

## Introduction

The United States is experiencing renewed urgency in civic learning and engagement in schools. The current political climate has led to a renewed interest in governance and democratic institutions; there is an emphasis on priming youth for active civic participation. With the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), there is a focus on providing students with a well-rounded education and preparing graduates for college, careers, and citizenship.

Participatory Budgeting (PB) is a viable and effective tool to better prepare youth for further education, work, and civic engagement. PB engages all students, particularly students from historically marginalized populations, in a process to identify critical issues in their schools, brainstorm innovative solutions, develop proposals, and vote on projects to fund.

During the PB process, students learn and practice critical skills, such as critical thinking, problem solving, and creativity which lead to improved success in college and careers, lifelong citizenship, and enriched democratic engagement. PB 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.

PB increases community awareness of the challenges that students, schools, and districts face. The PB process can help districts identify innovative solutions and initiatives for school improvement. Students who participate in PB are more likely to be civically engaged and involved in their communities as adults.

Federal and many state education policies are compatible with and supportive of PB. In addition to providing students with a well-rounded education, ESSA requires states to include a “non-academic” indicator of school performance, opening the door for states to incorporate active civic learning and engagement into their accountability systems. For many states, civics is an academic requirement for graduation; emphasis is placed on Action Civics; and districts prioritize student opportunities for service learning and community activism.

The PB Compatibility Assessment Rubric can be used to help education leaders assess alignment of their policy landscape with PB. The Rubric provides examples of policies and practices that can be viewed as “Highly Compatible,” “Compatible,” and “Neutral” to successful implementation of PB. Compatibility between education policies and PB can be leveraged by schools and districts to adopt PB in order to educate and prepare youth to be informed and engaged citizens. PB implementation supports innovative solutions for school improvement.

Given the political landscape and emphasis on engaged citizenry, the time is right for schools and districts across the country to adopt PB as a vital component of a stronger, more comprehensive education program (beyond civic engagement and learning).

## Resurgence of Civic Learning and Engagement in Schools

Across the country, there is increasing interest and focus on civic learning and engagement. In preparing students for success in college and careers, schools and districts recognize the vital role of civic learning and engagement. Civic learning includes the study of government and how people participate in government and prepares students for active citizenship through engaging projects, pedagogies, and integrated approaches.

**Active civic learning provides youth for a lifetime of knowledgeable, engaged, active citizenship which is vital to the health of our democracy. Participatory budgeting is an impactful strategy for active civic learning.**

Research finds that increased civic engagement for youth is correlated with high levels of civic involvement as adults; they view civic involvement as obligatory.<sup>1</sup> Students who participate in active civic learning during high school are more likely to vote, be politically aware, volunteer, and work to address community issues, and communicate with their elected officials.<sup>2</sup> Schools with civic learning programs are more likely to be safe, inclusive, respectful, and experience fewer high school dropouts.<sup>3</sup>

*“The need to revitalize and reimagine civic education is urgent. But that urgent need brings a great opportunity – the chance to improve civic education in ways that will resonate for years.”*

Secretary Arne Duncan, Remarks at the iCivics Educating for Democracy in a Digital Age Conference, March 29, 2011, Washington, DC.

Four critical elements that empower youth to be effective civic actors are civic knowledge, civic skills, civic values/disposition, and efficacy.<sup>4</sup>

**Civic Knowledge** refers to a deep understanding of government, politics, law, and the practicalities of citizenship. Social studies instruction provides basic understanding, but students learn best by doing. Participatory budgeting (PB), student governance, and service learning are examples of engaging learning strategies that lead to deep civic knowledge.

**Civic Skills** are necessary for effective participation in a democracy. Civic skills include ability to understand facts and communicate opinions, to debate issues and potential solutions leading to collective decision making, and to analyze and think critically. The PB process involves each of

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<sup>1</sup> Aaron Metzger. “Domain-Specific Judgements of Civic and Political Engagement in Late Adolescence: Associations with Adolescent Activity Involvement.” University of Rochester: Rochester NY. (2007).

<sup>2</sup> National Council for the Social Studies: Revitalizing Civic Learning in Our Schools. (2013).

<sup>3</sup> Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools. Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, Educating for Democracy. Leonore Annenberg Institute for Civics, University of Pennsylvania, CIRCLE, National Conference on Citizenship, American Bar Association Division for Public Education. (2011).

<sup>4</sup> “360 Civic Learning: A Study of the Practices that Cultivate Civic Engagement Among Youth from Underserved Communities.” Generation Citizen.

these skills and provides students with opportunities to work together to solve “community issues.”

***Civic Values/Disposition*** refers to the belief that individuals have a responsibility to contribute to the betterment of their community. Youth develop civic values when they seek solutions to address issues within their communities. PB allows youth to analyze issues, examine root causes, and develop potential interventions that lead to change.

***Civic Efficacy*** connects civic knowledge, civic skills, civic values and leads to action. Civic efficacy is the conviction that people can make a difference. PB provides youth with the framework to develop civic efficacy.

## What is Participatory Budgeting?

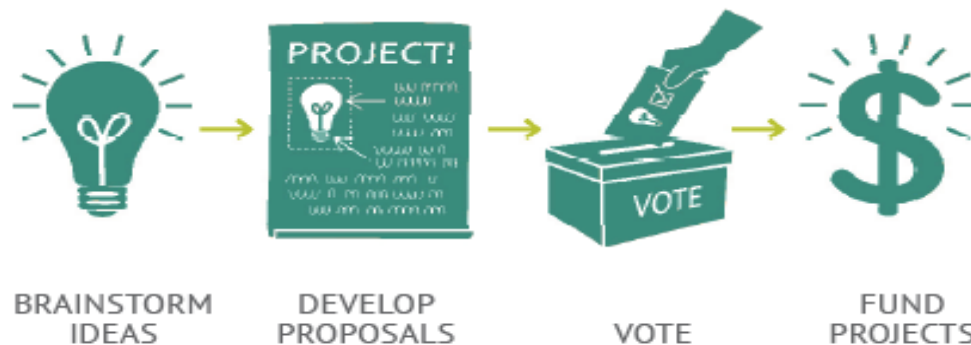
Participatory budgeting (PB) is a democratic process where community members work collaboratively to allocate public funds to achieve an established goal. The Brazilian city of Porto Alegre implemented the first PB process in 1989 as a strategy to address corruption and inequity issues. Since then, PB has spread to over 3,000 cities around the world.

Schools in the United States and around the world have used PB to decide which school programs and improvements to fund. The PB process helps develop civic responsibility and engages students to work collaboratively to develop innovative solutions to complex issues. PB builds a deeper understanding of school budgets, allocates funds to address pressing needs, and helps students and other community members learn active citizenship.

In schools, PB typically engages students but can also include various members of the school community such as teachers, other school-level staff, and parents. PB 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.

### *The Process: PB in Schools*

During the PB process, students and other school community members make budgeting decisions through a cycle of meetings and voting. Based on information and data, students and school stakeholders brainstorm project ideas, develop full proposals, and vote on project(s) to fund. The school or district funds the top projects.



The process includes seven major phases: planning, design, idea collection, proposal development, voting, evaluation, and implementation/monitoring.

Successful implementation of PB in schools or districts results in increased engagement, meaningful dialogues, deeper understanding of school or district challenges and the budgeting process, and student-centric, innovative solutions. PB helps improve transparency and

accountability. By engaging students, particularly marginalized student populations, in decision making, PB provides a platform for students to not only voice concerns but create solutions.

PHASE	GOALS/BENCHMARKS
<b>Plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Identify funding to allocate</li> <li>* Secure funding and staffing for implementation</li> <li>* Announce approval of the PB process</li> </ul>
<b>Design the Process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Form a PB Committee</li> <li>* Students volunteer to serve on PB Committee</li> <li>* Write the rules of the PB process</li> <li>* Create an idea collection plan, including scheduling any in-person events</li> <li>* Create and evaluation plan</li> </ul>
<b>Collect Ideas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The PB Committee collects ideas from students and other eligible participants</li> </ul>
<b>Develop Proposals</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Review and group similar ideas</li> <li>* Remove ineligible ideas or brainstorm ways to make ways to make the suggestion eligible</li> <li>* Rank and prioritize ideas based on equity and/or additional goals</li> <li>* Decide which ideas should be researched and turned into project proposals</li> <li>* Research priority ideas to identify project costs and feasibility in coordination with key stakeholders</li> </ul>
<b>Vote</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* PB Committee:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creates project ballots</li> <li>Creates promotional materials to get out the vote</li> <li>Act as “poll workers” for in-person events, handing out and explaining voting rules, collecting ballots, etc.</li> <li>Participate in the vote count using the agreed upon system for counting and/or logging votes</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Fund and Implement Winning Projects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* PB Committee announces the winning projects</li> <li>* Purchasing staff and/or budgeting administrators use the budgeted funds to make purchases, secure vendors, and implement winning project(s)</li> <li>* The PB Coordinator and other stakeholders track implementation and help troubleshoot problems and answer questions about the project that may arise</li> </ul>

## Participatory Budgeting in Schools and Districts

Participatory budgeting (PB) helps students develop and practice skills and habits that result in improved success in college and careers, lifelong citizenship, and enriched democratic engagement. PB increases community awareness of the challenges that students, schools, and districts face. The PB process can help districts identify innovative solutions and initiatives for school improvement.

**Participatory budgeting includes student voice in identifying the challenges that students, schools, and districts face and generates innovative, student-centric options for change.**

### PB to enhance civic education and learning requirements

Authentic civic learning results from effective instruction coupled with active engagement that allows students to apply their skills to real-life situations. Asking students to apply academic skills to real world problems results in powerful and long-lasting students learning. PB can be implemented as a tool to actively engage students in learning and academic enrichment.

