Background

- A school climate that promotes student voice encourages civic engagement and democratic thinking and increases student agency that can be transferred to future civic identities. 3,4
- Despite this, students from traditionally marginalized communities, including ethnic minorities, students from low socio-economic backgrounds, and those with fewer educational resources or expectations, often have inadequate access to civic learning and student voice efforts. 3,4
- School site leaders are fundamental to communicating shared goals and community ideals as well as supporting teachers’ agency to enact ideas that promote student autonomy and voice, like project-based learning (PBL), peer critique, and service learning. 5,3
- This case study explores site leadership’s (principal, assistant principals, counseling team, department chairs) efforts to effectively improve school climate at a large, urban, low SES Southern California high school by faculty and staff. While there is room for improving advisement period by giving teachers more autonomy and engaging students more meaningfully, the school’s efforts could serve as a model for other school sites seeking to increase student voice and improve school climate.

Research Questions

- RQ 1: In what ways does the school leadership promote student voice?
- RQ 2: What are teacher perceptions of the two schoolwide leadership initiatives: advisement period and the TED Talks project?

Data & Methods

- Context
  - Data gathered during the 2019-20 school year
  - School site: 2,785 students, 84% socioeconomically disadvantaged, 21% ELL, 88% Latinx, 93% graduation rate, 1% suspension rate
  - Study occurred in a research practice partnership (RPP) Participants & Data Sources
    - Teachers (68% white, 26% Latinx), counselors, and administrators (n=10) completed a school climate survey including open ended questions
    - Teachers, counselors, administrators (n=10) participated in semi-structured interviews
  - Data analyses
    - Codebook created using four domains of school climate, descriptive codes from interview analysis; magnitude codes were applied to open-ended survey questions
    - Researcher coded qualitative data using dedoose
    - Member checks with the RPP school site team occurred three times during data analysis

Results: Research Question 1

- Open door policy with students, teachers, and staff
- An expectation for civic participation at the school and within the community
- Data analyses
- [Students] felt comfortable enough to come and ask that they help with their school work or that they could talk about whatever was bothering them. 
- Teacher
- Many of them are very involved in organizations and choose and volunteer their time as well. 
- Teacher

Results: Research Question 2

- Infusing student choice throughout the curriculum through practices like PBL, "voice and choice" and "talk time" embedded in instructional practice
- We are adding civic inquiry into our instruction and student-focused, student-centered civic inquiry and project-based learning into our everyday instruction, and that’s particularly in the social sciences. But the key with civic learning and with a democracy school is you need to staff seeing that each student has other subject areas as well. 
- Teacher
- Leadership Initiative #1: Schoolwide expansion of homeroom to include a 20-minute advisement period 4x/week for student discourse on civic, emotional topics as well as current events and issues
- Leadership Initiative #2: TED Talk projects in ELA classes. Students identify an important issue facing the society, the community the school, the project includes research, policy, critique, revision, and solution proposal

Leadership Initiative #1: Advisement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response Type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive 50%</td>
<td>95 responses</td>
<td>Students express views they might otherwise not have the opportunity to do so.</td>
<td>They empower students to express views they might otherwise not have the opportunity to do so.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Constructive 21%</td>
<td>15 responses</td>
<td>with more control over how we interact with our students.</td>
<td>Teachers are unsure of developing appropriateness of topics and want to use the time to build relationships with students.</td>
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Leadership Initiative #2: TED Talks Project

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<tr>
<th>Response Type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive 70%</td>
<td>49 responses</td>
<td>Students participate encourage them to participate and become role models for them.</td>
<td>Opportunity for social emotional or civic learning as well as peer leadership, encourages student participation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical 4%</td>
<td>3 responses</td>
<td>English would like to see innovation, new ideas for growing involvement, or ways to continue success and well-being in all people at all times.</td>
<td>Student importance in participating, would like to see student creativity and innovation.</td>
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Conclusion & Discussion

- RQ 1: Respondents agree that leadership encourages four strategies to support student voice and that those strategies engage students, teachers, and staff.
- RQ 2: Both leadership initiatives are meant to engage student voice, the effectiveness differs between the two.
- The school’s efforts could serve as a model for other school sites seeking to increase student voice and improve school climate.

Limitations

- One staff interview and one administrator interview occurred via zoom after the school had closed due to COVID-19.

References