WHAT'S NEXT FOR PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING IN YOUR SCHOOLS?

THIS TOOL WILL HELP YOU DETERMINE YOUR NEXT STEPS

Using information from our [policy scan report](#) on PB in schools (June 2020), we have put together this guide to help you assess where your school or district is along a spectrum of readiness to do participatory budgeting. In addition to research gathered for the policy scan report, this guide reflects 10 years of experience working with educators to bring participatory budgeting to schools and districts.

In the coming pages you will find questions about various aspects of your school and district. Answers are organized into three categories: "somewhat compatible", "compatible" or "highly compatible".

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Compatibility helps you assess how ready your schools or district is to start PB, somewhat compatible schools are getting ready, compatible schools are ready, and highly compatible schools can launch PB! Once you determine your schools' readiness level, go to the last page for links to next steps.

Read through the following questions and consider your particular circumstance. Every school and district is different, and you know your school and district best, so if your school falls between two or more categories of compatibility, choose the next steps that feel best to you.

For example:
Do schools offer hands on, thought provoking experiences in and outside of the classroom?

Somewhat Compatible: A few schools do
Compatible: Many schools do
Highly Compatible: All schools do

Identify the answers that most closely match your school or district. Don't worry if you don't see an exact match or don't know the answer to a particular question! This tool is meant as a guide to help you identify next steps, not a grading formula. Keep track of where your answers are most frequently falling, and, if it helps, keep a tally on a note pad as you go.

SOMEWHAT COMPATIBLE SCHOOLS
ARE GETTING READY…

Schools whose answers to questions fall mostly in the first column need to do more research and take time to build relationships within their school and district before being ready to onboard a participatory budgeting process.

COMPATIBLE SCHOOLS
ARE READY…

Schools whose answers to questions fall mostly in the second column will benefit from research and deepening and expanding relationships within their school and district in preparation for onboarding a participatory budgeting process.

HIGHLY COMPATIBLE SCHOOLS
CAN LAUNCH!

Schools whose answers fall mostly in the third column are ready to launch a PB process with the right support.

Schools in this category may benefit from continued research and relationship building, but may also be ready for 1:1 support from an organization like ours.

+ bonus

Keep an eye out for bonuses, shown as green boxes in the appropriate column, if they apply to your school, consider it an additional tally mark in that column. Some bonuses apply to more than one column.

ABOUT THIS TOOL

	SOMEWHAT COMPATIBLE	COMPATIBLE	HIGHLY COMPATIBLE
Does your **state department** value **civic learning**?	✅ **Yes** Equally to arts, science, and technology.	✅ **Yes** Highly.	✅ **Yes** And civic engagement, highly.
Does your **district** have a formal **"profile of a graduate"**?	🚫 **Not to your knowledge**	🚫 **Not to your knowledge**	✅ **Yes**
Does your **district** value graduates' **content knowledge, workplace skills, community engagement, and civic responsibility**?	✅ **Yes**	✅ **Yes**	✅ **Yes** As well as career exploration.
Are **Social Studies** and **Civics** courses **required** for High School Graduation?	⚫ **Not quite** Courses are encouraged but not required.	✅ **Yes**	✅ **Yes** Students must pass to graduate.

STATE POLICY
WELL ROUNDED EDUCATION

Is a **capstone/ community service project required** for High School Graduation?

Not to your knowledge

Not quite
Projects are encouraged but not required.

Yes

STATE POLICY
WELL ROUNDED EDUCATION

	SOMEWHAT COMPATIBLE	COMPATIBLE	HIGHLY COMPATIBLE
Does the **State Department** of Education include positive school climate in their **definition** of **School Quality and Student Success**?	⚫ **Not quite** The definition includes college and career readiness, science or social studies proficiency, on-track indicators, or student attendance.	✅ **Yes**	✅ **Yes**
Are **student** and **teacher survey results** used to **measure SQSS**?	🚫 **Not to your knowledge**	✅ **Yes** But results are not prioritized in school improvement efforts.	✅ **Yes** And used to guage how positive and engaging the learning environment is. State conducts surveys.
+ bonus			Families are also surveyed, and results included in SQSS
Is **school climate** measured using **student and teacher surveys**?	🚫 **Not to your knowledge**	✅ **Yes**	✅ **Yes** Or on-site reviews of practice.

