

# Youth Citizenship in Action

Evaluation of  
Participatory Budgeting  
in Schools Pilot

October  
2018



**Great Cities  
Institute**

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## **Acknowledgments**

The authors of this report would like to acknowledge the contributions of many people in developing this report. First, we thank the teachers and students who volunteered to take part in this participatory budgeting pilot. This report would not have been possible without their willingness to participate in the evaluation, to be surveyed, observed, and interviewed. Special thanks also to Alderman Gilbert Villegas for contributing \$15,000 to Steinmetz College Prep for their participatory budgeting process, without which the school would not have been able to participate.

Additionally, we thank the Chicago Public Schools' Department of Social Science and Civic Engagement for their interest in participatory budgeting as action civics and their willingness to assist with the evaluation. In particular, we thank Heather Van Benthuisen for her efforts throughout the implementation of the PB process, guidance to teachers, and thoughtful feedback on the evaluation design. Thanks also to Maria Hadden and Olga Bautista of Our City Our Voice for their contributions to the evaluation and their support of data collection during the pilot.

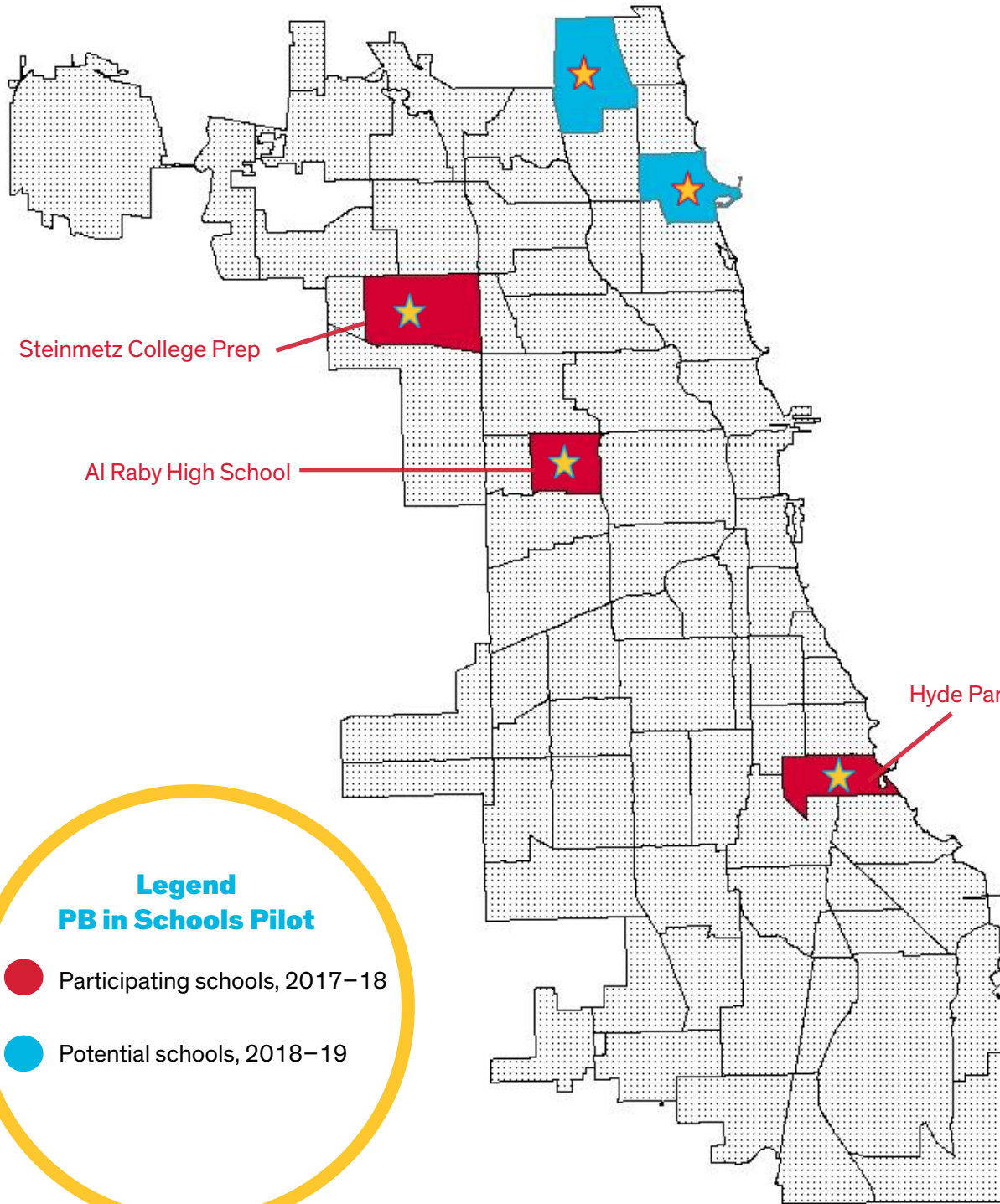
We thank the National Actions Civics Collaborative for making available their Action Civics Standard Student Survey instrument, which was adapted for this pilot. Thanks also to Crown Family Philanthropies for their financial support. Many thanks to Dr. Timothy O. Imeokparia, associate director of research and planning at the UIC Great Cities Institute, for his thoughtful feedback and input on the research design and analysis, and to Norma Hernandez, research assistant, for her assistance with data collection. Thanks also to Dr. Teresa Córdova, director of the UIC Great Cities Institute, for all of her comments and support throughout the process.

This report was made possible by the generous contributions of the Robert R. McCormick Foundation and the Chicago Public Schools Department of Social Science and Civic Engagement.

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Steinmetz College Prep

Al Raby High School

Hyde Park Academy

**Legend  
PB in Schools Pilot**

- Participating schools, 2017-18
- Potential schools, 2018-19



## Executive Summary

**2018** In the spring semester of 2018, high school students at three Chicago Public Schools took part in a participatory budgeting process as part of their civics class. The result? After the process was over, more than 80% of evaluation survey respondents said that they felt like they had the power to influence their communities or school, that people working together can solve community problems better than people working alone, and that they had a better understanding of needs in their community and school. Moreover, because of these students' participation and voting, schools will be able to establish a safe space for students, set up a school spirit store, pay for bathroom repairs, and beautify a cafeteria. The Participatory Budgeting in Schools pilot program—rolled out by PB Chicago, an initiative of UIC's Great Cities Institute in collaboration with Our City Our Voice, together with Chicago Public Schools—revealed these and other overwhelmingly positive results.

This evaluation report, **Youth Citizenship in Action**, prepared by the Great Cities Institute, is based on various data from each participating CPS school in the 2017–18 school year—Al Raby High School, in the East Garfield Park community area; Hyde Park Academy, in Woodlawn; and Steinmetz College Prep, in Belmont Cragin—as well as interviews with teachers who led the process in their classroom, and questionnaires filled out by students in those classrooms. The primary goals of the evaluation were to document the implementation costs and social and educational benefits of the pilot; to determine what students learned as a result of their participation; and to provide results so that CPS, PB Chicago, and other stakeholders can recommend changes to further improve the program as implemented in schools.

**“Civics goals are about students participating, actually getting up, them being movers and shakers. And that is all the PB process is about.”**

—Al Raby Teacher

## **What Is PB in Schools?**

PB in Schools is a pilot that introduces participatory budgeting into the classroom. Participatory budgeting (PB) is a democratic process in which community members directly decide how to spend part of a budget. To that end, the PB Chicago initiative works to further PB processes across the city of Chicago. PB Chicago partnered with Chicago Public Schools (CPS) to design the PB in Schools pilot. In addition to providing training and technical assistance to CPS on how to conduct and implement four stages of a typical PB process (planning, idea collection, proposal development, and voting), the pilot fulfilled students' project-based learning requirement in their Civics course and established a professional learning community of teachers.

## **Results**

A total of 913 students were engaged in making budget decisions during the pilot and vote. The demographic profile of students demonstrates that the majority (89.9% to 98%, varying by school) are low-income students of color who live in historically disenfranchised communities.

Results are categorized according to the pilot goals: (1) to document implementation costs and social and education benefits of the pilot, (2) to determine what students who actively participate in PB learned and determine whether it aligned with existing curriculum outcomes, and (3) to provide data and analysis to enable CPS and PB Chicago to improve the program going forward and make recommendations to that effect.

For the first goal of documenting implementation costs, the total cost was \$10,615 across all three schools. PB Chicago provided 260 hours of training and technical assistance. For the social and educational benefits, teachers at the three schools reported a greater sense of student engagement during the PB process as well as the following:

- Students reporting feeling that they had a voice in their school and in the PB process
- Students using of critical thinking and interdisciplinary skills
- Students gaining a stronger understanding of data and its analysis
- Students having an opportunity to speak up about issues facing their school and communities

For the second goal of determining student learning, Great Cities Institute developed 11 learning outcomes for the pilot that aligned with selected objectives of the CPS Participate curriculum used in all pilot classrooms. Results show that the pilot successfully achieved all 11 learning outcomes. Selected results from student questionnaires include the following:

- 94% indicated that, as a result of the PB experience, they feel that they have a better understanding of how they can use the skills they learn in school in the real world.
- 88% "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that people working together can solve community problems better than people working alone.
- 78% "probably" or "definitely" can analyze an issue to determine its causes.

## Recommendations

This report presents a variety of recommendations based on student questionnaires and teacher interviews that can help improve future implementation of PB in Schools. For example:

- Develop a sustainable pot of money for PB processes to take place in the schools
- Adjust the PB timeline to begin in the fall semester, and involve students in the planning
- Conduct schoolwide votes in all schools and increase the number of voting days to increase engagement
- Consider conducting PB with juniors and/or involving freshmen and sophomores
- Schedule in advance reflection days and conference calls and create a system for sharing tools and information electronically for the professional learning community of teachers
- Include training information on leveraging funds from other sources for use in project implementation

As participating CPS schools prepare to implement PB in Schools during the 2018–19 school year, this report and its results and recommendations can serve as an important tool for bolstering the program in the classroom. As one teacher said, “The civics goals are about students participating, actually getting up, not just letting things happen, but them being movers and shakers. And that is all the PB process is about, it’s about the students participating not the adults telling them what to do but the students generating their ideas. That is what the goal is for the curriculum for students to participate in their civics.”



