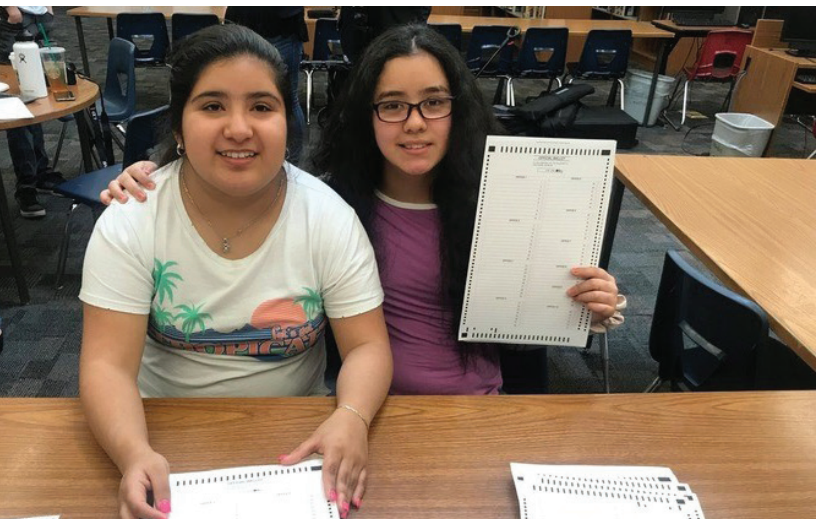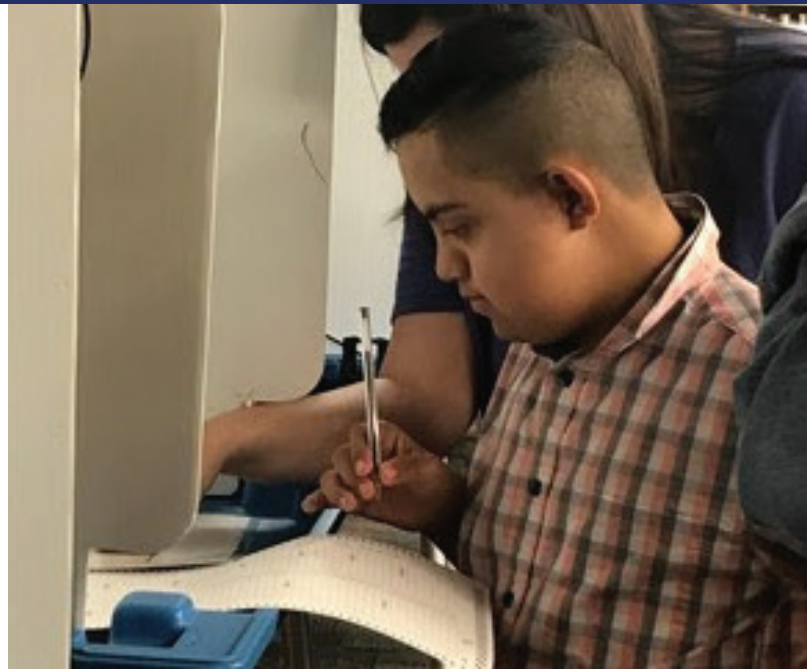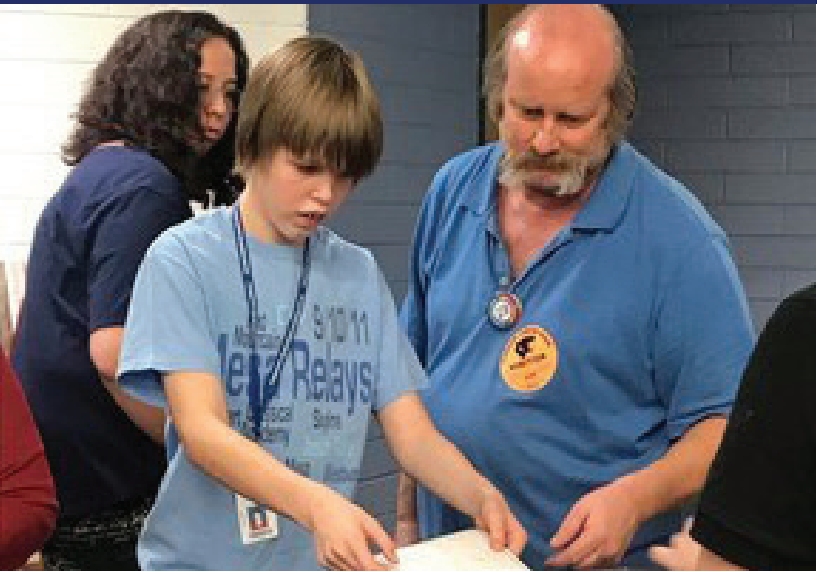# School Participatory Budgeting:
A Toolkit for Inclusive Practice