*“Give the pupils something to do, not something to learn; and the doing is of such a nature as to demand thinking; learning naturally results.”*

John Dewey

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

**PB helps students learn and practice social responsibility. In addition to curriculum, instruction, and teacher development, PB links academics to civic engagement and learning and builds an ethos of citizenship and engagement. Students address community issues through collaboration and gain a deeper understanding of fiscal responsibility and financial literacy.**

**When engaged in PB, students develop their ability to affect change. Through PB, youth perspective and voice shape programming, facilitate a rich dialogue, and provide the basis for advocacy for change. Students identify the issues that matter most to them, actualize a theory of change, design and**

**budget for innovative solutions. Students learn to effectively and confidently articulate their challenges and potential. Students are active in the evaluation of the impact of their efforts. PB helps students develop and practice the skills, habits, and methods that result in lifelong citizenship and improved success in college and careers.**

#### PB to strengthen school community engagement

Active student engagement promotes the skills, competencies, and values that help youth transition successfully into adulthood. When students become disengaged, particularly in high school, they are more likely to experience academic failure, truancy, delinquency, substance abuse, and negative psychological outcomes. Using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, researchers found that students who are actively engaged, attached to the school community, and participate in school learning activities are less likely to drop out.<sup>5</sup>

*“[Before PB] I would be the kid sitting in the back, in the corner, head always down not raising his hand. Now I want to sit in the front right where the teacher’s at.”*

High School Student at Phoenix Union High School District

Student engagement activities with diverse groups (race/ethnicity, socioeconomic, cultural, political, and ideological) support two types of outcomes:

- Learning outcomes: a range of academic outcomes; active and more complex ways of thinking; intellectual engagement; and motivation.
- Democratic outcomes: appreciation for diversity; acceptance of conflict and compromise; perspective discovery; and commitment to civic and racial/cultural engagement.<sup>6</sup>

**PB can serve as the platform to engage students in decision making and problem solving, as well as to develop an authentic sense of belonging and purpose within the school community. PB fosters student engagement and strengthens relationships between students, families, teachers, and school administrators. During the PB process, students participate in cross-group interactions, as well as curricular and extracurricular activities; this collaboration and cooperation helps to reduce students’ own prejudices and promotes inclusion and social justice.**

**Schools may choose to include families and community stakeholders in the PB implementation processes. When they participate in PB, families and**

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<sup>5</sup> South SJ, Haynie DL, Bose S. Student mobility and school dropout. *Social Science Research*. 2007;36:68–94.

<sup>6</sup> Gurin, P., Dey, E., Hurtado, S., and Gurin, G. Diversity and Higher Education: Theory and Impact on Educational Outcomes. *Harvard Educational Review*, 72 (3.) (2002).

**community stakeholders gain an increased awareness of the issues and challenges schools and the district face. Through their participation in the PB process, they become more actively invested in the school community. When families, communities, and schools work together, students are more successful and the entire community benefits.**

#### **PB to address the “civic opportunity gap”**

The civic opportunity gap emerges when districts provide low-income and minority students fewer and lower quality civic learning opportunities than they provide to middle class and wealthy white students. Inequities in access to high quality civic learning exist. The emphasis on English language arts, math, and science in high school has magnified the issues. The shift away from civics education is most noteworthy for low-income students in low-resourced schools. “Urban schools with low-income, diverse students provide fewer and lower-quality civic opportunity and affluent white students are twice as likely as those of average socioeconomic status to study the legislative process or participate in service activities...”<sup>7</sup>

Schools in low-income, underserved communities, urban centers, and rural areas are less likely to offer students authentic civic engagement opportunities. Historically marginalized youth are more likely to doubt their ability to effect change through civic participation. This uncertainty and lack of confidence intensifies civic disenfranchisement and alienation.<sup>8</sup> PB deliberately attracts and engages diverse groups, particularly underserved and marginalized students, and empowers all youth to impact policies and practices.

*“Now I understand so much more about how our school relates to the district, how are funding and facilities improvements work, and how I can make a difference here.”*

High School Student at Phoenix Union High School District

**When implemented with fidelity, the PB process embeds equity in participation and allocation. PB provides a framework for a commitment to promoting and protecting the role of youth voice and advocacy in policymaking and programmatic processes. PB engages all community members, particularly embracing participation of those who are typically marginalized, underserved, and underrepresented. PB intentionally reduces barriers that prevent inclusiveness and fosters greater equity leadership. When participation in the PB process is inclusive, marginalized populations are empowered and develop a genuine sense of ownership.**

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<sup>7</sup> Jan Brennan. “ESSA: Mapping opportunities for civic education.” Education Commission of the States. (April 2017.)

<sup>8</sup> “360 Civic Learning: A Study of the Practices that Cultivate Civic Engagement Among Youth from Underserved Communities.” Generation Citizen.



### PB to improve teacher satisfaction and effectiveness

Involving teachers in decision making makes them feel more valued and respected. Research confirms that teacher participation in decision making leads to empowerment; when they feel empowered, teachers are more likely to be satisfied, motivated, innovative, and energized.<sup>9</sup> Although student participation in PB is the norm, schools and school districts can opt to include teachers and staff in the PB process. When teachers and staff are part of the process, PB can serve as the facilitative structure that creates an empowering environment by soliciting teacher participation in decision making, encouraging innovative solutions, and providing effective allocation of school resources.

*“PB has presented more leadership opportunities for our staff, both as project champions and as facilitators of winning projects. PB has helped fund teachers’ time and encourage teacher creativity in the after-school sphere which in turn provides a more diverse selection of enrichment opportunities for students.”*  
*Educator, P.S. 139, Brooklyn*

Furthermore, involving teachers in the design and implementation of new initiatives and school improvement strategies is critical to the initiative’s success. Top-down decision making regarding policies, programs, and practices that directly impact teachers, instruction, and outcomes may not consider “implementation costs” or the professional development teachers need to be successful. Teachers have classroom and school-level expertise. PB can leverage this expertise when identifying, designing, and budgeting for school improvement strategies and classroom initiatives.

**Teacher engagement in PB ensures that funded initiatives are both relevant, operational, and sustainable. Teachers understand the practicalities of teaching, the time and commitment required to implement a new program or intervention, the additional support or professional development necessary for successful implementation, and its potential impact on school improvement. Giving teachers a voice ensures they receive the products, services, and support they need. Teacher involvement in PB significantly increases the success of implementation, maximizing the return on the investment.**

### PB as a tool for school improvement

As policymakers, education leaders, and school-level staff tackle the demanding, technical, and innovative work of school improvement, it is important to consider the application of PB for fulfilling their charge. PB provides a holistic approach in articulating challenges, examining root causes, and identifying innovative solutions.

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<sup>9</sup> (Spreitzer, G.M., “When organizations dare: The dynamics of individual empowerment in the workplace.” *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 53(11). (1992.)

Former US Secretary of Education John B. King Jr. understood the role of civic learning to engage youth in school improvement. He urged schools to prioritize civic learning and engagement to “help students learn to be problem solvers who grapple with challenging issues, such as how to improve their schools...”<sup>10</sup> PB provides an ideal framework for engaging youth in identifying the challenges and offering solutions to address the barriers that prevent success in schools.

*“We asked students if they knew of school initiatives, what they were, and if they were successful. PB was indicated by students as improving the school and giving students a say in decisions made at the school. When meeting with our school improvement team this year the students on the team indicated that they felt like there has been more student choice across the board in the school. PB was a piece of that puzzle in shifting the climate and culture.”*

*Laura Zanrucha, Principal, Afton Middle/High School (Afton NY)*

**Effective implementation of PB 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. PB supports genuine inclusiveness that can enhance school improvement efforts.**

**During the PB process, youth voice their concerns, explain the barriers they face, and identify the support they need to be successful. PB provides youth with the opportunity to share their experiences and participate in community dialogue and decision making.**

**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 can generate new and innovative solutions to address school and community needs. Youth-informed solutions can result in more effective school spending, directing funding to the areas that promise to have the largest impact.**

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<sup>10</sup> John B. King Jr. Speech at the National Press Club. (October 19, 2016.)

## Best Practice in School Budgeting

The Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA), founded in 1906, seeks to “advance excellence in public finance.”<sup>11</sup> GFOA helps governmental agencies enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of their operations by developing and promoting best practices, providing research and support focused on fiscal efficiency, long-term financial planning, and budgeting. GFOA provides “Best Practices in School District Budgeting” to support districts in ability to maximize student achievement through effective resource allocations.

### **All budgeting processes, but particularly school budgeting, require transparency. The budgeting process should include an extensive communications strategy.**

According to GFOA, an effective communication strategy engages a range of stakeholders, including educators, families, and the community at-large. It is critical that stakeholders understand the budgeting process, provide input into the allocation of funds, and recognize the reasoning behind the adopted budget decisions. During the engagement and communications process, stakeholders should be given the opportunity to provide feedback; it is the responsibility of the district or school to respond accordingly.

GFOA provides the following recommendations for implementing an effective communications strategy:

- Identify the appropriate messengers and provide them with data
- Identify the target audience and tailor the delivering of data and information to the audience
  - Share information widely
  - Share benefits of funding options
  - Engage stakeholders in decision making and encourage innovative solutions
  - Create a leadership team
  - Engage “influential” outsiders in the decision making process
  - Build on existing communications framework
- Utilize a broad-reaching method for communication and seek to engage marginalized community members
- Gather feedback through structured methods and be responsive to feedback

PB is considered a best practice by the federal government. In the third *Open Government Partnership: National Action Plan for the United States of America*, PB is cited as a best practice for public participation and transparency in government. Furthermore, the US Department of Housing and Urban development (HUD) has embraced PB as a tool to engage residents in the Community Development Block Grant program. Additionally, both the United Nations and the World Bank consider PB a best practice of democratic governance. PB reinforces local

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<sup>11</sup> Government Finance Officers Association. About GFOA. <https://www.gfoa.org/about-gfoa>

government's commitment to the people and develops the people's trust and support for local government.

**PB has been recognized by the federal government, the United Nations, and World Bank as a best practice in engagement, transparency, and democratic governance. PB also aligns with best practices in school budgeting cited by GFOA. The PB process provides districts and schools with a proven framework for an effective budgeting communication strategy. The PB process engages various stakeholders (students, families, teachers, and community) by providing information, a platform for submitting and vetting project proposals, and input into budget allocations. The PB process can strengthen public support and trust in district and school-level decision making.**

## Federal Policies, ESSA, and Participatory Budgeting

Federal policies impacting youth have evolved from various programs beginning in the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century and grew beginning in the late 1960's with the War on Poverty. Federal policies and programs targeting youth focus on workforce development, juvenile justice, social services, public health, community service, and education. Youth voice has been a critical part of these initiatives.