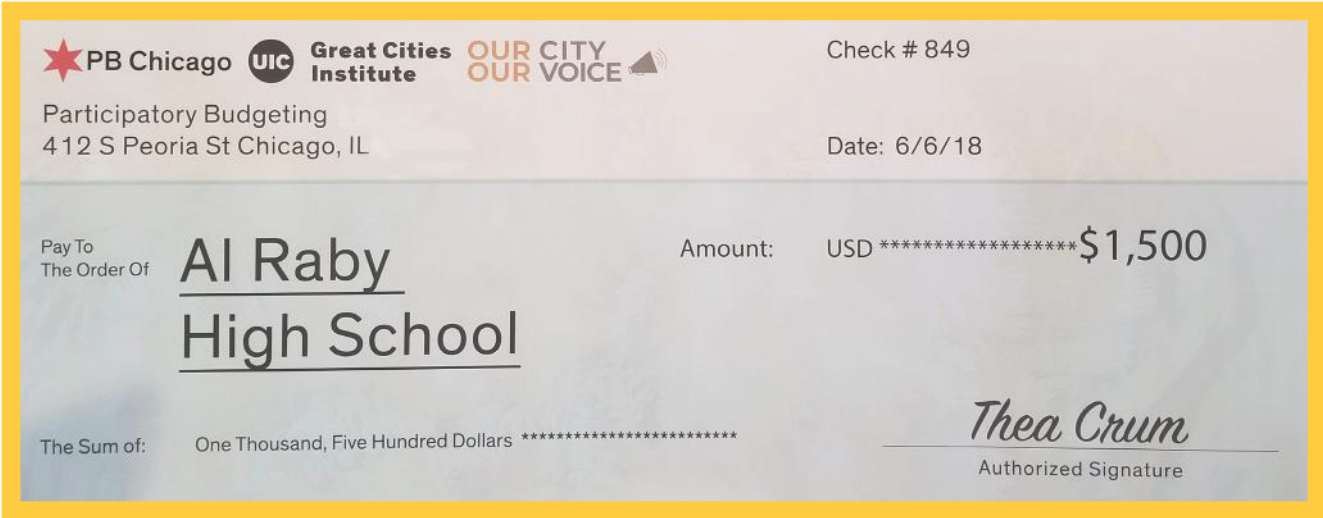
# Background

## What Is Participatory Budgeting?

**PB** or participatory budgeting, is a democratic process in which community members directly decide how to spend part of a public budget. PB began in Brazil in the 1980s, when residents of the city of Porto Alegre voted on how to spend the mayor’s budget to address community needs. Since then, municipalities, counties, and cities across the globe have adopted PB, and the United Nations has promoted it as a best practice of democratic governance. In 2009, Chicago alderman Joe Moore was the first U.S. elected official to use PB to allocate public money.

PB is widely adaptable to a variety of situations and circumstances, from small-scale decisions with a few hundred dollars at stake to multimillion-dollar municipal budgets. Although every PB process is different, in all cases, public officials across jurisdictions give residents access to different pots of public money—such as a school’s discretionary funds or a city’s multimillion-dollar budget line. People then come together to decide how to use that money to address the particular needs of their community. In Chicago, PB has been implemented most often by aldermen in Chicago wards who provide residents with access to discretionary capital budgets, commonly called “menu money.”

Participatory Budgeting Chicago (PB Chicago) is an initiative of the UIC Great Cities Institute, in collaboration with the nonprofit advocacy organization Our City Our Voice. PB Chicago works to further PB processes across the city of Chicago, providing support and assistance to residents and community leaders throughout the process. PB Chicago has always had inclusion of youth as a goal in its various PB processes. To achieve that, aldermen, individuals, and organizations implementing PB have formed youth committees and sponsored events to collect ideas and hold youth PB votes at high schools, among other strategies. Introducing PB into school curricula is a more recent development.





## **Introducing PB into Schools**

In 2015, the Chicago Public Schools' (CPS) Sullivan High School, in Rogers Park, in partnership with Embarc Chicago, UIC Great Cities Institute, Participatory Budgeting Project, Mikva Challenge, and Alderman Joe Moore of the 49th Ward, conducted the second PB process in a school setting in the United States.

The Participatory Budgeting Project later drew from this collaborative experience, among others, to create “A Guide to Participatory Budgeting in Schools,” intended for use by schoolteachers and administrators during facilitation of PB processes in their schools.

After the PB experience at Sullivan, PB Chicago worked on a variety of fronts to incorporate PB in schools and find ways to reach youth and collaborate with teachers and administrators at CPS. For example, PB staff were invited to present at CPS days dedicated to civic engagement and professional development. As a result of this relationship with CPS, and in conjunction with the State of Illinois's recent Civics mandate for high school students, in 2017, the CPS Department of Social Science and Civic Engagement partnered with PB Chicago to pilot a participatory budgeting process in five high schools.

This pilot, known as PB in Schools, was designed to fulfill students' project-based learning requirement in their required Civics course and to establish a professional learning community of teachers and administrators. In conjunction with the CPS Participate civics curriculum—developed by CPS also in response to the new Civics mandate—in this pilot PB Chicago would provide training and technical assistance to principals, teachers, and students on how to conduct a PB process, and then how to design and implement one at each school. To encourage schools to participate in the pilot program, CPS issued an announcement to neighborhood schools. Participation in the pilot was then first come, first served for up to five schools.

Four schools—Al Raby High School (East Garfield Park community area), Uplift Community High School (Uptown), Mather High School (West Ridge), and Hyde Park Academy (Woodlawn)—each received \$1,500 in seed money from PB Chicago's Robert R. McCormick Foundation grant funds for their PB processes. Some of the participating schools also matched funds, by a minimum of \$500. There were no restrictions placed on how students could use funds to implement projects developed during the PB process. For example, students were able to develop projects that required funding to address infrastructure improvements or to pay for programming expenses. The fifth participating school, Steinmetz College Prep, in Chicago's Belmont Cragin community area and the 36th Ward, received \$15,000 for its PB process from the ward's alderman, Gilbert Villegas. Alderman Villegas currently conducts PB with his residents annually in a process that restricts funding to infrastructure projects; as a result of that, and because Alderman Villegas supplemented the PB process at Steinmetz with funds from his discretionary capital budget,

projects developed by students there were required to have a focus on infrastructure. Teachers at Al Raby High School planned to begin the PB process in the Civics classroom in December 2017 and to hold a vote in February 2018. Steinmetz College Prep and Hyde Park Academy began their PB processes in the spring semester of 2018 and planned to hold votes in June 2018. Mather High School and Uplift Community High School decided to begin their PB processes in the fall of 2018 (and are therefore not included in this initial evaluation report). As each of the three schools participating from December 2017 through the end of the school year in summer 2018 implemented their PB processes, PB Chicago (led by UIC Great Cities Institute in partnership with Our City Our Voice) provided ongoing training and technical assistance to each school throughout its process.

This initial evaluation of the pilot includes Al Raby, Steinmetz, and Hyde Park academy, and a total of four teachers in eight classrooms. Because all three schools included in this initial evaluation are neighborhood schools, their enrollment is open to any child who lives within the school's designated boundary. They are all located in predominantly low-income communities on the Chicago's South and West Side: Al Raby in West Garfield Park, Steinmetz College Prep in Belmont Cragin, and Hyde Park Academy in Woodlawn. For demographic information on each school, see Table 1.

**Table 1: Demographic Information by School**

	<b>Al Raby High School</b>	<b>Steinmetz College Prep</b>	<b>Hyde Park Academy</b>
Asian	0.0%	2.2%	0.0%
Black	92.8%	15.5%	98.3%
Hispanic	5.7%	71.8%	1.3%
White	1.1%	8.8%	0.0%
Other	0.3%	1.6%	0.4%
Low Income	98.0%	89.9%	97.1%
Diverse Learners	29.2%	19.1%	20.2%
Limited English	3.2%	19.7%	1.0%
Chronic Truancy	74.5%	63.8%	73.5%

Source: Chicago Public Schools 2017-2018

## Adapting PB for CPS

The PB in Schools pilot included four main phases typical to most PB processes that were adapted to the school context. These are the following:

- **Planning:** Teachers and principals in each school designed an individualized PB process for the classroom with support and guidance from PB Chicago.
- **Idea Collection:** Students in Civics classes at each pilot school, within the framework of the CPS-created Participate curriculum, learned about participatory budgeting and available budget funds, and then either brainstormed initial ideas for spending the funds to improve the school and/or student life or collected initial spending ideas from the wider school community.
- **Proposal Development:** During Civics class time, student reviewed project ideas, narrowed the ideas according to eligibility and feasibility criteria related to the pot of money available to them for implementing the PB-developed proposals, conducted research on their different ideas, developed full project proposals, and prepared project posters and/or gave presentations to and sought feedback from their classmates, teachers, and administrators about their proposals.
- **Voting:** Students voted for which projects to fund. The projects with the highest number of votes won and will be implemented.

On October 23, 2017, the PB in Schools pilot launched with an orientation around stakeholder roles and responsibilities for the pilot, as well as an overview of what participatory budgeting is and how each phase of the PB process works. A subsequent “official” all-day training was conducted on November 17, 2017, and attended by teachers from four schools (Al Raby, Mather, Hyde Park, and Steinmetz). PB Chicago provided various hours of training and support to individual schools and teachers on-site as well.

At the November training, PB Chicago walked teachers through how to conduct each phase of a PB process in a school setting and provided hands-on exercises. As part of the training, each teacher was also provided with individual technical assistance as they began to design a PB process for their school, including implementation timeline, types of idea collection methods used (e.g., an all-school assembly, survey), and type of voting method (e.g., a schoolwide vote or vote among just one grade, paper ballot or electronic). For specific details on each of the three pilot schools’ PB processes, see Table 2, in the Implementation section.

## Methodology

Great Cities Institute (GCI) designed and conducted the evaluation of the PB in Schools pilot. Evaluation of the PB in Schools pilot had three primary goals:

1. To document the implementation costs and social and educational benefits of the PB in Schools pilot.
2. To determine what students who actively participate in PB learned as a result of participating and determine whether it is aligned with existing curriculum outcomes.
3. To provide data and analysis to enable CPS, the principals, teachers, and PB Chicago to better understand how the program worked in order to provide recommendations on future changes.

### Data Collection

#### 1. Documenting Implementation Costs and Program Benefits

To document the implementation costs and social and educational benefits of the pilot program, GCI collected various data on each participating school, including number of participating classrooms, number of participating students, number of voting days, amount of money allocated to PB, number of PB voters, number of projects funded, number of hours of training and technical assistance delivered throughout the process, and grant resources allocated to the program. At the end of the voting process but before implementation of winning projects, GCI conducted interviews with teachers to document their perspective on the pilot's benefits to their classroom, students, and school community. Teachers participating in the pilot also asked students to fill out questionnaires (later collected by GCI) about what they learned as a result of participating in PB.

#### 2. Determining What Students Learned

For the second goal, determining what students learned as a result of participating in a PB process, GCI developed evaluation outcomes. The development of these outcomes began by reviewing two sources. The first was the CPS-designed Civics curriculum Participate: A Civics Course for Chicago's Youth (Participate), which was used in all pilot classrooms. Participate covers four units—The Power of Democracy, The Power of Elections, The Power of Public Policy, and The Power of Activism. Overall, the curriculum presents approximately 245 learning objectives. A second source was the booklet "A Guide to Participatory Budgeting in Schools," developed by the Participatory Budgeting Project after the 2015 PB process at Sullivan High School. This guide provides step-by-step instruction to teachers, administrators, and students on implementation of PB in a school setting. Despite offering practical "how-to" guidelines for each phase of the process, the guide is not a curriculum, and it does not specify any learning objectives, as it was designed for broad adaptation and flexibility in schools.



GCI developed 11 learning outcomes for the PB in Schools pilot. To do so, GCI aligned the broader project objectives with the most relevant learning outcomes and course objectives from Participate, in order to ensure that the PB project as implemented in the classroom would enhance learning that occurs through Participate. Listed below are the GCI-developed learning outcomes in bold, followed by relevant Participate learning objectives. (Please note that repetition of some of the Participate learning objectives is intentional where GCI determined overlap.)