Tara Bartlett, Madison Rock, Daniel Schugurensky, and Kristi Tate

Center for the Future of Arizona & Participatory Governance Initiative 2020

CENTER FOR THE FUTURE ARIZONA

Participatory Governance Initiative

ASU Arizona State University

About the Participatory Governance Initiative:

The mandate of the [Participatory Governance Initiative](#) at Arizona State University is to promote excellence, collaboration, and innovation in participatory governance research and practice. The Participatory Governance Initiative is a university-wide interdisciplinary space that aims at bringing together academics, students, elected and non-elected government officials, community members and practitioners interested in the theory and practice of participatory governance. Special attention is paid to the examination of emerging trends and innovative experiments around the world that are relevant to the realities of governance and public engagement in the 21st century. PGI is devoted to undertaking teaching, capacity building, research and dissemination activities aimed at the study and promotion of participatory democracy initiatives, particularly at the municipal level of government.

About the Center for the Future of Arizona:

The [Center for the Future of Arizona](#) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that brings Arizonans together to create a stronger and brighter future for our state. We listen to Arizonans to learn what matters most to them, share trusted data about how Arizona is doing, bring critical issues to public attention, and work with communities and leaders to solve public problems. We work across the full spectrum of important issue areas identified by Arizonans themselves and have deep and ongoing work in education, workforce and civic health, recognizing how central these are to a bright and prosperous future for our state.

About the Authors:

Tara Bartlett, Doctoral Candidate, ASU Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College

Tara Bartlett is a doctoral student in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College (MLFTC) at Arizona State University. Tara's research focuses on youth public participation, community development, and civics efficacy. Her previous fourteen years were spent teaching a hybrid of English Language Arts and Social Studies in Title I schools. In the classroom, Tara implemented civic programs such as We the People, Girls Tribe, Participatory Budgeting, and Project Citizen. Additionally, Tara has counseled over fifty Arizona schools in civic learning best practices as committee co-chair on the newly rebranded Civic Education and Community Engagement and was integral in the rewriting and adoption of new Arizona History and Social Science State Standards. Tara has also been a presenter and mentor for the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, facilitating youth civic engagement workshops in partnership with the U.S. State Department and IREX. Currently, Tara is working with iCivics, ASU, Tufts University, and Harvard on the creation of a nation-wide "civic roadmap" for K-12 educators.

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Madison Rock is a native Arizonan and self-described cheerleader for democracy.
She is passionate about guiding young people through the process of self-empowerment, innovative problem solving, and developing strong, resilient communities. As the Senior Civic Health Program Coordinator at the Center for the Future of Arizona, she supports strategies and initiatives to improve Arizona's civic health, including the school participatory budgeting program where students "learn democracy by doing" by making decisions over a portion of the district's budget. Madison has been deeply engaged with the Phoenix Union SPB model since its early adoption and has supported its scale to district-wide expansion. Madison has helped seed and support SPB processes in Chandler Unified, Sunnyside Unified, Queen Creek Unified, and Carson Jr. High. She also serves as a global mentor on School PB in the Rising Stars PB Mentorship Program. Madison graduated from Arizona State University with a bachelor's degree in Public Service and Public Policy. Her area of study focuses on sustainability, creative city development, and participatory budgeting.

