Overall, the following three themes emerged from teacher responses: (1) Probably not as 9th graders; (2) Small proportion of 9th graders have voice; (3) Yes, too much. There were not any clear patterns to the themes or keywords based on gender or involvement in clubs/sports.
Similar to 9th grade responses, several teachers indicated that students likely felt they didn’t have much voice as Freshman. These responses included the following: “Probably not the 9th graders”; “Yes, however being a 9th grader you might feel as though that voice is not as strong as others might be”; “Do not feel freshmen feel that engaged in decision making [...] but they realize as they continue they will have more of a voice”. Student Council was the keyword most frequently mentioned in both teacher and student responses. Teachers mentioned Student Council and other leadership groups as a small proportion of students that have voice. These ideas were communicated with the following responses: “I don’t think they feel this way. They probably feel as though their elected representatives do this for them and that the individual opinion is diminished”; “There is a select group of kids who are in the most clubs, on student council, etc. [...] Many students who are on the outside of these cliques feel that their voices aren’t heard”; “Some student council members make decisions without thinking of what all students want; Many students have expressed this to me”. Teachers were acutely aware that only a small select group of students are involved formally in high school decisions. For example, “I think that a very small select group of students feel as though they have a say in what goes on at our high school”; and “Some students have quite a bit of input [...] However, there is a large group of students who do not have the opportunity, self-esteem, confidence, or peer support to figure out how to get involved in these opportunities”. This response also acknowledges that student voice has impact and is influenced by confidence and self-esteem, which was communicated in student responses. Other teachers mentioned, “I feel that a minority of students have a say in some of what happens at USCHS but most feel as though they don’t have a voice” and “Most of them don’t”. One teacher specifically indicated that students with special needs do not have a voice at the high school; “I think there is probably a group of high achieving students
who are involved with leadership in that way, but I don’t know of any in learning support”.

Overall, teachers communicated the same message as student participants. Specifically, there is a group of students involved in Student Council that are regularly given a voice in high school decisions. The tone of these responses is all similar, as it seems that although student council is a place that students could feel like they help decide what goes on in USCHS, it does not adequately represent the diversity of peer groups, cliques, and the student body at large. Within the teachers that indicated students do have opportunities for voice, a few teachers responded to the question from a personal perspective rather than indicating what students feel about voice. These teachers indicated that students have too much voice. For example, “Yes, they sometimes have more stake in decisions than teachers”; “Yes, there are some groups of students that get to decide what goes on in USCHS. Sometimes I feel they can have too much voice”; “Yes, they are often consulted before teachers are.” Finally, there was a portion of the teacher responses that indicated that the opportunity exists for students; however, they have to seek it out themselves.

They stated comments like, “I feel that students who want to help decide what goes on in USCHS feel that they can help do that” and “Yes, I think students at USCHS have been encouraged to advocate for themselves”. Thus, while there is some deviation as to their thoughts around student involvement, there does seem to be some consistency that illustrates there does seem to be opportunity.

The question “Do you think it is important to students that the adults at USCHS listen and act on their ideas more often? If yes, what scenarios?” was compared to the student question “Do you feel that adults at USCHS need to listen and act on your ideas more often? If yes, what scenarios”. Overall, approximately 50% of students felt more opportunities for voice were needed, with 34% of responders felt there is sufficient opportunity for voice, and 16% did
not wish to answer the question. Similar to the first open-ended question, some teachers responded from their own opinion rather than indicating interpretations of student opinions. Overall, teacher responses carried insight and perspective that was predominantly supportive of the idea that adults should listen and act on student ideas more often. Only two teachers (7%) stated no, while six stated that they were unsure or didn’t wish to respond (22%). Fifteen teachers (51%) stated directly “Yes” more opportunity for student voice is needed for students. Five were contemplative in their response and indicated this was a complicated question without a direct yes/no answer (~20%).

There was little elaboration on responses that indicated no or unsure. Thus, a keyword analysis did not result in additional interpretative conclusions. However, two teachers did provide a few additional words with their responses, including: “No. I don’t think that the students expect us to listen or follow their lead, nor do I think that this would be a good idea” and “None outside of daily lessons and customization.” Of those that said they were unsure, two teachers elaborated, stating, “It’s a very complicated question,” and “As far as a whole school, I cannot say I have any experience with 9th graders in this regard.” It is difficult to make a conclusion without much text to analyze. However, one teacher did assert his/her opinion that student voice is not appropriate.

Of the fifteen teachers that agreed with it being important for adults to listen and act on student ideas more often, many provided additional insight. These responses reflect the keywords that emerged in the student responses, suggesting that a large proportion of teachers understand the student perspective of student voice. One teacher reflected that students interpret opportunity for voice as reflective of their value, stating, “Yes, I believe it instills confidence.” Other teachers reflected the impact on learning environment, which was also communicated by students in their
responses. Teacher responses on the learning environment include the following: “I think it is important to students that their ideas are heard, and that they have leadership and a voice in an authentic learning environment.” Many of the teachers reflected the same keywords of importance of considering, stating, “When a student expresses an idea, an adult should listen and take it seriously.” “Everyone wants to be heard and to feel valued. Casual conversation yields great insight,” and “Absolutely. If students do not feel like they are being heard or there is no follow-through, they may stop reaching out.” Teacher responses did not include as many contextual examples for more opportunity for student voice as student responses. However, a few teachers suggested possibilities for more voice, stating, “Yes. I'm not sure there is really a venue for students to bring concerns to adults, like we have the liaison committee. Maybe there should be something like that for kids, too. Otherwise, it might seem that only certain select students have the ear of the principal instead of a completely open door.” Finally, there was a comment that summarizes the importance voice on listening, self-esteem, and learning, as this teacher said, “I think that students want to be heard and it sends a message that the adults do take what they have to say to heart. I think it teachers students to think for themselves and how they will need to think and initiate ideas in the working world after graduation.” Finally, there was a subset of colleagues that responded in a way that differentiated listening and acting on student ideas, similar to student responses. For example, one teacher stated, “I think that too often we think the high school students are mini-adults capable of making decisions that are appropriate for the high school. I think there needs to be discussion in large groups with all stakeholders so that the result of a decision can be fully analyzed.” This idea of including additional stakeholders is an important one, and if conversation is authentic, could lead to great progress and understanding of
perspective. This aligns with another teacher that stated, “While I think that students need to be heard and sometimes have some good ideas to share, they often do not have a broad spectrum of what is going on throughout the building. Sometimes it is difficult to see why something is being done the way it is.” While understanding perspective is important, another teacher commented on their developmental time period, stating

“I do think students want adults to act on their ideas more, but they also understand that generally the adults are looking out for them and because of their experience and knowledge do at times know a best path. This isn’t always the care and student voice should not be ignored, but at the same time, there needs to be an open and honest dialogue here that freshman are still kids and in many regards we should embrace the innocence of that youth and not put too much pressure to lose that innocence.”

Another teacher would probably agree with the sentiment of this colleague, stating, “It really depends on the ideas. We should be open to their ideas, but we shouldn’t just put forward every idea they have.” Thus, these teachers reflected the same sentiments as students that it is critical to allow students to express themselves but there is balance on acting on ideas and placing decision pressure on students. These responses suggest that many 9th grade teachers have a grasp on student perspectives related to voice even if there are discrepancies on how often students are given opportunity for voice.

Teachers were also asked “are there contexts where students should not be stakeholders in USCHS”. This question was not completed by students. Teachers had a variety of opinions regarding the when the context would not be appropriate for students to be stakeholders and have voice in decision making. However, common statements revolved around safety (n=4; 14%), private/confidential teacher information (n=3; 11%), and management of time in the school day.
(n=3; 11%). These suggestions did not have additional text to analyze for keywords or thematic interpretation. Approximately 15% of teachers (n=4) indicated that curriculum and assessments were not appropriate contexts for student stakeholders. One teacher stated,

“I think it’s important for students to understand WHY they are learning something. I don’t think they are always the best stakeholder to determine WHAT they should learn.”