## **Learning Outcomes**

### **1** Expand Civic Participation

**The PB in Schools pilot will engage a minimum of 500 students in making budget decisions, especially students who live in communities that are typically disenfranchised.**

### **2** Increase Civic Knowledge

**Students who actively participate in PB will gain increased awareness of what it means to be an active citizen or community member.**

- Different types of citizens and the roles they play in democracy.
- A rationale for the type of citizen they wish to become.
- Different tactics and strategies people use in their efforts to achieve change.

**3** **Students who actively participate in PB will gain an increased awareness of and value for participating in democracy including what participation in democracy looks like, the power of voting, and sense of their ability to effect change through their participation.**

- The meaning of democracy, power, and participation.
- What knowledge, skills, attitudes, and actions are needed for people to use their democratic power effectively.

**4** **Students who actively participate in PB will have an increased awareness of the needs in their community (or school).**

- What community means and which communities students belong to.
- Determine who the supporter and opponents of various solutions will be and why those groups feel differently about the options.

**5** **Students who actively participate in PB will have an increased understanding of “get out the vote” campaigns.**

- What knowledge, skills, attitudes, and actions are needed for people to use their democratic power effectively.
- That inclusion or exclusion from the political process affects one’s power.
- Why voting is important in democracy.

- Commonly used campaign techniques.
- Commonly used strategies for encouraging people to vote.
- How activists are using digital media.

## **6** Increase Civic Skills

**Students who actively participate in PB will analyze community (or school) needs and think through potential solutions—by narrowing down the list of potential PB ideas and creating project proposals that address the community (or school) need(s).**

- Apply a range of deliberative and democratic strategies and procedures to make decisions and take action.
- Work collaboratively to complete a task.

## **7** Students who actively participate in PB will demonstrate research skills by using information from multiple sources to create project proposals with cost estimates.

- Use information from primary and secondary sources.
- Gather data from a secondary source.
- Take and defend a position supported by evidence.
- Collaborate with people having a shared goal but different interests /values.

## **8** Students who actively participate in PB will be able to evaluate strategies for encouraging people to vote and campaigning.

- Apply a range of deliberative and democratic strategies and procedures to make decisions and take action.
- Assess options for individual and collective action to address public issues.
- Develop a plan for implementing a strategy for encouraging people to vote.
- Choose an election related project to complete.
- Evaluate strategies for encouraging people to vote, campaigning, and other election-related tasks.
- Articulate a convincing case for voting.
- Collaborate with people having a shared goal but different interests /values.

## **9** Students who actively participate in PB will demonstrate an increase in communication skills by listening to the experiences of other students and working collaboratively to formulate suggestions and solutions that work for the group.

- Share their personal stories and listen carefully to others' stories.
- Deliberate to reach a decision within a group with varied opinions.
- Identify multiple perspectives regarding an issue.

## **10 Students who actively participate in PB will have an increase in their ability to collaborate with others.**

- Work collaboratively to solve problems.
- Consider multiple perspectives.

## **11 Students who actively participate in PB will demonstrate an increased comfortability with communicating in different settings and with public speaking or presentations.**

- Speak clearly and persuasively about public issues.
- Clearly communicate information orally and in writing.

To measure this goal—to determine what students learned as a result of participating in a PB process—GCI adapted the Action Civics Standard Student Survey tool, developed and made available by the National Action Civics Collaborative (see the Appendix). The questionnaire was disseminated after the vote to those students who had participated in their classrooms in the PB process, and data was collected on each school's process. In all, 252 students actively participated in the PB processes across the three participating schools, and 134 completed the questionnaire, for an overall response rate of 53%.

### **3. Improving Future PB Implementation**

The third goal of the pilot was to provide providing data and analysis to enable CPS, principals, teachers, and PB Chicago to better understand how the pilot worked in order to provide recommendations for future changes, was measured by GCI through observations at trainings and technical assistance meetings; group evaluation conversations with teachers, members of the PB Chicago team, and staff from the CPS Office of Civic Engagement; and analysis of interviews with participating teachers.

# Implementation

## Implementation and Costs

Using the basic framework of the more widespread PB process, PB Chicago worked with each teacher to customize the process to his or her unique school context. Table 2 documents the details of each school’s process, including the number of actively participating classrooms and students, idea collection and proposal development methods used in each class, number of voters, type and amount of money used to support the PB process, and the winning project.

Overall, the three schools’ PB processes shared a number of similarities, including having students develop and analyze surveys for idea collection or proposal development; using evaluation and deliberation during class time to assess the eligibility and feasibility of ideas; and creating presentations on the proposals for the class, school, and/or administrators. Some of the main differences between the schools’ processes included whether or not students presented their ideas directly to other teachers or to school administrators for feedback, whether the whole school submitted ideas and/or voted, and the types of voter-outreach and voting methods used.

**Table 2: PB Process Details by School**

	<b>AI Raby High School</b>	<b>Steinmetz College Prep</b>	<b>Hyde Park Academy</b>
PB Process Name	Legacy Project	Participatory Budgeting	Participatory Budgeting Project
No. of Civics Classrooms Participating	2	3	3
Student Class Year	Seniors	Juniors and Seniors	Juniors
No. of Students Actively Participating	56	81	115
Idea Collection Participants	Open to whole school through survey	Open to whole school at lunch though idea drop box	3 participating classes—all collected feedback from broader school population during proposal development
Idea Collection and Proposal Development Methods	Developed survey, created rubric to evaluate and narrow ideas, deliberated, researched ideas, presented to classmates and steering committee of teachers and administrators for feedback	Developed survey, offered idea drop box for survey in cafeteria, evaluated ideas for eligibility and feasibility, prioritized ideas by number of similar ideas in class, voted in class on top ideas, researched further, and developed poster boards.	Brainstormed ideas in class, narrowed ideas down based on eligibility and feasibility, deliberated in class, researched ideas, created surveys to gather additional feedback from broader student body on ideas, and presented ideas in class and to administrators.
No. of Proposal Development Committees	13	6	30



	<b>Al Raby High School</b>	<b>Steinmetz College Prep</b>	<b>Hyde Park Academy</b>
No. of Vote Outreach Methods	Email, discussion in class	Discussion in class, poster boards, flyers in school, Facebook	Flyers in school
No. of Voting Days	1	1	1
Eligible Voters	Whole school	Whole school	Junior class
Voting Method	Google classroom survey	Paper ballot in cafeteria at lunch	Paper ballot in special room during lunch period
No. of Voters	270	563	80
Total School Population*	349	1,246	815
Percentage of School or Class (Hyde Park Academy) Population Voting	77%	45%	70%
Winning Project (s)	The Steam Room—providing a safe space for students to get resources and support around cyberbullying, anger management, and dating violence.	Bathroom Repairs—cleaning and repairing the bathroom infrastructure, including fixing holes in the wall and other circumstances requiring repairs.	Student Lounge—providing a safe and relaxing space for seniors.  Beautify the Cafeteria—brightening the cafeteria with the school logo and possibly student art.  School Store—offering healthy snacks, school supplies, and school spirit T-shirts.
Total Amount of PB Budget	\$1,500	\$15,000	\$1,500
Budget Source	Seed money PB Chicago McCormick grant	Ald. Villegas capital discretionary budget	Seed money PB Chicago McCormick grant
Additional Money from School	\$254		\$1,000

\*Total school population data are from Chicago Public Schools, 2017-2018.



The costs of implementation incurred by the PB pilot included PB Chicago's staff time for planning, training, and technical assistance to teachers and students; staff time to conduct the evaluation; teacher stipends; and materials and refreshments provided to teachers and students during the process. The total cost of implementation was approximately \$10,615 across the three participating schools. The pilot expenses were supported through two funding sources: CPS including a contract with PB Chicago and support for direct costs (\$4,500) and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation (\$6,115). PB Chicago spent a total of 260 hours on training and technical assistance as well as 104 hours conducting the evaluation, for a total of 364 hours.

The CPS–PB Chicago contract (\$6,000 for all five schools, or \$1,200 per school) covered a portion of PB Chicago's conducting of training and provision of technical assistance to all five pilot schools, as well as GCI's conducting of a pilot evaluation. Of the contract total, \$3,600 was allocated to conduct the full pilot at the three initially participating schools, with the remaining \$2,400 set to roll over for use in implementation of PB processes at two additional schools in fall 2018. CPS also provided each participating teacher with a \$150 stipend as well as some of the refreshments for the all-day teacher training and orientation (approximately \$300 total).

PB Chicago is generously supported by the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, and a small portion of PB Chicago's grant from the foundation was used to supplement staff time for training and technical assistance and to conduct the evaluation (estimated at \$3,847) and to purchase materials, including T-shirts for teachers and students participating in the pilot via their Civics classroom (\$9 each, for a total of \$2,256).

### **Social and Educational Benefits of PB**

The benefits to students, teachers, and the broader school community of taking part in a participatory budgeting process were documented and measured through responses from teachers during semi-structured interviews. Interview questions touched on what students learned, the impact of PB on the classroom, what the most active students learned by participating (see the section Measuring Student Learning), and the impact that winning projects will have on the school upon implementation.

Across the three schools in this evaluation, there were four participating teachers. Teachers were asked why they initially were interested in becoming involved in PB. They stated the following:

- Wanting to give their students a voice
- Importance of building civic engagement and empowerment in their students
- Seeing PB as an opportunity to bring to life the curriculum and goals of Participate
- Giving students real experience with participating in democracy around issues that students care about
- Providing a tangible outcome tied to students' participation, since there are funds attached to the process
- Believing that PB is not just another simulation

Teachers were also asked to describe some of the best things they experienced while conducting PB, whether they thought PB achieved its goals, and the most valuable things they learned using PB as a project in their Civics classroom. In response to these questions, teachers in all three schools talked about how PB gave their students a voice, that there was a sense of greater sustained engagement throughout the PB process, and that students who did not normally participate in class engaged during PB. The teachers talked about PB emphasizing students' agency and authority in class, as the ideas and proposal development were student driven and lined up with the goals of the curriculum.

“The civics goals are about students participating, actually getting up, not just letting things happen, but them being movers and shakers. And that is all the PB process is about, it's about the students participating not the adults telling them what to do but the students generating their ideas. That is what the goal is for the curriculum for students to participate in their civics.”  
—Al Raby Teacher

“It's a great way for students to experience participation in our democracy because that's really the whole theme of the whole year is participation. The whole program is called Participate.”  
—Steinmetz Teacher

“Throughout the process I thought it was fulfilling to see a number of students who don't normally participate as much or don't normally engage very much in class find this project as a way in.”  
—Hyde Park Academy Teacher



Teachers also reported that students used critical thinking and interdisciplinary skills throughout the process and in different ways than in other classroom settings. For example, teachers at Hyde Park Academy shared that they often analyze preexisting data tables and charts and graphs in class. However, through PB, students created their own surveys, and then created and analyzed charts and data tables from those surveys. As a result of this, they gained a stronger connection to and deeper understanding of the data they had collected and its analysis.

