



***My Voice* at the Dayton Early College Academy: Case Study Highlights**

During the 2006–07 academic year, the *My Voice* Survey was administered at Ohio’s Dayton Early College Academy (DECA). After reviewing the survey results, school staff recognized numerous existing strengths. They also developed enhanced approaches and methodologies to address areas they identified as in need of improvement. In subsequent years, the *My Voice* Survey was re-administered at DECA. Results from the survey indicated remarkable improvement in key areas that foster student success, including students’ sense of accomplishment.

Highlights of the *My Voice* administration at DECA are provided below; for comprehensive results, see the detailed case study.

About DECA

[The Dayton Early College Academy](#) is a nontraditional charter high school that serves inner-city students. DECA’s mission is “focused on preparing urban learners from the Dayton Public School District to go to college and be the first in their families to graduate.” The school achieves its mission through an educational philosophy that advocates “personalized, rigorous, and relevant learning.”

DECA Student Body	
Free and reduced lunch:	56%
College acceptance rate:	100%
First-generation college students:	82%
Number of students:	244

Initial *My Voice* Results

DECA received *My Voice* from the International Center for Leadership in Education. Judy Hennessey, DECA’s principal at that time, recognized that *My Voice* had the potential to engage faculty in grounded discussion about administration, student voice, and curriculum.

Students in grades 9 through 12 initially took the *My Voice* Student Aspirations Survey in the 2006-07 school year. Results, which were provided in relation to the [8 Conditions that Make a Difference®](#) in student aspirations, indicated that students perceived the school as a place where they could excel.



Strengths

- 88% said that teachers thought they (the students surveyed) could be successful
- 94% believed that they could be successful
- 7% said that they were afraid their friends wouldn't like them if they did well in school

DECA decided to focus on improving the following results, which indicate student response to selected survey statements pertaining to the Conditions of Curiosity & Creativity, Fun & Excitement, and Sense of Accomplishment.

Areas for Improvement

- 77% felt they were learning new things that were interesting to them at school
- 46% said teachers made school an exciting place to learn
- 67% said they enjoyed being at school
- 66% indicated that teachers recognize them when they try their best

Analysis

In groups, DECA staff analyzed the survey results, asking questions such as the following and listing concerns that required further examination:

- Why is this Condition important?
- What gets your attention?
- What is the overall tone of the student responses?
- What are the strengths of our school? Are they relative or remarkable?

Improvement Plan

As a result of that analysis, DECA staff developed the following plan to improve aspirations at their school:

- Develop a common language and consistent pedagogy for all teachers across classes.
- Provide support for new teachers through teacher coaching.
- Encourage the Condition of Fun & Excitement through "Nerd Night," combining a three-hour exam study session with an evening of social activity.
- Develop the Condition of Sense of Accomplishment by assigning leadership roles to students who might not ordinarily be recognized.



Improved *My Voice* Results

The combined efforts of administration, staff, and students produced the following measurable results in a re-administration of the *My Voice* Survey in the 2008–09 school year ([download full case study for detailed results](#)):

- 90% felt they were learning new things that were interesting to them at school (13% increase)
- 58% said teachers made school an exciting place to learn (12% increase)
- 72% said they enjoyed being at school (5% increase)
- 76% indicated that teachers recognize them when they try their best (10% increase)