



# YOUTH VOICE & SCHOOL CLIMATE & CULTURE IN THE MIDDLE GRADES

## RESOURCE BANK

### Overview

The resources below were curated to provide evidence-based best practices rooted in positive relationship development with adolescent/middle school aged youth both in and out of school. These practices aim to provide practical applications that can be implemented by practitioners to center youth voice and collaborate with young people with asset-based approaches. We welcome additions to this list of resources that keep youth voice at the core and provide examples for how young people can shape the planning, design, execution and evaluation of programs.

Each resource leverages work that has been done in the field and serve as a starting point for best practices that can be adapted to your context. Below you will find links and a summary of each resource as well as examples of how to implement.

### Resource Labels

Each resource page includes a brief description of what the resource is, why an educator should consider using it, the level of implementation, and a link to the site where it comes from. All of our resources are also labeled to indicate:

- The number of people it takes to implement the resource
- The setting for which it was designed (although some might be adapted)
- The level of student voice involvement (SEL focused)
- The organization entry point
- The impact level
- The type of resource

The **sample template** (pg. 3) shows how each resource is organized, along with a brief explanation of each component on the page.

### Connect to Toolkit Questionnaire

The forthcoming questionnaire of this toolkit is intended to be a discussion starter for your school community to consider the opportunities to engage and empower students in helping to shape and strengthen your school's climate and culture. It can also serve as a guide to identify the best resource to use as educators start their journey in increasing youth voice to improve their organization's culture and climate.

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# [Resource Title]

[Author / Organization]



## BRIEF DESCRIPTION:

[Brief paragraph describing what the resource is and why educators should check it out]

Is this a resource that can be implemented by an individual or group?

Is this a resource that can be implemented in or out of the school setting?

## LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION:

[This section indicates whether the resource is something ready for use in the classroom, or whether it is aimed at school-wide level adoption.]

[Click this link](#) to learn more about the ladder of student involvement

At what level of organization should you start to implement this resource?

## LINK TO MORE INFO:

[Link to website(s) to provide the reader with more information or context about the resource]

At what level(s) will this resource have an impact?

What type of resource is this?

### Resource Labels

#### PERSON

Individual, Group

#### SETTING

In-School, Out-of-School

#### EXPERTISE

Resources range from 4 (Students Informed) to 8 (Student/Adult Equity)

#### ORGANIZATION ENTRY POINT

Policy-level; Mission, Vision, Values; Admin/Leadership; Planning; Implementation; Evaluation

#### IMPACT LEVEL

Class-, School-, or District-wide

#### TYPE

Research-based, Practical Application, Tips, or Assessment

# Critical Mentoring: A Practical Guide



Dr. Torie Weiston-Serdan

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION:

Deep dive into how mentoring programs (and organizations/schools) can implement youth voice and culturally responsive practices into the work of engaging youth.

## LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION:

### In Class

- How can the classroom environment support student strengths that exist alongside academic performance?

### School-wide

- Assess school structure, practices and context to determine what can be shifted to better support youth over a focus on changing youth themselves

## LINKS TO MORE INFO:

Buy the book:

[Critical Mentoring: A Practical Guide](#)

Visit [Torie's website](#)



# Developmental Relationships Framework



Search Institute (Share Power)

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION:

Practical practices for what adults can do everyday to intentionally engage in relationships that are developmental with youth. Sharing power is one way adults can proactively honor and support youth voice/leadership.

## LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION:

### In Class

- How can I share power within the framework of the class? How do I respect, include, collaborate with and allow youth to lead?

### School-wide

- Incorporate training on developmental relationships

## LINKS TO MORE INFO:

Free Download: [Developmental Relationships Framework](#)

Free Download: [40 Developmental Assets](#)





### BRIEF DESCRIPTION:

Presents best practices, case studies and research on social-emotional learning and mentoring for middle school grades and after-school programs for middle school youth.

### LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION:

#### In Class

- Provide opportunities for small group interaction, and offer activities that foster understanding, belonging and connectedness.

#### School-wide

- Pair students with mentors or peer groups whose identities affirm their own, to help normalize and validate students' cultural experiences and provide relatable role models.

### LINK TO MORE INFO:

Free Download: [The Guide for Social Emotional Development in Early Adolescence](#)

**PERSON**  
Individual, Group

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**SETTING**  
Out-of-School

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**EXPERTISE**  
SEL Ladder 4

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**ORGANIZATION  
ENTRY POINT**  
Administration/Leadership

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**IMPACT LEVEL**  
District-wide, School-wide

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**TYPE**  
Practical Application



### BRIEF DESCRIPTION:

The Mentor’s Guide to Youth Purpose includes directive tips and worksheets to help adults and young people understand and explore purpose together.

### LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION:

#### In Class

- Select one activity from MENTOR’s worksheet to engage with your students, as an individual or with a fellow teacher.

#### School-wide

- Leverage MENTOR’s purpose worksheets to explore purpose. Explore adultism and how it exists in school.