Teachers reported that, when students were given the opportunity to speak up and be listened to, they had a lot to say about the issues facing their school communities, which allowed them to conduct research and identify multiple solutions to the problems they identified. Another benefit that teachers noted was how students' views shifted with respect to how they viewed themselves as able and in a position to effect change, how they viewed their interactions with the school community, finding that teachers and administrators were willing to listen to their ideas, and being able to take a more active role in their school community and education. This discussion centered on students' agency and the impact of being able to bring about change by addressing a problem by creating solutions that have funding and a commitment to implementation behind them and are not just talked about.

In all three schools, students chose to improve their physical environments either by creating safe spaces on school grounds or by repairing and beautifying spaces in the building that they frequently use. At Al Raby, students chose to address issues confronted by many in the student body: cyberbullying, anger management, and dating violence. The school's winning project was the "Steam Room," a separate room that will be established to provide resources and support for students who are dealing with those issues.

Teachers at Steinmetz College Prep and Hyde Park Academy shared during interviews that students chose to improve shared spaces in order to instill a greater sense of pride for the entire school community. At Steinmetz, the winning project involved cleaning and infrastructure repairs to bathrooms with holes in the walls or other poor conditions. At Hyde Park Academy, the winning projects included creating a senior lounge to provide a safe and relaxing space for seniors, beautifying the cafeteria with the school logo and (potentially) other student artwork, and establishing a new school store where students can buy healthy snacks, school supplies, and school spirit T-shirts. In all three schools the winning projects will be accessible to most of the student body, not just those students who participated in participatory budgeting.



“What they didn’t understand was that the process was a test. You had to bring those interdisciplinary skills in the classroom. So along the way they were having so much fun they didn’t realize they were getting assessed.”  
— Al Raby Teacher

“If you sit down and listen to the children, you’ll learn from them more than they’ll learn from you. Absolutely hands down that is the most valuable thing that I learned. These children, they come with a lot on their hearts, they have a lot of things that are troubling them. I think they are able not only to have empathy but just to show that they not only care about someone else, but they have really thought of ways that they could make their communities better. That’s amazing, that’s really is inspiring me to continue doing the work.”  
—Al Raby Teacher

“We normally do stuff by looking at data tables and charts and graphs... But this felt different because students were responsible for creating the survey and it was their own. It was very relevant data and it was something that they had contributed rather than this SAT style chart that gets blocked out in front of them that they don’t understand or have any real connection to. And that just made it that much more powerful.”  
—Hyde Park Academy Teacher

“When students feel empowered and feel like something is more than worth doing—a lot of our students have difficulty focusing, difficulty following through—...when they were interested and engaged, they were willing to work, and that for me was really rejuvenating.”  
—Hyde Park Academy Teacher

## Measuring Student Learning

To measure what students learned as a result of participating in a PB process, GCI adapted a questionnaire from the National Action Civics Collaborative) that teachers then disseminated to those students who had participated in the pilot. A total of 252 students actively participated in the pilot, and 134 students from Steinmetz College Prep (Steinmetz) and Hyde Park Academy (Hyde Park) completed the questionnaire, for an overall response rate of 53%. No questionnaires were collected from Al Raby High School. The school breakdown in terms of survey respondents was as follows: 47% from Steinmetz and 53% from Hyde Park Academy (see Table 3).

**Table 3. Demographic Data for Questionnaire Respondents**

	<b>Steinmetz PB Youth Respondents (n=63)</b>	<b>Hyde Park PB Youth Respondents (n=71)</b>
American Indian/Alaska Native Only	0.0%	3%
Asian Only	0.0%	0.0%
Black or African American Only	16%	83%
Hispanic or Latino/a Only	70%	0.0%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander Only	0.0%	1%
Caucasian or White Only	3%	0.0%
Two or More Races or Ethnicities	10%	10%
Other	1%	3%

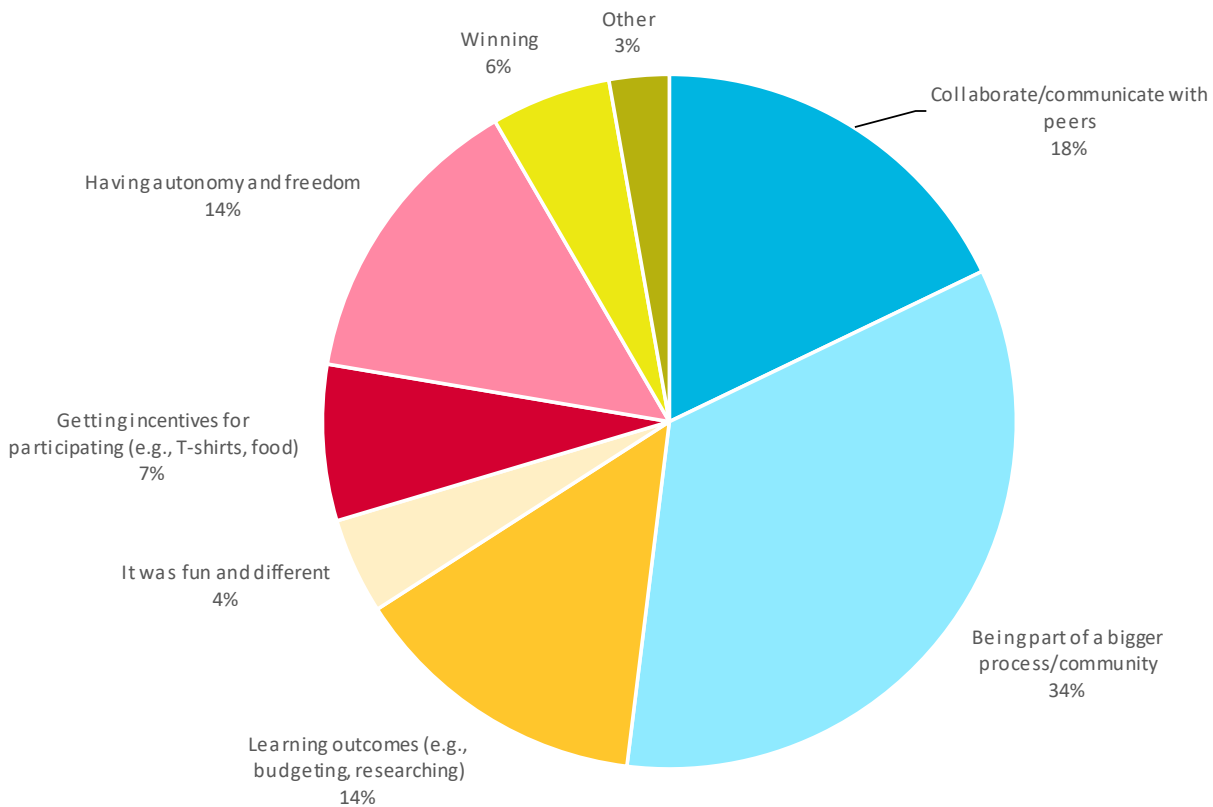
	<b>Steinmetz PB Youth Respondents (n=62)</b>	<b>Hyde Park PB Youth Respondents (n=70)</b>
Male	63%	39%
Female	34%	61%
Other	3%	0%

	<b>Steinmetz PB Youth Respondents (n=62)</b>	<b>Hyde Park PB Youth Respondents (n=71)</b>
14 years old	0%	1.41%
15 years old	0%	1.41%
16 years old	8%	13%
17 years old	35%	63%
18 years old	47%	21%
19 years old	10%	0%

The questionnaire included a multi-part, open-ended question that asked students to describe in their own words their work on both the class wide project and their group's proposal (Figure 1). A total of 92 responses were received. Response categories included (a) identifying a problem to be solved (in school or community); (b) doing background research and planning, as well as applying skills (e.g., budgeting, surveying students), (c) persuading others in a presentation (e.g., making posters, creating social media, engaging in school-wide outreach; (d) taking part in groupwork and related tasks; and (e) engaging in the classroom and being heard by others. Overall, students' responses show good alignment with the first three steps of the PB process: idea collection, proposal development, and exposition and community vote (no students touched on implementation).

**Figure 1. Student Descriptions of Their Own Work**



## **Civic Knowledge and Values**

Students who actively participated in PB were asked to think about their experience with PB and to determine how much they agreed or disagreed with specific value statements regarding civic engagement and efficacy. The majority of students responded positively to civic engagement and value statements about working with others and about the potential to effect change.

Asked to consider their experience with PB and reflect on their participation, after the PB process was over, the following percentage of youth respondents indicated that they “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the following statements:

- 89%—Young people have the power to influence their communities/school.
- 88%—People working together can solve community problems better than people working alone.
- 85%—They have a better understanding of the needs in their community and school.
- 81%—They can make things better by working with others in their community.
- 73%—They can make a difference in their community/school.

Ninety-three (93) students responded to an open-ended question on whether PB changed how they look at community service, engagement, and civic responsibility. Of the 48 students (52%) who reported that, yes, their views had changed, 43 also explained how their views had changed or which factors drove that change; of the 41 students whose views had not changed, 9 explained their responses.

Students whose views on service, engagement, and responsibility had changed particularly noted a sense of empowerment, revealed in statements about having their voices heard, working together to “do anything,” and seeing need in their community and then addressing that need together. Students whose views had not changed indicated a variety of responses, including not being heard by other people, learning too much about their specific school instead of the broader community, and not being able to witness or benefit from the winning project’s implementation.

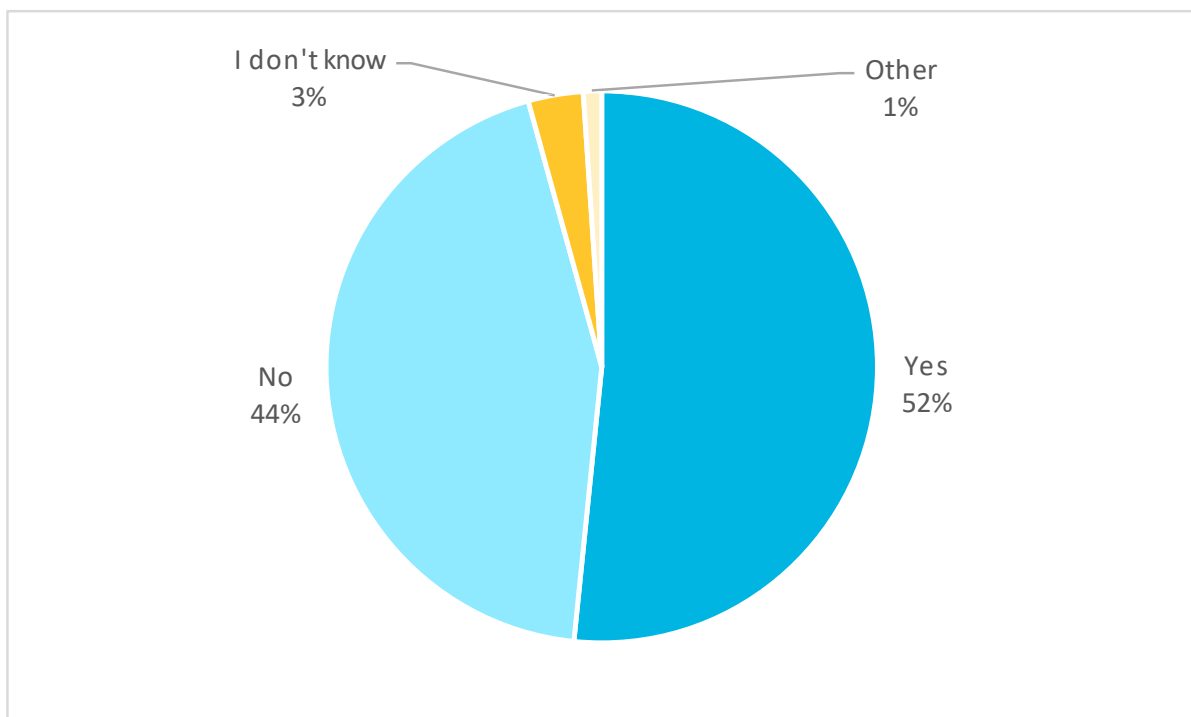
## **Civic Skills**

Students who actively participated in PB were asked to imagine that they found a problem in their community (e.g., school or neighborhood violence) that they wanted to do something about. The questionnaire asked them what they thought they would now, having participated in a PB process, be able to do with respect to specific critical thinking and communication skills (Figure 2). Most students indicated that they would be able to apply a range of civic skills.

