Student Voice Consultant Team

student voice

**listen speak act**

The Student Voice Consultant Team (Consultants) was established so that Brisbane Catholic Education's biggest stakeholder—students—have an opportunity to express their opinions and participate in the big decisions that impact their educational experience across Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE). BCE Student Voice Consultants are a team of students from Year 7 to 12 who are passionate about making positive change in BCE schools.

Our Why

We seek to build **authentic student-staff partnerships** to create and maintain safe, inclusive and engaging learning communities so that all students can reach their full potential and make a positive difference in the world.
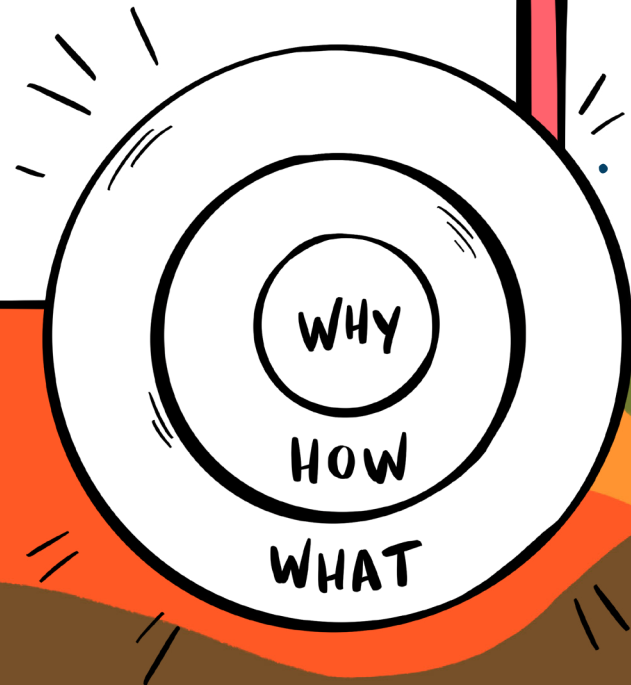
Our How

We do this by:

- Acknowledging that students know their world best, what works for them and what does not.

- Recognising students' right to express their opinions and participate in matters that impact on their educational experience.

- Empowering students to actively shape BCE.

Our What

We focus on:

- Creating platforms for student voice in BCE.

- Strengthening structures that enable student voice in BCE.

- Creating student voice opportunities for staff and students in BCE schools.

- Building the **capability** of students and staff to establish student voice in BCE community of schools.

WHY
HOW
WHAT

Our Approach

The Festival theme for 2022 was Wishes for Education: A hope-filled focus of building upon what works well, to help make BCE schools even better for all students.

In response to student delegates' feedback from previous years, Consultants used Open Space Technology to flip the traditional conference model on its head and give delegates:

WISHES for EDUCATION
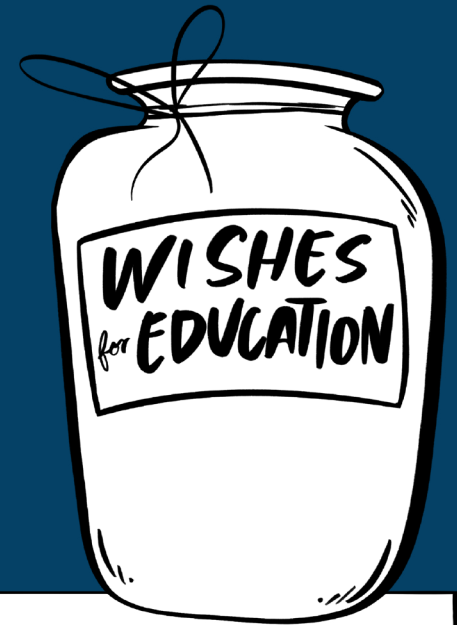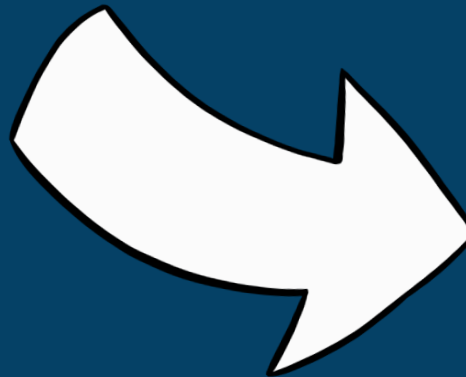
1. The freedom to create their agenda and choose what was discussed.

2. The opportunity to co-facilitate discussions.

3. The choice of how they could best participate and contribute to discussions on the day.

98 Delegates, 31 Schools

Prior to the festival, delegates:

- were briefed about how they could participate.
- proposed their own wishes for education in BCE.
- voted for the top 18 wishes to create the agenda.

On festival day, delegates:

- signed up to discuss wishes for education they were passionate about.
- attended 3 rounds of discussion to explore the wish for education, share why it is important to students and identify top ideas to make the wish a reality.
- shared key discussion points and top ideas with Executive Leaders and other delegates.
- voted in the top 3 priority ideas for action in 2023.

YR 12 (8%)
YR 7 (27%)
YR 11 (18%)
YR 8 (10%)
YR 10 (22%)
YR 9 (15%)

