



PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING IN SCHOOLS

REPORT SUMMARY

Civic learning and engagement provide youth for a lifetime of knowledgeable, engaged, active civic participation, which is vital to the health of our democracy. Participatory budgeting (PB) in Schools is an impactful strategy for active civic learning and an effective tool to better prepare youth for further education, work, and civic responsibility.

PB in Schools engages students to work together to develop innovation solutions to complex school-level issues. Students decide which projects and improvements to fund. PB in Schools typically engages students but can also include various members of the school community such as teachers, other school-level staff, and parents. PB in Schools can be implemented at the district level to allocate funding to improvements and programs across multiple schools and may engage a broader group of community-based participants.

PB in Schools builds an understanding of fiscal stewardship, provides opportunities for students to participate in democratic processes, and helps students learn and practice civic responsibility.

EDUCATION POLICIES AND PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

A Well-Rounded Education

ESSA emphasizes the role of civic learning in a well-rounded education and recommends that students are actively engaged and participate in the governance of their school, giving students an authentic voice in decision making. PB in Schools provides students with hands-on experience identifying challenges, working together to discover innovative solutions, and determine projects appropriate for the greater good.

College, Career, and Civic Readiness

PB in Schools supports many skills associated with college and career readiness. Through the PB process, students learn important life skills, critical thinking, problem solving, and creativity. PB in Schools gives students the opportunity to apply skills such as data collection, documentation, problem-solving, and persuasive writing. During the PB process, students engage in action research, develop surveys, analyze data, and practice presentation skills.

School Improvement Plans

ESSA supports struggling schools by providing districts with additional funding to develop an improvement plan to address the needs of all students, identify students who are most at risk, and provide additional and appropriate supports to students who need them. PB in Schools can serve as an excellent tool to engage stakeholders (teachers, students, families, communities) in school improvement efforts.

Teacher Engagement in School Improvement

ESSA requires that educators are part of the improvement plan development and implementation. Teacher participation in the PB process ensures that funded initiatives are both relevant, operational, and sustainable. Teachers add thoughtful discourse regarding the implementation costs of potential school improvement strategies, the professional development required to implement with fidelity, and the likelihood of success in their school and classroom.

Family Engagement in School Improvement

ESSA prioritizes family engagement and promotes opportunities for students and families to participate as collaborators and problem-solvers in their schools. PB in Schools can be an impactful framework for engaging families. By participating in the PB process, families and community stakeholders gain a deeper understanding of the data, the challenges facing schools, and the types of supports needed for successful school improvement efforts.

School Quality/Student Success

ESSA requires that state accountability systems include at least one indicator of school quality/ student success (SQSS). Carefully chosen measures, such as student engagement and school climate, can help identify inequities in access and outcomes to opportunities and can help guide improvement.

PB in Schools fosters student engagement and strengthens relationships between students, families, teachers, and school administrators. PB in Schools can serve as the platform to engage students in decision making and develop an authentic sense of belonging and purpose within the school community. During the PB process, students participate in cross-group interactions, as well as curricular and extracurricular activities.

PB in Schools promotes a positive school climate. PB in Schools facilitates collaboration, respect, transparency, and accountability. Students gain a deep sense of responsibility and accomplishment. All students are engaged and work together to solve school-level issues. Collaboration and cooperation help to reduce students' own prejudices and promotes inclusion and social justice.

Attention to Equity

States are accountable for closing achievement gaps and ensuring all students have the support and resources to reach their highest potential. A core tenet of PB in Schools is equity. PB in Schools honors and respects cultural and situational diversity of students and actively promotes understanding of differences. PB in Schools deliberately uses strategies to engage all student, particularly historically marginalized student populations. PB In Schools strengthens relationships between diverse groups of students, teachers, and education stakeholders. During the PB process, students participate in cross-group interactions; the collaboration and cooperation helps to reduce students' own prejudices and promotes inclusion and social justice.

Implementing PB in Schools

Effective implementation of PB in Schools respects and recognizes the value of experience and knowledge that youth can bring to public problem solving.

By engaging youth in the PB process, school and district-level issues are examined from a student-centric perspective. Engaging youth in defining the root causes of their challenges helps school leaders and district policy makers address the barriers students face and expand opportunities for improving school outcomes.

As a result, PB in Schools generates new and innovative solutions to address school and community needs.