STATE POLICY
SCHOOL QUALITY AND STUDENT SUCCESS (SQSS)

	SOMEWHAT COMPATIBLE	COMPATIBLE	HIGHLY COMPATIBLE
Are stakeholders central to the development of **school improvement plans**?	🚫 **Not to your knowledge** A top-down approach is led by a district-appointed task force.	✅ **Yes** A task force made up of various education stakeholders is engaged.	✅ **Yes** Key stakeholders are engaged, including students, families, teachers, union organizations, higher education institutions, and community members.
Are historically marginalized populations engaged?	🚫 **Not to your knowledge**	🟡 **Not quite** Little effort is made. Students, families, and community members may be asked to participate.	✅ **Yes** Deliberately. Their perspectives inform the plan.
Are stakeholders informed of **goals, objectives, progress and results**?	🚫 **Not to your knowledge**	✅ **Yes**	✅ **Yes** And stakeholder engagement begins early.
Are needs assessments supported with **data**?	✅ **Yes** Based on data, the task force provides a suite of district-supported intervention strategies.	✅ **Yes** Based on factors such as disaggregated data analysis and instructional audit or review.	✅ **Yes** Including school- and community-level factors. Needs are prioritized strategically, with a focus on equity and data.

LOCAL POLICY
DISTRICT LEVEL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANS

Is the **school board involved** in **allocating funds** and **implementing interventions** (in accordance with federal, state and local requirements)?

Not to your knowledge.
The district is soley responsible.

Yes
The district and school board provide schools with limited flexibility. The goal is to meet school community needs.

Yes
The district and school board provide schools with limited flexibility. Goal is to meet school community needs.

LOCAL POLICY
DISTRICT LEVEL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANS

	SOMEWHAT COMPATIBLE	COMPATIBLE	HIGHLY COMPATIBLE
Is **data shared** with the public **beyond the state generated framework**?	🚫 **Not to your knowledge**	🚫 **Not to your knowledge**	✅ **Yes** A district utilized framework (e.g. Data dashboard) with more detail than state-generated framework.
Does your **district emphasize data transparency**?	🚫 **Not to your knowledge**	✅ **Yes**	✅ **Yes**
Is the **data accessible**?	⋯ **Not quite** Only to select district and school-level staff.	✅ **Yes**	✅ **Yes**
+ bonus			The district offers families and community stakeholders various ways to engage.

LOCAL POLICY
DATA TRANSPARENCY

SOMEWHAT COMPATIBLE	COMPATIBLE	HIGHLY COMPATIBLE

Is data shared outside the school community?

🚫 **Not to your knowledge**
Data is rarely shared outside the school community.

🟡 **Not quite**
Data is shared by district and school leaders swith district and school staff.

✅ **Yes**
Data is shared by district and school leaders with the community, highlighting strengths and weaknesses.

Are school improvement plans informed?

🚫 **Not to your knowledge**

✅ **Yes**
With data.

✅ **Yes**
With stakeholder identified dashboard metrics.

+ bonus

> Teachers understand the power of data to improve instruction. Teachers work together in professional learning communities to review school and student-level data.

Is data used as a tool to empower people and fuel improvement?

🟡 **Not quite**
It is used as a tool of compliance, with limited use for improvement and innovation.