After participating in PB, youth respondents indicated that they now think that they “probably can” or “definitely can” do the following:

- 78%—Analyze the issue to figure out what is causing the problem.
- 82%—Identify individuals or groups who could help with the problem.
- 70%—Express your views with knowledge and confidence in front of a group of people.
- 79%—Compare the pros and cons of different solutions to an issue.
- 76%—Work with other youth and adults in their school or community to solve the problem.
- 72%—Create and implement a media/outreach strategy for spreading awareness.
- 78%—Use evidence from research to create solutions.

**Figure 2. Student Views on Whether PB Has Changed How They See Community Service/Engagement and Civic Responsibility**



### **Civic Skills: Skills Used during PB**

Students who actively participated in the PB pilot were asked to think about a series of statements and how often they used the skills described in those statements during participatory budgeting (Table 4). This question was designed to measure how often students were using certain civic skills throughout the process on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 = “never” to 5 = “always.” Student respondents’ answers tended to fall in the range of “sometimes,” “often,” and “always,” with approximately one-third of respondents falling into each of those categories.

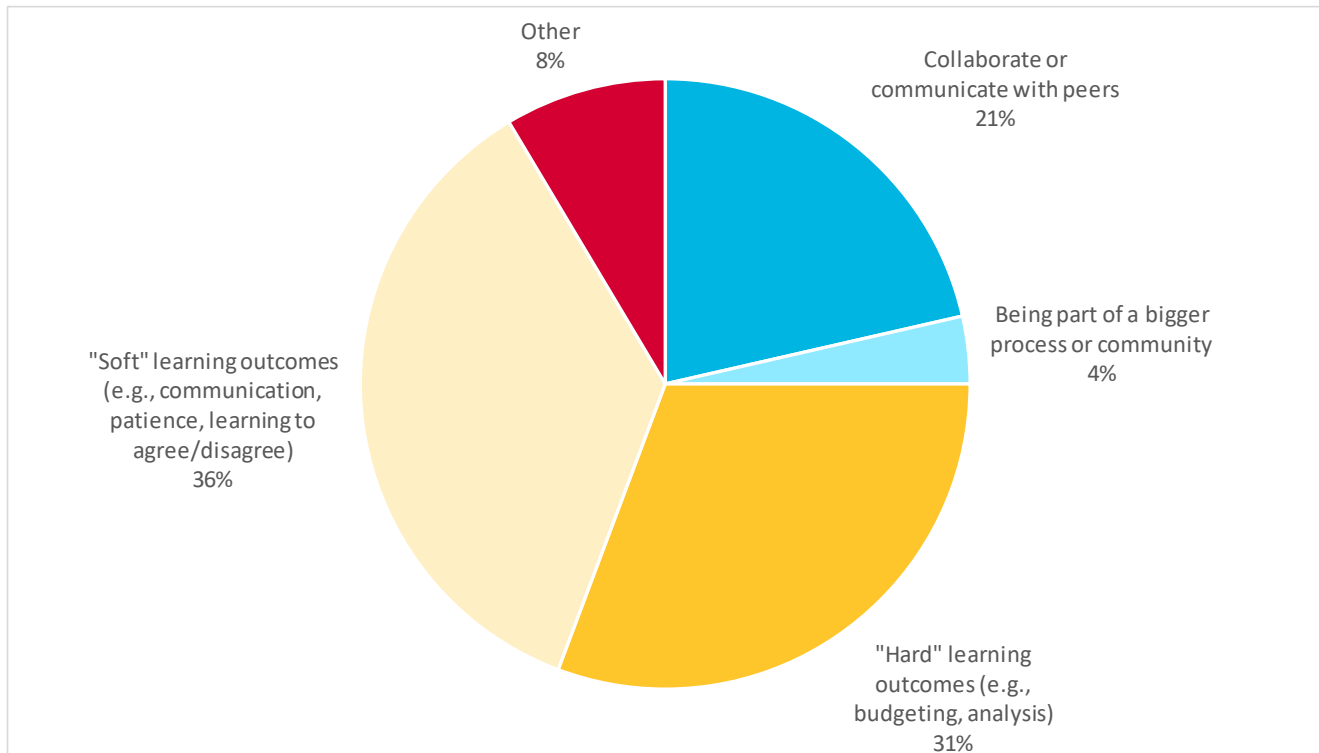
**Table 4. Student Responses on Civic Skills Used during PB**

	<b>Always</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Never</b>
Identify and use the skills that were needed to make a team work well together	28%	35%	32%	3%	2%
Help brainstorm solutions and new ways to go forward when a group got stuck on a problem	28%	40%	28%	4%	0%
Encourage other members in your group to contribute	36%	25%	32%	6%	1%
Listen to and value the contributions and perspectives of others in your group	35%	44%	17%	4%	0%
Handle disagreements well	37%	29%	29%	5%	1%
Speak comfortably with adults in my school and community	33%	32%	31%	4%	1%

When asked which were the two most important skills they learned during the PB process, 96 students responded with a total of 140 skills and ideas (not all students named two skills; Figure 3). Of those respondents, 67% of students identified specific aspects of classroom learning, which we have categorized as “hard skills” (e.g., budgeting, data analysis) and “soft skills” (e.g., communication, patience). For hard skills, 15 students specifically reported learning about budgeting and finances. For soft skills, the most common responses involved communication skills: 24 students (17% of responses) mentioned communication-related skills specifically, and 9 students (6% of responses) noted being able to be vocal about their opinions.



**Figure 3. Student Responses on the Two Most Important Skills Learned**



### **Experiences with PB**

Students who actively participated in PB were asked to think about their experience with the PB class project and reflect on how true a series of statements were. This question was designed to measure the different types of experiences and agency the students felt they had throughout the PB process.

Respondents indicated that they felt the following statements were either “sort of true” or “very true”:

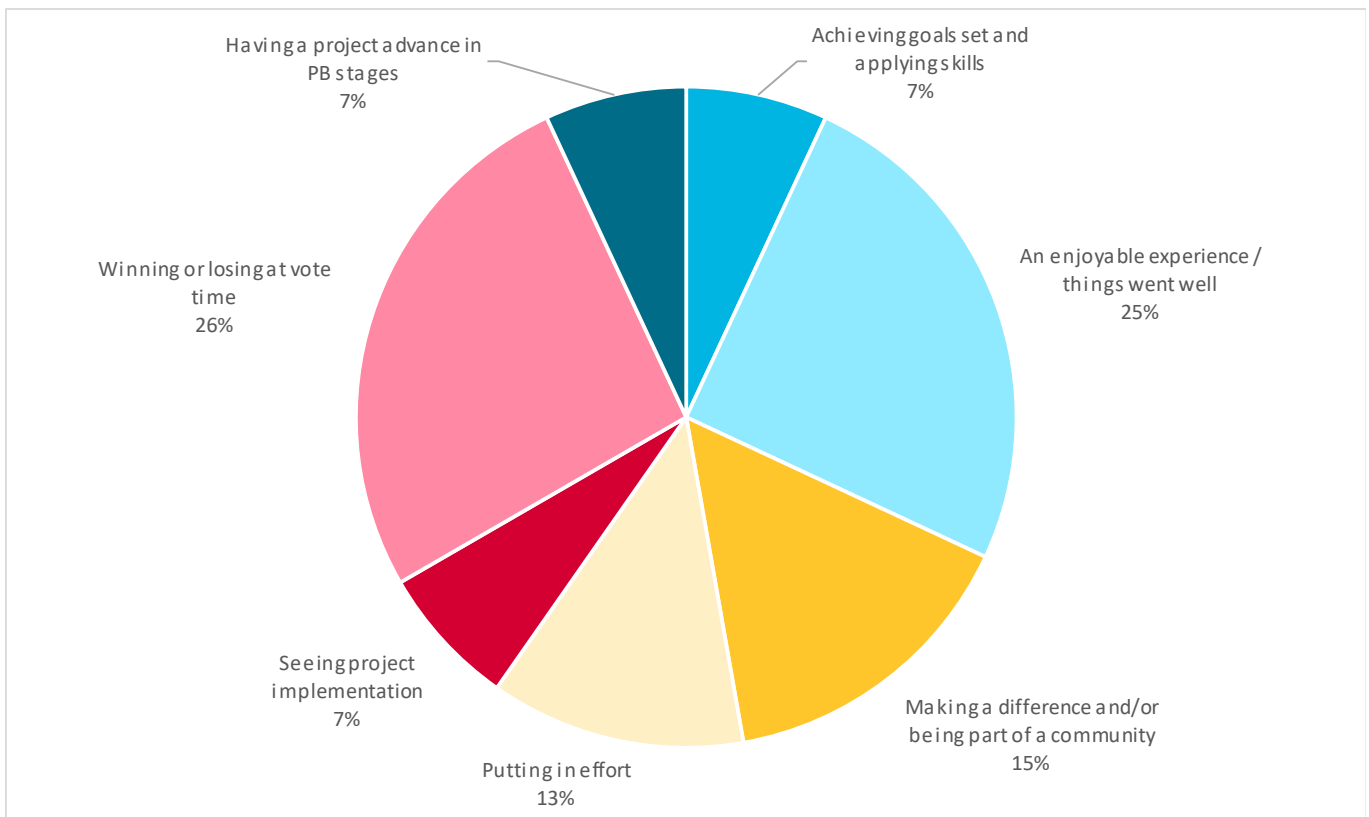
- 94%—We had a say in choosing the issue we worked on.
- 94%—We discussed different ways to make a difference on our issue before deciding what we were going to do for our project.
- 94%—I now know enough about the issues in my community and school to discuss them with family and friends.
- 88%—We presented and/or discussed the results of our project with one or more members of the community.
- 94%—I felt like we had real responsibilities on our project.
- 94%—As a result of my experience with PB, I have a better understanding of how the skills I learn in school can be used in the real world.
- 90%—I feel involved in the decision made at my school.

A total of 102 students who participated in the PB in Schools pilot described in their own words their work on the classwide project and their group’s proposal, and also responded to the question “How successful were you?” In answering these open-ended questions, some students defined multiple aspects of success (responses within answers were coded individually), for a total of 72 responses (not all students addressed each part of the three-part question) (Figure 4).

