Leading in a good way

Beyond Student "Voice":
Meaningfully centring the student
experience in decision making in
all classrooms, schools and
systems.

Aug 17, 2023

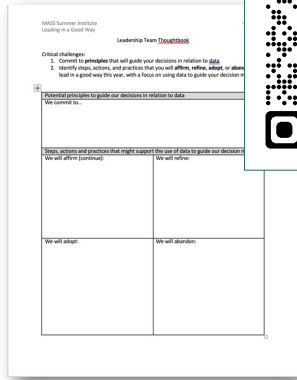Manitoba Association of School
Superintendents (MASS)

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Our critical challenges

- Commit to **principles** that will guide your decisions in relation to data
- Identify steps, actions, and practices that you will **affirm**, **refine**, **adopt**, or **abandon** to lead in a good way this year, with a focus on using data to guide your decision making.

Revisit your Thoughtbook: What might you add or change?

The path of our inquiry

Which questions are most intriguing for you?

- How and what are you learning from your students?
- What is most challenging about engaging meaningfully with student voice?
- What principles might guide us in making decisions about meaningfully engaging with student voice?
- What are the data literacy competencies required to thoughtfully engage with student guidance and feedback?
- What might it look like and sound like to learn from and think collaboratively with students?
- How might you nurture a system in which every leader and educators meaningfully engages with student voice and agency?

How and what are you learning from your students?

What guidance and feedback have you gathered from students? What is it telling you?
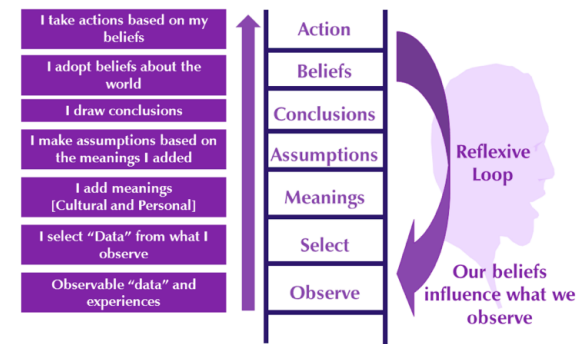
Type of data	Helps you understand…	Answers the questions:
Demographic Data	WHO you are as a community	Who do we serve? What is important to our community? What social identities are reflected in our community? Who in our community represents groups of historically marginalized peoples?
Perception Data	CLIMATE of your district and the well-being of students and staff	What are the lived experiences of members of our community, particularly those who are marginalized? What do students/ families identify as strengths of the district? Weaknesses?
Learning/ Achievement Data	HOW students are doing academically	What academic outcomes are students experiencing? What are the patterns of academic success—for whom is this a pattern? What are the patterns of academic underachievement —for whom is this a pattern?
Programs and Process Data	WHAT you are doing or not doing that is contributing to results	Where are is bias and oppression within our ways of doing business? What structures and practices that support or impede students' experiences and outcomes?

Examine your data

- Take time with your team to examine and describe the data
- What questions do you have?

The Ladder of Inference

I take actions based on my beliefs	Action
I adopt beliefs about the world	Beliefs
I draw conclusions	Conclusions
I make assumptions based on the meanings I added	Assumptions
I add meanings [Cultural and Personal]	Meanings
I select "Data" from what I observe	Select
Observable "data" and experiences	Observe

Reflexive Loop

Our beliefs influence what we observe

What is most challenging about engaging meaningfully with student voice?

Consider the extremes

> **What is the current reality? What would be "ideal"?**

A	Students are always able to choose how they will demonstrate their learning	Student choice is limited to the "topics" to ensure they are not able to opt out of demonstrating important communication competencies.
B	Students select which teachers they believe they'll learn best with	Student timetabling is random and/or based on educators' understanding of what would best serve students' needs.
C	Students assess and prescribe what areas of professional learning educators require in order to best meet students' needs	Professional learning is determined by the ministry, the board or the school.
D	Students have the authority to approve or reject decisions being made on their behalf	Teachers have full authority over instructional decisions

Beyond student choice, toward student agency

> What is most challenging about engaging meaningfully with student voice?

How might our own own identities, lived experiences, biases, assumptions and worldviews influence how we view student voice and agency?

