

# PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING in Schools & School Districts

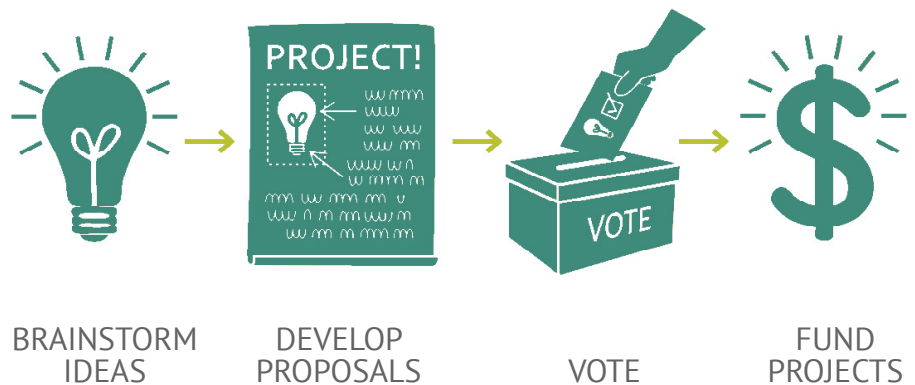
Participatory Budgeting (PB) is a democratic process in which community members decide together how to spend part of a public budget.

Schools and school districts operate large and complex budgets, often with little participation from the community members they serve. Schools have used PB around the world to engage students, parents, teachers, and community members in deciding which school programs and improvements to fund. This process builds understanding of school budgets, directs funds to pressing needs and innovative ideas, and helps students and other community members learn democracy and active citizenship.

## HOW DOES IT WORK

School community members make budget decisions through a cycle of meetings and voting. Most experiences follow a similar basic process:

*School community members brainstorm spending ideas, develop proposals based on these ideas, and vote on proposals. The school or school district funds the top projects.*



## WHO PARTICIPATES?

Participants may include any members of the educational community:

- Students
- Parents
- Teachers
- Staff

## WHICH FUNDS?

The amount of funds at stake may be small or large and may include portions of:

- School district budgets
- School budgets
- Principal's discretionary funds
- PTA budgets
- Student government budgets

## WHERE IS THE PROCESS BASED?

The PB process may be based in:

- Individual schools
- School districts - to fund improvements and programs across multiple schools



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## WHERE HAS IT WORKED?

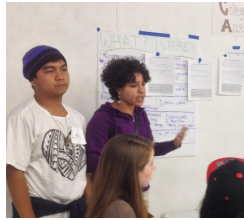
### Ridgeview Elementary School *Vancouver, British Columbia* | Individual School PB process



Students at Ridgeview Elementary, a K-7 public school, decided how to spend \$2,000 from the Parent Advisory Council budget through PB. 350 students participated and voted to set up a school store to help them raise additional funds for projects like cooking classes, a school pet, and a water fountain.

### Overfelt High School

*San Jose, California* | Individual School PB process



An innovative principal and student organizers teamed up to launch PB in Overfelt High School. Students, parents, and faculty decided together how to spend \$50,000 of the school's discretionary budget, funding new sports uniforms, trips to local colleges, and even driving lessons.

### Region Poitou-Charentes

*France* | School District PB process



The regional government of Poitou-Charentes in western France has used PB since 2005 to allocate 10% of the budget for its 93 high schools, including some private schools. Over 1800 projects have been approved including facilities improvements, Wi-Fi, curricular materials, and sports programs.

## WHAT ARE THE OUTCOMES?

- **ACTIVE & DEMOCRATIC CITIZENS** Students and parents learn democracy by doing it. They gain more understanding of complex school issues and needs, and become more engaged in the community.
- **STRONGER SCHOOL COMMUNITY** When school community members feel like they have a say in school decisions, they are more likely to invest time and energy in the school. Democratic dialogue between students, teachers, parents, and staff brings the school community together.
- **INNOVATIVE & EFFECTIVE SPENDING** School community members have valuable insider knowledge about school needs, and new ideas for how to address these needs. Engaging them in budgeting helps direct funds to the top needs and best ideas.

## PARTICIPATE!

To learn more about starting PB in your school or district, contact the Participatory Budgeting Project (PBP), a non-profit organization that empowers people to decide together how to spend public money.



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