Of respondents, 26% defined individual success as having the PB proposal they worked on win or lose, which might signal an opportunity for future PB teachers to help students define success more broadly according to the goals of PB in Schools as well as the Participate curriculum, such as community participation, civic engagement, project feedback, and so on. Notably, though, some responses (7%) defined success as having a proposal advance through the PB process at any step. One student commented, “[My project] was not that successful but overall it was good to indulge in the project and to see that I can make a change.”

Other responses focused on putting in effort and working together (13%), achieving goals set during group work (7%), and seeing a project’s final implementation (7%). Eleven students’ (15%) responses fell into the categories of either “being part of a community” or “making a difference.” One student noted that it was a “privilege” to be able to get money for the school. Another student was “very proud of the rest of the school for voting.”

**Figure 4. Student Definitions of Success**



# Learning Outcome Achievements

## Overview

At the beginning of the evaluation, 11 learning outcomes were developed that aligned with selected learning objectives from the Participate curriculum (see Methodology section for Participate’s learning objectives). The learning objectives fall into three categories: expanding civic participation, increasing civic knowledge, and increasing civic skills. Expanding civic participation was measured by documenting the number of students who voted in PB in each school, as well as by the demographic profile of each school. Increasing civic knowledge and skills were both measured through responses to the questionnaire disseminated to students (described in detail in the Measuring Student Learning section).

Each learning outcome is listed below along with results from the questionnaire students completed. According to these results, the PB in Schools pilot in the three schools achieved each identified learning outcome.

## Learning Outcome Achievements

### 1 Expand Civic Participation

**The PB in Schools pilot will engage a minimum of 500 students in making budget decisions, especially students who live in communities that are typically disenfranchised.**

- 913 students were engaged in making budget decisions through the PB process and vote. The demographic profile of students in each of the three schools demonstrates that the majority of students (89.9% to 98%) are low income, students of color, and live in communities that have been historically disenfranchised.

### 2 Increase Civic Knowledge

**Students who actively participate in PB will gain increased awareness of what it means to be an active citizen or community member.**

- 88% of youth respondents indicated that they “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that people working together can solve community problems better than people working alone.
- 81% of youth respondents indicated that they “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they can make things better by working with others in their community.
- 94% respondents indicated that they felt the following statement was either “sort of true” or “very true”: as a result of my experience with PB, I have a better understanding of how the skills I learn in school can be used in the real world.

### **3 Students who actively participate in PB will gain an increased awareness of and value for participating in democracy including what participation in democracy looks like, the power of voting, and sense of their ability to effect change through their participation.**

- 73% of youth respondents indicated that they “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they can make a difference in their community/school.
- 89% of youth respondents indicated that they “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that young people have the power to influence their communities/school.
- 94% respondents indicated that they felt the following statement was either “sort of true” or “very true”: as a result of my experience with PB, I have a better understanding of how the skills I learn in school can be used in the real world.

### **4 Students who actively participate in PB will have an increased awareness of the needs in their community (or school).**

- 85% of youth respondents indicated that they “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they have a better understanding of the needs in their community and school.
- 90% respondents indicated that they felt the following statement was either “sort of true” or “very true”: I feel involved in the decision made at my school.
- 94% respondents indicated that they felt the following statement was either “sort of true” or “very true”: I now know enough about the issues in my community and school to discuss them with family and friends.

### **5 Students who actively participate in PB will have an increased understanding of “get out the vote” campaigns.**

- 72% of youth respondents indicated that they “probably can” or “definitely can” create and implement a media/outreach strategy for spreading awareness.
- 88% respondents indicated that they felt the following statement was either “sort of true” or “very true”: we presented and/or discussed the results of our project with one or more members of the community.

## **6 Increase Civic Skills**

### **Students who actively participate in PB will analyze community (or school) needs and think through potential solutions—by narrowing down the list of potential PB ideas and creating project proposals that address the community (or school) need(s).**

- 94% respondents indicated that they felt the following statement was either “sort of true” or “very true”: we discussed different ways to make a difference on our issue before deciding what we were going to do for our project.
- 78% of youth respondents indicated that they “probably can” or “definitely can” analyze the issue to figure out what is causing the problem.

- 79% of youth respondents indicated that they “probably can” or “definitely can” compare the pros and cons of different solutions to an issue.
- 78% of youth respondents indicated that they “probably can” or “definitely can” use evidence from research to create solutions.

## **7 Students who actively participate in PB will demonstrate research skills by using information from multiple sources to create project proposals with cost estimates.**

- 78% of youth respondents indicated that they “probably can” or “definitely can” analyze the issue to figure out what is causing the problem.
- 79% of youth respondents indicated that they “probably can” or “definitely can” compare the pros and cons of different solutions to an issue.
- 78% of youth respondents indicated that they “probably can” or “definitely can” use evidence from research to create solutions.

## **8 Students who actively participate in PB will be able to evaluate strategies for encouraging people to vote and campaigning.**

- 70% of youth respondents indicated that they “probably can” or “definitely can” express their views with knowledge and confidence in front of a group of people.
- 88% of youth respondents indicated that they felt the following statement was either “sort of true” or “very true”: we presented and/or discussed the results of our project with one or more members of the community.
- 82% of youth respondents indicated that they “probably can” or “definitely can” identify individuals or groups who could help with the problem.
- 72% of youth respondents indicated that they “probably can” or “definitely can” create and implement a media/outreach strategy for spreading awareness.

## **9 Students who actively participate in PB will demonstrate an increase in communication skills by listening to the experiences of other students and working collaboratively to formulate suggestions and solutions that work for the group.**

- 88% respondents indicated that they felt the following statement was either “sort of true” or “very true”: we presented and/or discussed the results of our project with one or more members of the community.
- 79% of youth respondents reported listening to and valuing the contributions and perspectives of others in their group “often” or “always” during the PB class project.
- 61% of youth respondents reported “often” or “always” encouraging other members in their group to contribute during the PB class project.
- 63% of youth respondents reported “often” or “always” identifying and using the skills that were needed to make a team work well together during the PB class project.

- 68% of youth respondents reported “often” or “always” helping brainstorm solutions and new ways to go forward when a group got stuck on a problem during the PB class project.
- 57% of respondents identified communication, collaboration, learning to agree or disagree etc. in their open answers when asked the two most important skills learned.

## **10 Students who actively participate in PB will have an increase in their ability to collaborate with others.**

- 66% of youth respondents reported “often” or “always” handling disagreements well during the PB class project.
- 79% of youth respondents reported listening to and valuing the contributions and perspectives of others in their group “often” or “always” during the PB class project.
- 68% of youth respondents reported “often” or “always” helping brainstorm solutions and new ways to go forward when a group got stuck on a problem during the PB class project.
- 63% of youth respondents reported “often” or “always” identifying and using the skills that were needed to make a team work well together during the PB class project.
- 57% of respondents identified communication, collaboration, learning to agree or disagree etc. in their open answers when asked the two most important skills learned.

## **11 Students who actively participate in PB will demonstrate an increased comfortability with communicating in different settings and with public speaking/presentations.**

- 88% respondents indicated that they felt the following statement was either “sort of true” or “very true”: we presented and/or discussed the results of our project with one or more members of the community.
- 65% of youth respondents reported speaking comfortably “often” or “always” with adults in their school and community during the PB class project.
- 57% of respondents identified communication, collaboration, learning to agree or disagree etc. in their open answers when asked the two most important skills learned.



## Evaluation of Pilot PB Process

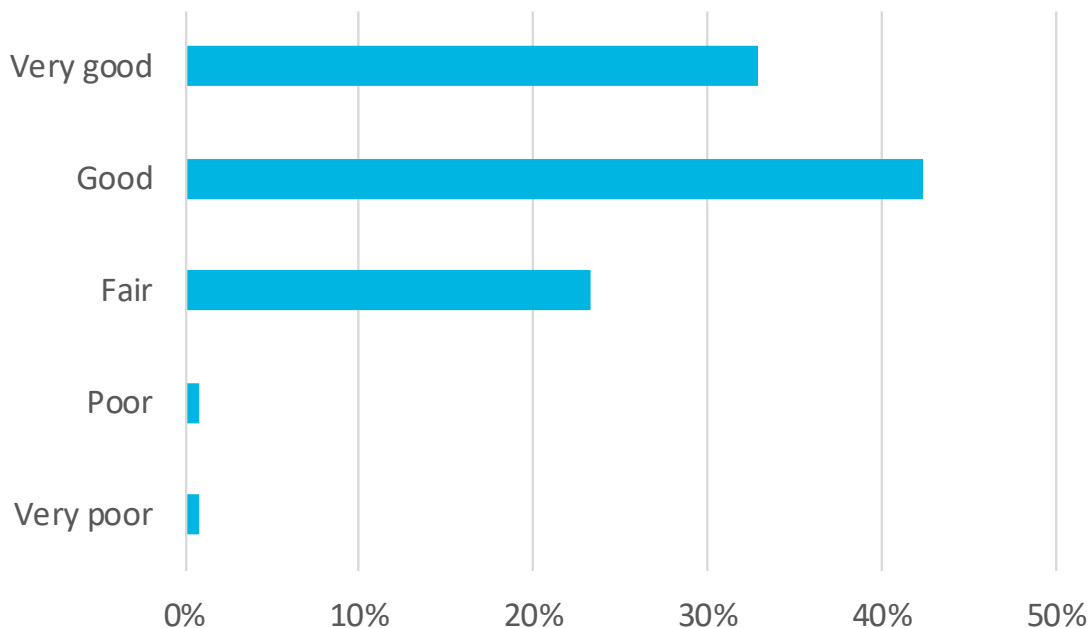
Students who actively participated in the PB pilot were asked to evaluate the process in four questions:

- How do you rate your overall experience with the participatory budgeting class project?
- Do you think the PB class project should continue next year?
- What two things did you like most about the participatory budgeting (PB) class project this year?
- What two things would you change about the PB class project this year?

During teacher interviews with PB staff, teachers were also asked to evaluate PB. They were asked what worked well, what could be improved, and whether they would like to participate again the following year. This section shows results from both students who participated in the pilot and teachers who used the pilot in their Civics classrooms.

As Figure 5 shows, the majority (75%) of youth respondents indicated that their overall experience with PB was either “good” or “very good.” In addition, 90% of youth respondents thought the PB process should continue to be implemented at the school.