The federal government has a responsibility to ensure quality public education. Although it does not prescribe curriculum, the federal government prescribes policy and influences local education practices that support state and local efforts to promote learning and engagement, prepare youth for college and careers, and develop civic responsibility. Through the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the federal government sets the national education policy and agenda.

### *The Pathway to Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)*

**Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)**, signed into law in 1965, was part of the War on Poverty. ESEA provides federal funding to elementary and secondary schools. Under Title 1 of the Act, the US Department of Education (USDOE) provides funding to state educational agencies to distribute to local school districts with high percentages of low-income families or other children who are considered “at risk.”

**Improving America’s Schools Act (IASA)**, signed into law in 1994, aligns federal and state efforts to improve student achievement. IASA ensures greater accountability by requiring states to create and administer standards-based assessments to measure student achievement (mastery of basic skills and growth toward state standards) and promotes family and community engagement.

**No Child Left Behind (NCLB)**, signed into law in 2002, expands the federal role in public education by holding schools accountable for student outcomes. States are required to disaggregate and analyze performance data by subgroup to identify achievement gaps in the performance of underserved groups of students (for example, low-income students, racial minority students, students with disabilities, and English language learners). States are required to report Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and have the authority to take action against schools that consistently fail to make AYP. NCLB supports family engagement and also requires that states ensure that teachers funded with Title 1 dollars are “highly qualified.”

**Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)**, signed into law in 2015, maintains high expectations for student outcomes, places emphasis on a “well-rounded” education, and shifts focus toward preparing all students for success in college and careers. ESSA gives states flexibility in assessment design, although tests must measure higher order thinking skills (reasoning, analysis complex problem-solving, critical thinking, effective communication, and mastery of challenging content). ESSA requires the use of multiple measures for accountability, evaluating student and school progress beyond test scores, academic growth, and graduation rates. Accountability systems must include at least one indicator of school quality (such as school climate, student engagement, access to advanced coursework and career and technical education opportunities) to identify challenges, recognize inequities, and advance solutions to close opportunity gaps. By allocating a proportion of Title 1 funding for family engagement, ESSA gives the community greater influence in school improvement efforts.

### *Federal Policy Support for Youth-Informed Budgeting: An Early Example*

Engaging youth in program and funding decisions is not a new idea. In 1964, the federal government established the Office of Economic Opportunity as part of the War on Poverty. OEO required all initiatives ensure “maximum feasible participation” in the community in all OEO-funded programs, including youth involvement in planning, operating, and evaluating youth programs.

From the February 1970 OEO Instruction Guide: “Experience has shown that the most successful programs, and the ones which youth demonstrated the highest degree of responsibility and interest, were those where they were directly involved in the activity. Youth involvement both increases the relevance and effectiveness of the program and offers a means of providing leadership training and youth development through participation in the process of planning, operating, and evaluating programs. The process in this case becomes the product, since their involvement produces constructive attitude changes which are as important as the accomplishment of other specific program objectives.”

As part of its

OEO initiative, the Washington, D.C. Office of Youth Opportunity Services engaged youth in Neighborhood Planning Councils (NPCs). Each NPC was made up of ten adults and ten youth between the ages of 14 and 21 years. NPCs were responsible for developing, debating, and voting on programs to be funded through their program budgets. In 1971, the annual budget allocations ranged from \$120,000 to more than \$500,000 based on you the level of youth poverty (number/percentage of economically disadvantaged youth) in the neighborhood. According to proponents of the program, giving youth a voice and a vote about the allocation of significant resources and funding of community programs led to many innovative solutions to the challenges of youth in their communities.

### *ESSA: A Well-Rounded Education*

ESSA provides states with more flexibility in setting accountability systems and goals. In addition to subject-specific mastery, academic growth, increased English language proficiency, and on-time graduation rates, ESSA requires a non-academic indicator of school quality/student success (SQSS) and reinforces a commitment to a well-rounded education that prepares students for college, careers, and citizenship. The United States Department of Education (USDOE) 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 and classrooms, giving students an authentic voice in decision making.<sup>12</sup>

*“Students need a well-rounded education to contribute as citizens in our democracy and to thrive in a global economy – from literacy to mathematics, science, and technology to history, civics, foreign languages, the arts, financial literacy, and other subjects.”*

US Department of Education.

*“Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.”*

March 2010.

**PB provides an ideal framework for engaging youth in decision making and problem solving. PB provides students with hands-on experience identifying challenges, working together to discover innovative solutions, and determine projects appropriate for the greater good. PB is democracy in action.**

<sup>12</sup> <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/index.html>

**The PB process enhances a school’s capacity to provide students with a well-rounded education. By engaging students in the PB process, schools bring civic learning and engagement to life. Students develop a deep understanding of the characteristics and habits of good citizenship, preparing them for democratic involvement after high school.**

***Reports that provided a foundation for ESSA and Civic Engagement***

*A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy’s Future*

October 5, 2011

High-quality civic learning and democratic engagement is a “win-win” proposition in higher education and career preparation

*Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools*

Civic learning promotes civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions and builds “21<sup>st</sup> Century competencies” that employers value and is associated with a better school climate and lower dropout rates

*Advancing Civic Learning and Engagement in Democracy: A Road Map and Call to Action (USDOE, 2012)*

Recognizes the importance of civic learning and engagement in college attainment and the quality and content of that education – prepare for 21<sup>st</sup> century jobs and democratic responsibilities and competent to tackle complex global challenges with diverse groups and diverse environments – fostering informed engaged responsible citizens

~~Engaging civic education must be “Action Civics”~~

Traditional civic ed goals: increasing civic knowledge, voter participation, volunteerism

New civic learning puts students at the center and includes both learning and practice

### ESSA: Support for School Improvement

ESSA supports struggling schools by providing districts with additional funding to develop a plan for improvement, instead of penalties. Districts are required to provide “comprehensive support and improvement” to underperforming schools. In partnership with education stakeholders (school administrators, teachers, families, and others), districts develop a school-level targeted comprehensive support and improvement plan that:

- is informed by academic performance metrics;
- is based on a school-level needs assessment;
- identifies resource inequities, which may include school-level budgeting; and
- includes evidence-based interventions.

The plan must outline a well-rounded program designed 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 can serve as an excellent tool to engage stakeholders (teachers, students, families, communities) in school improvement efforts.

### ***Teacher Engagement***

Teachers play a critical role in school improvement; ESSA requires that educators are part of the improvement plan development and implementation. ESSA requires state-level departments of education to create a committee of practitioners (COP) to advise and support the responsibilities under Title I. The COP must include district representatives, school administrators, educators (teachers, CTE instructors, paraprofessionals) along with families and community members.

Under ESSA, improvement plans must be tailored to local needs and informed by student performance and a school-level needs assessment. Because teachers are in the classrooms interacting with students and their families, they have a deep understanding of the issues impeding student/school success and the interventions that are likely to work well or not so well. ESSA supports teacher involvement in identifying data-driven, evidence-based approaches that are best suited to address the unique needs and challenges of their schools and students.

### ***Family Engagement***

ESSA prioritizes family engagement and identifies and promotes opportunities for students and families to participate as collaborators and problem solvers in their schools. ESSA requires districts to set aside at least 1 percent of their Title I funding to involve families in the school community; 90 percent of those dollars must be distributed by the district, with priority given to high-need schools.

Families are to be actively engaged in the development of district improvement plans. Districts are required to “provide the coordination, technical assistance, and other support necessary to assist and build the capacity” of schools to implement effective family engagement activities to improve student academic outcomes and school quality.

*“Teaching our students that they can make important decisions through voting and advocacy has rippled forward to families as well. Some of the winning projects have also deepened parent commitment by putting parents in project champion roles. I believe the process has helped us bring forward more parent voices and more parent leaders, making parent involvement an even stronger key lever within our school community.”*

*Educator, P.S. 139, Brooklyn, NY*

Districts are expected to engage families to identify the barriers that impede greater participation and the needs of family members to support their student’s learning. Based on feedback from families, districts are asked to design effective engagement policies and activities. ESSA provides examples in engagement activities such as establishing a Parent Advisory Board; providing professional development to school administrators, teachers, and other school-level staff; supporting programs that engage families at home, in the community, and in schools; collaborating with external organizations to increase family engagement; and implementing



other activities and strategies that are consistent with the policies and goals of the district. PB can be an impactful framework for engaging families.

**When schools elect to include teachers and staff, PB provides the framework to engage teachers and families to collectively allocate funds for school improvement efforts. Participation in the PB process allows teachers the opportunity to share their expertise, experiences, and insight into the challenges they face in and outside of the classroom. 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. Having teacher input throughout the process has a positive impact on the success of the program or interventions.**

**The benefits of involving families and community stakeholders in the PB process are twofold. Families and community stakeholders add a varied perspective of the issues impeding students' academic success. 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.**

### **ESSA: School Quality/Student Success**

ESSA requires that state accountability systems include at least one indicator of school quality/student success (SQSS) beyond test scores, academic growth, English language proficiency, and the graduation rates. ESSA provides examples of non-academic measures such as student engagement; educator engagement; student access to and completion of advanced coursework; post-secondary readiness; and school climate and safety. Carefully chosen measures can help identify inequities in access and outcomes to opportunities and can help guide/direct improvement.

### ***Student Engagement***

Student engagement can be a powerful indicator of SQSS. Engagement leads to increased academic outcomes, higher attendance and graduation rates. Students are engaged when they focus on relevant tasks, feel that their work matters, and can see tangible results of their efforts. Student engagement is spurred by curiosity, creativity, success, and positive relationships.<sup>13</sup> PB merges student voice with student engagement. Student voice gives students input but doesn't

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<sup>13</sup> Richard Strong, Harvey Silver, and Amy Robinson. "Strengthening Student Engagement: What Do Students Want?" (September 1995). Educational Leadership, Volume 53, Number 1. ASCD  
<http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/sept95/vol53/num01/Strengthening-Student-Engagement@-What-Do-Students-Want.aspx>

guarantee influence. Engagement places students in the position to turn input into action. Students become the driver of the work – from conceptualization to implementation.