BCE STUDENTS WISHES
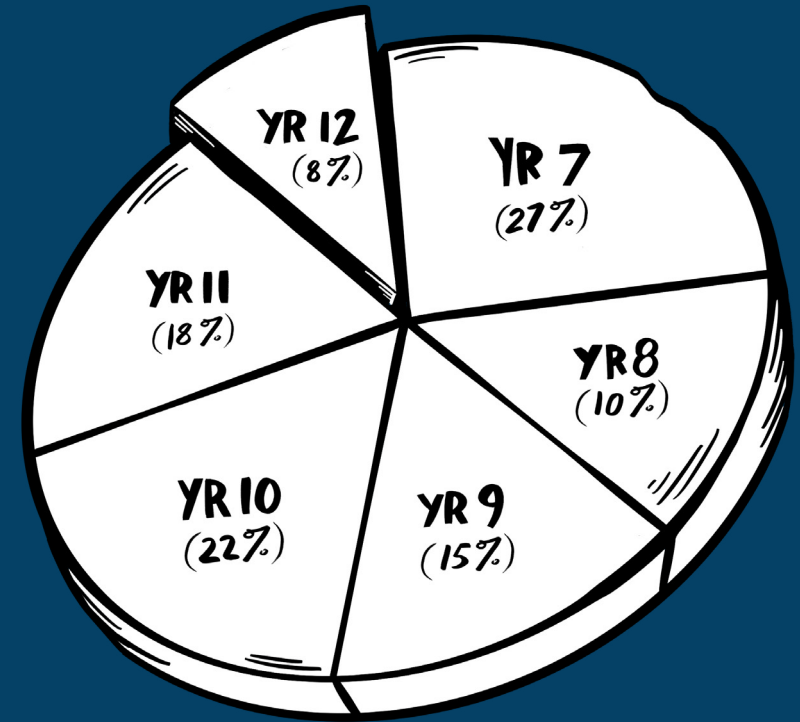
CHOICE & VOICE

STUDENTS CAN VOICE THEIR OPINIONS SAFELY & FREELY

STUDENTS HAVE GREATER CHOICE & POWER in their EDUCATION

STUDENTS CAN ACCESS SAFE & INCLUSIVE PLATFORMS to RAISE CONCERNS, SHARE IDEAS & VOICE OPINIONS

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

LGBTQIA+ STUDENTS ARE OPENLY CELEBRATED & SUPPORTED

ALL CATHOLIC STUDENTS HAVE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY to ACCESS CATHOLIC EDUCATION REGARDLESS of FINANCIAL HARDSHIP

STUDENTS of COLOUR ARE INCLUDED, VALUED & UNDERSTOOD

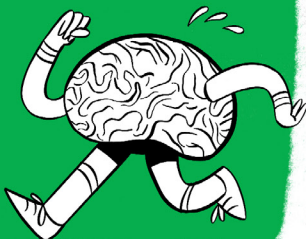STUDENTS WITH ILLNESS AND/OR DISABILITY ARE SEEN, HEARD, INCLUDED & VALUED

MENTAL HEALTH

STUDENTS WHO STRUGGLE WITH THEIR MENTAL HEALTH CAN FOCUS on LEARNING & ENJOY SCHOOL

STUDENTS WITH MENTAL HEALTH CONCERNS FEEL SAFE to SPEAK UP & SEEK HELP

STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING SO THAT THEY ARE MORE ACCEPTING & BETTER PREPARED for ADULT LIFE

STUDENT SAFETY

STUDENTS FEEL SAFE & DO NOT FEAR BEING JUDGED BY OTHER STUDENTS OR STAFF AT SCHOOL

ALL STUDENTS FEEL SAFE from BULLYING & A SENSE of BELONGING AT SCHOOL

LOVE OF LEARNING

STUDENTS ENJOY SCHOOL & HAVE A LOVE of LEARNING

STUDENTS WILL LEAVE BCE SCHOOLS WITH KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS NEEDED for the REAL WORLD

THERE IS CONSISTENCY & TRANSPARENCY BETWEEN ALL BCE SCHOOLS AS WELL AS the WIDER COMMUNITY

BCE SCHOOLS ACTIVELY INCLUDE the CREATIVE ARTS & ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY in the CURRICULUM

BCE EDUCATION IS ENGAGING, RELEVANT, ACCESSIBLE & UNDERSTANDABLE

ALL STUDENTS FEEL SAFE & INCLUDED WHICH ENABLES them to HAVE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY to EDUCATION

Click the wishes to navigate!

Voted 2023 Priorities

1. BCE implements a uniform policy to ensure all students have access to uniforms that are consistent with their gender-expression.

2. BCE implements LGBTQIA+ inclusivity training for all school staff to support safe school environments for all students by promoting the use of inclusive language and celebrating diversity.

3. BCE implements cultural sensitivity training for school staff to enhance cultural safety in schools, by promoting the use of inclusive language and celebrating cultural difference.

LGBTQIA+ is an abbreviation that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual, and more. These terms describe a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. Sexual orientation is a person's attraction to another person, such as being straight, gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Gender identity is a person's sense of being female, male, or outside of that binary.

Students can voice their opinions safely and freely.

There are barriers to student voices and opinions being heard, considered, and valued. Creating safe spaces for students to freely speak their opinions and be heard demonstrates student feedback is important.

- Students can feel apprehensive to give feedback and share ideas about what matters to them at school, fearing judgement and being 'shut down' by peers, teachers, or school leaders.
- Students need a classroom environment where they can speak freely.
- Student Representative Councils (SRC) could be more effective in seeking and putting forward views and ideas of students who may not feel comfortable to speak up.
- It's important to identify staff members students can speak with to share ideas and opinions or seek information and raise concerns.
- Students appreciate opportunities to share opinions anonymously.
- Certain student voices are more likely to be heard and valued over others. However, all opinions are equal and have a right to be heard.
- Some students are given more of a voice and taken more seriously, such as those who are involved with school activities or whose parents are a part of the school board.
- Staff have more opportunity to provide input on student matters than students do.
- Students with learning disabilities need a platform to have their say.

TOP IDEAS

Create an accessible platform where students can contact the BCE Wellbeing Team and/or other identified BCE staff to provide feedback and share improvement ideas with the option of remaining anonymous.

Facilitate regular (monthly) 'student forums' in schools where students have the opportunity to discuss ideas, opinions and/or concerns with school staff. It is suggested that school staff return to the 'student forum' the following month with information about actions taken regarding the previous month's agenda.

Students can access safe and inclusive platforms to raise concerns, share ideas, and voice opinions.