Daniel Schugurensky, Professor, Arizona State University

Daniel Schugurensky is a professor in the School of Public Affairs and in the School of Social Transformation at Arizona State University, where he is co-director of the Participatory Governance Initiative and coordinator of the graduate certificate in social transformation, the undergraduate certificate in human rights, and the master's in social and cultural pedagogy. Among his recent authored or edited books are "Global Citizenship Education in Teacher Education: Theoretical and Practical Issues" (Routledge 2020) "By the People: Participatory democracy, civic engagement, and citizenship education" (Participatory Governance Initiative 2017); "Volunteer Work, Informal Learning and Social Action" (Rotterdam: Sense, 2013), "Paulo Freire" (Continuum Library of Educational Thought. London: Continuum, 2011), "Learning

citizenship by practicing democracy: international initiatives and perspectives" (Cambridge Scholarly Press, 2010), "Four in Ten: Spanish-Speaking Youth and Early School Leaving in Toronto" (LARED/University of Toronto, 2009), and "Ruptures, continuities and re-learning: The political participation of Latin Americans in Canada" (Toronto: Transformative Learning Centre, 2007). He has published more than100 articles, book chapters and technical reports on a variety of topics, including adult education, community development, participatory democracy, citizenship education, social economy, civic engagement, higher education, migration, and volunteer work.

Kristi Tate, Director, Civic Health Initiatives, Center for the Future of Arizona

Kristi Tate serves as the Director of Civic Health Initiatives for CFA, where she leads a portfolio of work that drives data, dialogue & action statewide to improve civic health in Arizona. She has served in leadership roles spanning organizations focused on education, service, and civic engagement. Most recently, Kristi served with the National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC), a congressionally chartered organization dedicated to strengthening civic life in America. Her focus at NCoC was on developing and leading partnerships for the Civic Health Index, which creates reports and initiatives designed to strengthen civic life in communities across the country. Before joining NCoC, she served at Georgetown University's Center for Social Justice as Director of the DC Schools Project. She has also directed programs for HandsOn Greater Phoenix and the Boys and Girls Club of Boston Charlestown Clubhouse. She has a B.A. from the University of Notre Dame and Master of Arts in Liberal Studies degree from Georgetown University, with a focus on social and public policy.

School Participatory Budgeting:
A Toolkit for Inclusive Practice

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

School Participatory Budgeting (SPB) empowers students to "learn democracy by doing" by deciding how district funds are used to improve their school communities and prepares young people to be active, informed, and engaged participants in civic life for the long term. The process builds student agency, confidence, communication, critical thinking and problem-solving skills. SPB stems from the widely adopted municipal PB model founded in 1989 in Porto Alegre, Brazil, both of which follow an iterative five step process of creating the rules and guidelines, collecting ideas, developing proposals, voting, and implementing winning projects. Phoenix Union High School District (PXU) in Arizona was the first to pilot the model with district dollars, scaling from one school in 2013-14 to district-wide expansion by 2019-20. In partnership with the Center for the Future of Arizona (CFA), the Participatory Budgeting Project (PBP), and the Participatory Governance Initiative (PGI), SPB is now being implemented in five Arizona cities with a reach upwards of 50,000 students every year and continued growth and adoption anticipated in the coming years. The Arizona SPB process has also sparked implementation in the U.S. and internationally.

The SPB process is inherently inclusive. The model is designed to engage students traditionally underrepresented in leadership and decision-making roles on the student steering committee which guides the process while almost every student on campus participates at one point or another by submitting an idea and/or voting. The model is also designed to be adapted to suit the varying objectives and contexts of the school communities in which the process serves. Indeed, we have observed students meaningfully engage in leadership positions through SPB who may not have had the opportunity to do so in other civic engagement spaces on campus. We have also observed numerous variations of the model from school to school sometimes resulting in uneven participation among students, implications for student impact and outcomes, and posing challenges to the inclusivity of SPB. In implementing and observing SPB processes in Arizona and other places for several years, CFA and PGI have identified three challenges focused on process inclusivity which we describe in detail throughout the toolkit:

1. **Inclusivity in the steering committee**

2. **Inclusivity in student engagement**

3. **Inclusivity in the school community**

The challenge of inclusivity is particularly evident in the case of students with disabilities. Prior research has found that students with disabilities are usually underrepresented in spaces that promote civic engagement in schools. The research literature also indicates that adults with disabilities are less likely to engage in civic life, yet youth who have opportunities for civic engagement in schools are more likely to participate in civic life as adults. These two findings, and the broader body of research demonstrating significant demographic divides in access to high quality civic learning nationally have led us to a focus on implementing SPB in school communities with traditionally underrepresented communities, with special attention to students with disabilities.