Project-based learning activities, such as PB, create opportunities for students to develop that deep sense of curiosity. During the PB process, students apply a theory of change. Students think critically about complex issues and ask “why,” “what if,” and “how.” PB also sharpens student creativity. PB allows students to generate innovative ideas that reflect their experiences and perceptions. The PB process also helps students feel a sense of success and accomplishment. With PB, students work collaboratively toward a defined common goal. PB provides students with the tools (classroom instruction and a well-defined process, timeline, and deliverable) ensuring success. PB fosters relationships among students and between students and school-level staff. Students practice empathy, compromise, negotiation, and cooperation to reach consensus.

*“If youth engagement initiatives are to be successful in engaging youth, they must move beyond the token involvement of young people. True engagement requires youth have genuine and meaningful opportunities to make their voices heard and to have an impact on the problems that concern them.”*

Sarah S. Pearson and Heather M. Voke. *Building an Effective Citizenry: Lessons Learned from Initiatives in Youth Engagement*. Washington, DC: American Youth Policy Forum, 2003.

#### ***Positive School Climate Framework***

The school community has a shared vision and plan for promoting and sustaining a positive school climate.

The school community sets policies specifically promoting 1) the development of social, emotional, ethical, civic, and intellectual skills and 2) a comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage students who have been disengaged.

The school community’s practices are identified, prioritized, and supported to 1) promote the learning and positive social, emotional, ethical, and civic development of students, 2) enhance engagement in learning and teaching, and school-wide activities, 3) address barriers to learning and engagement, 4) develop and sustain an appropriate infrastructure for meeting the standard.

The school community creates an environment where all members are welcomed, supported and engaged.

The school community develops meaningful and engaging practices, activities, and norms that promote social and civic responsibilities.

Source: National School Climate Council

#### ***School Climate***

School climate is also used as an indicator of SQSS. A school with a positive school climate provides a safe, supportive environment and encourages respectful and trusting relationships. The National School Climate Council highlights the impact of a positive school climate on youth development and learning as “necessary for a productive, contributing, and satisfying life in a

democratic society.”<sup>14</sup> A positive school climate includes norms and expectations that support social, emotional, and physical safety; students and educators are engaged and respected; students, families, and educators work collaboratively to develop a shared school vision; teachers promote a love of learning; all members of a school community contribute to the operations and success of the school.

Students’ experiences of school climate vary by race/ethnicity. Researchers found that there were significant disparities in students’ sense of connectedness to school, positive relationships with adults in the school, and feelings of high expectations.<sup>15</sup> Differences exist between schools and within schools. PB promotes a positive school climate for all students. A critical element in PB is the engagement of all students, particularly students from historically marginalized populations. Involving all students in authentic decision making advances positive social, emotional, ethical, and civic responsibility for all students, eliminating school-climate gaps.

**PB provides an ideal framework to increase student engagement and improve school climate. PB provides students with the tools to apply critical thinking skills, creativity, and positive relationships with their peers and adults. PB provides students to focus on real issues at their school and realize the results of their efforts. Through PB, students actualize social and civic responsibilities.**

**PB fulfills the standards of positive school climate outlined by the National School Climate Council. PB creates a school-wide vision and plan for school improvement. PB presents a structure to address barriers that impede a positive school climate. By taking deliberate steps to engage all students, PB creates a school environment where all students feel respected, supported, and engaged.**

**Student engagement and school climate can be quantified through student surveys, by teacher observations, or by the degree of participation in extracurricular activities. Surveys are an effective method for assessing engagement, as well as uncovering issues that impact student success and could be tackled through PB.**

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<sup>14</sup> “National School Climate Standards: Benchmarks to Promote Effective Teaching, Learning, and Comprehensive School Improvement.” National School Climate Council.

<https://www.schoolclimate.org/themes/schoolclimate/assets/pdf/policy/school-climate-standards.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Austin, G., Nakamoto, J. and Bailey, J. (2010). “Racial/ethnic differences in school performance, engagement, safety, and supports.” *CHKS Factsheet #9*. San Francisco: WestEd.

## State Policies that are Compatible with Participatory Budgeting

ESSA provides states with the flexibility to customize their plan for educational success. The plans outline how the State Department of Education intends to reach their educational goals, describes their approaches to school improvement, and updates their accountability systems and performance reporting structures.

**States have the responsibility to provide all students with a well-rounded education and the flexibility to determine what that means and how to ensure it.**

States align curriculum, assessments, and accountability systems to prioritize the skills graduates need to be successful after high school. Based on their perspective of well-rounded education, states can define the characteristics of a high school graduate and adjust graduation requirements to include attributes associated with civic engagement and citizenship.

### Civics Curriculum and Instruction

The majority of states require their high school students to take social studies or civics courses. With the promise to provide students with a well-rounded education, many states are including social studies in their sequence of “high stakes” tests. Tests are considered “high stakes” if students must meet or exceed a specific cut-score in order to pass the course, transition to the next grade, or graduate from high school. Twenty states administer a high-stakes assessment(s) in social studies (civics, economics, geography, government, and history).<sup>16</sup>

Students in the following states must pass a civics exam to graduate:

- Alabama
- Arizona
- Arkansas
- Idaho
- Kentucky
- North Dakota
- Utah
- Wisconsin

In addition, the following states administer high-stakes testing in social studies/civics courses:

- Florida – Civics, History – in course grade – in SQSS
- Georgia – US History, Economics – in course grade – in SQSS
- Louisiana – US History – in course grade – in SQSS
- Maryland – American Government – pass to graduate
- Mississippi – US History – passing score is option for graduation – in SQSS
- New Mexico – US History, US Government, Economics, NM History – must pass 1 to graduate

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<sup>16</sup> *How Do Assessments Matter – And for Whom? Making Sense of the High School Student’s Assessment Experience.* (May 2019). Achieve. [https://www.achieve.org/files/2019%20Assessments%20Brief\\_final\\_1.pdf](https://www.achieve.org/files/2019%20Assessments%20Brief_final_1.pdf)

New York – US History & Government, Global History and Geography – in State Accountability  
Ohio – American History, American Government in SQSS  
South Carolina – US History & the Constitution – in course grade – in SQSS  
Tennessee – US History, Geography – in course grade  
Texas – US History – pass to graduate – in accountability: achievement and growth  
Virginia – Civics, Economics, Economics & Personal Finance, World History & Geography – pass 1 to graduate

In most cases, however, state curricula do not focus on developing the skills for effective civic engagement. The District of Columbia and Maryland have a community service requirement. Although most states do not require community service, 23 states give academic credit for community service activities. Project-based learning and community service opportunities teach students to address issues in their communities and prepare them for the responsibilities of citizenship.

*“The value is to teach students to deeply understand that they own their democracy, that they have a really important role to play in the direction the community goes, and that problems are solvable.”*

Catherine Brown, Vice President for Education Policy at the Center for American Progress

### ***Action Civics***

Action Civics is a civics education course where students learn about the political process by taking action in their communities. Through Action Civics, students examine issues that directly affect them and their community, consider the root causes of issues, and develop an action plan to address them. Action Civics programs encourage students to present their work to community leaders. The program strengthens students’ ability to reflect on what they have learned, the impact of their actions, and how they can remain active and politically engaged moving forward.

Sources:

Generation Citizen

<https://generationcitizen.org>

Mikva Challenge

<https://mikvachallenge.org>

National Action Civics Collaborative

<http://actioncivicscollaborative.org/>

Although states set the framework and subject-specific standards, local districts determine how the standards are met. Many districts are using Action Civics.

PB, paired with Action Civics coursework, is a powerful tool for supporting civic learning and engagement, preparing students for citizenship. Together PB and Action Civics courses put civics instruction into practice. Students learn by doing.

In the classroom, the Action Civics curriculum teaches students to examine community issues, research root causes and potential solutions, implement interventions, and reflect on the process. Building on the classroom instruction, PB adds a critical layer to civic learning and engagement by providing students with an opportunity to solve school-based issues that impact them directly. PB reinforces the value of collaboration, negotiation, and empathy to address complex issues.

PB complements social studies curriculum and instruction by providing a hands-on approach to civic learning and engagement. When students are engaged, they participate deeply in their learning. PB cultivates an acute interest in social studies and can lead to increased academic performance.

Through the implementation of PB, students see the relevance of what they are taught in social studies classrooms. During the PB process, students are asked to apply what they are learning to solve complex, real-life problems. The PB process brings relevance to the classroom by involving the following attributes:

- Higher Order Thinking. PB requires students to predict, hypothesize, justify, interpret, evaluate, analyze, and communicate.
- Holistic Understanding of Issues. PB requires students to articulate the issues, problems, root causes, and potential solutions.
- Multi-disciplinary Approach. PB requires students to make connection across disciplines and use that to solve complex, real-life problems. Students incorporate concepts and methods from multiple disciplines.
- Collaboration. PB requires students to collaborate with their peers and adults. Students strengthen their active communication skills through the development and presentation of projects.

### Indicator of School Quality/Student Success

ESSA gives states the flexibility to define their accountability systems and formulas. This flexibility allows states to craft definitions of success that reflect the goals and aspirations for their students. At a minimum, state accountability must include academic achievement on state assessments, student growth/progress in ELA and math, the four-year adjusted cohort graduation rate, and progress in achieving English language proficiency. ESSA also introduced a fifth indicator, School Quality/Student Success (SQSS), to accountability.

#### ***SQSS Indicator Requirements***

Measures variability among schools;  
Is valid and reasonable;  
Is used within each grade level;  
Is comparable and applicable statewide; and  
Is measured and reported annually for all students and disaggregated by subgroups.

States have the ability to define and measure SQSS in ways that reflect their values and vision for student success. Common measures of SQSS in state accountability systems include:

- Chronic Absenteeism (37 states) is the percentage of students who missed 10 percent or more of school days.
- College and Career Readiness (34 states) may include Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) participation rates and scores, ACT and SAT scores, dual enrollment and other post-secondary participation.
- Science Proficiency (14 states) measured by the percentage of students scoring proficient or higher on the standardized state science assessment.

- Social Studies Proficiency (7 states) measured by the percentage of students scoring proficient or higher on the standardized state social studies assessment.
- Ninth Grade On-Track Indicator (10 states) measured by the percentage of ninth graders who earn credits and are considered on-track to graduate in four years.
- Engagement and Climate Surveys (9 states) measured by surveys that assess things such as student and teacher engagement, school safety, family involvement, etc.