Ignored to Death: the Case of Brian Sinclair Brian Sinclair, an Indigenous man from Manitoba in central Canada, died in the emergency department of Winnipeg's Health Sciences Centre (HSC) in September 2008. He was 45 years old. He had sought care from a family physician at a primary care clinic. The physician referred him to the emergency department of HSC located just a few blocks away for further care. Brian Sinclair was sent by taxi to HSC. In his wheelchair, he entered the emergency department of the most comprehensive hospital in Manitoba. After being ignored, unattended, and uncared for during the next thirty-four hours, he died of complications of a treatable bladder infection. The Manitoba government refused to call an inquiry into Brian Sinclair's death and instead ordered an inquest. Initially, the presiding judge said questions about racism, poverty, and disability would play a significant role when the inquest considered how similar deaths could be prevented in the future. Manitoba's Attorney General also stated that the inquest would address broader issues raised by Indigenous groups. Almost five years after Brian Sinclair died, the inquest finally began. The inquest was to consist of two phases. Phase I was to examine the circumstances under which Brian Sinclair died. Phase II was to examine what could be done to prevent similar deaths in the future. In Phase I, numerous witnesses testified that staff at the Health Sciences Centre made assumptions about Brian Sinclair – that he was intoxicated; that he was homeless and had nowhere else to go. Nurses on shift while Brian waited in the waiting room testified they did not see Mr. Sinclair. However, the hospital's own video monitoring system showed many nurses walked right by him and looked directly into the patient waiting area where he was seated in his wheelchair. He was simultaneously "invisible" and "overly visible" as staff only saw stereotypes and assumptions, which were used to justify ignoring him to death. Many of the emergency department staff called as witnesses repeatedly said they were confident that racism was not a factor in Brian Sinclair's death because they "treat everyone the same."

https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/IPeoples/EMRIP/Health/UniversityManitoba.pdf

A simple case study:
A grade 12 science student's experience

Sample student voice data: specialized services review

Understanding their own needs
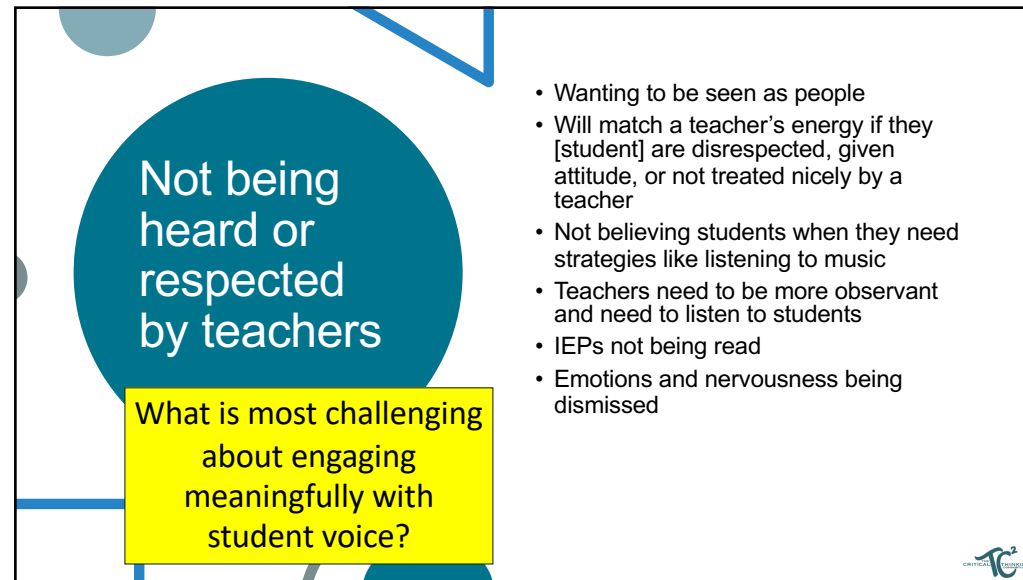
- Creative opportunities
- Introducing options and alternatives
- Opportunities to burn off energy
- Hands on learning
- Need for physical movement and stimming
- Needing music
- Strategies for focusing
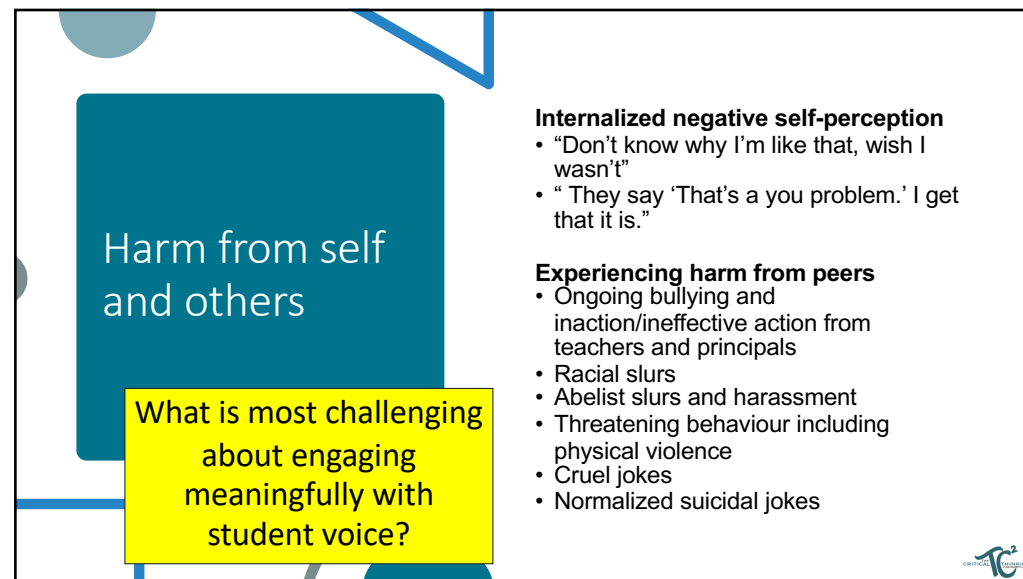- Slowing down instructions and breaking down steps
- Boring assignments