Creating a safe and accessible platform provides opportunities for student concerns and ideas to be voiced, acknowledged, and actioned.

- Accessibility, availability, feeling unsafe and fearing judgement can be barriers to students accessing platforms to share their thoughts and ideas.
- Students welcome more opportunities for open communication between students and staff. This would encourage listening to understand each other's perspective and concerns, and enable collaboration to develop ideas to improve the school experience.
- Building positive student/teacher relationships and providing opportunities to get to know students as individuals builds trust and helps students feel more comfortable to speak up.
- Students need staff who know how to approach and value the individual voices of each student.
- Less confident students need encouragement to engage in student forums/meetings and would value different ways to provide input e.g. one-on-one meetings, small group meetings, linking students with Student Voice or SRC representatives.
- An option for anonymity is important for some students.
- Raise the profile of Student Voice & SRCs to encourage meaningful participation.
- Increase students' and teachers' understanding about the role, function and benefit of student voice.
- Seek ways to actively engage students and teachers in SRCs.
- Make a once or twice-a-term student voice meeting compulsory.
- Communicate the value and benefit of student voice to teachers, pastoral and school leaders
- Use Personal Development/Access lessons or staff training to promote student voice.
- Promote each school's SRC, their members, and their role and function.
- Provide support and resources to enable SRCs to action student ideas.
- Provide training and support for SRC members to represent student body.

TOP IDEAS

Collaborate with students, student leaders, teachers, and school staff to co-create an open and safe space for the exchange of ideas, concerns, and feedback.

Offer a variety of platforms for students and staff to collaborate:
- Student to student.
- One on one with teachers.
- Attending staff meetings for a period of time.

Offer training opportunities to SRCs.

Provide anonymous avenues for feedback.
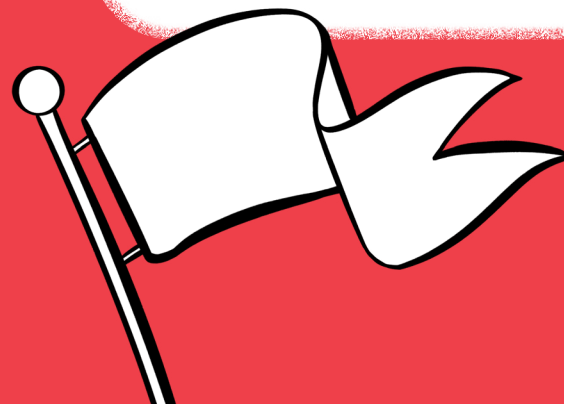
Students have greater choice and power in their education.

Students are the primary stakeholder in their own education. It is their future. When students feel heard, involved, and empowered to make choices in their education, they are motivated to learn.

- Students feel that they do not have the option to change subjects.
- Students would value increased opportunities to direct their learning.
- There is limited opportunity for students to have input into subject content. Content can be repetitive such as the same book being assigned as required reading, across year levels.
- Exams and assessments do not always match the content taught. There are no or minimal opportunities to participate in practice exams which would enable students to receive feedback on their progress against testing standards or for feedback post exams or assessments.
- Students would like religion to be optional subject for seniors.
- Teacher's style, consistency and knowledge significantly impact students' ability to learn.
- Substitute teachers have different teaching styles and may not specialise in the subject areas they are teaching. This creates difficulty for students to have to adapt to different teachers and certain topics not being covered appropriately.
- Students would like the opportunity to provide feedback to teachers regarding what works best for them to learn effectively. This can include learning content (e.g. topics students would like covered more extensively) or teaching style (how the teacher provides feedback to students).
- Students appreciate opportunities to further their learning within subjects and/or class groups (using online discussion boards, after school tutoring and or dedicated time where students can have one-on-one time with a teacher to better understand subject content).
- Students want their teachers to know them as individuals and build morale as a class group through discussions, post exam celebrations or other team building.

TOP IDEAS

Teachers inform students of the syllabus at the start of the term and provide an opportunity for students to provide feedback. This could include students identifying topics, activities, textbooks and/or assessment pieces which they believe will be useful and relevant (or those considered not beneficial).

Teachers dedicate five minutes of each lesson for student's and the teacher to provide feedback, ask questions or engage in relationship-building activities.

LGBTQIA+ students are openly celebrated and supported at school.

LGBTQIA+ students have a right to feel safe, included and valued at school.
Schools can be a safe space for LGBTQIA+ students, particularly if home is not.

- Stereotyping and homophobia contribute to a harmful culture of judgment and negativity.
  This leads LGBTQIA+ students to feel unsafe at school impacting learning, self-worth, and feelings of not belonging.
- The lack of understanding and normalisation of gender and sexual diversity results in stigma and targeting of students for their appearance, behaviour or choice of activities.
- Labels are attributed and used as slurs, e.g. if a boy is bad at sports they "must be gay" whereas if a girl is assertive, she "must be a lesbian". These types of statements are often not sufficiently challenged by teachers.
- Relationship and Sexuality Education lacks inclusivity regarding same sex, asexual, transgender, sexual and gender identity content. This limits the ability of LGBTQIA+ students to access safe and reliable information.
- References to LGBTQIA+ individuals or relationships often occur in conversations involving shame and 'sin'. Teachers appear to 'change mode' mid conversation when LGBTQIA+ issues or questions are raised.
- Same sex relationships are often demonised or sexualised leading to stereotypes and stigma.
- Normalisation of different genders and sexual preferences through use of correct terminology and inclusive education can reduce stigma.
- Students are unaware of BCE wide processes for preferred names or pronouns.
  Use of students' dead names and incorrect pronouns results in students feeling unsafe and unable be to be themselves.

TOP IDEAS

Implement staff LGBTQIA+ inclusivity training to support safe school environments for students, promote the use of inclusive language, and celebrate diversity.

Provide the option of non-gendered bathrooms in schools.

Review current Relationships and Sexuality Education to be more inclusive, normalise diverse relationships/gender expressions and provide safe information for all students.

