



## SCHOOL PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

# FLAGSTAFF UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

# 2023-24 Evaluation Report

*In partnership with Center for the Future of Arizona, Arizona State University's Participatory Governance Initiative, and Flagstaff Unified School District.*

In 2023, Flagstaff Unified School District (FUSD) piloted School Participatory Budgeting (SPB). Through SPB, students “learn democracy by doing” through a process of generating ideas, developing proposals, campaigning and deliberating, and voting to fund improvement projects that build stronger school communities.

FUSD partnered with Center for the Future of Arizona (CFA) and Arizona State University's Participatory Governance Initiative (PGI) to pilot, implement, and evaluate the SPB process.

FUSD piloted the process at Coconino and Flagstaff High Schools for students to identify health-related campus improvement projects with \$10,000 budget. Students worked with district and school staff to develop proposals, identify vendors, and approve projects to go on the ballot. After campaigning and deliberating on the options, students across each campus cast their ballot for the winning project.

FUSD partnered with PGI to evaluate the impact of the process from the educator's perspective. This report provides an overview of those findings.

## KEY STAKEHOLDERS

### FUSD District Leaders

- Michael Penca, Superintendent
- Ginger Stevens, Director of Finance & Business Services
- John Shirk, Director of Student Support Services
- Patti Pastor, Career Exploration Coordinator/Instructor

### SPB Advisors

- Center for the Future of Arizona Civic Health Team
- Arizona State University's Participatory Governance Initiative

### School Leaders & Sponsors

- **Flagstaff High School:** Principal Libby Miller; Assistant Administrator of Safety & Restorative Practices, Frank Alvillar Jr; Sponsors Emily Kerr & Jennifer Askew
- **Coconino High School:** Principal Tadd Ragan; Sponsor Derek Born

### Student Steering Committee(s)

- 32 9-12th grade students



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ARIZONA



Participatory  
Governance  
Initiative



ASU Arizona State  
University

## EDUCATOR REFLECTIONS

- “Our students, they’re why we’re here, and it’s really important that we honor their voice. I believe by involving them in decision-making, they’ll feel more ownership and connectedness to the school community.” –*Michael Penca, Superintendent*
- “I think this was a really good experience for [the students] to actually think about like how the school runs, where our money comes from, and why we have to go to certain people to do certain things.” –*Emily Kerr, Sponsor*
- “I was super impressed that we could all get our heads and hearts around something and participate in it.” –*Libby Miller, Principal*
- “[It’s] a functional result that I hope kids will appreciate having had a voice in.” –*Derek Born, Sponsor*
- “I think it’s really positive and really good, the more that you can make [the students] aware of kind of their larger piece of civic duty [and] how the school system works.” –*John Shirk, Director of Student Support Services*
- “[The students] were great at sharing the why, you know, telling the story.” –*Ginger Stevens, Director of Finance and Business Services*

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide a collaborative online space with resources for process implementation and support.
- Adjust the timeline to allow for more time invested in each phase, specifically the phases that require district consultation.
- Allocate time for students to dialogue with district level and school level administrations to ensure understanding of expectations and parameters.



**\$20,000**

**public dollars invested in student-developed, health-related school improvement projects**

**Over 2,000 students cast their ballots, ensuring their voices were counted in improving their school community**

**Over 100 high school students who were eligible and interested were registered to vote for upcoming local, state, and federal elections during their SPB Vote Day at Flagstaff High School**