With these challenges and prior research in mind, CFA and PGI partnered with the Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (ADDPC) in the 2019-20 academic year to implement and evaluate an inclusive SPB process alongside Carson Jr. High in Mesa, Arizona. The Carson SPB Project focused on meaningfully including students with disabilities in all phases of the process. This project created a space for general education and special education students to work together, build relationships, and share leadership roles. SPB became one of the few spaces in which students with disabilities interacted regularly and on an equal basis with other students.

The purpose of this toolkit is to share promising practices gleaned from the inclusive SPB model and developed in response to the inclusivity challenges noted above with practitioners and educators seeking to engage students with disabilities in the SPB process. The practices and lessons learned through this project serve as a promising model for other SPB processes in Arizona and around the world that are striving to increase inclusivity.

INTRODUCTION

Background

Participatory Budgeting (PB) is a democratic process of deliberation and decision-making over budget allocations that started in 1989 and is currently implemented in over 11,500 cities around the world. School Participatory Budgeting (SPB) is a more recent phenomenon, and has been growing internationally and in North America. Phoenix Union High School District was the first in the nation to pilot and scale the model with district dollars, growing from one school in 2013-14 to district-wide expansion by 2019-20. Since initial adoption, SPB has grown from a single school in 2013-14 to 34 schools in 2019-2020 (20 schools in Phoenix, 11 schools in Chandler, 2 schools in Tucson, and one school in Mesa) - with even more Arizona schools and districts slated to adopt the model underway. The Arizona SPB experience has sparked adoption across the United States, including New York and Florida, and internationally.

SPB empowers students to "learn democracy by doing" by deciding how district funds are used to improve their school communities and prepares young people to be active, informed, and engaged participants in civic life for the long term. The process has the following objectives:

- Increase student civic knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and dispositions like problem-solving, teamwork, agency and collaboration.
- Provide a meaningful process to improve the quality of the school campus and build a more democratic school environment.
- Build community and improve school climate by improving cohesion, trust and communication between students, teachers, and school leaders.
- Equip young people with skills, tools and opportunities to contribute to their communities long-term.

How does SPB work?

Students organize and lead the SPB process on their campuses with the support of teachers, administrators, and community organizations. They are given a set budget and parameters to collect and develop ideas to improve their school communities that ultimately the entire student body decides upon by voting.

The SPB process is typically organized in five steps:

1. students propose ideas to improve the school community

2. students transform ideas into proposals by conducting research on cost and feasibility

3. students deliberate on viable proposals and discuss their pros and cons

4. students vote on proposals to select winning projects

5. winning projects are funded and implemented

Before the process begins, a steering committee of students designs the process, comes up with rules and regulations, and communicates them to the rest of the school community. After the process ends, participants conduct an evaluation and make recommendations for improvements for the next SPB cycle. All stages of the process are led by the students themselves, with the support of their teachers and the community. Typically, the SPB process takes several months, running from October until April, but in some cases shorter processes have been implemented.

For more information on how to implement SPB in your school or district contact the authors of this toolkit or check out PBP's PB in Schools Guide, Videos, and Online Educator's Course.

CARSON AT A GLANCE

Given a track record of success of SPB in Arizona and the opportunities to deepen engagement and inclusivity, CFA and PGI developed a project with Carson Jr. High in the city of Mesa in 2019-2020 to pilot an inclusive SPB process. Supported by a partnership with the Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (ADDPC), this project has added a new layer of focus on the importance of engaging students with disabilities and has generated a greater impact on self-advocacy and inclusion.

Carson Junior High Students & Mascot

The project included a particular focus on inclusion of students with developmental disabilities in every aspect of the SPB process (steering committee formation, process design, idea collection, proposal development, deliberation, campus-wide voting and evaluation). SPB is being implemented in thousands of schools around the world, but to the best of our knowledge, this is the first SPB initiative intentionally designed to include students with disabilities in all phases of the process.

Carson Jr. High provided an excellent school partner for the pilot project, with a proven track record of high-impact civic learning, an inclusive learning community, and sharp focus from school leadership on increasing access to civic learning for students with disabilities.

Carson Jr. High is a public middle school (grades 7 and 8) in the city of Mesa. With a population of over 500,000, Mesa is the third largest city in Arizona, with the following demographics:

- Whites: 83.8% (Non-Hispanic Whites: 62.6%)
- Hispanic or Latinx (of any race): 27.4%
- Black or African American: 3.7%
- Two or more races: 3.1%
- Native American: 2.3%

Carson Jr. High has 1,138 students, with a significant overrepresentation of minority students when compared with the demographics of the city: 57% of the students are Hispanic/Latinx, 13% are American Indian/Native American, and 8% are African American. Approximately 18% of Carson's students are enrolled in Special Education programs.

