



UNLEASHING YOUR
POWER OF VOICE 101



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INTRODUCTION

IowaSLI Introduction

The Iowa Student Learning Institute (IowaSLI) was founded in the spring of 2013 by high school students Ian Coon and Jack Hostager after being inspired by their experiences at EdCampIowa. The organization is led by a group of Iowa high school students and supported by a board of passionate educators. IowaSLI is dedicated to revolutionizing student voice in Iowa's K-12 education system. Through events and online networking, the organization will bring together students, educators, and community leaders from all over Iowa to improve education by empowering students to use their voice.

MOTIVATE. IDEATE. CHANGE.

What is Student Voice?

Student voice is an international movement of students, teachers, administrators, and other education stakeholders working to create a more equal role for students in the school system. The student voice movement empowers students to address disparities within their education systems that directly affect them. Whether it is grass roots movements within schools, social media campaigns, or policy and legislation lobbying, student voice initiatives take many forms.



POWER OF VOICE (POV)

WELCOME to Power of Voice!

Power of Voice teams are student action teams implemented at a local, school level. The audience for students wanting to create POV teams are high schools; however, POV can easily be implemented at the middle school level as well. These student action teams will decide locally what issue(s) they want to focus on. Examples of these issues could be school funding, dress code, standards based grading, unfair school policies and more. These groups will then work in pursuit of their goals by collaborating with teachers, administrators, legislators, and other stakeholders in the education community. The focus of POV is to enable students to enact legislation that they believe will help them in their education.



Mission Statement

Empowering students to address disparities that directly affect students within the education system by providing a network of grassroots resources.



Vision

Every student has the ability to affect change within their schools and education to create a more robust learning environment.



Ambitious Goal

One Power of Voice group in each of Iowa's 99 counties.

CREATING A POV GROUP

STEP 1

Analyze Your Situation

TO DO

- a. Take a close look at your school through the lens of the Student Bill of Rights. Are there disparities between these rights and what you have at your own school? Check in with existing groups within your school that focus specifically on student voice issues. There are many different local and national organizations that could be considered student voice teams, such as Student Council and Raising Student Voice and Participation (RSVP). If one of these groups already exists at your school, decide if it would be more efficient to add a POV component to the existing organization, or to create a brand new POV group. Be sure that a new group focuses on different issues than an existing group.

- b. The mission of POV is “Empowering students to address disparities that directly affect students within the education system by providing a network of grassroots resources”. Student Council is many times focused on running local events for the school, such as hunger drives or dances, and RSVP is focused on small changes within a school that students want to see. Typically these groups are not focused on affecting education and education policy. So when deciding whether to start a new group or add on to an existing one, decide if an existing one meets that mission. If not, create a new POV group.



CREATING A POV GROUP

STEP 2

Register with IowaSLI

TO DO

- a. Let us know! We are tracking how many POV groups are getting started across the state. We will also be able to provide you with additional resources, and further coaching on how to get your group up off the ground.
- b. Go onto <http://www.iowasli.org/power-of-voice> and register your group. This space can also be used to communicate with other POV groups!
- c. We will assign you a contact member from IowaSLI when you register.
 1. Your contact member will reach out and set up a meeting with your group.
 2. This person will be a great resource for you. They can give you additional help if you ever get stuck or have any questions. This person can help explain the student voice movement and more ideas on how to get started.
- d. Fill out the following contact information for the IowaSLI member you were assigned:

OUR IOWASLI TEAM MEMBER

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

E-Mail: _____

CREATING A POV GROUP

STEP 3

Gather Your Group

TO DO



Gather Students

Gather a group of like-minded students that want to help create a culture of student voice in their school.

- Posters around school, weekly newsletters, social media, or daily announcements are a great way to recruit like-minded students.
- Word of mouth is likely the best way! Talk to your friends and peers, and get them to join.



Enlist a Teacher

Finding a teacher around your school to act as an advisor is crucial in the success of your group. This advisor would act as a resource and a guide, mainly to keep the group focused. The advisor should not be in charge of deciding the agenda of the group, or trying to do the work of the group himself or herself. It is a student action team, after all.



Meet with an Administrator

Make sure you follow your school's specific guidelines on starting a new student organization. In some districts you might need to speak to the principal or superintendent before holding your first meeting. In other districts you might even need to get it approved by the school board. Your teacher advisor is a great resource for making sure you follow these guidelines.

