



Giving Psychology Away: Eliciting Pupil Voice

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What is Pupil Voice?

- Eliciting pupil voice is the process of exploring a child's views with them.
- These views should then be taken into consideration when decisions are being made about the child/ children.
- This might involve understanding how the child feels about school, what helps them, what doesn't help them, what they enjoy, and what they don't enjoy.
- These views can be explored both in group sessions, such as student councils, or in individual sessions with children.
- It is important that these views are taken seriously, and influence changes/ decision making processes accordingly.



Why is it important?



- We want to empower children and young people to know that their experiences, opinions and wishes are understood and valued. This promotes their confidence and development.
- The child knows themselves better than anyone else, therefore, capturing the child's views can help to make proactive and positive changes to their life.
- All children have the fundamental right to express their views on all matters affecting them (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989) and to participate as fully as possible in decisions involving them (SEND code of practice, 2015).

Personal Construct Psychology (PCP)

- Many techniques of eliciting pupil voice are underpinned by Personal Construct Psychology (Kelly, 1955) such as Drawing the Ideal School and BLOB resources.
- PCP outlines that everyone has core constructs which are deeply held beliefs or views about how the world works.
- It focuses on the **subjective experience** and how the world is perceived or construed by the individual: the child's constructs, understandings and perceptions about school and themselves are valid and unique to them. It is important that we gather how **the child** sees things, **not** how **we** interpret their picture.
- As everyone has different experiences, everyone's construction of reality is different e.g. 2 children could have different constructs, one seeing people as safe and the other seeing people as threatening.



Top Tips for Eliciting Pupil Voice



Try to sit side by side with the child or young person



Start by having an open conversation with the child or young person, about why you are interested in gaining their views



Build a rapport with the child or young person first, by playing games or doing other activities that the child enjoys together



Show the child or young person you are actively listening to them, and show them warmth



During activities, subtly mirror their body language



Make sure the child or young person knows and understands what you will do with the information afterwards

Techniques for Eliciting Pupil Voice: Scaling

- Scaling is a tool that uses a rating scale (0-10) to explore a child or young person's views about school or their wellbeing.
- It can also be used to help the child find solutions and identify strengths and resources that can help improve challenges they may face.

Resources:

- Pen and paper

Instructions:

- Write out a scale from 0 to 10
- Label 0 as "things are really bad" and 10 as "things are going great"

Example of questions:

- Where are you now on the scale?
- Where were you last week/last month/ last year?
- What was happening when it was higher?
- What would be different if you were at an "X" score?
- What could help improve things by 1 point?
- What strengths and resources do you have that could help you move up the scale?
- What have you learnt about yourself from previous experiences?

Pros and Cons of Scaling



Time efficient to use



Only requires pens and paper



Can help with understanding the child and can provide lots of information about them