What is most challenging about engaging meaningfully with student voice?

Not being heard or respected by teachers

What is most challenging about engaging meaningfully with student voice?

- Wanting to be seen as people
- Will match a teacher's energy if they [student] are disrespected, given attitude, or not treated nicely by a teacher
- Not believing students when they need strategies like listening to music
- Teachers need to be more observant and need to listen to students
- IEPs not being read
- Emotions and nervousness being dismissed

Harm from self and others

What is most challenging about engaging meaningfully with student voice?

Internalized negative self-perception
- "Don't know why I'm like that, wish I wasn't"
- " They say 'That's a you problem.' I get that it is."

Experiencing harm from peers
- Ongoing bullying and inaction/ineffective action from teachers and principals
- Racial slurs
- Abelist slurs and harassment
- Threatening behaviour including physical violence
- Cruel jokes
- Normalized suicidal jokes
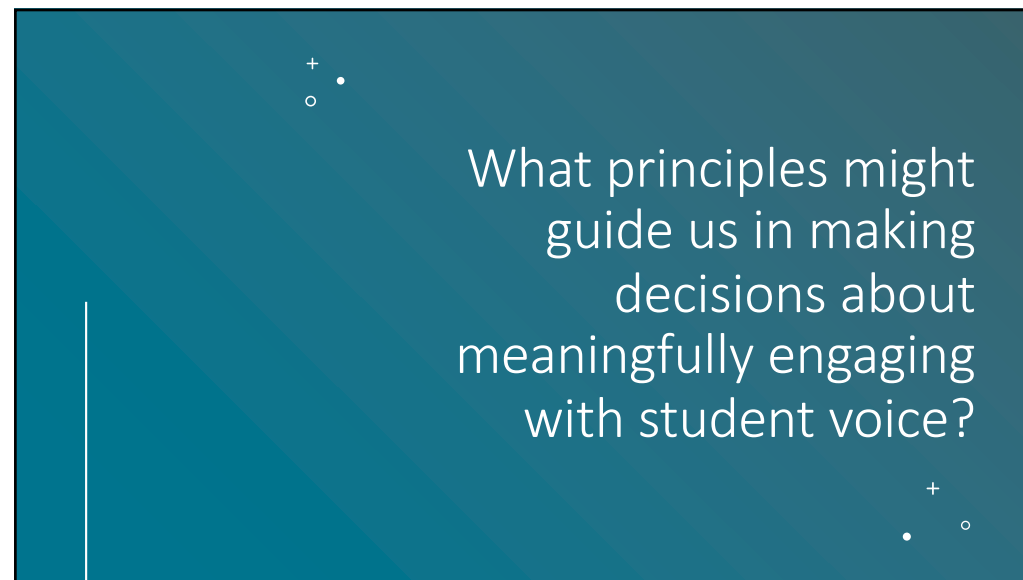
Keenly aware of and empathetic toward challenges teachers face