CREATING A POV GROUP

STEP 4

First Meeting

TO DO

- a. Explain to your group what vision you have for this group, and see what common ideas they have.
- b. Decide roles
 - You will need at least one person to keep in contact/be the contact person with IowaSLI. We want to hear what you are up to!
 - Electing a president or co-presidents will help you stay on track. These roles can be in charge of creating agendas, scheduling meetings, and/ or communicating with advisor, school, and other students.
 - Roles beside President and Vice-President can include Social Media Coordinator, Graphic Designer, Data Analyst, Secretary, Treasurer, etc.
- c. Set up a team communication method for your POV club (e.g. email, GroupMe, Messenger, etc.) Having a clear communication method will help assist in the group's overall efficiency and effectiveness.



STEP 5

Focus on One or Two Main Issues

Examples of issues could be...

- School Funding
- School Board Representation
- LGBTQ Rights
- Additional ideas can be found at the Student Bill of Rights

Questions to consider when determining these issues...

- What issues are affecting your school?
- What issues does your group care most about?
- Where can your group make the strongest impact?

CREATING A POV GROUP

STEP 6

Publicize What Your Group is Doing

TO DO

Creating social media accounts for your group can help you get in touch with other groups and also spread your message.

Social Media Requirements:

1. Handle/Username should be in the following format of POVschoolname
2. Create an email address as it is a good place for people to contact you to find out more about what your Power of Voice is doing
3. Please share your passwords of all Power of Voice social media accounts and email account to your IowaSLI contact or us to keep on file as you are representing IowaSLI.



STEP 7

Create an Action Plan

TO DO

This will be personalized to you. It's your job to be the change!

Create step-by-step document that will keep your group on track to reach the goals that you have set for your Power of Voice team. See the next page for an example of a Power Plan!

POWER PLAN EXAMPLE

Problem

The problem that has been identified is that there is not any student representation on the school board of your school. This is a major problem, because every decision that school board makes affects your education and your school. Therefore, students should have some input.

Solution

In order to solve this problem, you need to have student representatives on your school board. This means these students sit at the same table as the board, have a microphone like the board, and the ability to speak like the board.

Step 1

Now that you have identified the problem and your goal for a solution, you must plan out how you will get there. The first step for this process would be to poll students. Ask at least 100 students if they believe the school board should have student representatives, yes or no. Once this is done, poll the teachers. This might require help from the administration and/or other teachers. This is where your teacher advisor can help guide you.

Step 2

Begin to think how and who you will pitch your idea to. In this case, now you have your data on whether people agree with you wanting to put student representation on the school board your team can start thinking where to begin trying to make this happen.

This process will probably end in you and your team pitching this idea to the school board at a board meeting.

Step 3

Research what has been done in other parts of your state and the country. There are multiple school boards that already have student representatives, some even having voting power. Contact these schools and try to find out how their student representative position works. You want to get a general consensus of how other school boards have implemented this, so that you can clearly state what it is you want when you pitch this to your school board

Step 4

Come up with a plan for how the student representative(s) will be selected. Is it through student council elections, an application, teacher recommendation, or a combination? Make sure to start with your first choice, but have backups in case the school board does not agree to the first one.

Step 5

Once you have all this information gathered and planned out, create your presentation. The easiest form is through a powerpoint. Order your information in an easy-to-follow format, explaining the problem, why it is a problem, what others have done to solve it, your solution, the pros, and who agrees with you.

Step 6

Do several practice runs. Make sure each presenter knows exactly what they will be saying and when they will do so. You want to be well spoken, concise, and professional. This includes basic public speaking skills, such as good eye contact, not fidgeting, loud speaking voice, etc. Groups to practice with could include: your POV group, a group of teachers, your administration, or parents. Note: Presenting in front of your administration is a great idea, because they know how the school board acts, and can likely guess how it will respond, including the type of questions it will ask. It is also good to keep the administration in the know with regards to what you are doing.

Step 7

Contact your school board to ask for a presentation spot at a board meeting. Explain what it is that you want to present about, and about how long you want to present for.

Step 8

Present! The day is here, and it is your time to shine.

Get students, parents, teachers, and administrators to attend in support of your pitch.

Step 9

After your pitch, how you proceed will depend on the reaction of the school board. But once this is done, you can plan for how to move forward, and hopefully succeed in getting student representation on your school board.

RESOURCES

Tips

- Share what you're doing on social media and reach out to POV groups at other schools. Use the hashtag #IowaPOV on your posts to connect with other groups.
- Make sure you have regular meetings! This will help keep your group in touch and focused.
- Ensure that work is shared equally. Everyone in the group should have a job and understand their role in the group.
- Create a team norms document ahead of time with the group to make sure things don't turn bad. This helps keep each other accountable when work like this can become sobering and depressing.

Conferences

- RISE
- StuCamp
- Student Voice Rally

Links

<http://www.iowasli.org>

<http://www.sturights.org/rights>

Facebook School Climate Surveys