Another teacher shared similar thoughts, “We should still guide content and curriculum, given students choice within that is fine, but they should not be getting to change the overall goals of our classes”

Another teacher reflected similar thoughts and stated, “Students are not as knowledgeable about many issues and often don’t have their own best interested in mind even though they think they do. Decisions regarding required curriculum, for example, are probably not best decided by students.”

Finally, another teacher shared, “I feel as though anything that requires a master’s degree (curriculum, assessments, teaching strategies) or anything that they cannot objectively evaluate (grades, discipline) should not be subject to student opinion). Of all teacher responses, only two stated that students should always be considered stakeholders, regardless of context. This question also seemed to prompt teachers to explain their philosophical approach to the role of adults in a school setting. Three teachers specifically mentioned broadly the role adults play in schools. One mentioned that concept of time management with, “I feel we need to educate students on how to use their time wisely in school and I feel we do not do that,” while another mentioned holistically that “Teachers are the ones with training and experience and wisdom.”

Similarly, another teacher mentioned that “Students do not have the professional expertise that adults have, so there are many decisions that need to be made by adults. While teachers did not provide suggested contexts for more voice in the previous question, this question can be
compared to student responses to suggested context for more voice. Specifically, 25% of student responses requested more voice in the classroom where several teachers indicated that classroom and curriculum decisions were not an appropriate context for student decision making. This discrepancy perhaps can be addressed with the conclusion that both teachers and students shared that student’s voice may need to be heard but not acted on within the context of the classroom. It appears that students and teachers are in agreement related to safety, confidentiality, and school day structure since these were not suggested by students.

4.4.3 Student versus Teacher Perceptions of School Membership

Teachers completed a teacher-version of the PSSM that was drafted for this study, in which teachers were instructed to answer the same questions and rate their perception of students’ school membership. Student and teacher responses to the PSSM were compared an independent t-test. Assumptions of normality and homogeneity were met for total school membership ($F=1.75, p=.188$) and generalized connection to teachers ($F=.619, p=.433$). Assumptions of homogeneity were violated for identification and participation in school ($F=6.89, p=.01$) and perception of fitting in with peers ($F=4.96, p=.028$), and, as a result, Welch’s $t$ for unequal variances were used for those subscales.

Results indicated significant differences in teacher and student ratings of overall school membership ($t=3.7, p<.001$), with a large effect size ($d=.807$) (Table 4.11). Specifically, students reported significantly higher school membership ($M=67.1$) than teachers reported for students ($M=60$). Significant differences between male and female student participants were not found on the generalized connection to teachers subscale, suggesting that teachers and students view relationships between teachers and students the same. Students ($M=22.6$) reported significantly
higher identification and participation in school than teachers reported for students ($M=17, t=8.15, p=.01$) with a large effect size ($d=1.489$). Students ($M=18.6$) reported significantly higher perception of fitting in among peers than teachers reported for students ($M=16.9, t=2.74, p=.028$) with a medium effect size ($d=.503$).

**Table 21:** Student and teacher school membership ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Student (n=73)</th>
<th>Teacher (n = 29)</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$-value</th>
<th>Cohen’s $d$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall membership</strong></td>
<td>$67.1 (9.43)$</td>
<td>$60 (6.9)$</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td><strong>&lt;.001</strong></td>
<td><strong>-0.807</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(PSSM)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Identification &amp;</strong></td>
<td>$22.6 (4.1)$</td>
<td>$17.0 (2.7)$</td>
<td>8.15</td>
<td><strong>.01</strong></td>
<td><strong>-1.489</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>participation in school</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(PSSM, 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perception of fitting in</strong></td>
<td>$18.6 (3.7)$</td>
<td>$16.9 (2.35)$</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td><strong>.008</strong></td>
<td><strong>-0.503</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>among peers (PSSM, 2)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Generalized connection</strong></td>
<td>$13.8 (2.2)$</td>
<td>$14.8 (1.9)$</td>
<td>-2.13</td>
<td><strong>.035</strong></td>
<td>.472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>to teachers (PSSM, 3)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PSSM overall range (18, 90); PSSM subscale 1 range (6, 30); PSSM subscale 2 range (5, 25); PSSM subscale 3 (4,20)

**4.4.4 Differentiating Adult-Student Relationships and Stakeholder Involvement**

Students and teachers responded to an open-ended question that aimed to determine if students and teachers differentiate adult student relationships from stakeholder involvement in similar ways. The following question was analyzed using a summative content analysis to identify...
themes and keywords for interpretation: Explain the difference, if there is one, between adults listening and acting on your/student ideas and having relationships with adults at USCHS? Student and teacher responses were compared for similarities and differences in perceptions of student voice relationships.

Overall, the large majority of students that responded indicate there is a difference between adult relationships and student voice (68%). Approximately 20% of student participants (n=5 male, n=11 female) indicated there is no difference between adult relationships and voice and 12% did not wish to answer the question. Individuals that indicated there is no difference did not include any additional text to analyze for keywords and contextual interpretations. Within those that responded there is a difference, the following three themes emerged: (1) relationships with adults improve opportunities for voice, (2) relationships have elements of caring, whereas student voice does not, and (3) acting on ideas is different and more involved than relationships (Table 4.12).

**Table 22:** Emerging themes and keywords for difference between student voice and relationships with adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keywords &amp; Phrases</th>
<th>Relationship improves voice</th>
<th>Relationships = Adults Care</th>
<th>Acting on Ideas &gt; Relationships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Allows expression &amp; action</td>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>May not act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open</td>
<td>Talk</td>
<td>Not listen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More likely</td>
<td>Care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Trust/Comfortable</td>
<td>Personal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There were not any clear patterns to the themes or keywords based on gender or race/ethnicity. One student response did not fall within any theme or keyword pattern but provided valuable insight. This student indicated, “*Listening should be to everyone, don’t need to have*
relationships with everyone”. This student appears to indicate that listening is essential for all interactions with an acknowledgement that students won’t establish relationships with all adults.

The most predominant theme that emerged was that relationships with adults at USCHS comes before and improves opportunities for student voice. Students used the keywords ‘open’, ‘trust’ and ‘comfortable’ in addition to the phrases ‘allows expression”, allows action”, and “more likely” to describe this theme. Students explained the importance for establishing relationships with teachers prior to sharing ideas. They suggested that relationships allow students feel safe, comfortable, and respected enough to share. One student indicated, “if a student connects with an adult, they are more likely to feel more open to giving suggestions”. Another student explained that comfort is required to share ideas, “Students have to be comfortable with their teachers to start telling them their ideas. Teachers and students need a close relationship.” The keywords ‘open’ and ‘comfortable’ suggest that 9th grade students need security in order to express ideas and engage in student voice. Several other students felt similarly that they are not able to share ideas without relationships first. For example, “I am more willing to share what we think rather than sharing with some random adult” and “Having relationships with adults at USCHS allows you to share your ideas”. Other students agreed that relationships are critical for adults to actually consider the ideas being expressed. Students said that if these relationships are formed, “better relationships will allow adults to listen to ideas more carefully,” “could allow them to act on an idea brought forward because of trust that has been built”, and “will better your chance of their listening and acting on your ideas”. These responses suggest that students believe student voice is more successful if a relationship is already established. Students also indicated the opposite is true. One female shared, “If you don’t have a relationship with adults at USCHS, then it is less likely they will listen to your
ideas”. This female student involved in a club and a sport explained this belief; *When they listen to your ideas that is all they are doing and maybe acting on your ideas, but if you have a relationship with them, then they might try and help you improve and work on your ideas and help you to accomplish your goals*.”