- repeating reminders to students can be annoying for teachers
- understand that teachers are supposed to encourage students to do their best, but they [the student] are pushed too hard
- being a teacher is rough and that they [teachers] have hard days, but kids are having a hard time too
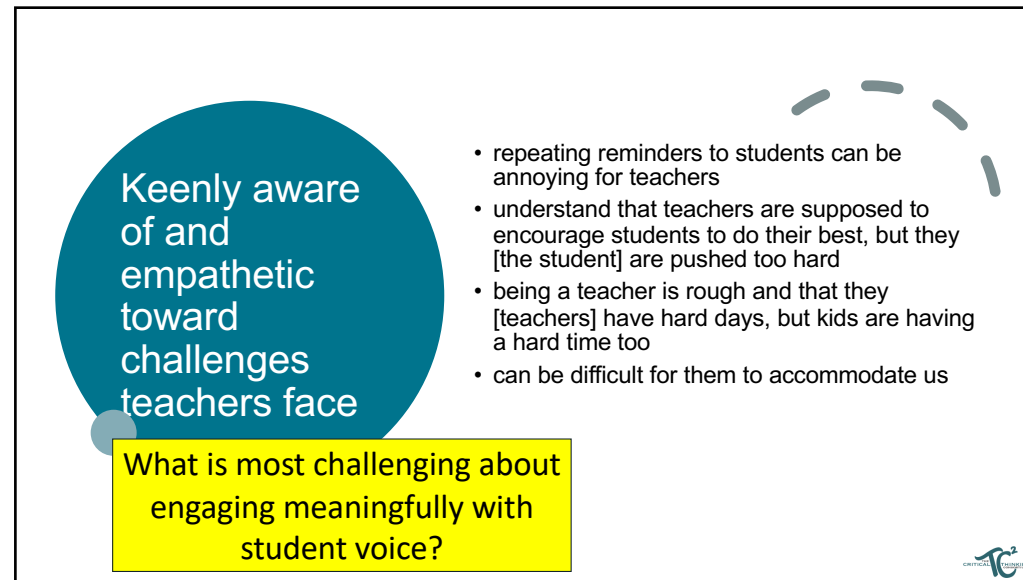- can be difficult for them to accommodate us

What is most challenging about engaging meaningfully with student voice?

What principles might guide us in making decisions about meaningfully engaging with student voice?

What does language reflect or reveal about our beliefs and attitudes?

Achievement Gap   VS   **Education Debt**

- Student performance is the problem
- Suggests students are to blame for their own status
- stereotypes that Students of Color are less competent and intelligent, and unable to learn at the rates of their White peers become believable
- after seeing news stories about the achievement gap and test scores, participants belief in Black Americans' ability to perform in educational spaces decreased

- educational system and the structures and practices that continue to dangerously underserve marginalized students are to blame
- historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral debt - what we should have been contributing to but were instead were extracting from the educational and life experiences of marginalized students, families and communities
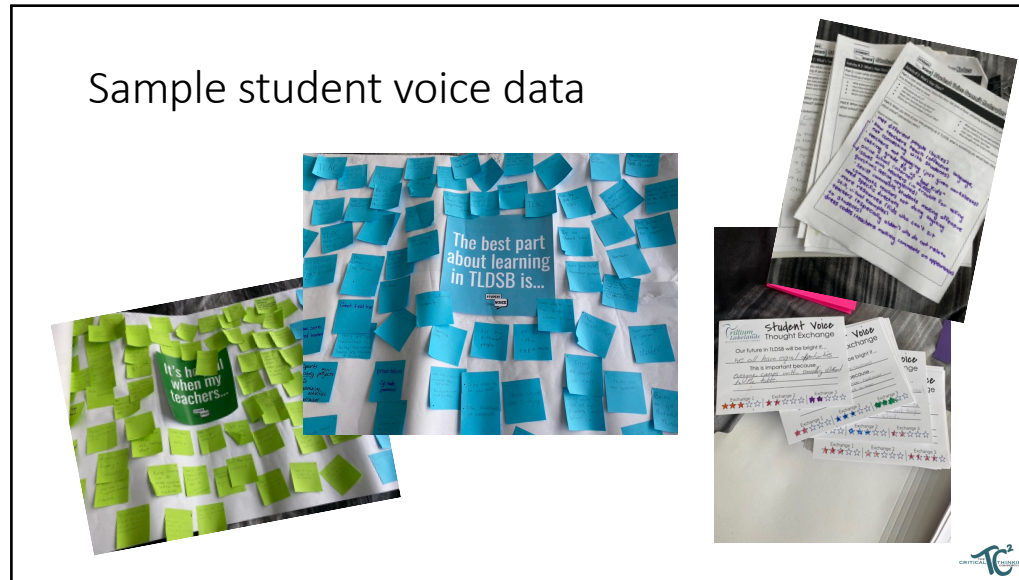
Gloria Ladson-Billings (2006), summarized by Tori Amason