Encourage Wear It Purple Day, participate actively in Pride month, and support LGBTQIA+ advocacy groups.

Implement a uniform policy to allow students access to uniforms that are consistent with their gender-expression.

Students of colour are included, valued, and understood at school.

Students feel as though culture gets sidelined and is not considered important unless it is being used to show diversity within school advertising and promotion. This feels tokenistic to students who want their culture to be genuinely embraced by schools. Students of colour have a right to be culturally safe at school, and to be free of racism, segregation, misrepresentation, and tokenism.

- Inappropriate and culturally unsafe language is being used in some schools.
- Using racist language even in the context of schoolwork (e.g. quotes from literature) is culturally unsafe for students of colour.
- Education is needed for teachers, staff, and students about cultural safety, racism, unconscious bias, and the power of language.
- Students value teachers and staff who courageously confront and address racism when it occurs. Students of colour feel that teachers can at times show reluctance to acknowledge and address issues of cultural safety and incidents of racism. At times it feels like other issues (such as uniform violations) take higher priority.
- It is important for teachers and staff to show courage when they make a mistake, take steps to address the issue and commit to change.
- Clear and consistent consequences for incidents of racism against students are needed to ensure cultural and psychological safety for students of colour.
- It's challenging when schools to use performative diversity for promotion purposes without embedding active representation.

TOP IDEAS

Schools provide students with the opportunity to collaborate with teachers in the selection of learning materials to ensure cultural relevance, appropriateness, and safety.

Schools expand the selection of online courses and resources for students that want alternative education.

Students of colour could express their concern/ decline to participate if they feel that school promotion incorporates performative diversity.

BCE implements cultural sensitivity training for all school staff to enhance cultural safety in schools, by promoting the use of inclusive language and celebrating cultural difference.

Students of colour are included, valued, and understood at school.(cont.)

- Diversity and celebration of culture is used at times for school promotion and advertising without embedding active representation. Students of colour can feel used and misrepresented when this occurs.
- Student established cultural groups are run by students with little support from the school but are then used for school promotion.
- More support for multicultural communities in schools is needed.
- Students value schools that prioritise celebration of cultural diversity in a meaningful and authentic way—actively working to avoid cultural celebrations feeling tokenistic.
- Students want to engage authentically in cultural celebrations and would welcome the involvement and participation of community cultural groups in the school.
- Students notice segregation in social groups based on culture which could be addressed.
- Offering students in different cultural groups the opportunity to connect and network across schools would be valued by students.
- Diversity in educational content.
- Currently, white perspectives in education are prioritised and centralised. There needs to be a shift away from euro-centric views.
- It is important to involve appropriate cultural representatives from the community when teaching about culture.
- Students appreciate when education focusses on the positives of multiculturalism (rather than the negatives).

Students with illness and disability are seen, heard, included, and valued.

Disabilities and illnesses can be life-altering for students. Invisible disabilities and illnesses are real, valid, and can impact education. Schools can make positive change to challenge ableism and support students with disabilities and illnesses.

- Students want to be seen for who they are.
- Students with disabilities or illnesses can sometimes feel like "novelties".
- It is important for students NOT to be defined by their disability and/or illness.
- It is important to recognise that disabilities can be life-altering.
- Students with disabilities can experience prejudice and stigma.
- Shaming, stereotyping, stigmatising and ableist behaviour is present in schools.
- Students can experience misunderstanding and ignorance from peers, who appear to focus on how another student's disability impacts on them.
- Building awareness and understanding of disability and illness among peers can be helpful. Some students would welcome the option to discuss their disability and/or illness openly at assemblies, school workshops and activities to raise awareness.
- Provide inclusive and integrative resources for students with disabilities or illnesses to access their education.
- Students value teachers who work directly with them to meet their learning needs, rather than immediately referring them to the Guidance Counsellor.
- Assisting students to maintain a good support system within school (inclusive of school staff/teachers and students) is helpful.
- There are challenges to accessing Guidance Counsellor support particularly when they job-share. This can contribute to a lack of continuity and communication.

TOP IDEAS

There are opportunities for teachers and students with disabilities or illnesses to collaborate and identify effective methods of inclusion within the classroom and ensure that students' needs are met.

Schools actively ensure students with disabilities or illnesses have accessible opportunities to voice opinions and provide feedback.

Students with disabilities or illnesses are actively included in educational planning and decision making.

Students with illness and disability are seen, heard, included, and valued.(cont.)

- It is important for teachers and staff to take the time to actively listen to and consider the experiences and perspectives of students with disabilities or illnesses.
- Students appreciate being included in decisions that directly and indirectly affect them.
- School staff could benefit from targeted professional learning to build their capability to support students with disabilities or illness.
- Students value teachers who seek to gain firsthand information on whether there are specific avenues of support that the student wishes to have, improvements that could be beneficial, or concerns that could be addressed.
- Increasing accessibility for students with disability or illness is helpful.
- Some schools may not have the resources for students with disabilities or illness, which may result in them needing to enrol in a different school.
- When teachers/staff do not allow students to be exempt from activities, this can lead to them feeling that their disability or illness is invalidated.
- Students with more 'invisible' disabilities value teachers who understand and meet their needs (e.g. allowing them to leave the classroom when needed).

Students have equal opportunity to access Catholic school education regardless of financial hardship.

School fees and expenses can be a barrier for some Catholic families experiencing financial hardship. Catholic students have a right to access education in Catholic schools, regardless of their families' financial situation.

