



New York State
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Knowledge > Skill > Opportunity

Participatory Budgeting



Overview

On an annual basis, all Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) schools will be required to implement a Participatory Budgeting Process for the school year **OR** provide opportunities for parent and student engagement in a manner prescribed by the Commissioner of Education.

Purpose

This guidebook is designed to outline expectations and support schools in establishing and implementing the Participatory Budgeting model.

Participatory Budgeting Expectations

Schools pursuing this model must adhere to certain parameters.

Participatory Budgeting Process

Participatory Budgeting follows a defined model with multiple steps. Schools must follow each of these steps:

- First, the school identifies the amount of money to be set aside for PB.
- Next, parents, students, and teachers brainstorm ideas and develop proposals on how they money may be spent to improve the school.
- Then, a Steering Committee reviews the proposals and identifies the final proposals that will appear on the school ballot.
- Finally, the student body and the parents of the school vote on the proposals. The proposal(s) with the most votes are funded.

Site-based Organization of Participatory Budgeting

Schools must also ensure that certain aspects of the process are in place:

- Each school must have a site coordinator and a steering committee that will solicit proposals, vet proposals for feasibility and cost, and organize voting.
- Each school must be as inclusive as possible with its voting process. Participatory Budgeting is designed to support direct democracy, so that all eligible voters have a say in the final results.
- Each school must be willing to dedicate at least \$2,000 toward the proposal(s) that generate the most votes.

What is Participatory Budgeting?

Participatory Budgeting (PB) is a democratic process in which community members decide how to spend part of a public budget. The process is intended to strengthen public input and deepen public engagement in the civic organizations designed to service the public.

Often decision-making rests in the hands of leaders identified to represent their constituencies. The PB model supports direct democracy, allowing parents and students to vote for the projects to be funded. PB allows schools to engage students, parents, teachers, and community members in choosing a school program or improvement to fund.

The process builds understanding of stakeholder perspectives, directs funds to pressing needs and innovative ideas, and helps students and other community members learn democracy and active citizenship.

Benefits of Participatory Budgeting Model

- Strengthens stakeholder input and deepens school community engagement by supporting direct democracy
- Develops student leadership, civic engagement, and confidence in ability to effect change
- Increases students' sense of social responsibility
- Imparts critical career and life skills including problem solving, research, surveying, and financial education

Implementing Participatory Budgeting

Step 1: Design the Process

- Identify a Site Coordinator
- Set up a steering committee
- Identify the amount money to be reserved for Participatory Budgeting
- Identify rules, engagement plan, and timeline

Step 2: Idea Collection

- Parents, students, and teachers brainstorm ideas and develop proposals on how funds may be spent to improve the school

Step 3: Proposal Development

- The steering committee reviews proposals and determines if they are feasible as written, or if they could become feasible with slight modification.

- The steering committee narrows the list of proposals, ensuring that only those proposals that are can be implemented appear on the final ballot.

Step 4: Vote

- Final proposals are presented in a manner that allows students and parents to identify the proposals are their favorite.
- Students and parents vote on the final proposals.
- The steering committee reviews the voting results and identifies the proposals with the most votes.
- The school announces the results.
- The school funds the proposals with the most results.

Choosing a Site Coordinator

Every school offering Participatory Budgeting must have a Site Coordinator to oversee the process. This person should be knowledgeable about Participatory Budgeting and enthusiastic about extending the opportunity to students and parents to determine how certain funds can be spent.

- Ideal coordinators include administrative interns, Civics teachers, after-school coordinators and parent volunteers

For More Information

Participatory Budgeting can be incorporated into the curriculum in multiple subjects and in multiple grades. Participating schools are encouraged to look for ways to link the school's Participatory Budgeting process to the curriculum and explore the various resources that exist online for Participatory Budgeting.