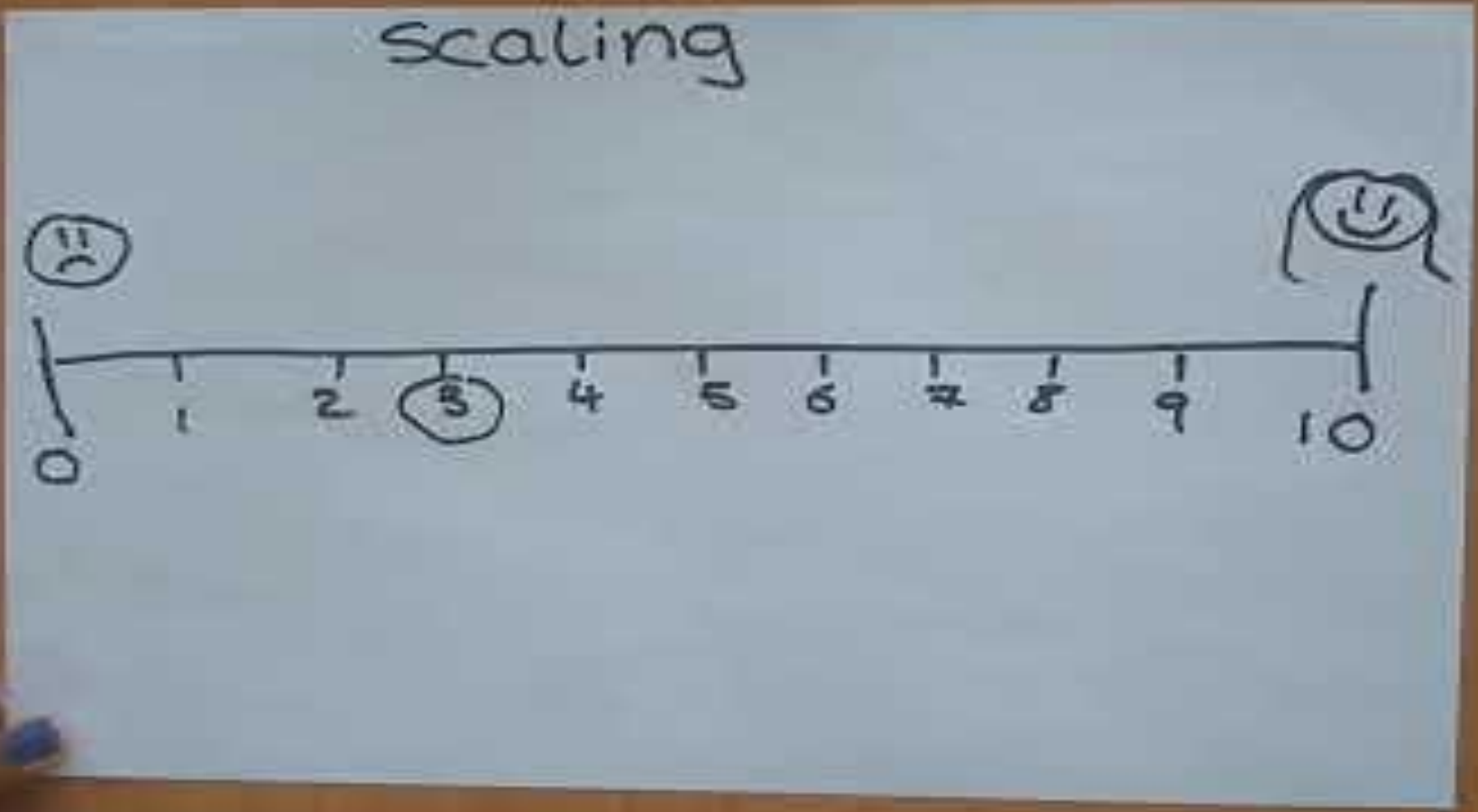


Can help to support the child and key adults with finding solutions to problems



Requires the child or young person to have moderate expressive and receptive language skills

scaling



Techniques for Eliciting Pupil Voice: BLOB Resources

- BLOB resources can be used to explore moods and emotions with children and young people, which can then be used to explore the way that different places, activities and people make them feel.

Resources:

- BLOB resource (this could be the BLOB playground, BLOB tree, BLOB football, etc.)
- Colouring pencils

Instructions:

- Ask the child or young person to colour in the BLOB character that is feeling a particular emotion, or doing a particular action.
- Use questioning to explore the child's views around this emotion or action.
- Give the child a different colour pencil and begin again with a new question.

Example of questions:

- Which BLOB feels happy? Why do they feel happy? When do you feel happy?
- Which BLOB feels sad? Why do they feel sad? When do you feel sad?
- Which BLOB is doing something you like doing?
- Which BLOB is doing something you don't like doing?
- Which BLOB is doing something you find difficult?
- Which BLOB feels how you feel at school?
- Which BLOB is playing with their friends? How does playing with your friends make you feel?

Pros and Cons of BLOB Resources



Resources are easily available online



Wide selection of BLOB scenes to choose from – you can choose the one most appropriate for the child or young person you are working with



You can adjust your questioning to meet the needs of the child or young person you are working with



Allows for a more in-depth exploration of their emotions, as well as views on activities



You need to come prepared with printed resources and colouring pencils



Requires the child or young person to have a good understanding of emotions



Requires the child or young person to have the receptive language skills necessary to understand the task

BLOB PLAYGROUND

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Techniques for Eliciting Pupil Voice: Drawing the Ideal School

(William and Hanke, 2007)