- Catholic schools builds a community for Catholic students.
- It can be difficult to locate a same faith community in non-Catholic schools. Catholic students can feel safer, more seen and supported within BCE schools.
- Students value diverse avenues to connect with their Catholic beliefs and community (e.g. school activities, lunch programs, youth groups across different schools).
- Students would welcome opportunities to share their opinions and ideas on how to build a supportive and inclusive Catholic community.
- Equitable access to Catholic education should be made available for any Catholic family.
- As Catholics driven by the Catholic ethos, there should be equal opportunity regardless of financial situations (helping one another as a community).
- School fees are high in comparison to public schools and this may be a barrier to students being able to access a Catholic education.
- Affordability of uniform costs can impact on students and families. Students are aware of the challenge of uniform costs for their parents. When students wear older uniforms due to affordability it can create stigma.
- Families with more than one child may only be able to afford to send one child to a Catholic school. Families need other options available besides a sibling discount.
- Schools could share more options that enable Catholic students to attend a Catholic school (fee extensions without penalty, more scholarships and bursaries, financial support for those who can't afford, uniforms, classroom materials).

TOP IDEAS

Provide more scholarships and bursaries for Catholic students to access Catholic schools.

Facilitate assistance with fees, uniforms, school supplies and other necessities for students and families facing financial hardship.

Provide after school or lunchtime programs for Catholic students and families to attend.

Students who struggle with their mental health can focus on learning and enjoy school.

TOP IDEAS

Poor mental health and wellbeing can significantly impact a student's learning, how they manage schoolwork and demands, and their school attendance.

- Schools need stronger and more accessible processes to support students before their mental health challenges impact their capacity to learn.
- Strengthening teachers' ability to recognise early signs that a student is struggling with their mental health can enable students to access available supports early.
- Students struggling with their mental health need to feel safe at school.
  This means knowing and believing it is okay to be different (e.g. cultural background, religion, sexuality, neurodiversity, skill set, ability).
- Students with mental illness need inclusive, respectful, and supportive approaches to supporting their needs. They appreciate being actively involved in decision making around mental health supports and adjustments.
- It's important to consider the impact of mental illness on learning and behaviour and minimise a compliance mindset.
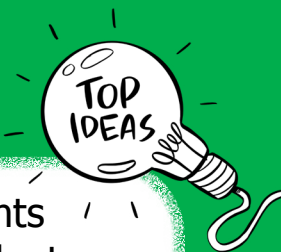
Confidentiality agreements and support plans for students experiencing mental health challeneges.

Access to psychologists or other appropriate professionals.

Education around methods of self-care such as journaling, accessing social support, sleep hygiene and stress management.

Flexible approaches to education and assessments including break passes, quiet learning hubs and alternate assessment arrangements.

Enable students and their families to lead the approach to supporting the student's mental health at school.

Students with mental health concerns feel safe to speak up and seek help.

Mental, physical and spiritual health are connected. Students need to know and feel that every part of their wellbeing is important to their teachers. School should be a safe environment where students are comfortable to speak up if they are struggling and receive appropriate support.

- Students don't always feel safe to speak up about struggling with mental health challenges.
- There is stigma around seeing a counsellor or other mental health professional.
- Students may be afraid of what will happen after they speak up including, being judged, not getting support, or receiving an inappropriate response.
- Identified supports may not always be available.
- Counsellors or other mental health professionals at school must manage emergency situations which can result in proactive mental health visits not being prioritised and students missing an opportunity to seek support.
- Some schools prescribe particular support people to students/grade levels however, students may not feel comfortable with the nominated person, that person may be unavailable, or another teacher may not permit a student to go speak with the identified support person.
- Students, families, teachers, and other adults in school need to understand the benefits and limitations of confidentiality when students express mental health concerns.
- Students may be concerned everything they say will be reported back to their parents/carers. Some students want to speak privately about concerns at home without fear that it will cause additional problems if reported back to their parents/carers.
- Adults need to be honest and clear with a student if, when and why they share information including providing a pathway for students to address concerns if they believe their privacy has been breached.
- Suicide awareness and prevention must be discussed in schools so that everyone in the school community can recognise warning signs and keep students safe.

TOP IDEAS

De-stigmatise mental health and create a culture where it is safe to ask for help.

Utilise external professionals to educate students and staff around different aspects of mental health and supports available.

Provide teachers, students, and other members of the school community access to mental health and physical first aid training.

Students to choose from variety of safe people who they can speak to regarding mental health concerns.

Students learn about mental wellbeing so that they are better prepared for adult life.

Improved education around Mental Health will normalise discussing mental health concerns, destigmatise the topic, improve awareness of early indicators of mental health concerns and encourage support seeking. This will have a beneficial impact on a student's long-term wellbeing. Students should receive consistent education regarding mental health regardless of which BCE school they attend. Students and their families should know that BCE takes students mental health seriously and has robust support in place for BCE students. All students are at risk of experiencing mental health concerns however the senior years of secondary schooling are a known time of increased stress for students. If they have received education regarding mental health throughout their schooling, students will be better equipped to manage this period of increased stress.

- There is inconsistency in the way mental health is taught, discussed, and supported across different BCE schools.
- Mental Health challenges carry a stigma. This can be combatted through normalising the discussion around mental health, providing accurate and relevant education to students, ensuring a positive proactive school culture around supporting mental health concerns and promoting wellbeing.
- Current curriculum relies on small amounts of information discussed during health classes. This is not sufficient. Students want to know more about protecting their mental health, self-care, setting and respecting boundaries, identifying triggers, understanding support available, learning about different diagnoses, and breaking down stigma.
- Consistent education will result in students being more self-sufficient in managing minor mental health concerns earlier and less dependent on a support adult to step in once a mental health challenge has worsened. It will also help students know when and how to seek support.

TOP IDEAS

There should be funding available for schools to specifically address proactive mental health topics such as relaxation, understanding warning signs, self-care, boundary setting and respect.