What are the data literacy competencies required to thoughtfully engage with student guidance and feedback?

Sample student voice data

Sample analysis: What questions do you have? How would you imagine next steps?

1. Students expressed a deep desire to feel cared for by teachers and administrators.

   i. Students notice the positive effects of care and compassion.

   ii. Students have clear examples of the negative impact of the absence of care and compassion.

   iii. Students want the district to know that there are significant issues that they feel are not adequately addressed by adults in school, if they are addressed at all.

   iv. Students have important and valuable ideas about how adults might better support their learning.

2. Students feel general anxiety about their ability to succeed.

   .

   i. Students report significant stressors related to assessment and evaluation and a feeling of unpreparedness.

   ii. Students have important insights they hope adults at school can understand and integrate into their decision making.

3. Students feel that the school infrastructure and environment is limiting or hostile.

   i. Students have concerns that they want to be taken seriously about the school environment them make them feel excluded, uncomfortable and unsafe.

   ii. Students have important and valuable ideas and guidance about physical changes that would improve their sense of inclusion, comfort and safety.

   iii. Students have important and valuable ideas about the how the learning environment is structured.

4. Students have important insights about what they learn and how they learn.

   • Student responses consistently demonstrated a deep sense of understanding regarding their own learning.

   i. Students have important and valuable ideas about the how their teachers might better structure their learning that they hope will be taken seriously.

   ii. Students have ideas and directions about the content of their learning that include the desire for more explorations of their diverse interests and learning that is more connected with real world skills.

Sample analysis: What questions do you have? How would you imagine next steps?

1. **Students expressed a deep desire to feel cared for by teachers and administrators.**

i. **Students notice the positive effects of care and compassion.**

- "being more comfortable with teachers on a personal level"
- "when my teacher reads to us and gets involved"
- "when the teachers treat us like young adults."
- "when the teacher gives us a chance to try!"

ii. **Students have clear examples of the negative impact of the absence of care and compassion.**

- "how teachers teach: offensive language, not connecting with students"
- "teachers no(t) engaging (just giving worksheets)"
- "moody teachers/people who don't care"
- "teachers (are) not very outgoing."

iii. **Students want the district to know that there are significant issues that they feel are not adequately addressed by adults in school, if they are addressed at all.**

- "Body shaming"
- "racism isn't a joke"
- "a lot of fat shaming as a boy"
- "group chats is where the bullying happens"
- "teachers picking favourites"
- "sexist comments, students making offensive comments, teachers not doing anything"
- "issues with teachers (in trouble for asking questions, feeling neglected)"
- "teachers making comments on appearance"

iv. **Students have important and valuable ideas about how adults might better support their learning.**

- "(if) teachers are open to their students, this will make the students want to learn more…"
- "More art, positivity (to address bullying)"
- "teachers (should) pay more attention to students that struggle"
- "some students drop out in high school, college, or university due to the low grades. So, if teachers realize the struggles, then the students can get more help."