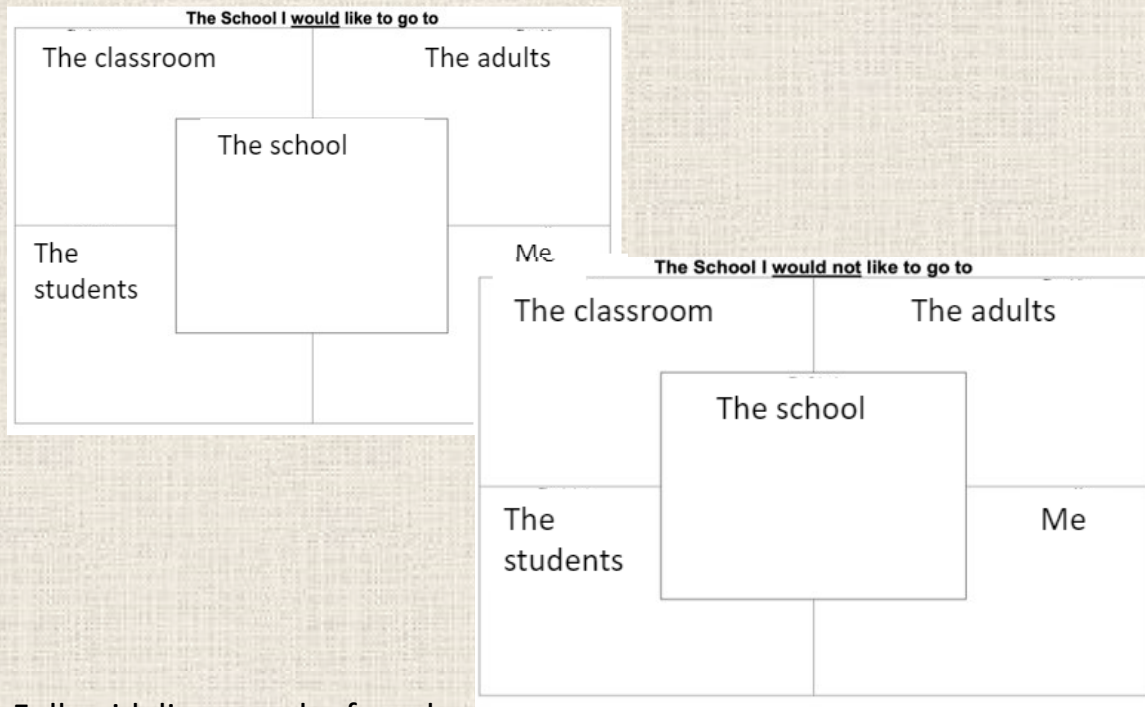
- Drawing the Ideal School involves the child sharing their ideas on what their ideal school and their non-ideal school would look like. This helps us to understand what elements of school the child likes/ does not like.

Resources:

- Pens and pencils
- Two pieces of A4 paper

Instructions:









- Explain to the child that you will be doing the writing today and they can do the drawing.
- Each time the child finishes a drawing, ask them to describe three elements of that drawing. You should scribe for the child and add labels detailing the three elements they describe.
- Provide reassurance that there are no right or wrong answers.
- **Part 1:** Start with the Non ideal school.
- Ask the child to draw a school they **would not** like to go to in the middle. Around this drawing, the child should draw what the classroom, adults, and children would look like in this school. Finally, the child should give three statements about how they would feel at that school.
- **Part 2:** The Ideal school.
- Ask the child to draw a school they **would** like to go to in the middle. Around this drawing, the child should draw what the classroom, adults, and children would look like in this school. Finally, the child should give three statements about how they would feel at that school.



Full guidelines can be found:

<https://dmbcwebstolive01.blob.core.windows.net/media/Default/ChildrenYoungPeopleFamilies/Documents/Drawing%20the%20Ideal%20School%20Prompt%20Sheet.pdf>

Pros and Cons of Drawing the Ideal School

-  Has the potential to provide a wealth of rich information about what the child thinks is going well at school/ what they are worried about school/ what they find helpful at school.
-  Can be used to explore why a child or young person might be struggling to attend school.
-  Can be used to explore a child or young person's feelings around transitioning from one school to another.
-  Good tool to use if the child or young person enjoys drawing and talking.
-  Requires the child to have moderate expressive and receptive language skills
-  Requires the child to have some imagination skills
-  Requires the child to good fine motor skills, and want to engage in the drawing
-  May not cover all aspects of school life therefore the adult may want to add questions about other areas that are important to the child (i.e. playground or lunchtimes)



me

-anxious
-sad
stressed

Techniques for Eliciting Pupil Voice: Talking Mats

- Talking Mats activities involve using visuals to help children with verbal language difficulties express their views.

Resources:

- Pre-prepared images of various activities.
- Pen and paper (to draw the different faces or rating scale).







Instructions:

- Ask the child or young person to place images of different activities in different locations, depending on how they feel about that activity.
- If the child or young person does have some expressive language skills, you can ask them to explain **why** they like or dislike this activity.