Ensure that all schools have a consistent approach to mental health education (that focusses on a holistic overview of mental health and wellbeing as opposed to crisis management). This should include mental health as a part of curriculum as well as extracurricular activities.
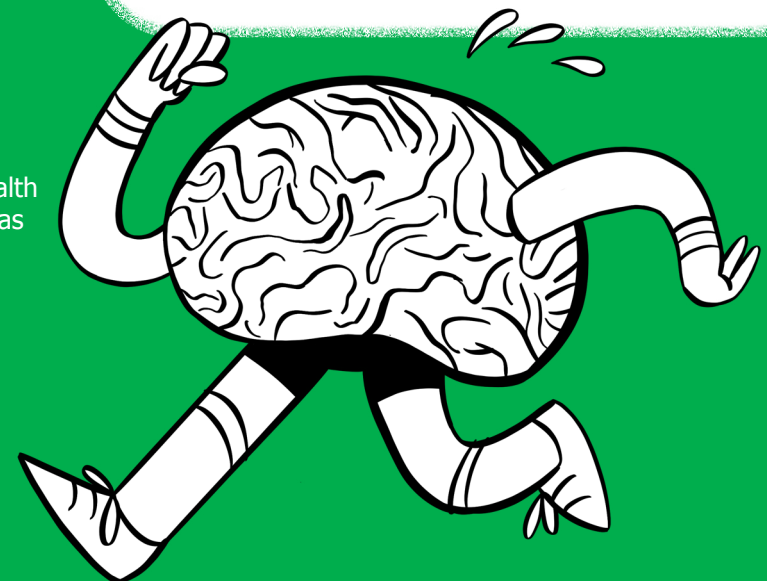
Students learn about mental wellbeing so that they are better prepared for adult life.
(cont.)

- There are minimal extracurricular mental health supports available to students.

- In school where there are extracurricular activities and/or groups regarding mental health topics these tend to be reserved only for students who staff identify as requiring support. Other students are not able to access these extracurricular activities.

- If these kinds of extracurricular activities and/or groups were offered to all students, it would provide additional opportunities for proactive mental health education and reduce tension between students who receive additional support and those who do not. It will further normalise talking about mental health.

- Some attempts to discuss mental health, such as "RUOK" day, are viewed as tokenistic as there is minimal discussion before or after the day.

- People of all ages experience mental health challenges. A student might not experience mental health concerns during their schooling however may experience them later in life. Students want to be prepared to manage their mental health as adults who will face stressful real-world experiences. Students want to know how to prevent, identify and manage mental health concerns at any time in their lives.
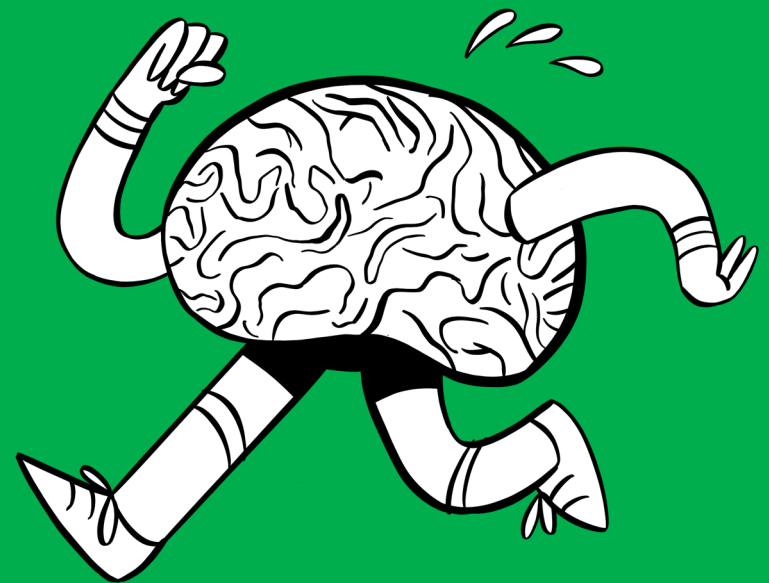
Students feel safe and do not fear being judged by other students or staff.

TOP IDEAS

Students have a right to feel safe to engage in their education in a supportive, encouraging, and non-judgemental (online and in person) environment.

- School should be a safe place for all students.
- Students are fearful of being judged by peers (e.g. being labelled as the 'teacher's pet' when seeking extra support or answering questions in front of the class). Staff can help reduce stereotypes and fear of judgement by providing reassurance to students to foster confidence.
- Students value staff who model positive behaviour, are non-judgmental and set clear classroom expectations. Teachers can encourage class participation by catering to all learning styles and by creating a supportive, caring and judgment-free atmosphere.
- Peer-to-peer help and support is effective. Peers can support students who are struggling (e.g. those being bullied) to access support. They can encourage quiet and more reserved students to answer questions in the classroom and actively participate in activities.
- Safe spaces need to be more effective and known.
- There is stigma around students accessing Guidance Counsellors.
- Existing structures for student representation should be used to enhance student support. Schools should publicise support systems open to students. Both staff and students should have input into the students identified as representatives.
- Provide the opportunity for parents to be aware of the struggles some students face in the online environment so that they can also offer support and guidance.

Schools ensure that there are effective consequences for bullying behaviour.

Teachers and students co-create an environment that encourages more reserved students to feel safe to engage.

Include staff voice when identifying student representatives.

Establish a process/council to educate teachers and parents on social media and the impacts on students.

Students feel safe from bullying and have a sense of belonging at school.

Bullying can happen in school and online. Bullying has far-reaching impacts in the lives of students who experience it and the whole school community.

_____

- A deeper investigation into bullying incidents can provide opportunities to explore underlying issues and create pathways to better outcomes.
- Students need education on recognising bullying behaviour and how best to respond. It is important to reflect, discuss and understand why people choose bullying behaviours, the role of by-standers and effective ways of speaking up.
- Students feel that schools need to strengthen school responses to bullying behaviour and the support pathways for those students impacted by this behaviour.
- Schools could establish a school leadership role dedicated to promoting positive relationships between students in the school community.
- To support help-seeking, schools could design an online form to for student to request appointments with the Guidance Counsellor via the Student Portal to ensure privacy and confidentiality.

TOP IDEAS

Access detailed, creative and effective teaching and learning about bullying (e.g. guest speakers, interactive activities, games, and presentations).