Data literacy competencies

How might our own identities, lived experiences, biases, assumptions and worldviews influence how we engage with data at each stage?
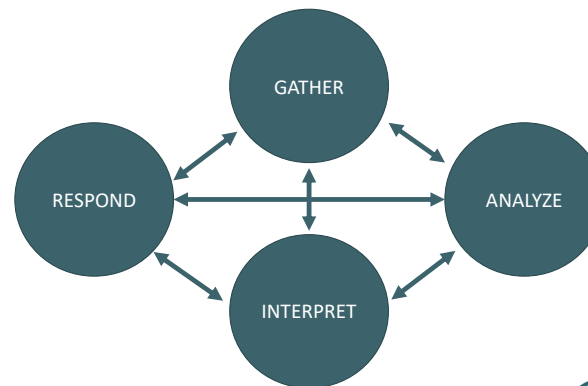
GATHER — ANALYZE — INTERPRET — RESPOND

What might it look like and sound like to learn from and think collaboratively with students?

How might we invite guidance from students?

Student voice survey

Student focus groups

Student support meetings

Authentic opportunities for classroom feedback

More meaningful roles for student council and student trustees

Invitations for students to critique curriculum, course outlines, assessment plans

Family partnership conversations

Student roles in school improvement planning and other school-wide initiatives

Invitations for students to critique curriculum, course outlines, assessment plans

Honour student wisdom

What makes a great assessment task?

Co-construct criteria

Our criteria for a great assessment task
-
-
-

Critique our class assessment plan

Assessments	Criteria 1	Criteria 2	Criteria 3
	←→	←→	←→
	←→	←→	←→
	←→	←→	←→

Examine and imagine other possibilities

Ideas from other courses?

What does the research say?

Personal strengths and areas of development?

Authentic purposes and audiences?

Refine/redesign our class assessment plan

Course outcomes

Essential competencies

Core concepts

Ways to demonstrate your learning

How might we invite guidance from students?

Student voice survey

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Student support meetings

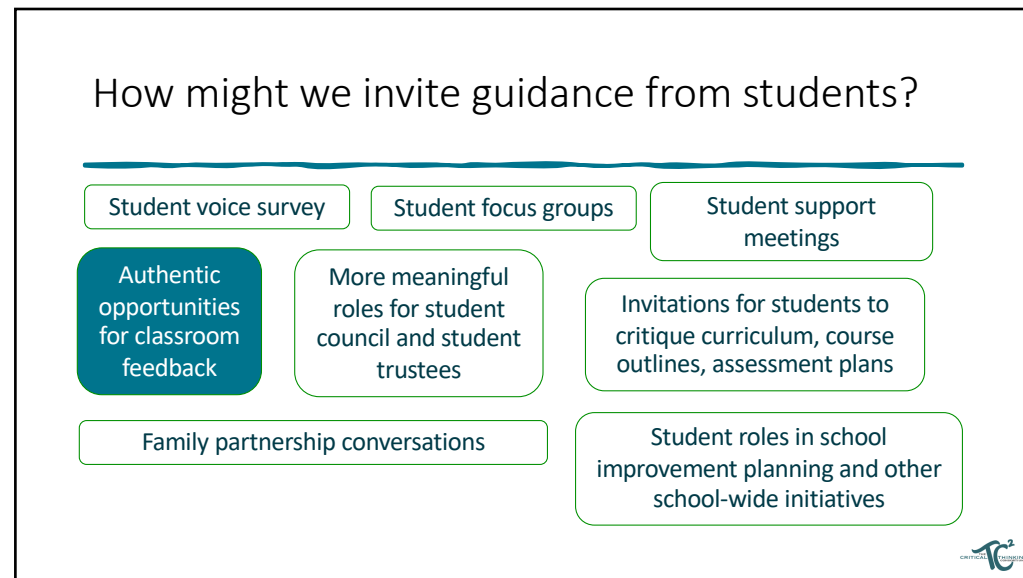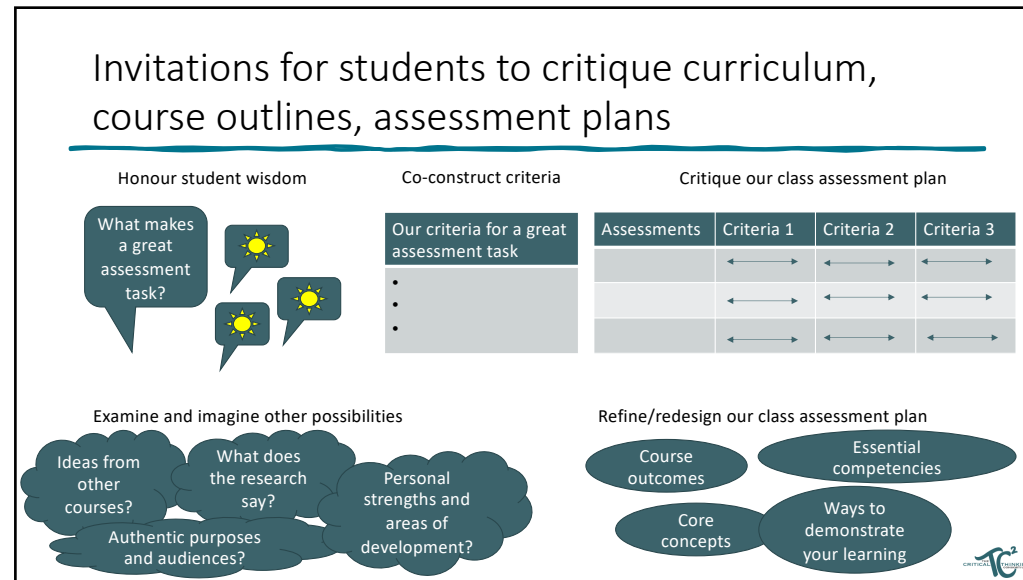Authentic opportunities for classroom feedback