Other indicators include access to physical education, access to arts, access to Librarian/Media Specialist, access and success in courses beyond the “core,” participation in career exploration, progress closing achievement gaps, and extended graduation rates. Nine states include measures of student engagement or school climate as a component of their SQSS indicator.

**Implementing PB is likely to increase measures of School Quality/Student Success (SQSS). PB has a positive impact on student engagement and school climate.**

With PB, students feel respected and that their opinions are valued. Giving students a voice in decision making is a powerful tool for engagement. Engaging students and helping them feel like a part of the solution (rather than the problem) results in a more positive school climate.

Arkansas

- SQSS includes a measure of student engagement for grades K-11

Idaho

- SQSS includes satisfaction and engagement surveys for all grades

Illinois – Climate survey

- SQSS includes a school climate survey to capture the voices of students (grades 6-12), families, teachers, administrators, and Illinois Board of Education on topics like school safety, relationships, and engagement

Iowa

- SQSS includes a Conditions for Learning index as measured by a student survey measuring three domains: safety (physical and emotional), engagement (diversity, student to student relationships, adult to student relationships), and environment (physical environment and expectations of rules and enforcement)

Maryland

- SQSS includes a school climate survey (students and teachers) for grades K-12 that evaluates climate under four domains (relationships, safety, environment, and engagement) and is planning to implement a parent survey in the future.

Montana

- SQSS includes a student survey covering school climate, behavior issues, and engagement for grades K-12

New Mexico

- SQSS includes an Opportunity to Learn (OLT) survey to evaluate the quality of instruction and school environment for grades K-12; domains include school safety, climate, culture, and responsiveness to community needs. The survey instrument was

selected through stakeholder engagement and community feedback to define “other school quality” or student success.

#### North Dakota

- SQSS includes a student engagement survey for all grades

#### South Carolina

- SQSS includes a student engagement survey to measure the Positive and Effective Learning Environment defined as “the degree to which the school climate supports and fosters high levels of engagement” for grades K-12. Domains represented in the survey are:
  - Behavioral engagement – student’s efforts in the classroom
  - Cognitive engagement – student’s investment in learning
  - Emotional engagement – student’s feelings about the classroom and school

States may also choose blended indicators (combination of academic, engagement and climate, and post-secondary success) as measures of school quality or student success. Nebraska’s new accountability system integrates various components (academic and non-academic) for accountability. Connecticut and New Hampshire use climate surveys for public reporting. California and Tennessee are considering adding a survey component to measure SQSS.

Some school districts (Austin Independent School District, Washoe County School District (Nevada) and CORE District in California, among others) administer surveys and collect data for diagnostic purposes and to share with the community. Surveys can provide a complete and objective picture of a school’s climate if validated, bias is considered, and participation rates are high and representative of the population.

**PB supports student engagement. Students are engaged when they focus on meaningful issues, are provided with the tools to make an impact, and see tangible results of their efforts. PB provides the framework to fully engage students in decision making. PB merges student voice with action.**

**PB promotes a positive school climate. PB facilitates collaboration, respect, transparency, and accountability. All students are engaged and work together to solve school-level issues. Students gain a deep sense of responsibility and accomplishment.**

#### *Graduation Requirements*

In an effort to make high school graduation requirements more meaningful, states have aligned graduation requirements with college, career, and civic readiness. In addition to course and exit exam requirements, states have adopted non-academic requirements. Some states have shifted to proficiency-based competency (for example Kentucky, Maine, and Vermont). In states such as Massachusetts, Colorado, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island, graduation requirements are generally established by local school boards.



### ***Top Ten Skills Required by Employers***

Complex problem solving  
Critical thinking  
Creativity  
People management  
Coordinating/collaborating with others  
Emotional Intelligence  
Judgement and decision making  
Service orientation  
Negotiation  
Cognitive flexibility

Source: Gray, A. (2016). The 10 Skills You Need to Thrive in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. World Economic Forum.  
<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/01/the-10-skills-you-need-to-thrive-in-the-fourth-industrial-revolution/>.

### ***College and Career Readiness***

The Commonwealth of Virginia created a “Profile of a Graduate” after engaging community stakeholders in conversations about the extent to which high school students graduate “college and career ready.” The Profile identifies the skills and experiences that students must exhibit to be “college and career ready.” These include content knowledge, workplace skills, community engagement and civic responsibility, and career exploration.<sup>17</sup> The Virginia State Board of Education proposed changes to the graduation requirements and accountability system to reflect the qualities associated with the community-informed Profile.

Similarly, Vermont’s “Portrait of a Graduate” specifies cognitive, personal, and interpersonal skills that students must exhibit upon graduation. The Portrait was developed through collaboration of students, educators, and community stakeholders. Domains include learner agency, global citizenship, academic proficiency, communication, critical thinking and problem solving, and well-being.<sup>18</sup>

### ***Civic Readiness***

An increasing number of states require students to answer questions from the USCIS Naturalization Exam as a condition of high school graduation; tests in Arizona, Arkansas, Idaho, Indiana, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, North Dakota, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin include questions from the USCIS Naturalization Exam. Some states require students to meet a minimum benchmark score in order to graduate.<sup>19</sup>

States align their graduation requirements to civic engagement and citizenship competencies. For example, in addition to requiring financial literacy, Ohio offers students an opportunity to graduate with a Civic Engagement Honors diploma. The District of Columbia requires students to complete 100 hours of community service. Maryland requires 75 hours of community service.

<sup>17</sup> iNACOL Issue Brief. “Redefining Student Success: Profile of a Graduate.”

<sup>18</sup> “A Vermont Portrait of a Graduate.” Vermont Agency of Education.  
<https://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/edu-a-vt-portrait-of-a-graduate-with-performance-indicators.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> “Civics Test Graduation Requirement.” Council of State Social Studies Specialists.  
<https://cs4.socialstudies.org/resourcesmain/new-item4/new-item>

Massachusetts integrates civic learning through service learning projects to engage with the community. Idaho requires students to complete a senior project, which must include a written report and oral presentation.

*"[There is a] happy convergence between the skills most needed in the global knowledge economy and those most needed to keep our democracy safe and vibrant."*

Tony Wagner, Director of the Change Leadership Group at Harvard Graduation School of Education.

**PB supports many skills associated with college and career readiness. Through PB, students practice complex problem solving and critical thinking. Students work closely with their peers and teachers, learning to collaborate and negotiate to arrive at practical and innovative solutions to real issues.**

**PB provides a structure for students to practice in active citizenship and promotes civic knowledge, skills, motivation, and inspiration. PB helps develop the characteristics and qualities of a high school graduate who is prepared for active citizenship.**

#### Attention to Equity

States are accountable for closing achievement gaps and ensuring all students have the support and resources to reach their highest potential. Disaggregated student outcome data illustrate the inequities in access and opportunity that exist among districts, among schools, and within schools. Culturally responsive teaching provides equitable opportunities to learn and fosters a cooperative learning environment that benefits students from diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds, gender and sexual orientations, abilities and disabilities, and socioeconomic status. When curriculum and instruction is culturally relevant, all students, especially those from historically marginalized populations, can succeed in school and beyond. The school and classroom become the center of change; teachers adjust their methods to help students and bring positive changes to their community.

In addition to engaging curriculum and instruction, a more equitable educational environment is built on student empowerment. Districts and schools promote equity to eliminate opportunity gaps by consistently creating a safe, affirming, and empowering environment where students can build community, gain confidence, and develop leadership skills. By engaging all students, schools are developing students equipped to be active citizens and change agents who will positively influence their school and community.

**A core tenet of PB is equity. PB honors and respects cultural and situational diversity of students and actively promotes understanding of differences. PB deliberately uses strategies to engage all student, particularly historically marginalized student populations.**

**PB 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. By engaging all students in the PB process, schools "civic education gaps" are eliminated. Supporting PB enables equitable opportunities for student success and civic learning and engagement.**

## Implementing Participatory Budgeting in Schools and Districts

Schools and districts across the country are implementing PB to engage students, families, teachers, and staff in the budgeting process. PB deliberately engages all students to consider various ways to improve teaching and learning. The PB process leads to innovative solutions to deep rooted, complex challenges.

**PB fosters student leadership and development, advances student voice in decision making, and involves students and educators together in meaningful civic experiences.**

### School-Supported Implementation of PB

Schools use PB to engage students to allocate resources. Funds for PB have been made available through school district budgets, school budgets, administrator discretionary funds, Parent Association budgets, student government budgets, student activity funds, or local government.

“Participatory budgeting has been a fantastic experience, generating brilliant new ideas to improve the school and amazing engagement from parents and students.”

Teacher (Mary McDonald), P.S. 139, Brooklyn, NY

### ***Bioscience High School, Phoenix, Arizona***

In 2013, Bioscience High School in Phoenix, Arizona became the first school to implement the PB process in the United States. Researchers found that the “hands-on experience with self-governance has great potential to develop democratic knowledge, attitudes, skills, and practices among students.”<sup>20</sup> The study also indicated that when PB is connected to curricular and extracurricular learning activities, students are more likely to develop the knowledge and practices and promote civic learning and engagement.

### ***Overfelt High School, San Jose, California***

In 2015, Overfelt High School became the first school in California to implement PB. Students, families, and school staff used the PB process to allocate \$50,000 of their school’s budget. Under California’s Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), districts are required to consult students to establish funding priorities and develop their budgets; PB became the ideal framework to accommodate the mandates of LCFF. The year-long PB process allowed students, parents and teachers to understand the challenges and needs of the school, to brainstorm and consider various ideas, to research the costs of projects, to engage in discussions about the pros and cons of each, and to vote for the project of their choice.

### ***Primary School 139, Brooklyn, New York***

P.S. 139, a diverse Title 1 school, implemented the PB process to allocate a portion of the Parent Association’s budget. During the Spring of 2017, parents, students, teachers, and staff developed the rules for the process, shared critical information, and solicited as many ideas as possible. The

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<sup>20</sup> (Cohen, M., Schugurensky, D., and Wiek, A. (2015). “Citizenship Education through Participatory Budgeting: The Case of Bioscience High School in Phoenix, Arizona.” *Curriculum and Teaching, Volume 30, Number 2.*

ideas were developed into proposals. Over 600 students and parents voted. Six innovative projects were funded. As a result of PB, parents gained a better understanding of the budgeting process and were motivated to continue engagement in the school and Parent Association. Students “got a unique opportunity to learn about democracy by doing democracy.”<sup>21</sup> The school principal was so impressed with the success of PB that she included additional funding available for allocation by the PB. The process has continued annually since the first cycle, and stakeholder engagement have increased each year.