A second theme emerged that relationships are more personally meaningful than instances of adults listening and acting on student ideas. Analyses illuminated the keywords ‘friend’, ‘talk’, ‘care’, and ‘personal’ that provide context for interpretation. Students defined relationships as, “more of a friendship and can be more open about personal things” or means teachers act as a friendly figure where as simply acting on your ideas seems might just start that friendship. These responses suggest students interpret relationships as more personal than opportunities to voice ideas. Several students used the word ‘care’ to describe the difference between voice and relationships. These examples included: “*It means that they care about your learning. Having a relationship with a teacher is more like they care about our personal lives and opinions*” and “Adults may listen but don’t care but having relationships they do care”. Students also shared that relationships with adults can make it more likely that adults will listen and act on ideas, presumably because they care more. They believe that adults will care more to act if there are established relationships. One student shared, “*adults may listen but don’t care, but having relationships they do care*”. Another student reflected the same sentiment; “*Listening to your ideas is just considering doing something but having a relationship with them is more of them wanting you to do well and listening.*”

Finally, a few students explained acting on ideas as more involved and less passive than relationships. A male student involved in multiple clubs and sport explained, “*Relationships with adults is more passive than adults acting on ideas. The relationships can be just a way to*
discuss ideas and communicate with instructors.” Another male student-athlete indicated, “adults listening and acting on ideas is a form of understanding, and the idea that the teacher is not 100% of the time correct. Having a relationship with a teacher means that the student and teacher get along well, but the teacher could still not listen to the student’s ideas”. These responses can be interpreted that students feel that relationships serve a different purpose than acting on ideas. A female student athlete’s response shared, “having relationships means more having trust and respect, even though they may choose not to, or cannot act on ideas.” These responses, when interpreted in context with the other questions, may be explained by students not knowing the best way to express opinions. However, one might also conclude that students are more understanding of the lack of action on ideas when they have a relationship with the adult.

Teacher responses to this same question elicited many different responses. Only two didn’t wish to respond, and only one stated that they didn’t think there was much of a difference. Several themes emerged from teacher responses with considerable variation between individual responses: (1) relationships with students are intentional (2) relationships strengthen acting on ideas, and (3) discussing ideas is also action. Teacher themes of intentional relationships and relationships improving voice are similar to responses shared by students. However, the third theme explaining the different response to student ideas is unique from the student responses. Unrelated to the question prompt, few teachers also commented on the lack of teacher voice and the problem with empowering student decision making at the high school level.

Teachers responses described and defined relationships with students. A central interpreted message of these responses is building relationships is intentional but can happen in a variety of high school contexts. One teacher said specifically that “relationships come in all
forms and vary from classroom to classroom” and another built upon this stating that “building relationships with students involve listening and encouraging student to think and process.” Teachers can vary in their approach to this, as one stated that this could occur in the classroom or with outside activities, “I think a teacher could have a very satisfactory career here without sponsoring any club, coaching any sports, and just fostering a positive classroom environment” while another stated “the best and truest relationships are really formed outside of the classroom when more time is spent in an informal atmosphere.” Yet another teacher offered a simple explanation by saying, “You have relationships with children by asking about their activities and daily life.” These varied responses suggest that intentional effort in forming relationships with students is needed but different personalities and styles might influence the context and relationship building approach.

Similar to student responses, teacher participants described ways in which relationships strengthen opportunity for acting on student voice ideas. Adults report that after relationships are formed, more authentic dialogue, and specifically listening, occurs between the adult and student. One teacher stated that “The relationships that teachers develop with student better support and allow students who would not typically find themselves in a position of feeling heard”. This suggests that genuine communication allows teacher to have a better understanding of the student perspective. Another teacher agreed, stating “relationships allow a much deeper understanding of what the students are really saying when they speak to adults.” Teachers agreed with students that acting on student voice ideas occurs after a relationship is formed, ultimately strengthening student voice. One teacher described, “Listening and acting on student ideas gives me the notion that students are the vehicle of change. Having a positive relationship means that students are at the center of decisions but don’t necessarily make those decisions.”
Another teacher recognized that this involves a negotiation between the two people in the relationship; “Acting on ideas involves a plan between the adult and the students [...] that both parties agree on.” Students communicated a reluctance to share ideas with adults in the high school without relationships. One teacher describes this from the adult perspective, stating, “Listening and acting on student ideas can happen in a more formal way without having strong student relationships, however, if ideas are voiced through a strong relationship this would make the process feel much more organic and natural to all parties.” Overall, teachers and students describe similar perceptions that relationships can aid student voice and ideally occurs before students voice ideas for change.

One of the most interesting themes that was derived from the responses from teachers is their view that sometimes genuine conversation and consideration of ideas is the best action for student ideas. This sentiment was partially expressed by students that indicated adults don’t need to act but consider student ideas. Five teachers specifically mentioned that this can be the ‘action’ on student expression. One teacher expressed, “I think you can have a relationship with students and listen, but not necessarily be able to act. For example, getting rid of grades is not a terrible idea, but we still have to report out, so student voice in what that looks like becomes ambiguous and nebulous.” Teachers feel that the communication is the key component to student voice; “To me, the difference comes with the dialogue. [...] Having positive relationships means that students are at the center of decision but don’t necessarily make the decision.” Similarly, another teacher said that “adults can have meaningful relationships with students and not necessarily act on the ideas.” Another teacher participant indicated, “a healthy relationship between adult and student does sometimes involve saying no, though adults do need to elaborate on their
Several teachers agree that not acting on student ideas is aided by a genuine relationship and conversation with the aim for students to feel heard.

Finally, a few teachers did not necessarily answer the question to describe the difference between relationships and voice but used their response to describe the problem with listening to student ideas. One teacher indicated, “relationships in the classroom do not mean that a teacher has to act on a student idea or even listen to it”. This response is different from the majority of teacher and student responses that indicate listening is integral to relationship building. Another teacher shared similar views on voice. Specifically, she stated, “Students do not always know what is best for them. […] Students often only see their specific needs in the moment and do not understand the complete picture. Yes, we should have a relationship but not an equal relationship. Yes, we should listen but not always bow down to student demands.” Another teacher didn’t comment on relationships or student voice but mentioned the lack of process and resources to facilitate this process. She stated, “Listening and acting on student ideas requires additional time, resource, and action.” In sum, a few teachers are averse to the idea of empowering student voices and decision making. The majority of teachers indicate genuine consideration and listening to student ideas within a close relationship is developmentally appropriate and empowers students to feel heard and valued.

### 4.5 SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

This research study utilized mixed methods to explore 9th grade student and teacher perceptions of student voice, school membership, and adult-student relationships. This project utilized previous literature to inform the following research aims: (1) determine the extent
USCHS 9th grade students feel that they have a sense of school membership and student voice; (2) evaluate the relationship between 9th grade student perceptions of student voice and school membership; (3) assess whether ninth grade student and teacher perceptions of student voice differ. Overall, student participants reported a lack of student voice and requested formal processes to allow for student voice. However, gender significantly influenced perceptions on student voice and membership. Teachers overestimated student voice opportunities and underestimated school membership. However, teachers and students agreed on critical influencers of voice and suggested similar ideas on improving voice. An unintended result emerged in this study, as students described a new conceptual model describing a critical process of student voice that is more important than previously suggested spectrums of voice.

Recruitment was a challenge for this study. Students were approached in 9th grade health and physical education classes. Recruitment scripts and presentations were the same for both classrooms. However, one teacher truly believed in the aims of this study and encouraged students to enroll in the study to voice their opinions. The other teacher was supportive of the project but did not provide the same encouragement. The enrollment rates between classes were significantly different. This challenge supports the overall findings of this study; teacher-student relationships are critical for this period of development. Students trust teachers and are more likely to listen and act on suggestions with encouragement from teachers. Thus, administrators would benefit from targeting teacher voice, gathering teacher input and buy-in for projects like this, ultimately improving student and teacher participation. Despite the recruitment challenges and small student participant sample size, the sample size (N=102) was appropriate for the planned analyses. The study sample consisted of 23% of the 9th grade class and 71% of the 9th grade teachers. The sample consisted of mostly females (67%), with 23% males and 1% no-
binary. The sample was predominantly Caucasian (83.3%), which is consistent with the district demographics. Students reported high involvement in clubs and sports, as only 12% of the study sample was not involved in school-related activities. This level of engagement is unique from previously researched samples on student voice in low-income urban communities.