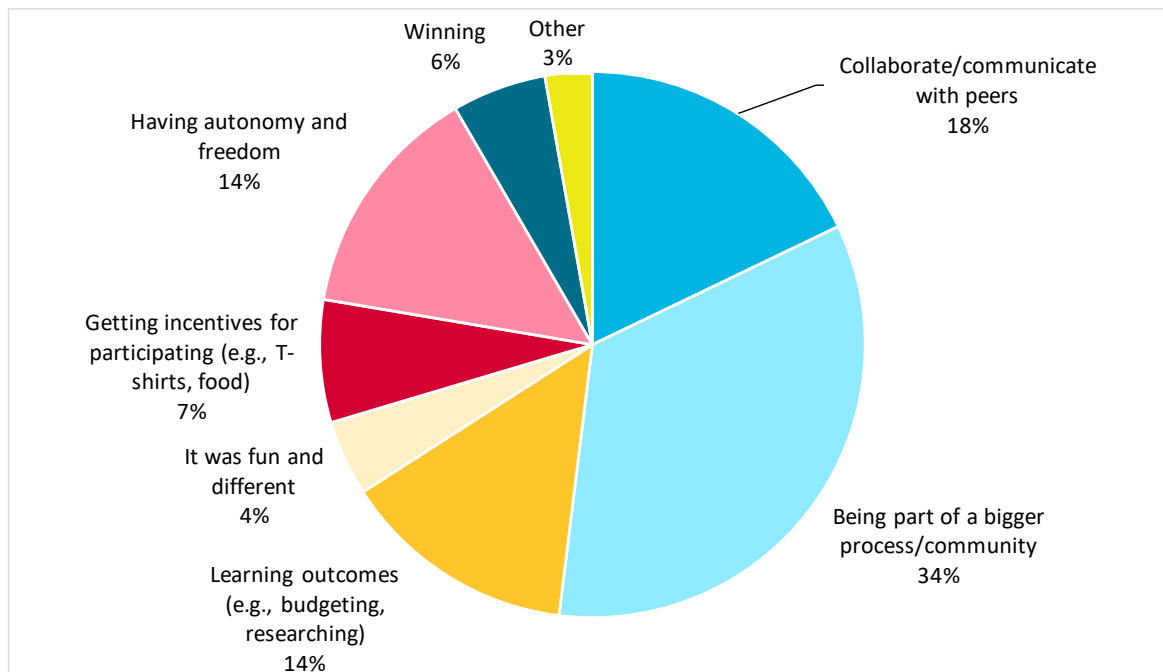
**Figure 5. How do you rate your overall experience with the participatory budgeting class project? (n = 125)**



A total of 105 students participating in PB answered the open-ended question “What 2 things did you like most about PB?” for a total of 179 responses (not all students responded with two items) (Figure 6). Of respondents, 34% reported that they liked being part of a bigger process or feeling part of a bigger community. Individual responses touched on fostering unity in the school, having the opportunity to make an impact on the school, raising awareness about issues at school, and spending money toward a good cause.

When teachers were asked, “Describe your experience with PB,” and “What were the best things?” they talked very favorably about the training and technical assistance they received to prepare them to implement PB in the classroom. They noted that “Guide to Participatory Budgeting in Schools” provided step-by-step, easy-to-adapt instructions to meet unique classroom settings. As reported in the section Social and Educational Benefits of PB, teachers discussed at length the importance of PB lining up with the goals of the Participate curriculum and of its providing real democratic experience for their students, not just another simulation. Teachers believed that because the experience had real consequences, students were more engaged and used skills in different ways. In addition, because the PB process resulted in tangible results, the students felt they had a real opportunity to effect change, not just talk about creating it.

**Figure 6. What Students Liked Most about PB**



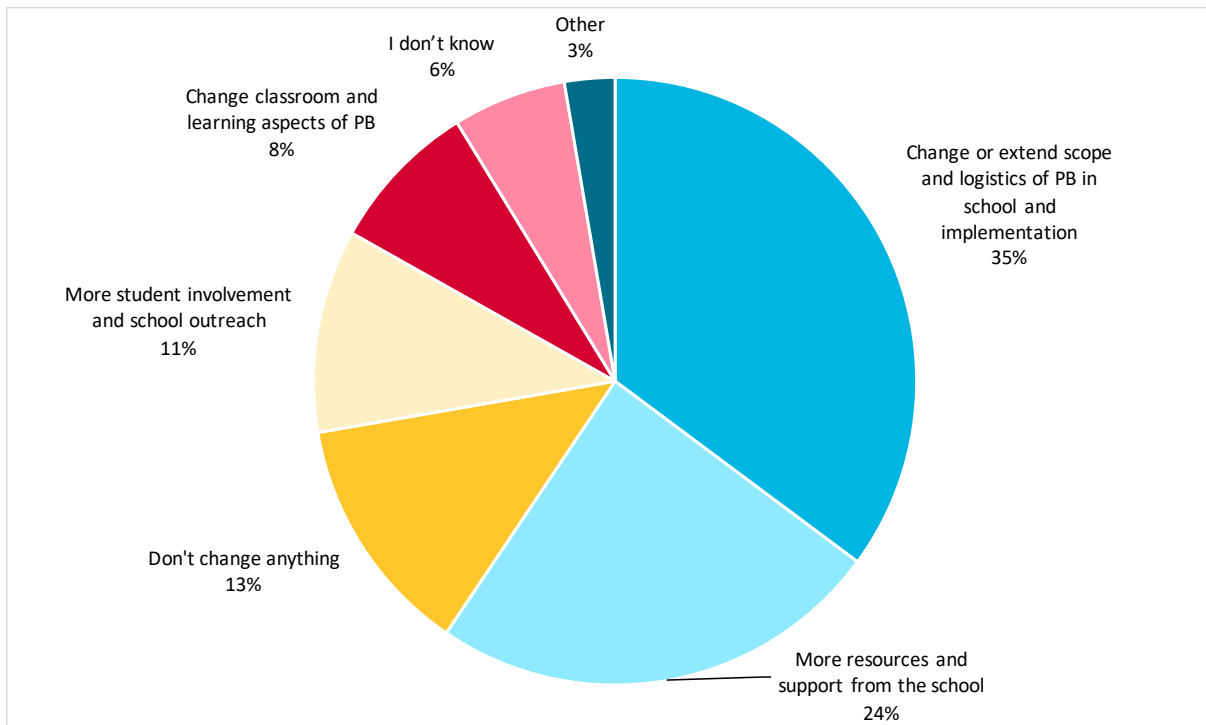
Teachers and students were also asked to evaluate ways to improve PB or to describe the challenges they faced during implementation. There were 102 students who responded to the open-ended question “What 2 things would you change about the PB class project this year?”

“Thank you for allowing us to do this project with our students... I definitely see a change. They are more excited, more willing to do the work once they [see] there is something tangible. We gave them these real-world examples in class. And we give them “Oh, you can change the world,” “You can be an agent of change,” but now they know: “OK, once I do my proposal and my research, I can actually be that agent of change within our community. That was amazing.”

—Hyde Park Academy Teacher

for a total of 148 responses (not all students indicated two things they would change). Responses most frequently involved changing or extending the scope and logistics of PB in the school, particularly in such a way that students can see the implementation of the winning project (e.g., “actually fixing what we voted for”). For example, extending the PB process and scope of the project to be able to work on more than one proposal at a time. Figure 7 provides the results of respondents’ answers.

**Figure 7. What Students Would Change about the Class Project**



Teachers were asked during interviews what some of the biggest challenges were for them to implement PB and how they would improve the process. Teachers' responses were similar to those from students. The following is a summary of the main challenges and ways to improve the process in schools or overall, according to teachers and students:

### **Amount of PB Money Available and Restrictions on the Use of Money**

Teachers noted that many of the issues and solutions that were of greatest concern or interest to the students did not meet the criteria related to the PB pot of money because they would cost too much to address or (in the case of Steinmetz) did not meet the infrastructure-based restrictions on using the pot of money.

Some students expressed being discouraged that they could not address the most pressing issues, and many stated that they would like more money to make decisions with. Teachers used the smaller pot of money or the ineligibility of a project idea as an occasion to talk about other opportunities for advocacy. Teachers and students both believed that they would have a larger impact with a larger pot of money.

### **Determining Length of Time and Pacing of the PB Process with Other Civics Course Work**

Teachers reported that conducting PB over four weeks was challenging because of the uneven capacity and engagement levels of students. They suggested shortening the time to two to three weeks, or pacing the PB process so that it is spread out across a semester. Teachers indicated that adjusting the pace might also allow for additional threads from the Participate civics curriculum to be woven into the PB process and highlighted. Students noted that they would like to work on two project proposals and/or participate in project implementation.

### **Finding the Right PB Proposal Development Committee Group Structure and Size**

Teachers talked about working to further define the roles and structure of the classroom proposal development committees and group sizes. They talked about students needing very clearly defined roles so that all the work is shared evenly among group members (they mentioned that this is not unique to PB but applies to group work in general). They also talked about experimenting with group size (which was typically 3-4 students), perhaps working in pairs to make grading and group coordination easier. Students' comments in this area were limited and included increasing the pacing and teamwork.

### **Challenges in Timing during the Spring Semester**

All four teachers suggested conducting PB in the fall semester rather than the spring. Most teachers agreed that PB could fit with any section of the Participate civics curriculum, with the best fit being either after the Elections section or during the Public Policy sections. However, teachers also noted that PB needed to take place before SAT prep or after SAT testing, and that if

it occurred too close to the end of the year, seniors would be too focused on graduation and prom to be engaged in the vote. Teachers noted that students also suggested that PB take place earlier in the school year or be done with younger students (e.g., freshmen, sophomores) so that those students can also participate in implementation.

### **More Involvement from Other Teachers, Students, and Administration**

Teachers and students alike reported a desire for more involvement from the whole school community, including other teachers, students, and administrators. Teachers noted that it was critical to have support from administrators and other teachers throughout the process. In particular, in some schools administrators and/or other teachers formed “decision maker” or “advisory” committees to which students presented ideas for feedback, thus showing support for students ideas and engaging in dialogue about the needs of the school in a way that reinforced learning. Students and teachers also reported wanting to engage more students and teachers in idea collection, vote outreach activities, and in voting.

### **Concern That Project Implementation Will Not Happen Smoothly or a Desire to Be Involved in Project Implementation**

Teachers and students both reported concerns that project implementation might not happen smoothly, and in some cases they expressed worries that it might run into obstacles that prevented it from happening. Both noted that this would have a negative impact on students’ engagement levels in the future. Students in particular expressed interest in being involved in the implementation phase of the process or at a minimum being at the school while implementation was occurring so that they could see the fruits of their labor.

### **Overcoming Students’ Disillusionment**

Teachers reported that one challenge they experienced in the beginning of the PB process was that many students were disillusioned and skeptical that the ideas they shared would be listened to and implemented. A few of the students’ comments reflected these sentiments, particularly for those students whose projects were not selected for the ballot or did not win the vote. These students made comments indicating that they did not feel heard or that their voice mattered, even after putting in effort during the PB process. An example from a teacher’s response is below.

### **Better Ways to More Readily Share Experiences and Tools among Teachers**

One suggestion for improving PB was to create better connectivity among teachers who are implementing a PB process in the classroom so that they could more easily share experiences, resources, and tools. In particular, teachers expressed interest in learning how other teachers paced and planned the PB process in their classroom, what additional materials they used, how they wove the PB process into the curriculum, and how they set up grading rubrics.


## Conclusions

The three overarching goals of the PB in Schools pilot were to fulfill the CPS Civics project-based classroom requirement, to enhance and enrich learning in the Civics classroom, and to establish a professional learning community among teachers. The evaluation data collected demonstrate the pilot's initial success in achieving the first two goals. Teachers reported that PB did align with the goals and learning outcomes of the Participate curriculum, that it fulfilled the Civics project-based learning requirement, and that it significantly enhanced classroom learning by providing a real experience of democracy in which students could apply interdisciplinary civic skills. Results from the participating student questionnaires demonstrate the following:

- The pilot achieved all 11 learning outcomes
- The majority of students applied the skills and engaged in the activities that the Participate civics curriculum strives for.
- A reported increase in civic skills after participating in the PB process.
- Positive responses to statements about civic engagement and values related to working with others and the potential to effect change.