### ***Acorn/Gotham and John Jay Educational Campus, Brooklyn, New York***

In Spring 2019, Acorn/Gotham and John Jay Educational campuses became the first schools in the nation to combine PB and policy development focused on school safety, as defined by students. The schools used PB to decide how to spend \$1 million (\$500,000 per campus) on capital projects to make their schools safer and more secure with funds from the Brooklyn Borough President’s budget. They also allocated \$10,000 on each campus for programs, services, and smaller purchases. According to Brooklyn Borough President Eric L. Adams, “Our students are directly investing in the future of their schools; this is what democracy looks like. ... It’s a very empowering feeling when you no longer feel as though someone is dictating to you, and it has a real impact on the future of a young person’s democratic participation as well as how they interact with their peers.”<sup>22</sup>

### **District-Supported Implementation of PB**

District-supported PB has many benefits. District-supported PB provides transparency and builds trust in district and school board leadership. Community members become more informed and actively involved in public education, gaining a better sense of the challenges and resource constraints. District-supported PB gains from the insights of students, families, and teachers. District-supported PB leads to equitable participation and decision making and brings diverse members of the community together.

### ***Phoenix Union High School District, Phoenix, Arizona***

During the 2016-17 school year, Phoenix Union High School District became the first school district to allocate district funds to PB. Phoenix Union, a relatively large, diverse urban school district, first piloted PB in five public high schools and have since scaled up; PB now runs in all schools in the district. Students at each campus used PB to budget to fund school improvement projects starting with a Student Steering Committee responsible for the planning and design of the process and ends with the debrief and evaluation. Students generate ideas, develop proposals based on the ideas, and select the projects to be funded.

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<sup>21</sup> “Participatory Budgeting in Elementary Schools: You’re Never too Young for Democracy.” (August 29, 2017). Participatory Budgeting Project.

<https://www.participatorybudgeting.org/participatory-budgeting-elementary-schools-youre-never-young-democracy/>

<sup>22</sup> “BP Adams and PBP Unveil Results of the First In-The-Nation Participatory Budgeting Vote Focused on School Safety.” (April 8, 2019). Bklyn.

<https://www.brooklyn-usa.org/bp-adams-and-pbp-unveil-results-of-the-first-in-the-nation-participatory=budgeting-vote-focused-on-school-safety/>

*“The impact that the PB experience is having on student and our educational community at Phoenix Union can’t be understated. The initiative is helping us create an environment that nurtures leadership in our student, promotes civic engagement, and builds community throughout every school in our district.”*

Dr. Chad E. Gestson, Superintendent, Phoenix Union High School District<sup>23</sup>

### ***New York City, New York***

In his 2018 State of the City address, Mayor de Blasio outlined a 10-point plan to strengthen democracy and encourage civic participation. Empowering high school students through PB was an important component of his plan. The Department of Education responded accordingly and initiated PB in schools.

*“We’ve got to prove to our young people that they’ve got the power to change the world around them. When people feel empowered, they participate. When they can see the impact they’re making, they come back for more. So starting next school year public school students will learn how to stay civically engaged and to fight for the future they believe in with our civics for all initiative and they will learn in a hands-on way by putting their skills to their test right there in their own school building.”*

Mayor Bill de Blasio, 2018 State of the City Address. (February 13, 2018).<sup>24</sup>

During the 2020 fiscal year, 156 participating schools all received \$2,000 for their *Civics for All: Participatory Budgeting* allocation.<sup>25</sup> The *Civics for All* initiative dedicates funding for projects “proposed, researched, and promoted by students that will improve the students’ quality of life at school.”<sup>26</sup>

*“This project is meant not only to educate students about how participatory budgeting works, but also to empower the students by involving them in a process requiring them to demonstrate, in a meaningful way, the skills and knowledge introduced and honed during Economics and Participation in Government courses.”*

NYC Department of Education. *Civics for All: Participatory Budgeting in Your School*. (2020-21.)

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<sup>23</sup>“Center for the Future of Arizona awarded \$110,000 to expand civic engagement initiative across all schools in Phoenix Union High School District.” Center of the Future of Arizona, New Release. (October 18, 2017). <https://www.arizonafuture.org/news/news-release/center-for-the-future-of-arizona-awarded-110000-to-expand-civic-engagement-initiative-across-all-schools-in-phoenix-union-high-school-district.html>

<sup>24</sup>

<https://www1.nyc.gov/office-of-the-mayor/news/095-18/official-transcript-mayor-de-blasio-presents-2018-state-the-city>

<sup>25</sup> School Allocation Memorandum No. 89, FY 2020. (January 28, 2020). New York City Department of Education. [https://www.nycenet.edu/offices/finance\\_schools/budget/DSBPO/allocationmemo/fy19\\_20/fy20\\_docs/fy2020\\_sam089.htm](https://www.nycenet.edu/offices/finance_schools/budget/DSBPO/allocationmemo/fy19_20/fy20_docs/fy2020_sam089.htm)

<sup>26</sup> *Civics for All: Participatory Budgeting in Your School*. Updated for 2019-20. NYC Department of Education. [https://www.weteachnyc.org/media2016/filer\\_public/70/d7/70d78916-1ebf-4ef4-9d70-9e52271eeef7/cfa\\_participatory\\_budgeting\\_guide\\_2019\\_digital.pdf](https://www.weteachnyc.org/media2016/filer_public/70/d7/70d78916-1ebf-4ef4-9d70-9e52271eeef7/cfa_participatory_budgeting_guide_2019_digital.pdf)

Since initiating PB, they have scaled up over the past few years. During the first year of the pilot in 2019, 48 public high schools in New York City ran a PB process; over 150 schools implemented PB in the second years. PB plans to extend to all 400-plus high schools within the next three years.

## Assessing District and School-level Compatibility with Participatory Budgeting

District and school administrators can assess how PB aligns with their vision, values, and culture using the PB Compatibility Assessment rubric, a tool describing various levels of compatibility (Highly Compatible, Compatible, Neutral) based on a set of criteria.

The rubric helps district and school leaders understand to what extent the policies and practices at their district or school are compatible with PB. The PB Compatibility Assessment rubric is also formative and illustrates what steps could be taken to enhance compatibility with PB. Districts and schools can use the rubric to monitor and assess their progress as they work towards aligning compatibility with PB. The rubric is also a helpful tool that allows districts and schools to recognize their strengths (as related to PB) and limitations and direct their efforts accordingly.

### Components of the PB Compatibility Assessment Rubric

There are three components of the rubric. The Criteria presents the aspects of policy or practice that will be assessed. The PB Compatibility Assessment rubric is organized based on the following criteria: Policy (State and Local), Commitment to Civic Learning and Engagement, Community Engagement Capacity; and Resource capacity. Each criterion is divided into sub-indicators.

Within each criterion, there are examples of policies and practices that are associated with the levels of compatibility (Highly Compatible, Compatible, and Neutral). Descriptors provide examples and are not meant to be inclusive of the types of policies and practices represented by each compatibility level.

Compatibility levels refers to the rating scale describing compatibility within each criterion and are described as Highly Compatible, Compatible, and Neutral.

- Highly Compatible indicates that current policies and practices are aligned to the vision and values of PB. The foundation for PB is in place. Implementation of the PB process would likely be a natural addition to community engagement and budgeting processes that exist within the district or school.
- Compatible indicates that current policies and practices are complementary to the PB process. Much of the groundwork for the successful implementation of PB is in place.
- A Neutral rating does not indicate that the district or school is not ready, willing, or able to successfully implement PB; however, it may indicate that the pathway to PB implementation is less clear.

### Limitations of the Rubric

The rubric provides a structure for evaluating the alignment of policies and practices. The framework does not discourage PB implementation based on the compatibility levels. Furthermore, the framework does not necessarily imply that one criterion of the rubric is more valuable than another or that districts, schools, and policymakers must move in any particular direction within the rubric. Rather, it provides a holistic approach to explore the extent to which PB may be applicable and relevant in supporting the vision and mission of the district.



## Assessing Compatibility

The Compatibility Assessment rubric allows for self-assessment of conditions that are relevant for the successful implementation of PB by providing examples. The rubric helps education leaders consider their current conditions (policies and practices); evaluate their goals for civic learning and engagement, school improvement, and budgeting; establish short- and long-term expectations; and understand their unique circumstances that would lead to successful outcomes using the PB process.

### **Policy – State**

#### ESSA – Well-Rounded Education

- **Highly Compatible** – In defining a well-rounded education, your State Department of Education places a high value on civic learning and engagement. The state-adopted “profile of a graduate” includes content knowledge, workplace skills, community engagement, civic responsibility, and career exploration.  
High school students are required to take and pass social studies and civics courses in order to graduate. Graduation requirements also include a project-based learning component, community service, or capstone project to teach students to address issues in their communities and prepare them for the responsibilities of citizenship.
- **Compatible** - In defining a well-rounded education, your State Department of Education places a high value on civic learning and engagement. While there is no formal “profile of a graduate,” most districts understand the importance in content knowledge, workplace skills, community engagement, and civic responsibility.  
High school students are required to take social studies and civics courses but do not need to pass these courses in order to graduate. Students are encouraged but not required to complete community service or capstone project to teach students to address issues in their communities and receive credit toward graduation.
- **Neutral** – In defining a well-rounded education, your State Department of Education places equal value on civic learning and engagement, relative to arts, science, and technology.  
High school students are encouraged but not required to take social studies and civics courses in order to graduate.

#### ESSA – School Quality/Student Success (SQSS)

- **Highly Compatible** – Based on community input, your State Department of Education includes positive school climate and engagement in its definition of School Quality/Student Success (SQSS). A positive school climate is when students and teachers feel supported, empowered, and respected and is measured by student and teacher surveys or on-site reviews of practice (School Quality Reviews). Engagement is inclusive of behavioral engagement (students participate in academic and extracurricular activities), emotional engagement (students have positive relationships with teachers and students), and cognitive engagement (students are invested in learning); particular care is taken to ensure historically marginalized youth are engaged. Teacher engagement is when

teachers feel a deep connection to school improvement in and outside of the classroom and play an active role in decision making.