Constructs of student voice and school membership were significantly related with a moderate, positive correlation ($r=.419$, $p<.05$). These results suggest that they are different but related constructs. Student voice and school membership were not influenced by school clubs or sports or race/ethnicity, as there were not significantly differences based on these demographic variables. This suggests that students perceive school membership and student voice as different from participation in school-related activities. The qualitative analyses support this conclusion, as students involved in multiple clubs and sports indicated a voice need that was not currently being met.

Overall, this sample of students reported that they do not feel they have much opportunity for student voice but indicated voice is important. Students and teachers indicated that students have the most voice for expression (i.e. volunteering opinions, objecting, complaining, celebrating, creating art). A substantial percentage (42%) of the student sample indicated they had opportunities for consulting with adults (i.e. adults ask me for my opinion, ask me to provide feedback, ask me to serve in a focus group, ask me to participate in hiring interviews). Overall, students did not endorse participation as stakeholders, partnership in decisions, school activism, or school leadership.

There were significantly different experiences and student perceptions of overall student voice ($p<.001; d=1.24$) and school membership ($p=.003; d=.66$) based on gender. These differences were consistent across quantitative and qualitative analyses. Male students reported
significantly higher student voice and school membership than female counterparts. Males expressed content with the amount of student voice and limited interest in more opportunities for voice. Females reported significantly less identification with the school \( (p=.01; \ d=.639) \) and connection to teachers \( (p=.013; \ d=.563) \), despite involvement in school-related clubs and/or sports. Females expressed discontent with the amount of student voice, described voice as ‘very important’ and ‘important’, and requested more opportunities for voice. Females used words such as ‘care’, ‘value’, ‘confidence’ to describe the importance of voice opportunities. Other responders indicated that student voice improves motivation and the school culture. There was no difference in club or sport involvement between males and females, indicating that these results are not due to differences in school involvement. In fact, many female students that expressed discontent were involved in 6 or more clubs and activities. These results suggest that female and male teenagers may have different needs from adults in the high school, and females in this sample are searching for connection with adults through school activities. It is important to note that male and female student participants did not differ on ratings of fitting in peers \( (p=.082; \ d=.291) \), suggesting that differences are not due to social connectedness, peer interactions, or social adjustment.

As expected, teachers and students significantly differed in frequency ratings of student voice and overall school membership. Specifically, students reported lower opportunities for student voice than teachers reported they had \( (p<.001; \ d=.881) \). Teachers reported that students had lower school membership than students reported \( (p<.001; \ d=.807) \). Interestingly, teachers reported that students had more difficulty connecting with peers than students reported for themselves. Teachers also overestimated students’ connectedness with teachers compared to student’s actual ratings. Despite these differences, both students and teachers agreed that there
is less voice for 9th grade students than upperclassman. Qualitative analyses found similar main themes in teacher and student response describing the lack of opportunity or method for expressing voice. Student council was mentioned by teachers and students as the only formal method for expressing ideas that is restrictive to a select group of students. Findings suggest that Student Council is insufficient and there is no system for all students to express ideas to adults.

Only a select number of teachers provided suggestions for incorporating voice in the high school more formally. One teacher suggested that there is a student liaison between adults and students. Students provided a number of suggestions and specific examples requesting voice. Multiple students also indicated technology decisions added to the 9th grade transition stress, as different technology is required in 8th grade. Students indicated that the transition class needs revision, which the teachers did not mention the class. Students expressed that the content of the transition program was not helpful and inaccurate at times. These individuals expressed frustration with the content, specifically learning about personal learning styles and personality types, because teaching methods used in other classes were in conflict with the identified personal learning styles. When synthesizing students responses of frustration with the transition curriculum and classroom voice, it appears that the transition curriculum is in conflict with teacher autonomy, teaching instruction, and classroom environment. Ultimately, this may be negatively impacting student-teacher relationships during this critical transition year.

The most interesting theme that emerged from the qualitative analyses was that students differentiated listening and acting on ideas when this cohesive phrase aimed to describe voice. Students indicated that adults listening to ideas was more important than acting on ideas. Students offered that they do not expect adults to act on ideas but desire open communication and genuine consideration of their ideas. Teacher answers reflected similar themes. Teachers
considered the appropriateness of acting on student ideas with most participants suggesting that
listening is critical but acting is not always in the student’s best interest. Perceived value was a
significant theme that emerged from student responses but not teacher responses. Students
indicated that they interpret adults’ genuine listening and consideration of ideas as personal
value, self-worth, confidence, and self-esteem. Only one adult participant acknowledged that
students need adults to listen to build confidence. These findings suggest that genuine
consideration of student ideas is critical to adolescent development. Teachers suggested that
genuine listening and consideration of ideas is *action*. In sum, teachers and students agreed that
acting is not always necessary or appropriate, but listening is critical.

A process of student voice emerged when synthesizing qualitative analyses across all of
the open-ended questions. While students indicated a lack of voice and feeling that voice was
‘very important’, their responses suggest that student voice is important for different reasons and
in different ways than previously prevented in empirical literature (need citation). Rather than a
spectrum of student voice, students described a process that needs to occur to perceive value as
a 9th grade student. A six-step process emerged from the qualitative data, describing the desired
student voice process from the student’s perspective. Students indicated that, first, students and
adults need to develop a genuine relationship. Students and teachers agreed that relationships
increase opportunities for voice and genuine consideration of ideas. Students used keywords of
‘trust’, ‘comfort’, and ‘safety’ to describe the importance for establishing secure relationships
with teachers prior to sharing ideas. Students are reluctant to share ideas with unfamiliar adults,
as they are acutely aware of their lack of authority as 9th grade students. After a relationship is
established, students have enough comfort and security to share ideas with trusted school adults.
Teachers and students agreed that expression of ideas needs to occur during natural, genuine
conversations. Students desire open consideration of the expressed ideas, regardless of the outcome. Findings suggest that the interaction, discussion, and processing of ideas is the key ingredient or imperative component of student voice. It is critically important because students interpret the presence or absence of these conversations as reflective of their personal value. Students indicated that this perceived value in the eyes of an adult influences self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-worth. Perceived worth is a critical protective factor for adolescents at this age and stage of development (Gurung, Sampath, Soohinda, & Dutta, 2019). These six steps describe a process of student voice that, to this sample, was more important than the spectrum of student voice opportunities. In sum, students want to have genuine connections to teachers and feel heard, considered, and valued.

4.6 LIMITATIONS

This research study had some methodological limitations worth considering. The sample size of this research study was large enough for the analyses but only comprised 23% of the 9th grade class at USCHS. The sample size was appropriate for this study but limits generalizability. Results of this study may be skewed, as participants were likely students that wanted to be heard through student voice opportunities. Students were recruited through health and physical education classes. There was considerably higher enrollment for one classroom in comparison to the other. It is possible that this difference was in part caused by a disconnect between the administrative researcher and teacher, suggesting that teacher voice might be warranted to empower students. Incentive for participation in this study was low and should be considered in future studies.
This survey did not collect demographic information about disability, special education, or adverse childhood experiences. This limits generalizability of the results to these groups, which are marginalized in everyday society. It is possible that student voice and school membership would be lower among these groups.

This survey was administered in the beginning of the 2nd semester (3rd nine weeks) of the school year. It is possible 9th graders first transitioning to high school would respond differently in the 1st semester. Future studies might consider collecting data at the beginning and end of 9th grade.
5.0 DISCUSSION AND FUTURE WORK

5.1 DISCUSSION

This study evaluated perceptions of student voice, school membership, and adult student relationships amongst 9th grade students and teachers at a suburban high school. This study was unique in several ways. Much of the previous work exploring student voice and school membership were completed with low-income urban school district samples (Halx, 2014; Kirby & Gardner, 2010; 2009; Pazey et al., 2014). These projects explored the influence of student voice and school membership on graduation rates, academic performance, and school reform (Halx, 2014; Kirby & Gardner, 2010; 2009; Pazey et al., 2014). That was not the focus of this study, as USCHS is a high socioeconomic status, suburban school with one of the highest graduation rates, overall academic performance, and student engagement in the country. Instead, this study explored the constructs of student voice and school from a developmental perspective rather than as a predictor to performance and engagement outcomes.