✅ **Yes**

✅ **Yes**

LOCAL POLICY
DATA TRANSPARENCY

	SOMEWHAT COMPATIBLE	COMPATIBLE	HIGHLY COMPATIBLE
Do **schools** in your district **prioritize civic learning**?	**Many schools do**	**All schools do** Your district as well.	**All schools do** Your State Department of Education and your district as well.
Do **staff** consider **college, career, and civic readiness** the **educational goal** for all high school graduates?	**Some staff do** At your school they seem to, but they are not lead by or accountable to research based strategies.	**Most staff do** District and school-level staff do.	**All staff do** There is a universal consensus.
+ bonus		Teachers and community stakeholders collaboratively develop a vision of civic readiness and a clear concept of shared accountability.	
Is **civic engagement** a **part** of your **high school curricula**?	**Not to your knowledge** But teachers are interested in developing a collective vision of civic readiness.	**Yes** It is an important component.	**Yes** It is integrated in all components of curricula beginning in elementary school.

COMMITMENT TO CIVIC LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT
CIVIC COURSES OFFERED AND REQUIREMENTS

Do **students participate** in **service** learning and **community-based** projects?

Not quite

Your school offers limited opportunities for this, but students who do receive credit toward graduation.

Not quite

The district supports students who do, and while not a graduation requirement, Students receive credit toward graduation

Yes

The district implements a project-based assessment in high school to measure civic learning and demonstrate understanding of public policy.

+ bonus

Student, in service learning and community-based projects, apply academic knowledge to find viable solutions to real community needs.

COMMITMENT TO CIVIC LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT
CIVIC COURSES OFFERED AND REQUIREMENTS

	SOMEWHAT COMPATIBLE	COMPATIBLE	HIGHLY COMPATIBLE
Is **civic learning** and **engagement important** to your **district** and **school**?	✅ Yes	✅ Yes	✅ Yes
+ bonus			Action Civics is a priority in your district and school. Through various activities, students learn that engaging with decision makers to address community issues can effect policy change.
Does the **district require** that schools teach a **civics course**? (social studies, civics, government, law, or economics).	🚫 Not to your knowledge	✅ Yes Yes, a state standards-aligned civics course.	✅ Yes Yes, a state standards-aligned course where students participate in real-world democracy.
Do **schools offer hands on, thought-provoking experiences** in and outside of the classroom?	🏫 A few schools do	🏫 Many schools do The district encourages schools to provide students with activities to learn how government works.	🏫 All schools do With the goal of teaching students how government works.

COMMITMENT TO CIVIC LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT
USE OF HIGH-ENGAGEMENT PEDAGOGIES

	SOMEWHAT COMPATIBLE	COMPATIBLE	HIGHLY COMPATIBLE
Do **schools** in your district **offer experiential learning activities**?	**No schools do**	**Many schools do** Student participation is not equitable or standardized across district schools.	**All schools do** Students have a choice of projects including those focused on advocacy and social equity.
Does your **school provide** various **extracurricular activities** that **promote student involvement** in their schools and communities?	**Yes** Such as student government.	**Yes** Your school encourages students to be active in student government.	**Yes** And engagement of historically marginalized populations is ensured.
Do **schools** in your district **provide** students participatory **simulations** of **democratic processes** and procedures?	**No schools do**	**Some schools do**	**All schools do**

COMMITMENT TO CIVIC LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT
USE OF HIGH-ENGAGEMENT PEDAGOGIES

	SOMEWHAT COMPATIBLE	COMPATIBLE	HIGHLY COMPATIBLE
Is your **district successful** at **engaging** students, families, teachers and community members?	**Not quite** — Schools have varied success.	**Not quite** — Your district and school have made progress in their efforts.	**Yes** — Your district and school have a solid infrastructure for outreach in place.
Do your **district** and **school host activities** and **special events** for students, families, and community members?	**Not quite** — Attendance is variable.	**Yes** — There has been progress in efforts to engage students, families, teachers, and community members	**Yes** — These happen routinely and your district and school have a solid infrastructure for outreach in place.
Are **staff encouraged** to **attend** non-school, **community events**?	**Not to your knowledge**	**Yes**	**Yes**
Does your **school survey students** about their interests, concerns, and challenges?	**Not quite** — Only occasionally and informally.	**Yes**	**Yes**

ENGAGEMENT CAPACITY
EXISTING ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Are **survey results disaggregated** in **meaningful ways** and used in school improvement efforts?