Schools undertake comprehensive investigations of bullying incidents.

Provide counselling opportunities for students who use bullying behaviours and those impacted by them.

Students enjoy school and develop a love of learning.

When students enjoy learning, they value their education and are inspired to explore their passions for the future with hope. With quality education comes the pursuit of lifelong learning.

- Students value input and choice on what and how they learn, including:
  - Opportunities to choose their own learning schedule in their subjects of interest.
  - Options to have more flexible learning or extended school days.
  - Input into curriculum and lesson planning where possible.
  - Opportunities to provide feedback to teachers about their learning experience.
- Positive partnerships between teachers and students are important to students learning.
- Positive connection with teachers improves student motivation to learn.
- Opportunities for staff and students to understand each other better are valued.
- Helping to build students understanding of teachers' roles and challenges will lead them to appreciate them more. Students are aware of the time challenges teachers experience.
- Students want staff to know that they have passions and that they dream of a better life.
- Students value teachers who understand the challenges they experience and what contributes to their own stressors (e.g. excessive school work from assessments/exams due concurrently.
- Students appreciate staff who meet their diverse learning styles and needs. They value staff who take the time learn and understand the individual needs of each student at the start of the year.
- Engaging learning activities with options for different learning styles.
- Opportunities to collaborate with other students to make the most of diverse learning styles.
- Alternative options for homework and assessments.
- Dedicated pedagogy coaches to observe lessons and review data, results, and grades.
- Schools that provide more educational support services, such as accessible tutoring.
- Support for their learning (e.g. study groups, direct teaching of effective study habits).
- Staff who have access to professional learning to improve their teaching.

TOP IDEAS

Teachers take the time to understand each student's learning needs and styles.

Teachers plan engaging learning activities with options for different learning styles.

Schools value and develop processes that enable student feedback on their learning experience.

There is consistency between the BCE schools community.

Students attending BCE schools should have equal access to opportunities and resources.

- Students are aware that there are inconsistencies in access to learning options and resources.
- There are inconsistent opportunities across schools to study different subjects, carry over subjects from junior to senior years, participate in sports or access distance learning.
- Numerous factors play into this including school size, geography, school focus (e.g. more 'academic' or 'sporting' school) and teacher availability.
- Extracurricular clubs are often dependent on teacher availability and interest. This limits the variety, and at times the quality of activities provided to students.
- Encourage BCE schools to communicate with each other to ensure consistent messaging to students. More communication and cross school opportunities would result in increased options for students. This would also help to develop life skills for students (e.g. collaboration, working in different environments, and meeting new people).
- Students identified that there is varying opportunity across BCE schools to participate in decisions that impact on them and their education.
- There is inconsistency between school around the communication and advertising of student voice opportunities resulting in some students not knowing, and therefore not participating, in the Student Voice Initiative.
- The Student Voice Initiative and individual school's Student Representative Councils do not currently work collaboratively.
- The Student Voice Initiative and individual schools' leadership teams do not currently have working agreements.
- There is a lack of transparency regarding funding and resourcing for student voice.

TOP IDEAS

Offer cross school opportunities for students to access different subject offerings, extracurricular activities or clubs.

Sharing of physical resources, teacher time and expertise and/or students being permitted to attend another school either in person or via distance learning.

Student Voice Initiative should have a website where ideas, activities and opportunities can be shared.

Policies impacting students should be as consistent across schools as possible e.g. a single uniform policy for all BCE schools.

Students contribute to BCE wide policies that impact on students.

Students leave school with knowledge and skills they need for the real world.

Students want and need to be able to care for and support themselves as they develop into adults and transition out of school. If schools can better support the transition from school, students will experience less stress and challenges in adulthood.

- Students feel that the current curriculum is not sufficiently preparing students for the real world.
- Students would value the opportunity to integrate practical life skills and knowledge into the curriculum and/or alter curriculum to be more practical.
- Life skills are important and should be directly taught to students. This encompasses a variety of topics including taxes, cooking, self-defense, first-aid and drug and alcohol awareness. Sex education is often very limited or not relevant.
- When life skill topics are discussed, it is often on a one-off basis which limits the opportunity for students to engage in genuine, meaningful discussions in a safe, non- judgmental environment.
- Schools could more effectively communicate and support potential options for learning pathways relating to certificates/ATAR. There should be a variety of progression options from more general junior level subjects to more specific learning areas in senior school.
- Subject offerings are different in different schools. This limits students' opportunities to develop skills for a variety potential future careers. Single-gender schools often have subjects which are more traditionally seen as masculine (e.g. woodworking) or feminine (e.g. fashion).

TOP IDEAS

Introduce mandatory life skills classes allocated in the school timetables for all students. This would allow specific time for students to focus on topics which may not fit into the curriculum however are important knowledge and skills needed for adulthood.

Schools could introduce a process for students to communicate their wants, needs and questions about life skills. This could be through a dedicated email address, hotline or way to submit online feedback/enquiries on a school website.

Review current subject offerings to determine relevance, whether there are gaps in offerings, how to address these and to identify where and how practical, real life elements that can be incorporated into subjects.

BCE schools actively include the creative arts and environmental sustainability in the curriculum.

Creative arts and the environment are both overlooked and considered less important than other subjects. However, these areas of study are important as they prompt thinking about morality, challenge students to think more broadly and align with Catholic social teachings.

- Creative arts help students to understand and express themselves in different ways. Creative arts can include media, dance, drama, music, visual, digital art etc.
- Creative arts are often overlooked in curriculum and not consistently offered in schools. Creative arts subjects or future careers may be discouraged in favour of STEM-based subjects or more traditional career paths.
- When creative arts are offered in schools, they are often performance-based which can be off-putting for some students who want to explore their creativity but do not feel comfortable performing publicly.
- School musicals or plays are a good opportunity for students who want to participate in performing arts.
- There are many opportunities to learn about, support and encourage the care of the environment in schools.
- Climate change needs to be a part of curriculum with opportunities to link more broadly across subjects. For example, environmental projects such as litter collection data can be used in maths/ sustainable fashion could be used in creative arts.
- Caring for the environment and the creative arts subjects can be linked through sustainable art or upcycling projects and involve partnering with organisations such as Reverse Garbage.
- Education around protecting the environment is a valuable skill for students' adult lives.