The unique sample allowed for analyses to assess whether school engagement influences school membership or student voice rather than exploring engagement as an outcome. This sample had participants that were very involved in school, as 88% of the sample were engaged in 2 or more school clubs or sports. One might assume that engagement in activities would allow more opportunities for voice and increase a sense of belonging with the school. However, this study found the opposite that club activity and sports did not influence perceptions of voice or school membership.
This study also asked unique qualitative questions attempting to differentiate student voice interactions from other relationships in the school. It is possible that adults’ conceptualization of student voice is not the same from the student perspective. These questions prompted student reflections on the greater need of genuine adult relationships over student voice action. Responses to these questions illuminates a new aspect and process to the already complex student voice construct.

Value emerged as a major theme when discussing the importance of student voice. Students indicated that they interpret adult reactions to their ideas as indicative of their personal value, self-worth, and esteem. The teacher participants did not comment on this phenomenon, suggesting that adults may not realize how students are internalizing adult reactions. Erikson’s theory of development can be used to interpret this finding (1997). Adolescents experience the identity vs. role confusion psychosocial crisis, where adolescents grapple with their own thoughts and confirming to their communities. It has been well documented that this developmental stage is critically influential on self-esteem, as adolescent identity development is tethered to self-esteem, senses of accomplishment, and belonging. Adolescents are attempting to generate their own ideas and learn how their ideas fit within the context and culture of their environment. Thus, adolescence marks the emergence of adolescents needing to express their unique ideas and receive feedback of how these ideas are received in their surroundings. Given this developmental context, it is not surprising that adolescents are internalizing all adult student interactions and extrapolating their value and self-esteem based on how adults consider their ideas. Student survey responses are also supported by this developmental task, as they indicated action on ideas is not important but genuine, open consideration of ideas is desired. Adolescents
developmentally need to discuss ideas with adults in a secure way and receive feedback on how these ideas fit into school and classroom context.

Student voice literature suggests engaging students are valuable stakeholders and change agents for school culture (Fielding, 2001; Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). This study utilized Toshalis & Nakkula’s Spectrum of Student Voice framework to guide analyses of current student voice opportunities (2012). The sample only endorsed expression as a consistent student voice activity in the school. However, qualitative response indicated that students did not yet want action or higher levels of student voice. This finding may be explained by the age of the sample. Ninth graders are tasked with navigating a new environment, expectations, increased workload, and establishing relationships with new adults. It is possible that ninth grade students do not value higher levels of student voice because it is developmentally inappropriate for that age group. While students reported expression, they indicated that a different communication with adults is more important and needed. Another explanation of this finding is that teens do not require every level of student voice. While some students may desire being agents of change, other students may be content without the pressure of decision making. More research is needed to determine if this interpretation of student voice is unique to just 9th grade or a biproduct of the developmental tasks in adolescence.

Instead of the spectrum of student voice, results of this study suggest that students desire a safe and secure process for voicing ideas to trusted adults more than action on ideas. Figure x depicts the student voice process that emerged from student’s qualitative responses. This process can be interpreted within Maslow’s theory of development. Student responses detail the ideal communication process with adults, which follows similar stages to Maslow’s path toward self-actualization. Students indicate that they need to establish safe and secure relationships to voice
opinions. Genuine consideration and communication on ideas expressed is interpreted as self-esteem and value. Maslow’s theory talks often of physical needs and physical safety. Given the context of USCHS, students have physiological and safe home and school environments. However, students express the need for safety to share vulnerable ideas. Once this is established, students reported to move towards increased interpreted value and self-esteem.

This study illuminated differences in gender, suggesting that student voice has a role in social justice reform in education. These results found that gender influenced student perceptions of student voice and school membership. Females were overall less satisfied with school membership and student voice that male peers. These results are consistent with other research exploring gender during the 9th grade transition year. It is well established that females are more likely to have low self-esteem, depressive symptoms, and anxiety than males at this age (Barraocas et al., 2012; Williams et al., 2017). Carol Gilligan presents a model for female identity development that provides context for interpreting these findings (1982). Gilligan indicates that female identity development is more dependent on fusion and relationships with others than male identity development (1982). She suggests that the critical developmental period of adolescence is experienced differently based on gender, as females establish identity with relationships and males prefer isolation (Gilligan, 1982). Gilligan’s developmental theory for female identity development can provide context for interpreting the results of this study. The female participants that expressed a need more adult-student relationships, more voice, and genuine consideration of ideas were involved in many school-related activities. This suggests that 9th grade female students in this sample are searching for relationships but may not even be sure how to fulfill this need. Male students were more satisfied with the amount of voice and adult-student relationships, indicating they did not need more. In sum, adolescent females may
have different developmental needs than male peers, with more genuine relationships with adult role models. Students expressed that these interactions inform internal self-worth and value, and it is well documented that female adolescents experience more anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation than males. It should be noted that statistical differences in student voice and school membership were not able to be calculated for the student participant that identified as non-binary. It is likely that this minority group feels less student voice and membership given the discrimination often experienced by this group in our society. Ultimately, it is imperative that educators consider the role of adult relationships as a protective factor during this developmental period. School systems are micro-societies of our larger national culture and social norms. Acknowledging gender differences in the developmental process instead of operating from male-oriented developmental theories is a necessary next step in the journal to provide culturally competent education for all.

Students and teachers indicated that Student Council is the only formal venue for voicing ideas as 9th grade students. Nearly all participants indicated that Student Council is not representative of the larger student body. Further, findings suggest that all students require adult-student relationships and genuine consideration of ideas. Thus, Student Council is not a sufficient process for fostering growth and voice amongst 9th grade students. Students also mention transition stressors that were easily avoided through voice. The change in required technology from iPads to chromebooks was not well received by students. The transition from one tablet to another was likely not considered in context of all the other developmental transitions occurring at this time. Many students commented on problems with the transition curriculum in the Freshman Seminar course. Students also reported that the learning styles presented in the transition class were in conflict with teaching styles in primary courses. This suggests that the
transition course designed to help this developmental transition is not successful and possibly damaging relationship building with teachers. One possible solution is to engage 8th and 9th grade students in development of the transition curriculum. Allow students to have voice on the unique needs of each class that is moving to transition to the high school building.

Teachers and students did not agree on student voice in the classroom. Teachers indicated that student voice on curriculum and teaching methods is not appropriate or developmentally warranted. Students want to provide feedback on learning and workload in the classroom. Yet, both teachers and students agree that honest, open consideration of ideas is sufficient and appropriate. High school adults may work together to design a process for students to voice ideas related to the classroom. This task becomes easier without the requirement of action. This study highlighted the importance of teacher-student relationships, as students trust teachers the most of all adults in the school.

Given this critical relationship, administrators might focus efforts to facilitate teacher voice in determining the best process for receiving student voice. Teachers are more likely to engage in new processes elevating student ideas if not mandated. It is likely that student voice cannot be addressed on system wide basis without a teacher voice initiative to design this process. This study suggests that school leadership and administration must systematically evaluate student and teacher voice on a regular basis. This study suggests that administrators might involve students and teachers when working to build a sustainable system for open, genuine conversation and voice. The results of this study have slightly shifted my understanding of student voice, which was previously focused on creating a democratic structure to engage students in school reform. However, students in this study suggest that teachers provide a critical role to hear ideas, which is more important from their perspective than school reform.
In sum, this study found that student voice and school membership is important to 9th grade students despite the demographic differences from previously researched samples. Further, this study suggests that 9th grade student voice might not be important in the way previously theorized and proposed (Fielding, 2001; Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). Results from this study support a particular process of student voice that is critical for student’s perception of value, self-worth, confidence, and esteem. This may partially explain previously found results linking voice and membership to higher academic outcomes. Researchers may consider evaluating this process in other samples. It is possible that educators can design student voice processes that meet the developmental need of adolescence, which is different than previously documented in empirical literature.