This activity can be adapted depending on the age and understanding of the child or young person you are working with:

- For a simple version of the task, you may want to use a happy face and sad face so they can indicate whether they like or dislike this activity.
- For a slightly more complex version, you may want to also include an 'unsure' face for activities they feel indifferent about.
- For an even more complex version, you may want to create a scale of 1 to 5, so they can rate and compare activities on a scale.

Pros and Cons of Talking Mats

-  Can be used with children who have language difficulties
-  Can be used with very young children
-  Images can be tailored to include activities appropriate for the child or young person you are working with
-  You need to come prepared with printed images of activities
-  The child can only give answers on the activities you have come prepared with (this could be combatted by using a few blank cards where the child can draw their own images to share views on activities they want to raise).
-  The child needs to understand the concept of happy/sad etc.

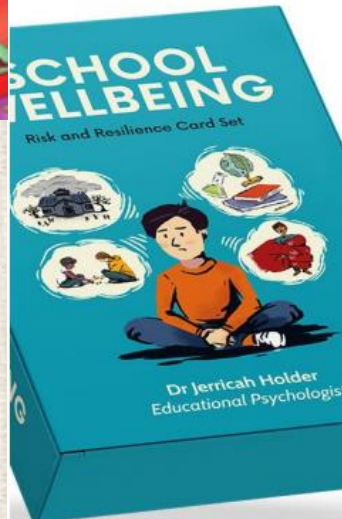
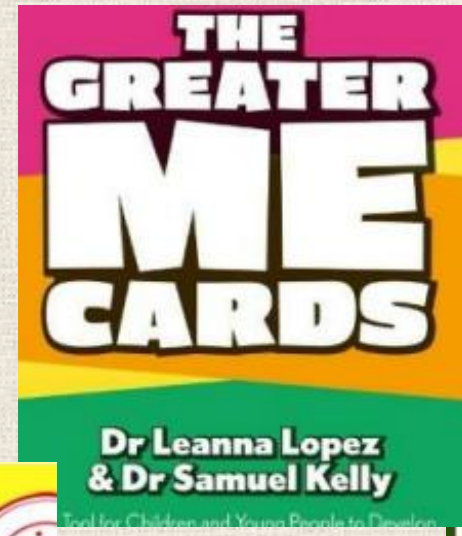
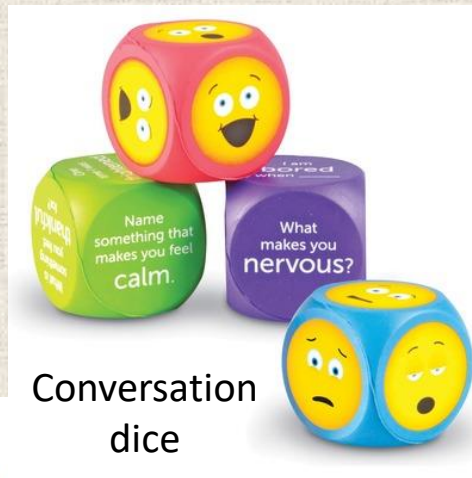
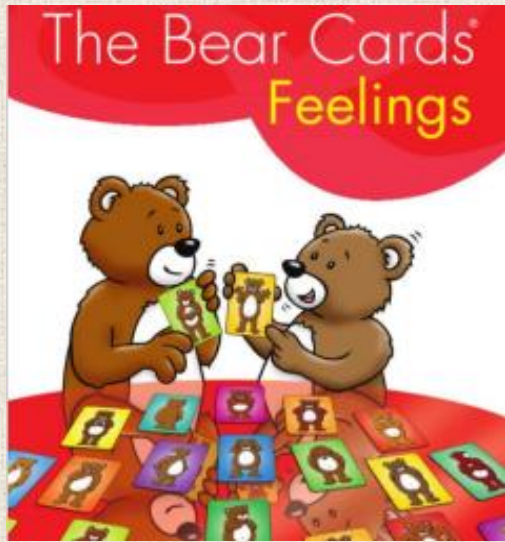


Other Techniques for Eliciting Pupil Voice

- Drawing and Talking
- Using puppets/ dolls/ small world toys
- Self-characterisation exercises
- Strengths cards
- Visual questionnaires
- Card based question activities
- Conversation dice
- Computer based questionnaires (e.g. Let's Talk)
- School mapping/ Landscape of fear: the child colours in areas of the school in red, orange, and green to show how they feel when they are in that area
- Sometimes we can elicit pupil voice simply through having a conversation with the young person!

Useful Resources

- By no means are these resources necessary, but they can be useful if you are looking for additional resources to use:



Great for building rapport!



References

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