🚫 **Not to your knowledge**

✅ **Yes**

✅ **Yes**
When a more detailed picture of student experiences is needed, your school hosts focus groups to explore complex issues.

+ bonus

> Your school surveys families on a regular basis. Survey responses are disaggregated and analyzed; results are publicly reported and are used to inform your school improvement plan.

Do **teacher** and **staff survey results provide** school leaders with an **understanding** of perceptions and experiences?

🚫 **Not to your knowledge**

✅ **Yes**

✅ **Yes**
A holistic understanding.

ENGAGEMENT CAPACITY
EXISTING ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

	SOMEWHAT COMPATIBLE	COMPATIBLE	HIGHLY COMPATIBLE
Do **teachers receive professional development** and trainings on family and community **engagement**?	🚫 Not to your knowledge	✅ Yes	✅ Yes
Does your **district hire** and **train school-community liaisons** knowledgable of the community's **history**, **language**, and **cultural background**?	🚫 Not to your knowledge	✅ Yes	✅ Yes
Does your **school understand** the value of **family involvement**?	✅ Yes	✅ Yes It is prioritized.	✅ Yes It is prioritized.

+ bonus

Your school provides resources for families through various workshops, classes, and open houses.

An active Parent Advisory Committee is made up of public school parents; membership is representative of the student population.

ENGAGEMENT CAPACITY
EXISTING ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

	SOMEWHAT COMPATIBLE	COMPATIBLE	HIGHLY COMPATIBLE
Do your **district** and **school emphasize equity**?	Not quite	Not quite But they are sensitive to the needs of underserved and marginalized students.	Yes Your district and school emphasize equity.
Are **rigorous courses**, **extracurricular activities**, and **district/school governing organizations diverse** and **inclusive**?	Not quite Although encouraged, little effort is made.	Yes	Yes
Does your **school recognize** the value of **student voices** in school improvement efforts?	Not to your knowledge	Yes	Yes
Is your **district** and **school sensitive** to the **needs** of **underserved** and **marginalized students**?	Yes	Yes	Yes

ENGAGEMENT CAPACITY
ENGAGEMENT WITH AN EQUITY LENS

Does your school encourage underserved and marginalized student participation in student government and community organizing?

🚫 **Not to your knowledge** | ✅ **Yes** | ✅ **Yes**

+ bonus

> Your school and district utilize an Action Civics curriculum to prepare students for active citizenship.

> Your district values financial literacy and provides students opportunities to participate in budget and financial simulations.

Do all school staff consider outreach to families a vital responsibility?

👥 **Some staff do**
Many teachers are serious in their efforts to reach out to families. No school-wide consensus on the importance and effective strategies of outreach.

👥 **All staff do**

👥 **All staff do**
Partner organizations (representative of underserved communities) provide training to empower parents to exercise leadership within schools.

Are various methods used to connect with families including text messages, emails, and phone calls?

✅ **Yes** | ✅ **Yes** | ✅ **Yes**

ENGAGEMENT CAPACITY
ENGAGEMENT WITH AN EQUITY LENS

Does your school have a structure for partnership engagement?

Not quite
Not quite. Potential partners are eager to engage, however, the path to engagement is unclear.

Not quite
Not quite. Partnership development is ad hoc. All partnerships add significant value to your school and district improvement and community engagement efforts.

Yes
Your school develops and maintains strategic partnerships. Having a strong role in the community is a priority in your district and school.

+ bonus

Partnerships include local government, businesses and business clubs (Rotary and Kiwanis), faith-based organizations, and civic organizations.