5.2 Future Work

Results of this study support future work to better understand student voice, school culture, and school membership. This study also highlighted areas for growth within USCHS that may warrant timely action. A review of USCHS freshman transition curriculum is suggested given the problematic conflict between curriculum and teaching styles. There is potential for considerable improvement. One way to do this is to provide opportunity for students, teachers, and counselors to partner in the co-development of what, when, and how curriculum is planned and delivered. This collaboration across these collective stakeholders could help foster authentic instruction around topics such as technology support, mental health awareness, sexual education, and additional subjects that are developmentally appropriate as students enter the high school setting.
USCHS could benefit from the creation of new systems for student and teachers to express voice. Students shared that the expression of voice allows them to feel valued. Yet, both teachers and students mentioned that Student Council is the main way to do this. However, even in this recognition, they added clarity by stating that members of Student Council might not truly represent the values and interests of the entire student body. Thus, there should be considerations for embedding feedback loops and system support for all students and teachers. One possible way to do this is through end-of-course evaluations, such as anonymous teaching evaluations used in higher education. Members of the staff and collective bargaining agreements could determine what, when, and how evaluations are conducted.

Another major theme derived from this study was the importance of teacher-voice in high school culture. Specifically, students highlighted the need for genuine conversation with teachers among all other adults in the building. The process of incorporating student voice is based upon the foundation of genuine and authentic dialogue. Thus, embedding any new initiative into school culture is dependent upon teacher insight and perspective. Teachers would need to engage as key stakeholders in this process of re-designing opportunities for school-wide relationship building and voice.

Additional research exploring the influence of key demographics on the experience of student voice and membership is warranted. The needs of male, female, and non-binary students is multifaced and complex. Additional research exploring the needs for adult-student relationships across the spectrum of gender may be helpful in targeting individualized intervention. This study did not include survey questions that provided students to self-report if they had a disability. It is likely that membership and voice is different for students with disabilities. Similarly, this study would have benefitted from collecting data on identified at-risk
groups. This data would then allow researchers to intentionally intervene with systems of support if it can be determined that at-risk groups of students also report low school membership or low acknowledgment of student-voice.

Researchers might also consider collecting this data in 8th grade and again in 9th grade to better understand the transition experienced in this district. It is suggested that open-ended questions on school membership are added to the survey to better understand the construct from students’ perspective. In addition, future work might include comparing results to this study to other districts with different socioeconomic status and location. While schools that are located in rural, city, and suburban districts might have different problems associated with access and privilege, there could be commonality found due to the developmental need for adolescence to seek relationships with adults.

The exploration of culture in school districts is multifaceted and complex. The approach of recognizing and facilitating support of school membership and student voice is not always dependent upon leadership at that given time. Philosophy and ideologically beliefs surrounding specific aspects of school culture is passed down and shifts from generation to generation. Qualitative insight from school district leaders, including administrators and teachers, could help support a sense of understanding associated with current climate and culture.
### APPENDIX A: OVERVIEW OF STUDENT VOICE INITIATIVES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors, publication date</th>
<th>Location, Sample N, year &amp; SES</th>
<th>Design</th>
<th>Participant Sample</th>
<th>Research Question(s) and Initiatives (s)</th>
<th>Outcomes &amp; themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Groves &amp; Welsh (2010)</td>
<td>Perth, Australia; N = 14</td>
<td>(1) 25 question survey – 5 point likert scale; (2) two focus groups</td>
<td>15-17 years old; (group 1) 5 females, 3 males; (group 2) 4 females, 2 males</td>
<td>(1) Provide a space for students to voice their views; (2) uncover and document student perception of learning and school experiences</td>
<td>The need to (1) customize student needs in curriculum &amp; daily lessons, vary instructional strategies, relate lessons to ‘real life’; (2) embed student voice into curriculum &amp; class routine, facilitate opportunities to expose their voice, allow students to be heard; (3) describe the characteristics of an effective teacher, the positive approaches of a teacher’s personality; (4) the importance of relationships with teacher, parent, and peers; (5) empower students the responsibility for their own learning, set their own goals, school to maintain order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philips (2011)</td>
<td>Pacific Northwest; alternative school; N=11; at-risk; low SES</td>
<td>Interviews; focus groups; classroom observations</td>
<td>5 9th &amp; 10th grade, 6 11th &amp; 12th grade; all males;</td>
<td>(1) Is there a connection between understanding the purpose of learning subject matter and a student’s academic success in school? (2) How do emotional states affect learning? (3) How does informal learning processes connect and help us understand how students might learn better in formal environments? (4) Is social learning, both</td>
<td>(1) Social and emotional learning should not be ignored in the education of these students – fostering a positive and social experience is crucial, (2) autonomy is necessary for at-risk students, and giving students authority over their learning is motivational and can help grow a successful learning experience (3) Learning must be relevant, and students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
in and out of the classroom, consequential for students and, if so, in what ways? Must see it as such – otherwise, they will not be engaged or motivated to participate in learning. Positive emotions help learning.

**Whitlock (2006)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Details</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 school districts in the Northeast U.S.; N=350; moderate to high SES</td>
<td>n=350 student surveys; 110 item survey; 11 focus groups</td>
<td>n=108 focus group participants, n= 36 8th grade, n=31 10th grade, n=41 12th grade; 49% boys, 51% girls</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pazey et al. (2014)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Details</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Findings</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urban Texas high school; N=12 special education students; n=6 in 1995, and n=6 in 2012; comparison of field notes, individual interviews, &amp; focus groups</td>
<td>n=6 in 1995, and n=6 in 2012; 2 12th grade African American students; 2 11th grade African American students; 2 10th grade Mexican-American students</td>
<td>(1) How do special education students perceive high – stakes testing and accountability? (2) How do special education students understand the impact of school reform efforts on their educational experience?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From both decades… (1) conflict between what students believed they had already accomplished and what they are required to do; (2) there is a confusion about learning and testing coupled with anxiety over their ability to success or...
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Sample Description</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Halx (2014)</td>
<td>Three south Texas high schools, N=8, low SES</td>
<td>(1) written word-association exercise, (2) One-hour taped interview with each participant, (3) field notes</td>
<td>Eight 20-year-old Latino males</td>
<td>(1) How do the student participants feel about school and the education they are receiving? (2) What do the student participants think about their status in society and their change to advance some day? (3) How would the student participants feel about learning through a more critical pedagogy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simmons et al. (2014)</td>
<td>Three regional &amp; diverse school systems in Australia, N=606</td>
<td>Focus groups, individual interviews,</td>
<td>6-8 years old n=139; 10-12 years old n=150; 13-14 years old n=160; 16-17 years old n=150. Focus group sizes ranged from 1 to 16 students.</td>
<td>(1) Develop an understanding of ‘wellbeing’ in schools; (2) identifying how to recognize wellbeing and advance understanding and improvements in relation to student ‘wellbeing’; (3) generate new knowledge for policy, programs,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Findings</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitra (2008)</td>
<td>San Francisco Bay Area; n=13 diverse urban schools</td>
<td>Interviewed adults and students with all 13 schools</td>
<td>Studying youth-adult partnerships. All schools consisted of youth and adults in teach group working together to develop and implement projects; youth shared leadership responsibilities with adults and focused on group process to enable the enactment of their activities</td>
<td>(1) Youth-adult partnership is not business as usual. It takes a school wide and can be transformative. Fostering collaboration requires intentional effort. Tone of this partnership must be informal and comfortable to connote a different relationship within the institutional school setting. (2) Visible victories must exist in the school system itself. Sustaining morale and participation in the partnership must include clear goals, be authentic, and meaningful to the group. (3) Dedicated time for collaboration must exist. Ideally, this system would be more democratic and not hierarchal in nature. This is a major obstacle since the school day is so structured.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirby &amp; Gardner (2010)</td>
<td>St. Johns, NL; N=31; low SES, conducted during 2008</td>
<td>14 focus groups: data gathering phase (8, 1-hour sessions) &amp; data analysis</td>
<td>(1) Sought to understand the school experiences of fourth-year students at an urban school where school administrators and course/program scheduling, flexibility, and graduation requirements could be adjusted to better suit the needs for students; (2) Students can...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>School Details</td>
<td>Data Collection Methods</td>
<td>Findings</td>
<td>Implications</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mitra (2004)</td>
<td>Whitman High School - Northern California; N=43; low SES</td>
<td>2 student partnership groups – Pupil School Collaborative (PSC) &amp; Student Forum through interviews and focus groups</td>
<td>Students identified a need for research into the experiences, (2) inform school-change initiatives due to the concern about the number of students who were not engaged in learning and/or not successful graduating</td>
<td>Participate in the curriculum review process; (3) Students desire to feel a sense of respect, belonging, and partnership in the school process. Mitra (2004) examined student voice initiatives at Whitman High School through interviews and focus groups with PSC and Student Forum. The findings suggest students want to be heard and have a sense of leadership in the change process. They acknowledge the importance of having relationships with adults, and the teacher interactions impact their connectedness. Having a more democratic opportunity to engage is important. Competence. They can critique the environment, develop problem solving skills, and grow in public speaking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>York &amp; Kirchner (2015)</td>
<td>examining two different high schools involved in a three-year grant surrounding</td>
<td>semi-structured interviews, observed classroom interactions, reviewed student work, and analyzed</td>
<td>historically marginalized students in Smith High School (n=9) and Central High School (n=14),</td>
<td>Develop strategies for students to partner with adults in problem-solving.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g Critical Civic Inquiry</td>
<td>informal conversations</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B: Student survey