### LINKS TO MORE INFO:

Free Download: [The Youth Purpose Guide](#)

Free Download: [Mentor Reflection Worksheet](#)

**PERSON**  
Individual

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**SETTING**  
In-School, Out-of-School

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**EXPERTISE**  
SEL Ladder 7

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**ORGANIZATION  
ENTRY POINT**  
Planning, Implementation

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**IMPACT LEVEL**  
Class-wide, School-wide

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**TYPE**  
Research-based, Practical  
Application, Tips

# Bi-Weekly or Monthly Meetings on Student Population



MENTOR

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION:

Adult support for each young person in your school.

## LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION:

### In Class

- Scan attendance sheet monthly. What do we know about each student beyond grades/academic performance? Is the student connected to a supportive adult within the school (either you or a staff member outside of your classroom)? Who does each student go to for support (academic or social/emotional)?

### School-wide

- Implement school-based (peer, group or 1 to 1) mentoring program to provide essential wrap-around supports. Can target specific issues such as chronic absenteeism to engage youth.

## LINKS TO MORE INFO:

Free Download: [Practical Guide for Program Coordinators Implementing the Success Mentors Model](#)

Visit the Website:  
[National Mentoring Resource Center](#)

[Request Technical Assistance](#) for a mentoring program



# Youth Program Quality Assessment



## BRIEF DESCRIPTION:

The YPQA is a validated assessment used to evaluate youth experiences in a program. The most salient parts of this assessment are related to youth engagement, which cover three aspects of youth voice in a program: planning, choice, and reflection.

## LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION:

### In Class

- Use the rubric for the Engagement section to evaluate the levels of youth participation in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of activities as well as the program offering's diversity and developmental appropriateness of youth choice.

### School-wide

- Similarly to in-class, the tool's Engagement metrics are used to assess the incorporation of youth in planning, implementing, and reflecting on the program offerings
- It would also be worthwhile for schools to look into the assessment's Interaction: Adult Partners metric to ascertain the equity of adult-youth collaboration

## LINK TO MORE INFO:

Learn More About the [Youth Program Quality Assessment](#)





## BRIEF DESCRIPTION:

The Yale Center for Intelligence’s RULER method provides educators with strategies to support youth in recognizing, understanding, labeling, expressing, and regulating their emotions. The Charter strategy creates a space for youth participants to agree on the purpose of the group and the approaches they will take to meet their goals.

## LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION:

### In Class

- Use the Charter strategy to give youth the space to create their own group goals, expectations, and approaches.

### School-wide

- This strategy is best used in small groups to find consensus in goals and approaches. However, it can be expanded as a school-wide strategy to re-align school values to the feelings youth seek to have in school. In this way, starting to look at school systems that reinforce the feelings youth want to have during their experience in the building.

## LINKS TO MORE INFO:

Learn More: [Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence](#)

Free Download: [RULER Activity](#)



# Systematic Approach to Including Youth Voice



Washoe County School District

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION:

Educators should look at this resource if they have district-wide support to make youth voice a codified aspect of education in the district. This toolkit is designed with the perspective of seeking school improvement through increasing youth voice.

## LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION:

### In Class

- There are strategies listed in this toolkit to activate youth leaders in the classroom. The goal is for them to participate alongside adults to bring about change using their voice.

### School-wide

- The toolkit is designed to be implemented school-wide to gather as many diverse voices as possible.

## LINKS TO MORE INFO:

Free Download: [Speak Out, Listen Up! Toolkit](#)

See Washoe County's [Board Policy to Codify Youth Voice](#)



# "Rise" Screening and Discussion

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## BRIEF DESCRIPTION:

"Rise" can be an entry way for educators unfamiliar with the value of youth voice. An educator could host a screening in their home or community to spark conversation about the need to create spaces for youth voice.

## LINK TO MORE INFO:

Learn more: [RISE: VOICE OF A NEW GENERATION](#) Documentary.

### PERSON

Individual, Team

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### SETTING

Out-of-School

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### EXPERTISE

SEL Ladder 4

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### ORGANIZATION ENTRY POINT

Implementation

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### IMPACT LEVEL

Class-wide, School-wide

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### TYPE

Tips

# Student-Led Meetings

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## BRIEF DESCRIPTION:

Students lead these 30-minute meetings with their teaching team, administration, and parents, during which they create a plan to propel their goals forward and ensure that everyone is on the same page in supporting their needs and self-defined path.

## LINK TO MORE INFO:

Read Edutopia Piece: [Promoting Student Agency in Learning](#)

**PERSON**

Team

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**SETTING**

In-School, Out-of-School

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**EXPERTISE**

SEL Ladder 7-8

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**ORGANIZATION  
ENTRY POINT**

Administration/Leadership,  
Planning, Implementation,  
Evaluation

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**IMPACT LEVEL**

School-wide

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**TYPE**

Practical Application