For the third goal of establishing a professional learning community, any claims of success are more complicated. GCI's observations of teachers at orientation and full-day training, as well as at interviews after the PB in Schools pilot had ended, demonstrate the beginnings of a professional learning community. However, teachers also expressed interest in having more opportunities to share information, resources, tools, and experiences with one another. Given that teachers' schedules are so busy and tightly planned, designing the most effective format for the professional learning and sharing of information will require some experimentation.

Notwithstanding the initial successes of the PB in Schools pilot, the pilot did also face some challenges during implementation (see Evaluation section). GCI has developed several recommendations in order to refine and improve the PB in Schools program, to fully support teachers in its implementation, to expand the impact and number of participants, to deepen the power of the experience of democracy for students, and to demonstrate an institutional commitment to the development of students as community leaders and citizens.



“ The best thing is giving the students a voice; the biggest challenge is the students understanding that they do have a voice and that their voice matters. ”  
—Al Raby Teacher



## **Recommendations**

### **Develop a sustainable pot of money for PB processes to take place in the school.**

The PB in Schools pilot used funding from two sources including seed money from PB Chicago's Robert R. McCormick Foundation grant and a portion of Alderman Villegas's aldermanic menu money. Developing a sustainable pot of money for PB project-based learning from an existing budget will ensure that the initial success of the pilot can be built upon and could solidify and strengthen some of the goals around student agency and voice with an annual PB cycle.

### **Increase the amount of money available for the PB pot of money and/or combine with other school program(s) funding sources.**

Many of the pressing issues and ideas that students generated were ineligible or not feasible to be addressed with the pot of money available for use during the pilot. With increased resources and/or incorporating PB into other sources of funding for school programs, PB will be able to have a greater impact on both participating students and on the entire school community.

### **Adjust the PB timeline to begin in the fall semester**

Beginning the PB process in classrooms in the fall semester will provide teachers with the flexibility to adjust the PB process to avoid scheduling challenges such as those that occurred during the pilot: SAT prep, SAT testing, prom, and graduation. In addition, PB in the fall semester would provide teachers with the flexibility to determine the best pacing for the PB process within the Participate curriculum and the potential for students to be involved in planning for the winning PB project's implementation.

### **Involve students in planning for the PB timeline.**

Including students in the planning for how the PB process will take place—including the timeline for each phase of the process—will provide another opportunity to enrich learning and will give them more agency in the process.

### **Redefine success around the ability to participate.**

Because many students defined "success" in terms of only winning or losing, there is an opportunity to redefine success around the ability to participate, having a voice, and developing civic skills rather than simply winning the vote.

### **Conduct schoolwide votes and also increase number of voting days.**

Teachers and students alike reported a desire to involve the entire school in PB, particularly additional teachers and students. Conducting a schoolwide vote and increasing the number of voting days will provide opportunity for the entire school community to become involved. Having more than one voting day ensures that in the case of a student absence, or a student not being contacted by voter outreach on campus, he or she has another opportunity to participate in the vote.

### **Combine the PB vote with other activities sponsored by the school and CPS Office of Civic Engagement.**

The PB vote can be combined with activities such as voter registration for students who are age 18 years and older and/or using voting machines from the Cook County Board of Elections for the PB vote. This will enhance students' experiences of the democratic process and also familiarize them with voting.

### **Consider conducting PB with juniors and/or involving freshmen and sophomores.**

Juniors, as well as freshmen and sophomores, who participate in a PB process can be part of project implementation and/or see the winning PB project(s) be implemented the following year, which will greatly add to their sense of accomplishment.

### **Schedule in advance reflection days and/or conference calls as well as a system for sharing tools and information electronically for the professional learning community (PLC) of teachers.**

Schedules of both teachers and CPS staff and administrators are busy and difficult to schedule around. Having a schedule and system for sharing experiences, information, and tools will add more structure to the PLC.

### **Include in training materials the idea of leveraging funds.**

Because of the existing experience in the 36th Ward, where a Steinmetz student proposed a winning project on the ward-wide PB ballot that was later provided with over \$4.5 million in city funds, teachers and students can be made aware of previous successes. Knowledge on how to leverage funds and where to identify sources of additional funding (e.g., park district, alderman's office) could encourage students to participate in PB processes occurring outside of school and/or to leverage funds for additional projects in their schools and communities.

## **Implications**

Public schools in the United States play a critical role in preparing students to become citizens and to participate in civic life. A healthy democracy needs informed, active citizens. In other words, it requires citizens with a sense of agency. Youth who responded to the questionnaire reported positively on their experience with participatory budgeting, and the impacts of PB on their sense of self-efficacy and agency are very promising. The ability to self-determine parts of the process they participated in as well as create their own projects speaks to the development of this important skill set.

The evaluation results show positive gains for participants in the areas of critical thinking, communication, and collaboration. Working together to create surveys, projects for the ballot, and get-out-the vote campaigns demonstrates how these skills were used throughout the

process. However, many of the youth involved were initially reluctant to participate as a result of previous experiences of not feeling heard or of having other programs (or authorities) not deliver as promised. In addition, many youth expressed concerns that implementation of the winning projects would not occur as promised.

A Harvard study suggests that developing agency may be as important of an outcome in school as the basic skills measured in standardized testing (Ferguson et al. 2015). Along similar lines, over the past several years, researchers, early childhood experts, and educators have advocated for schools to incorporate critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity into their programming, as these skills are all considered critical to succeed in life and work, and as a citizen (Partnership for 21st Century Learning 2018; Golinkoff and Hirsh-Pasek 2016).

Solidifying the results of this pilot will necessitate more than just one experience over one program. It will require creating a culture of democracy inside the school where students can anticipate that PB will occur annually. Building skills requires practice, and people learn citizenship by doing. Youth are no exception to this. Ensuring that PB is not a one-time experience will amplify the results seen in the pilot and, over time, promote spillover effects in the overall school experience of participating students.

The results of this evaluation have several implications for implementing and/or scaling up PB both in schools across the City of Chicago and nationally. PB and similar programs play an important role in providing students with spaces to co-create their civics project-based learning experiences. Additionally, PB provides real democratic experience to students, not just another simulation—a point that teachers and students alike repeated. In doing so, it potentially raises the stakes in terms of gains in student self-efficacy and agency and their willingness and ability to collaborate and communicate with one another on group projects. Additional research needs to be conducted, including longitudinal studies, on the impact of PB on students' academic achievements and/or civic engagement over time, as does comparative analysis nationally to determine how different models have an impact on results.

## References

- Ferguson, Ronald, Sarah F. Philips, Jacob F. S. Rowley, and Jocelyn W. Friedlander. *The Influence of Teaching—Beyond Standardized Test Scores: Engagement, Mindsets, and Agency*. Cambridge, MA: Achievement Gap Initiative of Harvard University, 2015. <http://www.agi.harvard.edu/projects/TeachingandAgency.pdf>.
- Golinkoff, Roberta Michnick, and Kathey Hirsch-Pasek. *Becoming Brilliant: What Science Tells Us about Raising Successful Children*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2016.
- Partnership for 21st Century Learning. *Framework for 21st Century Learning*. <http://www.p21.org/about-us/p21-framework>

# Appendix

## Participatory Budgeting Youth Survey Instrument

### Demographic Information

#### How would you identify your race and/or ethnicity? (mark all that apply)

- American Indian/Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- Hispanic or Latino/a
- Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
- White

#### What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

#### What is your age?

- 14 years old
- 15 years old
- 16 years old
- 17 years old
- 18 years old
- 19 years old

### Civics Knowledge and Values

Think about your experience with participatory budgeting and the class project. Now that it is over, how much do you agree with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
I have better understanding of the needs in my community and school.					
I can make a difference in my community/school.					
Young people have the power to influence their communities/school.					
People working together can solve community problems better than people working alone.					
I can make things better by working with others in my community.					

Youth survey instrument adapted from the Action Civics Standard Student Survey tool.

**Civics Skills**  
**Critical Thinking and Communication**

**Imagine that you found about problem in your community, like violence in your school or community and you wanted to do something about it. Think about your own abilities now that you have done PB. What do you think you would be able to do?**

	<b>Definitely can't</b>	<b>Probably can't</b>	<b>Unsure</b>	<b>Probably can</b>	<b>Definitely can</b>
Analyze the issue to figure out what is causing the problem?					
Identify individuals or groups who could help you with the problem?					
Express your views with knowledge and confidence in front of a group of people?					
Compare the pros and cons of different solutions to an issue?					
Work with other youth and adults in your school or community to solve the problem?					
Create and implement a media/outreach strategy for spreading awareness?					
Use evidence from research to create solutions?					

**Participation**

**Think about the following statements. During the PB class project, how often did you.....?**

	<b>Never</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Often</b>	<b>Always</b>
Identify and use the skills that were needed to make a team work well together?					
Help brainstorm solutions and new ways to go forward when a group got stuck on a problem?					
Encourage other members in your group to contribute?					
Listen to and value the contributions and perspectives of others in your group?					
Handle disagreements well?					
Speak comfortably with adults in my school and community?					

Youth survey instrument adapted from the Action Civics Standard Student Survey tool.

**Think about your experience with the PB class project. How true are the following statements?**

	<b>Not true at all</b>	<b>Not very true</b>	<b>Sort of true</b>	<b>Very true</b>
We had a say in choosing the issue we worked on.				
We discussed different ways to make a difference on our issue before deciding what we were going to do for our project.				
I now know enough about the issues in my community and school to discuss it with friends and family.				
We presented and/or discussed the results of our project with one or more members of the community.				
I felt like we had real responsibilities on our project.				
As a result of my experience with PB, I have a better understanding of how the skills I learn in school can be used in the real world.				
I feel involved in the decision made at my school.				

**PB Evaluation**

**How do you rate your overall experience with the participatory budgeting (PB) class project?**

- Very poor     Poor     Fair     Good     Very good

**Do you think the PB class project should continue next year?**

- Yes     No

**In your own words, can you describe the work you did on the PB class project? What proposal did you work on? How successful were you?**



**What two things did you like most about the PB class project this year?**

**What two things would change about the PB class project this year?**

**What are the two most important skills you developed in the PB class project and why?**

**Has the PB class project changed the way you look at community service and engagement, and civic responsibility? If so, how?**

## **Semi-structured Questions Interview Guide**

- How did you first hear of participatory budgeting? Why did you decide to get involved?
- Describe your experience with PB? What were the best things? What were the biggest challenges?
- To what extent did PB carry out its' goals?
- To what extent did PB meet CPS's project based learning goals?
- Compared to other civic project based learning, what do you see as the positive and negative elements of PB?
- How do you feel about the final selected projects?
- How do you feel about the student's overall experience?
- What are the most valuable things you've learned through the using PB as a project based learning project?
- What worked well?
- What needs to be improved?
- What changes would you suggest?
- Do you plan to participate in PB next year?
- Do you have any other comments and suggestions for the PB process? The CPS project based learning?





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