1. Please identify your gender:
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Transgender
   d. Do not wish to report

2. Please identify your current age:
   a. 13
   b. 14
   c. 15
   d. 16
   e. Do not wish to report

3. Please identify your racial or ethnic background:
   a. Native American/American Indian/Alaskan
   b. Black or African American
   c. White
   d. Hispanic or Latino
   e. Multiracial
   f. Asian
   g. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islands
   h. Other ______
   i. Do not wish to report

4. Please name the clubs with which you are involved.

5. Please name any sports with which are you involved.
School Membership

Please answer the following questions using the following scale:

1-Not at all true    2-Partially true    3-Neither true nor false    4-Somewhat true    5-

Completely True

6. I feel like a real part of Upper St. Clair High School.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1- Not at all True</th>
<th>2- Partially true</th>
<th>3- Neither true nor false</th>
<th>4- Somewhat true</th>
<th>5- Completely True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

7. People notice when I’m good at something.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1- Not at all True</th>
<th>2- Partially true</th>
<th>3- Neither true nor false</th>
<th>4- Somewhat true</th>
<th>5- Completely True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

8. It is hard for people like me to be accepted here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1- Not at all True</th>
<th>2- Partially true</th>
<th>3- Neither true nor false</th>
<th>4- Somewhat true</th>
<th>5- Completely True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

9. Other students in this school take my opinions seriously.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1- Not at all True</th>
<th>2- Partially true</th>
<th>3- Neither true nor false</th>
<th>4- Somewhat true</th>
<th>5- Completely True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

10. Most teachers at this school are interested in me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1- Not at all True</th>
<th>2- Partially true</th>
<th>3- Neither true nor false</th>
<th>4- Somewhat true</th>
<th>5- Completely True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

11. Sometimes I don’t feel as if I belong here.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1- Not at all True</th>
<th>2- Partially true</th>
<th>3- Neither true nor false</th>
<th>4- Somewhat true</th>
<th>5- Completely True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>There’s at least one teacher or other adult in this school I can talk to if I have a problem.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>People at this school are friendly to me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Teachers here are not interested in people like me.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>I am included in lots of activities at this school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>I am treated with as much respect as other students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>I feel very different from most other students here.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>all True</td>
<td>nor false</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18. I can really be myself at this school.

1- Not at all True  
2- Partially true  
3- Neither true nor false  
4- Somewhat true  
5- Completely True

19. The teachers here respect me.

1- Not at all True  
2- Partially true  
3- Neither true nor false  
4- Somewhat true  
5- Completely True

20. People here know I can do good work.

1- Not at all True  
2- Partially true  
3- Neither true nor false  
4- Somewhat true  
5- Completely True

21. I wish I were in a different school.

1- Not at all True  
2- Partially true  
3- Neither true nor false  
4- Somewhat true  
5- Completely True

22. I feel proud of belonging to Upper St. Clair High School.

1- Not at all True  
2- Partially true  
3- Neither true nor false  
4- Somewhat true  
5- Completely True

23. Other students here like me the way I am.

1- Not at all True  
2- Partially true  
3- Neither true nor false  
4- Somewhat true  
5- Completely True
Student Voice

Please answer the following questions using the following scale:

1-Never    2-Seldom    3-Sometimes    4-Often    5-Always

24. Adults in the high school allow me to express myself (i.e. Volunteering opinions, objecting, complaining, celebrating, creating art).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1- Never</th>
<th>2- Seldom</th>
<th>3- Sometimes</th>
<th>4- Often</th>
<th>5- Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

If you chose 3, 4, or 5, please specify where this occurs (select all that apply)

a. In the classroom
b. In a sport
c. In a club

25. Adults in the high school request my consultation (i.e. Adults ask me for my opinion, ask me to provide feedback, ask me to serve in a focus group, ask me to participate in hiring interviews).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1- Never</th>
<th>2- Seldom</th>
<th>3- Sometimes</th>
<th>4- Often</th>
<th>5- Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

If you chose 3, 4, or 5, please specify where this occurs (select all that apply)

a. In the classroom
b. In a sport
c. In a club

26. Adults in the high school invite me to participate as a school stakeholder (i.e. attend meetings or events where school decisions are made, include me about discussions for problems or issues, include me in school planning).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1- Never</th>
<th>2- Seldom</th>
<th>3- Sometimes</th>
<th>4- Often</th>
<th>5- Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

If you chose 3, 4, or 5, please specify where this occurs (select all that apply)

a. In the classroom
b. In a sport
c. In a club
27. Adults in the high school request my **partnership in school decisions.** (i.e. I partner with adults in school decision-making; I have a formal role in decision making, school operations require my involvement)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1- Never</th>
<th>2- Seldom</th>
<th>3- Sometimes</th>
<th>4- Often</th>
<th>5- Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

If you chose 3, 4, or 5, please specify where this occurs (select all that apply)

a. In the classroom
b. In a sport
c. In a club

28. Adults in the high school involve me in school **activism** (i.e. I help adults identify problems and generate solutions for school/district change)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1- Never</th>
<th>2- Seldom</th>
<th>3- Sometimes</th>
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<th>5- Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

If you chose 3, 4, or 5, please specify where this occurs (select all that apply)

a. In the classroom
b. In a sport
c. In a club

29. Adults in the high school rely on my **school leadership** (i.e. I help co-plan school activities, I make some decisions for the school)

|----------|-----------|--------------|----------|-----------|

If you chose 3, 4, or 5, please specify where this occurs (select all that apply)

a. In the classroom
b. In a sport
c. In a club

**Open Ended Questions**

30. Do you feel that you help decide what goes on in USCHS? Please explain.

31. Describe the ways adults at USCHS listen to your ideas.
32. Describe instances of adults at USCHS supporting and acting on your ideas.

33. How important it is to you to have adults listen and act on your ideas.

34. Do you think that adults at USCHS need to listen and act on your ideas more often?
   a. If yes, in what scenarios?

35. What would the school need to do to increase supporting and acting on your ideas?

36. What barriers prevent USCHS from increasing supporting and acting on your ideas?

37. Explain the difference, if there is one, between adults listening and acting on your ideas and having relationships with adults at USCHS?