Throughout this project, we have developed a set of recommended promising practices with demonstrated potential for increasing inclusivity of SPB. Recommendations highlighted in this section were developed by the research team in partnership with Carson SPB coordinators, Social Studies and Special Education teachers, and school leadership and are intended to create a culture of inclusivity within the broader school community.

> **In this section, we describe five promising practices which are embedded in the three different dimensions of the SPB process:**
> **Steering Committee, Student Engagement, and School Community.**

INCLUSIVITY IN THE STEERING COMMITTEE

A PB process is typically coordinated by a relatively small group of stakeholders. In a school setting, this is often 10-35 students (depending on the size of the school) who are known as steering committee members. The steering committee plays a very important role from the beginning to the end of the SPB process. Among other things, steering committee members are in charge of designing the process, communicating with the rest of the school, collecting ideas, researching the viability of those ideas, transforming those ideas into projects, selecting the ideas that move to the ballot, and organizing the voting.

Through these activities and intensive involvement, steering committee members have more opportunities to develop their deliberative and leadership skills than other students. From an inclusivity framework, it is important to ensure that students in the steering committee truly represent the student body of the school community. In many SPB processes around the world, students join the steering committee through four main mechanisms: students are elected by their peers, the steering committee is derived from an existing group (i.e. a classroom or student club), students volunteer to participate (self-appointment), and/or students are invited by teachers and administrators (in some cases with diversity and inclusion in mind). Sometimes, these mechanisms result in steering committees that reflect the student population of the school. However, the variation in these models may create a steering committee in which students who participate might already be seen as leaders or have acquired leadership skills in other settings. Furthermore, as the process and steering committee becomes established within the school community, new members are often recruited by their friends and peers on the existing steering committee, minimizing the outreach pool and creating further implications for inclusivity. In those cases, there is a risk that the steering committee might reinforce existing gaps in civic leadership opportunities.

Of particular note in this project, and backed up by a growing body of evidence, students with disabilities are often underrepresented in school leadership roles, such as the SPB steering committee. Research has shown that adults with disabilities are less likely to be civically engaged, and we know that early civic learning experiences often set a path for future participation. With that in mind, the focus on inclusivity of students with disabilities takes on particular importance in school-based civic learning.

Promising Practice: SPB steering committees and campus activities, clubs and/or sports, should strive for demographic representation, including meaningful engagement of students with disabilities. This is strongly recommended for campus activities in which students assume leadership positions and/or acquire power in decision-making processes (e.g. student government, advisory councils, etc.).

Carson Example: With inclusivity at the forefront of decision-making, the student steering committee at Carson Jr. High was formed through a combination of teacher referrals and student selection with the aim to represent the broader student body as participants in the steering committee. Teacher referrals were provided by the Social Studies and Special Education Departments. On the school's morning announcements, the steering committee information meeting was announced for all interested students to attend. The information meeting had approximately 40 students in attendance, with 32 students committing to the yearlong program. The steering committee student demographics are representative of Carson Jr. High's overall demographics, with Special Education and several race demographics overrepresented since these groups are often underrepresented in electoral engagement. The graph below illustrates the demographic breakdown of the steering committee compared to the broader school community.
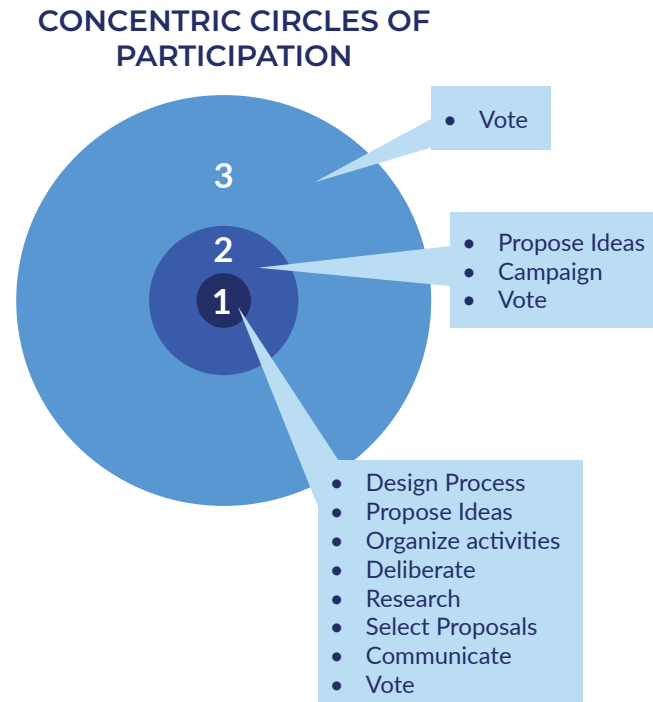
Carson Jr. High Demographic Comparison
SPB Steering Committee
2019-2020