More meaningful roles for student council and student trustees

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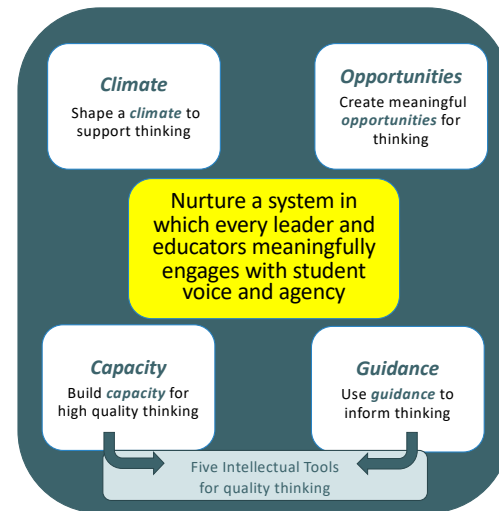
Authentic opportunities for classroom feedback

- **Honouring and paying attention to students' lived experiences**
  - When I'm trying to learn, it helps when…. It doesn't help when…
  - What sparks my thinking vs squashes my thinking
  - What were my most memorable, most engaging, most meaningful past learning experiences?
- **Reflections on classroom learning opportunities**
  - What will I likely remember most from this lesson/week/unit? What will I most likely forget? Why?
  - How helpful / safe / inviting / engaging was this experience?
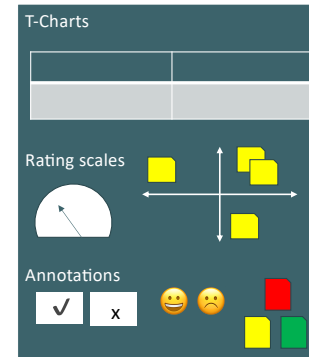
T-Charts

Rating scales

Annotations

How might you nurture a system in which every leader and educators meaningfully engages with student voice and agency?

TC²'s framework to ensure a critically thoughtful approach to teaching, learning and leadership

Climate
Shape a *climate* to support thinking

Opportunities
Create meaningful *opportunities* for thinking

Nurture a system in which every leader and educators meaningfully engages with student voice and agency

Capacity
Build *capacity* for high quality thinking

Guidance
Use *guidance* to inform thinking

Five Intellectual Tools for quality thinking

Our critical challenges

- Commit to **principles** that will guide your decisions in relation to data
- Identify steps, actions, and practices that you will **affirm**, **refine**, **adopt**, or **abandon** to lead in a good way this year, with a focus on using data to guide your decision making.
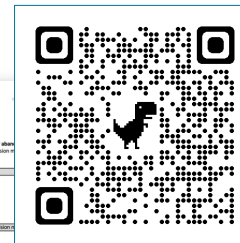
Revisit your Thoughtbook: What might you add or change?

Share a principle and/or a corresponding step, action or practice

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Next steps on our path of inquiry

- Why take a system wide approach to developing data literacy competencies?

- What might it look like to take focus on a thoughtful and meaningful approach to data across the system?

- System-wide inquiry, strategic planning, data literacy: Where to next?

- How might you consolidate your key learnings from this summer institute?

Thank you!

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