Family engagement is also a critical component in SQSS. Your state administers surveys to provide insight into the degree that students, teachers, and families believe their school provides a positive and engaging learning environment; surveys are used to guide school improvement efforts.

- **Compatible** – Your State Department of Education includes positive school climate in its definition of School Quality/Student Success (SQSS). A positive school climate is measured by student and teacher surveys. Student and teacher engagement is expected to have a positive influence on school climate. Family engagement is not a statewide priority. Survey results are included in the calculation of SQSS but are not prioritized in school improvement efforts.
- **Neutral** - Your State Department of Education includes college and career readiness, science or social studies proficiency, on-track indicators, or student attendance as a measure of School Quality/Student Success (SQSS). Although student attendance is correlated to positive school climate and engagement, these indicators are not formally included in SQSS. Students and teachers are not surveyed as part of the SQSS indicator.

### ***Policy - Local***

#### School Improvement Plans

- **Highly Compatible** – In developing school improvement plans, your school district engages key stakeholders, including students, families, teachers, union organizations, higher education institutions, and community members. Student, family, and community groups are representative of the population served. Special stakeholder groups, such as Special Education Parent Advisory Councils, English Language Learner Parent Councils, and district partners are also engaged. Engagement begins early in the planning process and continues throughout the process.

Your district supports a comprehensive needs assessment that includes both internal (school-level) and external (community-level) factors. With input from the stakeholder group, the plan is informed by multiple perspectives. The process includes strategic prioritization of needs, a focus on equity, and data-driven decision making. Throughout the school improvement process, stakeholders (teachers, students, families, and community members) are kept informed of the goals and objectives, progress, and results.

The district and school board provide schools with the flexibility to allocate funding and implement interventions that fit the needs of the school community, in accordance with federal, state, and local district requirements.

- **Compatible** - In developing school improvement plans, your school district engages a task force made up of various education stakeholders. Students, families, and community members may be asked to participate, although relatively little effort is made to engage historically marginalized populations.

Your district supports a comprehensive needs assessment based on internal factors, such as disaggregated data analysis and instructional audit or review. Based on data, the task force identifies goals and objectives and prioritizes needs.

Throughout the school improvement process, stakeholders (teachers, students, families, and community members) are kept informed of the goals and objectives, progress, and results.

The district and school board provide schools with limited flexibility to allocate funding and implement interventions that fit the needs of the school community, in accordance with federal, state, and local district requirements.

- **Neutral** - In developing school improvement plans, your school district uses a top-down approach, led by a district-appointed task force. Your district supports a comprehensive needs assessment based on internal factors, such as disaggregated data analysis and instructional audit or review. Based on data, the task force provides a suite of district-supported intervention strategies. The district is responsible for decisions regarding the allocation of funds and implementation of interventions, in accordance with federal, state, and local district requirements.

#### Data Transparency

- **Highly Compatible** – Your district prioritizes data transparency and utilizes a framework, such as a data dashboard, to provide the public with data over and above what is reported at the state-level. Your district engaged stakeholders to identify dashboard metrics that matter most to the community and are used to inform school improvement plans. The dashboard is viewed as a tool that families, teachers, and community members use to initiate honest conversations about the successes and struggles of teaching and learning, school performance, and equity. The data framework is easily accessible; the district offers families and community stakeholders various ways to engage.

In your district, transparency starts with district and school leadership. Communication is key; district and school leaders model transparency by sharing data and information, highlighting strengths and weaknesses, with the community. Leadership supports a foundation of openness to hearing varied perspectives, learning new ideas, and encouraging innovation among teachers. Your district and school foster an authentic collaborative culture, one that is relationship-based, honest, and all-inclusive.

Your district understands the power of data to build trust and confidence. Data is seen as a tool to empower people and fuel improvement, not merely as a tool of compliance. Clear and consistent communication about data promotes public understanding, confidence, and trust in the district and school board as good stewards of public funds.

- **Compatible** - Your district emphasizes data transparency and relies on the state-generated framework to provide the public with data. Data are used by the district and schools to inform school improvement plans. The data framework is accessible.

In your district, transparency starts with district and school leadership. District and school leaders share data and information with district and school staff. Within the district, there are some school leaders who welcome varied perspectives, are open to new ideas, and encourage innovation among teachers, although this practice is not consistent throughout the district.

Your district understands the power of data to empower people and fuel improvement, not merely as a tool of compliance.

- **Neutral** - Your district relies on the state-generated framework to provide the public with data. Data are used by the district and schools to inform school improvement plans. Data are accessible to select district and school-level staff.  
In your district, teachers understand the power of data to improve instruction. Teachers work together in professional learning communities to review school and student-level data, but data is rarely shared outside the school community. As a rule, data is seen as a tool of compliance, with limited use as a tool of improvement and innovation.

### ***Commitment to Civic Learning and Engagement***

#### Course Offerings and Requirements

- **Highly Compatible** - Your State Department of Education, district, and school place a high value on civic learning and engagement. There is a universal consensus that college, career, and civic readiness should be the educational goal for all high school graduates. Your district has flexibility in implementation to achieve that goal. Your district adopts a multi-curricular approach in preparing students for citizenship and provides all students with access to deeper learning opportunities.  
Civic engagement is integrated in all components of curricula beginning in elementary school. To improve district practices aimed at increasing civic readiness, teachers and community stakeholders work collaboratively to develop a collective vision of civic readiness and build a clear concept of shared accountability.  
Your district implements a project-based assessment in high school to measure civic learning and demonstrate understanding of public policy. Students participate in service learning and community-based projects, applying academic knowledge to find viable solutions to address real community needs.
- **Compatible** – Your district and school place a high value on civic learning and engagement. Most district and school-level staff agree that college, career, and civic readiness should be the educational goal for all high school graduates. Your district has flexibility in implementation to achieve that goal. Civic engagement is an important component of high school curricula. On a school to school basis, teachers and community stakeholders work collaboratively to develop a collective vision of civic readiness and build a clear concept of shared accountability.  
Your district supports student participation in service learning and community-based projects. Although service learning is not a requirement of graduation, students receive credit toward graduation for completion of student learning or community-based projects.
- **Neutral** – Many schools in your district prioritize civic learning. Staff at your school understand that college, career, and civic readiness should be the educational goal for all high school graduates but are not sure of research-based strategies. Teachers are interested in developing a collective vision of civic readiness.  
Your school offers limited opportunities for service learning and community-based projects, but students who complete service learning projects receive credit toward graduation.

#### Use of High-Engagement Pedagogy

**Highly Compatible** – Action Civics is a priority in your district and school. Civic engagement includes a broad array of activities that teaches students how to effect policy

change by engaging with decision makers to address community issues. Your district requires schools to teach a state standards-aligned course where students participate in real-world democracy. In your district and school, students learn how government works by participating in hands-on, thought-provoking learning experiences in and outside of the classroom. Students examine issues and events that are particularly important in their own lives. Students are provided the freedom to give their own opinions on controversial issues; diversity in thought is embraced. All schools in your district offer a choice of experiential learning activities and externships, volunteer and community service projects, independent study and applied research projects, and participation in projects focused on advocacy and social equity.

Your school provides extracurricular activities that promote student involvement in their schools and communities and effort is made to ensure that historically marginalized populations are engaged. Your school encourages students to be active in student government (student council, youth advisory boards, department committees, etc.) and supports participation of historically marginalized populations. Such activities offer students the opportunity to work with their peers and community partners to address local community needs and aspirations.

Your district provides students with opportunities to participate in simulations of democratic processes and procedures (mock trials, policy making, model United Nations, etc.). Simulations teach students skills such as public speaking, teamwork, empathy, critical thinking, and collaborative problem solving.

**Compatible** - Civic learning is important to your district and school. Your district requires schools to teach a state standards-aligned civics course. Your district encourages schools to provide students with activities to learn how government works. Many schools offer hands-on, thought-provoking learning experiences in and outside of the classroom. Students examine issues and events that are particularly important in their own lives. Students are provided the freedom to give their own opinions on controversial issues; diversity in thought is embraced.

Many schools in your district offer experiential learning activities and externships, volunteer and community service projects, independent study and applied research projects; however, student participation is not equitable or standardized across schools in your district.

Your school provides various extracurricular activities that promote student involvement in school and communities. Your school encourages students to be active in student government (student council, youth advisory boards, department committees, etc.). Such activities offer students the opportunity to work with their peers and community partners to address local community needs and aspirations.

Some schools in your district provide students with opportunities to participate in simulations of democratic processes and procedures (mock trials, policy making, model United Nations, etc.).

**Neutral** - Civic learning and engagement is important to your district and school. Your district requires schools to teach a civics course (social studies, civics, government, law, or economics). Your district encourages schools to provide students with activities to learn how government works. A few schools offer hands-on, thought-provoking learning experiences in and outside of the classroom.

Your school provides various extracurricular activities that promote student involvement in their schools and communities, such as student government, offering select students the opportunity to work with their peers and community partners to address local community needs and aspirations.

### ***Engagement Capacity***

#### Existing Engagement Activities

- **Highly Compatible** – Your district and school have a history of successfully engaging students, families, teachers, and community members in school-related issues. Your district and school have a solid infrastructure for outreach in place. Your district uses a communications service and social media to keep the community informed and redirect community members to opportunities for deeper, in-person engagement. Your district and school routinely host activities and special events for students, families, and community members and encourage staff to attend non-school, community events.  
School climate is a critical component of SQSS. Your school is invested in capturing student voice through surveys to better understand student interests, concerns, and challenges. Survey results are disaggregated in meaningful ways and used in school improvement efforts. When a more detailed picture of student experiences is needed, your school is prepared to host focus groups to explore complex issues.  
Your school prioritizes family involvement. Your school strives to meet all families where they are and uses various methods to connect, including text messages, emails, phone calls, and house visits. Your school provides resources for families through various workshops, classes, and open houses. Your school is interested in family perception and 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.  
Your school values teacher input. Surveys provide school leaders with a holistic understanding of teacher and staff perceptions and experiences. Your district and school invest in professional development and training on family and community engagement for teachers. Your district and school hire and train school-community liaisons who understand the community’s history, language, and cultural background.  
Asking for and using stakeholder input is not a novel idea in your district. Your school board and district utilize a funding formula that requires stakeholder input. Your school board and district consult with teachers, school leaders, other school staff, local bargaining units of the district, families, and students in developing the budget and accountability plan. Your district has an active Parent Advisory Committee made up of public school parents; membership is representative of the student population. Your district has a systematic process that also allows students, as well as the general public, to review and comment on the budget and plan.
- **Compatible** - Your district and school have made progress in their efforts to engage students, families, teachers, and community members. Your district and school routinely host activities and special events for students, families, and community members and encourage staff to attend non-school, community events.