STEERING COMMITTEE (32) ■   SCHOOL COMMUNITY (1,138) ■
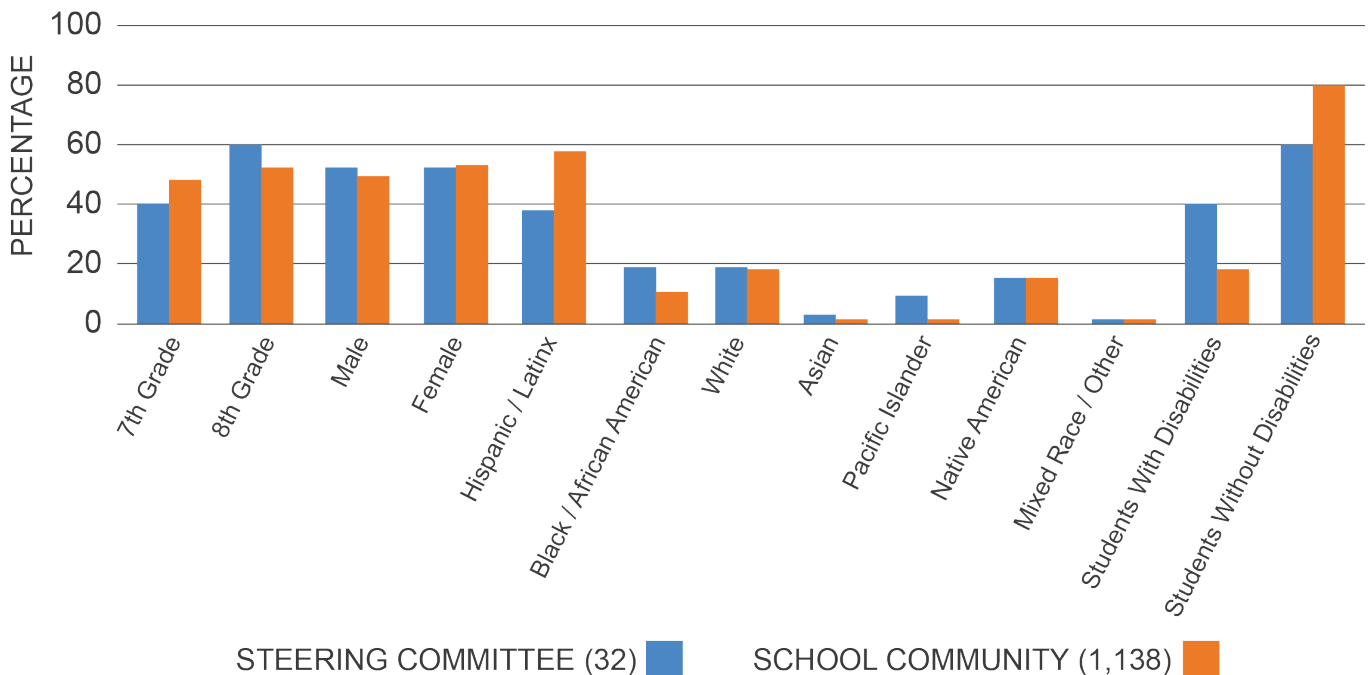
INCLUSIVITY IN STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

One of the great benefits of SPB is that it provides a tool for engaging the full student body in decision-making and building their sense of agency, and not just a small group of students. In a typical SPB process, almost every student participates whether through submitting ideas, campaigning for ideas, or voting. However, this engagement is often uneven, with some students much more engaged than others. The process can be understood as having three tiers of engagement:

- In the **inner circle** we find the group of students with the highest level of engagement. This usually consists of members of the steering committee, who work with teachers to shepherd each phase of the process among their peers. These students design the process, communicate with the school community throughout the process, collect project ideas, create their own proposals, research and deliberate on the viability of the proposals, facilitate discussions around proposals, organize campaigns, manage the voting process, and vote.