TOP IDEAS

Promote and offer more opportunities for students to be involved in all forms of creative arts through extracurricular activities or offering a variety of arts subjects as electives.

Provide practical excursions, incursions and activities to raise awareness of environmental sustainability e.g. beach/park clean ups or school trash audits where the school gathers data to identify strategies for improvement/change).

Recycling program with easily accessible recycling bins labelled with instructions about appropriate items for each bin.

Introduce the Containers for Change program in all BCE schools with proceeds to be used by the school or donated to social justice charities.
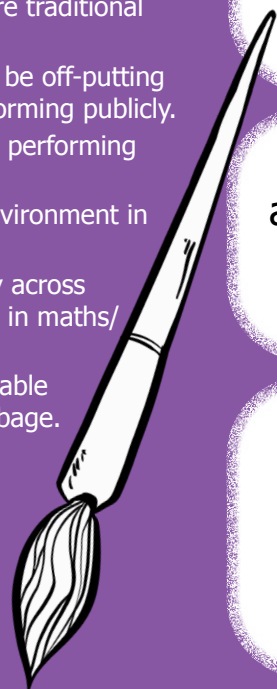
BCE education is engaging, relevant, accessible, and understandable.

Students are individuals and learn differently. Students want choice and to have a say about what they learn and how they learn.

- Curriculum can be challenging to engage with and understand. Students want to understand the purpose and relevance of learning topics, and how topics are selected. Explore ways to integrate 'real world' applications to the content so that students can understand the relevance of what they're learning.
- Students value having a clear understanding of learning intentions of assessments and how to achieve success. Explore different ways to outline and teach topics to maintain interest and ensure all students understand the content.
- Schools could consider trying less formal or structured exams for younger grades to build up to more formal exams as students' progress into senior years. They could trial pop quizzes or mock exams to measure levels of comprehension on a topic.
- Schools could review the current grading/reporting system.
- Some students may need additional clarification and/or support.
- It's important to recognise the different learning styles of students and structure lessons or provide materials that accommodate for this (e.g. visual, kinesthetic, reading and writing and auditory learning styles).
- Schools could gather statistical data on the number of students that struggle with certain subjects to guide support strategies.
- Students and teachers could collaborate to meet educational needs and expectations.
- Students want teachers to consider factors that impact learning and engagement, and understand that engagement could look different for some students.
- Have the option for students to access different levels for subjects (e.g. essential math as an option for juniors).
- Students recognise that teachers have time and budget pressures, which can cause limitations to changing teaching styles in the classroom or providing extra support for students.
- Students in larger schools may feel 'lost in the crowd' and may need additional support.

TOP IDEAS

Teachers recognise and respond to student's different learning styles and needs in class.

BCE/Schools review the current grading/reporting system.

Teachers outline topics in a variety of ways and clarify that students understand the content.

Students feel safe and included which enables them to have equal opportunity to education.

Students need to feel safe to be able to learn. Students need to feel included to enhance their feelings of self-worth. Students need equal opportunities in education so that they have opportunities to pursue anything they want for their futures.

- Students are individuals with different needs. Students want equal opportunities and recognise that some students need genuine access to additional support to have equitable opportunity to reach their goals. Students achieving below grade levels are not always supported, which leads to lower motivation.

- Inequality or feeling disadvantaged is bad for self-esteem and self-worth. If students feel discriminated against due to culture, race, gender, or religion they will be less willing to engage in education. Some students may choose subjects based on friendship groups or may avoid certain subjects due to fear of bullies, stigma or subject matter.

- Many schools focus on STEM subjects. This limits student access to humanities, arts and manual subjects and discourages students from pursuing non-STEM interests. There is also less support and opportunities provided for students in non-STEM subjects.

- It seems that some subjects or opportunities are only offered to certain students. Bias and favouritism can result in the same students being given opportunities while other students who would be interested, are not offered the option to participate.

- There is wide variation between when, how and what elective subjects are offered to students. School curriculum options and restrictive curriculum pathways can limit student's equal access to education.

TOP IDEAS

Offer students a variety of options for elective subjects through cross-school offerings and the expansion of digital learning options (e.g. Fisher One).

Teachers of different subjects collaborate to ensure that workload and assessment are spread out.

Where possible, teachers provide students with the choice of different assessment options so that they can choose an option that best represents their learning.

There is recognition that students are individuals and teachers receive professional learning on how to engage support and celebrate diverse students.

Next Steps

The Student Voice Consultant Team will:

- Submit 2022 FOI Report to the BCE Safeguarding Committee whose role is focused on improving student safety in BCE schools. This includes building opportunities for students to have input into decisions that affect them.

- Submit 2022 FOI Report to the BCE Executive Team to seek their support to progress the 3 top FOI priorities and share the report across our BCE community of schools.

Seek feedback from the Executive Leadership Team about their commitment to take action on the ideas proposed by festival delegates:

- What was heard?
- What has been done?
- What will be done and by who?
- What can't be actioned and why?

Share this report and the 50+ student ideas aimed at making our students' education experience even better with our students, parents/carers, teachers, principals and leaders and the wider community.

Call To Action

This report is packed with ideas on how to improve student education experience at BCE schools. Take some time to reflect on what your key takeaway is from this report. What is one thing that you can do, big or small, to action or progress an idea or enhance opportunities for student voice in your role?

You are invited to:

Share this report with others in your community.

Consider the findings in this report and how it applies to you or your context.

Progress or start conversations in your school about student ideas for improvement.

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