38. How important it is to you to have relationships with adults at USCHS?

39. Do you wish you had more relationships with adults at USCHS? How might that happen?
APPENDIX C: Teacher survey

1. Please identify your gender:
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Transgender
   d. Do not wish to report

2. Please identify the grades you teach:
   a. 9
   b. 10
   c. 11
   d. 12
   e. Do not wish to report

3. Please identify your racial or ethnic background:
   a. Native American/American Indian/Alaskan
   b. Black or African American
   c. White
   d. Hispanic or Latino
   e. Multiracial
   f. Asian
   g. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islands
   h. Other ______
   i. Do not wish to report

4. What 9th grade course do you teach?

5. Please name the clubs with which you are involved.

6. Please name any sports with which you are involved.

Students’ School Membership

Please answer these questions with 9th grade students (only) in mind using the following scale:

1-Not at all true    2-Partially true    3-Neither true nor false    4-Somewhat true    5-Completely True
7. Students feel like they are a real part of Upper St. Clair High School (USCHS).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1- Not at all True</th>
<th>2- Partially true</th>
<th>3- Neither true nor false</th>
<th>4- Somewhat true</th>
<th>5- Completely True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

8. Students get noticed when they are good at something.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1- Not at all True</th>
<th>2- Partially true</th>
<th>3- Neither true nor false</th>
<th>4- Somewhat true</th>
<th>5- Completely True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

9. It’s hard for certain students to be accepted at USCHS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1- Not at all True</th>
<th>2- Partially true</th>
<th>3- Neither true nor false</th>
<th>4- Somewhat true</th>
<th>5- Completely True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

10. Students take their peers’ opinions seriously

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1- Not at all True</th>
<th>2- Partially true</th>
<th>3- Neither true nor false</th>
<th>4- Somewhat true</th>
<th>5- Completely True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

11. Students feel that most teachers at USCHS are interested in them

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1- Not at all True</th>
<th>2- Partially true</th>
<th>3- Neither true nor false</th>
<th>4- Somewhat true</th>
<th>5- Completely True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

12. There are students at USCHS who might feel as though they don’t belong here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1- Not at all True</th>
<th>2- Partially true</th>
<th>3- Neither true nor false</th>
<th>4- Somewhat true</th>
<th>5- Completely True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

13. All students have at least one teacher or adult that they can talk to if they have problem.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1- Not at all True</th>
<th>2- Partially true</th>
<th>3- Neither true nor false</th>
<th>4- Somewhat true</th>
<th>5- Completely True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
### 14. USCHS students feel that people at the school are friendly to them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 - Not at all True</th>
<th>2 - Partially true</th>
<th>3 - Neither true nor false</th>
<th>4 - Somewhat true</th>
<th>5 - Completely True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### 15. Some students at USCHS might feel that teachers here are not interested in people like them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 - Not at all True</th>
<th>2 - Partially true</th>
<th>3 - Neither true nor false</th>
<th>4 - Somewhat true</th>
<th>5 - Completely True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### 16. Students are included in lots of activities at USCHS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 - Not at all True</th>
<th>2 - Partially true</th>
<th>3 - Neither true nor false</th>
<th>4 - Somewhat true</th>
<th>5 - Completely True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### 17. Individual students feel that they are treated with as much respect as other students at USCHS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 - Not at all True</th>
<th>2 - Partially true</th>
<th>3 - Neither true nor false</th>
<th>4 - Somewhat true</th>
<th>5 - Completely True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### 18. It is possible for some students to feel very different from most students at USCHS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 - Not at all True</th>
<th>2 - Partially true</th>
<th>3 - Neither true nor false</th>
<th>4 - Somewhat true</th>
<th>5 - Completely True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### 19. Students can really be themselves at USCHS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1 - Not at all True</th>
<th>2 - Partially true</th>
<th>3 - Neither true nor false</th>
<th>4 - Somewhat true</th>
<th>5 - Completely True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
20. Teachers at USCHS respect each individual student.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1- Not at all True</th>
<th>2- Partially true</th>
<th>3- Neither true nor false</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
</table>

21. Individual students feel that people know that they can do good work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1- Not at all True</th>
<th>2- Partially true</th>
<th>3- Neither true nor false</th>
<th>4- Somewhat true</th>
<th>5- Completely True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

22. It is possible that some students at USCHS wish they went to a different school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>3- Neither true nor false</th>
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<th>5- Completely True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

23. Individual students feel proud of belonging to USCHS.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>2- Partially true</th>
<th>3- Neither true nor false</th>
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</table>

24. Individual students at USCHS know that other students like them the way they are.

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**Student Voice**

Please answer these questions with 9th grade students (only) in mind using the following scale:

1-Never  2-Seldom  3-Sometimes  4-Often  5- Always
25. I allow students to express themselves (i.e. Volunteering opinions, objecting, complaining, celebrating, creating art).

| 1- Never | 2- Seldom | 3- Sometimes | 4- Often | 5- Always |

If you chose 3, 4, or 5, please specify where this occurs (select all that apply)

d. In the classroom
e. In a sport
f. In a club

26. I request students’ consultation (i.e. I have students consult with me; Ask students for their opinion, ask students to provide feedback, ask students to serve in a focus group, ask students to participate in hiring interviews)

| 1- Never | 2- Seldom | 3- Sometimes | 4- Often | 5- Always |

If you chose 3, 4, or 5, please specify where this occurs (select all that apply)

a. In the classroom
b. In a sport
c. In a club

27. I invite students to participate as a school stakeholder (i.e. attend meetings or events where school decisions are made, students discuss problems or issues with adults, include students in school/classroom planning)

| 1- Never | 2- Seldom | 3- Sometimes | 4- Often | 5- Almost always |

If you chose 3, 4, or 5, please specify where this occurs (select all that apply)

a. In the classroom
b. In a sport
c. In a club

28. I request students partner with me in school decisions.
(i.e. students partner with me in school decision-making, students have a formal role in decision making, school/classroom/club operations require my students’ involvement)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1-  Never</th>
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<th>3- Sometimes</th>
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If you chose 3, 4, or 5, please specify where this occurs (select all that apply)

a. In the classroom
b. In a sport
c. In a club

29. I involve students in school activism (i.e. students help me identify problems and generate solutions for school/district change)

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If you chose 3, 4, or 5, please specify where this occurs (select all that apply)

a. In the classroom
b. In a sport
c. In a club

30. I rely on the students’ school leadership (i.e. students help to co-plan school activities, students make some decisions for the school)

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If you chose 3, 4, or 5, please specify where this occurs (select all that apply)

a. In the classroom
b. In a sport
c. In a club

Open Ended Questions

Please answer these questions with 9th grade students (only) in mind:
31. Do you think students feel that they help decide what goes on in USCHS? Please explain.
32. Describe the ways adults at USCHS listen to student ideas.
33. Describe instances of adults at USCHS supporting and acting on student ideas.
34. Do you think it is important to students that the adults at USCHS listen and act on their ideas more often?
   b. If yes, in what scenarios?
35. What would the school need to do to increase supporting and acting on student ideas?
36. What barriers prevent USCHS from increasing supporting and acting on student ideas?
37. Explain the difference, if there is one, between adults listening and acting on student ideas and having relationships with students at USCHS?
38. How important do you feel it is for students to have relationships with adults at USCHS? (staff, teachers, administrators). Please give examples.
   a. Does this need to increase?
   b. How could this occur?
39. How important it is to you to have relationships with students at USCHS?
40. Do you wish you had more relationships with students at USCHS?
41. In your opinion, are there contexts where students should not be stakeholders in USCHS. (describe those in detail).
42. Does USCHS need to increase the amount of students’ stakeholder involvement in the school and classroom? Why or why not? How could this occur?
   a. What barriers do you anticipate would occur to increase student stakeholder involvement in the classroom?
   b. What barriers do you anticipate would occur to increase student stakeholder involvement in the school and district overall?
   c. What factors would support increasing students as stakeholders in the classroom?
   d. What factors would support increasing students as stakeholders in the school overall?
BIBLIOGRAPHY