School climate and culture is a component of SQSS. Your school surveys students to better understand their interests, concerns, and challenges. Survey results are disaggregated in meaningful ways and used in school improvement efforts.

Your school prioritizes family involvement. Your school uses various methods to connect, including text messages, emails, phone calls, and house visits.

Your school values teacher input. Surveys provide school leaders with an understanding of teacher and staff perceptions and experiences. Your district and school invest in professional development and training on family and community engagement for teachers. Your district and school hire and train school-community liaisons who understand the community's history, language, and cultural background.

- **Neutral-** Throughout your district, schools have varied success engaging students, families, teachers, and community members. Your district and school host activities and special events for students, families, and community member, although attendance is variable

School climate and culture is not a component of SQSS, but your school utilizes informal surveys of students on occasion to better understand their interests, concerns, and challenges.

Your school understands the value of family involvement. Your school uses various methods to connect, including text messages, emails, and phone calls.

#### Engagement with an Equity Lens

- **Highly Compatible** – Your district and school emphasize equity and are sensitive to the needs of underserved and marginalized students (minority students, students with disabilities, English language learners, sexual orientation, and students who experience barriers such as poverty, homelessness, high-mobility, and involvement in foster care and juvenile justice systems.) Extra effort is made to promote diversity and inclusion in rigorous courses, extracurricular activities, and district/school governing organizations.

In school improvement efforts, your school recognizes the value of student voice and seeks to amplify the voices that are often underutilized and marginalized. Your school believes that all voices matter because they determine the relevance of strategies, represent authentic youth experiences, and show that all students are valued. Survey participation is representative of the student population. All youth feel engaged and involved in school decision making. Underserved youth are represented on student advisory councils, school boards, and various committees.

Your district and school invest in programs that develop the skills and leadership capacity that students need to become critical and informed problem-solvers. Your school encourages underserved and marginalized students to participate in student government, action research, policy advocacy, and community organizing activities.

Your school uses a variety of media to communicate with families in and outside of school. Outreach to families is considered a vital responsibility of all school staff. Your school partners with organizations representing underserved communities to provide training to empower parents to exercise leadership within schools.

- **Compatible** – Your district and school are sensitive to the needs of underserved and marginalized students. Effort is made to promote diversity and inclusion in rigorous courses, extracurricular activities, and district/school governing organizations.

In school improvement efforts, your school recognizes the value of student voice. Survey participation is representative of the student population.

Your school encourages underserved and marginalized students to participate in student government, action research, policy advocacy, and community organizing activities.

Your school uses a variety of media to communicate with families in and outside of school. Outreach to families is considered a vital responsibility of all school staff.

- **Neutral** - Your district and school are sensitive to the needs of underserved and marginalized students. Although encouraged, little effort is made to promote diversity and inclusion in rigorous courses, extracurricular activities, and district/school governing organizations. Your school uses a variety of media to communicate with families in and outside of school. Many teachers are serious in their efforts to reach out to families, but there is not school-wide consensus regarding the importance and effective strategies of outreach.

#### Partnership Support

- **Highly Compatible** – Partnership development is a priority in your district. Partnerships are strategically developed and maintained. Your district and school partner with local government, businesses and business clubs (Rotary and Kiwanis), faith-based organizations, and civic organizations to establish a strong role in the community. Your school invests in a staff member to generate and engage partners.

Partner organizations often provide financial or in-kind support and volunteers for many school and district projects. Partners are eager to support your school and district, often looking for ways to help. Your school has an active Parent Association or Alumni Association.

Your school and district work closely with higher education institutions and local foundations to improve educational outcomes and serve as a resource for your school improvement efforts.

Your school and district receive financial support from external partners. External funders support research-based school improvement initiatives focused on increasing college, career, and civic readiness, as well as improvements in school quality.

- **Compatible** – Partnership development is ad hoc, but all partnerships add significant value to your school and district improvement and community engagement efforts. Your school has a Parent Association or Alumni Association, although underutilized; there is potential for the association to be more active in school improvement efforts and support. Your school and district have informal partnerships with higher education institutions, local business, and nonprofit organizations.
- **Neutral** – Your district and school partner with nonprofit organizations to provide students with a holistic support and various wrap-around services. Potential partners are eager to engage, however, the path to engagement is unclear.

#### Familiarity with PB

- **Highly Compatible** – Your local government has implemented PB or a similar process to engage the community in decisions regarding the allocation of funds. You have participated in the process and recognize the benefits PB would have for your school or district.



Your school and district offer service learning or community service opportunities to students as a means to engage them and develop their sense of civic responsibility. 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.

Your school and district leadership teams have expressed an interested in learning more about ways to engage students, teachers, and education stakeholders in innovative school improvement initiatives. PB has been mentioned as a viable option to engage students and the school community in the budgeting process.

- **Compatible** – You are familiar with PB and have been thinking about ways to introduce the idea of implementing PB in your school and district. Your local school board is interested in learning about various ways to engage the community, particularly to garner support for school improvement initiatives.
- **Neutral** – You are not familiar with PB but are intrigued by the thought of engaging students in real-life problem solving at your school or in your district. Currently your school and district does not engage students, teachers, and families in decision making; you are interested in exploring options for filling that void.

## Next Steps

### Assess your District and School

Complete the PB Compatibility Assessment rubric to determine how closely PB is aligned with your existing practices and measures of success.

Using the rubric, reflect on the areas of strength and compatibility that currently exist for your district or school and consider areas targeted for “growth.”

Discuss with your district and school leaders about what you learned and your interest in the PB process.

Visit the PBP website to learn more about PB in schools and explore the various resources available that support successful PB implementation.

Work with others (teachers, administrators, superintendent, school board members, community, students, etc.) to develop a plan for PB implementation.

## Appendix A

From:

360 Civic Learning: A Study of the Practices that Cultivate Civic Engagement Among Youth from Underserved Communities

### SELECT PRACTICES THAT DRIVE CIVIC KNOWLEDGE

- Engaging classroom pedagogies:
  - Open climate classrooms (where the discussion of political issues is welcome)
  - Action Civics
  - Simulations
- Civics testing
- Student governance
- Student-led research, or “research in action”
- Youth participatory budgeting
- Discussing current events and news literacy
- Service learning
- Youth participation in municipal councils and boards
- Parent-led discussions (of political systems or current events)
- Involvement in faith-based and community organizations
- Community/ youth organizing

### SELECT PRACTICES THAT DRIVE CIVIC SKILLS

- Practicing civic skills while addressing an important problem in their community:
  - Community/ youth organizing
  - Action Civics
- Debate and discussion in any venue (classroom, home, community, among peers)
- Open classroom climates
- Student governance
- Student-led research, or “research in action”
- Service learning
- Public speaking
- Youth participatory budgeting
- Youth participation on municipal councils and boards
- Journalism activities like investigative reporting or writing op-eds
- Leadership and decision-making roles of any kind
- Self-expression through the arts
- Participation in team-based activities such as sports
- Involvement in faith-based and community organizations
- Engagement in interest-based voluntary organizations or clubs

## SELECT PRACTICES THAT DRIVE CIVIC VALUES / DISPOSITION

- Practicing civic skills while addressing an important problem in their community:
  - Community/ youth organizing
  - Action Civics
- Debate and discussion in any venue (classroom, home, community, among peers)
- Open classroom climates
- Student governance
- Student-led research, or “research in action”
- Service learning
- Youth participatory budgeting
- Youth participation on municipal councils and boards
- Journalism activities like investigative reporting or writing op-eds
- Self-expression through the arts
- Participation in team-based activities such as sports, particularly in leadership positions
- Involvement in faith-based and community organizations
- Engagement in interest-based voluntary organizations or clubs
- Parent civic engagement and education level
- Peer civic participation
- Volunteering
- A sense of belonging or connectedness (e.g. strong religious or ethnic affiliation, or a strong association with one’s neighborhood or school)

## SELECT PRACTICES THAT DRIVE CIVIC EFFICACY<sup>34</sup>

- Practicing civic skills while addressing an important problem in their community:
  - Community/ youth organizing
  - Action Civics
- Student governance
- Democratic and open school climates
- Student-led research, or “research in action”
- Youth participation on municipal councils and boards
- Journalism activities like investigative reporting or writing op-eds
- Parent civic engagement
- A sense of belonging or connectedness (e.g. strong religious or ethnic affiliation, or a strong affiliation to one’s neighborhood or school)
- Student decision making and leadership opportunities

## Appendix B

### *Characteristics of Effective Civic Learning Implementation (Six Proven Practices of High-Quality Civic Learning Experiences)*

*Classroom Instruction:* Courses in government, history, economics, law, and democracy lay the foundation for civic learning.

*Discussion of Current Events and Controversial Issues:* Engaging students in civil dialogue about local, national, and international issues (especially those that are relevant to young people) fosters open-mindedness, compromise, and tolerance of diversity.

*Service-Learning:* Providing students with opportunities to connect formal classroom instruction with democratic processes and practical community problem solving teaches the powerful impact of collaboration. Students learn the workings (particulars or details?) of local government and community politics and the key role they can play to influence making a positive impact on their community.

*Extracurricular Activities:* Activities outside the classroom provide students with opportunities to practice civic skills and knowledge in purposeful ways.

*School Governance:* Effective student government helps students learn critical citizenship skills and practice the democratic process. Giving students a voice in school-level/district-level issues by encouraging active participation in school governance can result in new ideas and initiatives relating to school improvements.

*Simulations of Democratic Processes:* Providing students to engage in simulations of democratic processes (such as voting, policy making, and budgeting) helps students learn skills applicable to both active citizenship and college and career success; students develop skills in public speaking, collaboration, analytical thinking, and complex problem solving.

Source: Guardian of Democracy: The Civic Mission of Schools