Your school invests in a staff member to generate and engage partners.

Do partners provide financial or in kind support?

Not to your knowledge

Not to your knowledge

Yes

+ bonus

External funders support research-based school improvement initiatives focused on increasing college, career, and civic readiness, as well as improvements in school quality.

Partner organizations often provide volunteers for many school and district projects.

ENGAGEMENT CAPACITY
PARTNERSHIP SUPPORT

	SOMEWHAT COMPATIBLE	COMPATIBLE	HIGHLY COMPATIBLE
Are **partners eager** to **support** your school and district?	⊘ **Not to your knowledge**	⊘ **Not to your knowledge**	✔ **Yes** They are often looking for ways to help.
Does your **school** have an **active Parent** or **Alumni Association**?	⊘ **Not to your knowledge**	● **Not quite** They are underutilized.	✔ **Yes** They are active.
Does your **school** have a **range** of **partner types** that **support students** and improve educational outcomes?	● **Not quite** Nonprofit organizations provide students with holistic support and various wrap-around services.	● **Not quite** Informal partnerships with higher education institutions, local business, and nonprofit organizations are present.	✔ **Yes** Higher education institutions and local foundations partnerships help to to improve educational outcomes and serve as a resource for your school improvement efforts.

ENGAGEMENT CAPACITY
PARTNERSHIP SUPPORT

Are you familiar with PB?

🚫 **No**
But you are intrigued by the thought of engaging students in real-life problem solving at your school or in your district.

✅ **Yes**
You have been thinking about ways to introduce the idea of implementing PB in your school and district.

✅ **Yes**
You have participated in the process. You recognize the benefits PB would have for your school or district.

+ bonus

Your local government has implemented PB or a similar process to engage the community in decisions regarding the allocation of funds.

Is there interest in exploring options for engaging students, teachers, and families in decision making?

✅ **Yes**
You are interested.

✅ **Yes**
Your local school board is. They want to garner support for school improvement initiatives.

✅ **Yes**
Your school board and district consult with teachers, school leaders, staff, local bargaining units, families, and students in developing the budget and accountability plan.

Does your district have processes that allow students and the public to review and comment on the budget and plan?

🚫 **Not to your knowledge**

🚫 **Not to your knowledge**

✅ **Yes**
Your school and district leadership want to learn more about engaging school and community in innovative school improvements. PB is mentioned as a viable option.

ENGAGEMENT CAPACITY
EXISTING SUPPORT COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION MAKING

Based on which column most of your schools' answers land, use this guide to place your school/district on a path towards participatory budgeting.

SOMEWHAT COMPATIBLE SCHOOLS *ARE GETTING READY...*

If most of your answers are in the "Somewhat Compatible" column, we recommend that you…

- Download our Guide to PB in Schools share what you learn with other members of the school community (e.g., teachers, students, administrators)
- Gauge interest and support
- Make a plan to advocate for PB in your school.
- If there were several questions where you were unsure of the answer, we recommend doing research to get a better assessment of your readiness for PB.

COMPATIBLE SCHOOLS *ARE READY...*

If most of your answers are in the "Compatible" column—or you are somewhere between the "Ready" and "Getting Ready" and several "Bonuses" apply to you—then you're probably ready to dig a little deeper. We recommend that you…

- Download our Guide to PB in Schools
- Share learning and build connections with others in the community to get conversation and interest in PB going
- *Sign Up* for updates on upcoming workshops, webinars, and office hours.

HIGHLY COMPATIBLE SCHOOLS *CAN LAUNCH!*

If most of your answers are in the "Highly Compatible!" column, the conditions in your school or district are primed to launch participatory budgeting!

- Download our Guide to PB in Schools
- *Sign Up* for updates on upcoming workshops, webinars, and office hours.
- Click here to schedule a scoping call with our Network Building team.

NEXT STEPS
BASED ON YOUR SCHOOL'S COMPATIBILITY