- In the **second concentric circle** we find students who participate at the beginning by submitting project ideas and attending some meetings, and then again participate towards the end by advocating for final projects and voting.

- In the **third concentric circle** are students who only actively participate at the end of the process, during the voting phase. In many cases of SPB, the majority of students (and most students with disabilities) can be found in the third concentric circle. Across SPB to date in Arizona, the vast majority of students participate in this phase of the process by voting on final projects having already been proposed and vetted.

CONCENTRIC CIRCLES OF PARTICIPATION

- Vote

- Propose Ideas
- Campaign
- Vote

- Design Process
- Propose Ideas
- Organize activities
- Deliberate
- Research
- Select Proposals
- Communicate
- Vote

The challenge with uneven engagement lies in the limitation of opportunities for students not in the steering committee to engage in the process between the steps of idea generation and voting. As a result, the steering committee members have many more opportunities to develop civic skills and concentrate a high amount of decision-making power. For instance, they are in charge of considering all the ideas submitted by students and selecting the short list of projects that move to the final ballot. Additionally, because many students in the third concentric circle vote but do not engage in robust deliberation to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the different proposals, they miss out on the chance to critically analyze the different proposals and to engage in deliberation with their peers before casting their vote. This reinforces a cycle of limiting the skill-building and experiential learning that can lead toward future engagement, specifically in the electoral process as informed voters. The need to foster active, engaged, and informed participants in civic life prompted the development of additional ways for students to meaningfully participate throughout the entire SPB process.

INCLUSIVITY IN STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Promising Practice 2:
Connect PB Process to Curriculum and Classroom Facilitation

Promising Practice: Ensure inclusion of the broader student body to the SPB process by implementing opportunities for information sharing, deliberation, and dialogue through a core curriculum classroom, and make connections between SPB and the curriculum of subjects like Social Studies, Math, English and the Arts.

Carson Example: One of the key objectives of the Carson project was to ensure every student had meaningful opportunities to engage in the various phases of the process from idea collection to the final vote. As stated above, varying levels of student engagement, represented by the three concentric circles of participation, does not necessarily present an inherent flaw in the model as students are able to balance participation alongside interest and availability. However, the research team noticed through observations of previous SPB cycles that interest and availability were not the only factors influencing levels of participation. Rather, access to opportunities to engage was driving uneven participation. Because all Carson students, including special education students, must take a Social Studies class in both 7th and 8th grade, the research team worked with the Social Studies and Special Education teachers in using class time as an access point to the SPB process.

In each Social Studies class, steering committee members led idea collection efforts, pros and cons deliberations on proposed ideas, primary vote logistics, presentations on the final project ideas, and the creation of campaign tools like posters and other visual aids. In addition to providing more opportunities for the broader student body to meaningfully engage in the SPB model, the implementation of these important phases embedded within a core curriculum classroom also created space to tie the SPB process to the curriculum standards. A series of lesson plans for 7th and 8th grade Social Studies were developed and provided in the tools and resources section of this document.

Highlights from Teachers:

"I saw a student from this year and a student from last year, both students with disabilities, really shine during the process. They came out of their shells and weren't afraid to speak up in front of their peers."

\- Rebecca Urias,
Carson Social Studies Teacher

"This process was so intentional in getting students with disabilities involved, it made me think how we need to be more intentional and encouraging in other school activities."

\- Meg Scott,
Carson Social Studies Teacher and Department Chair

Broaden Participation and Input through a Primary Vote

Promising Practice: Increase opportunities for shared decision-making, deliberation, and dialogue throughout the SPB process among students outside of the steering committee, including a primary vote.

Carson Example: In an effort to include the broader student body more meaningfully in the proposal development phase, a primary vote phase was added to the SPB process. After the initial idea collection phase, the student steering committee narrowed down the 100+ ideas by using the decision-making constraints of timeline, existential policies, feasibility, budget, inclusivity, and sustainability. The resulting top 21 ideas were ranked by every student through the implementation of a primary vote.
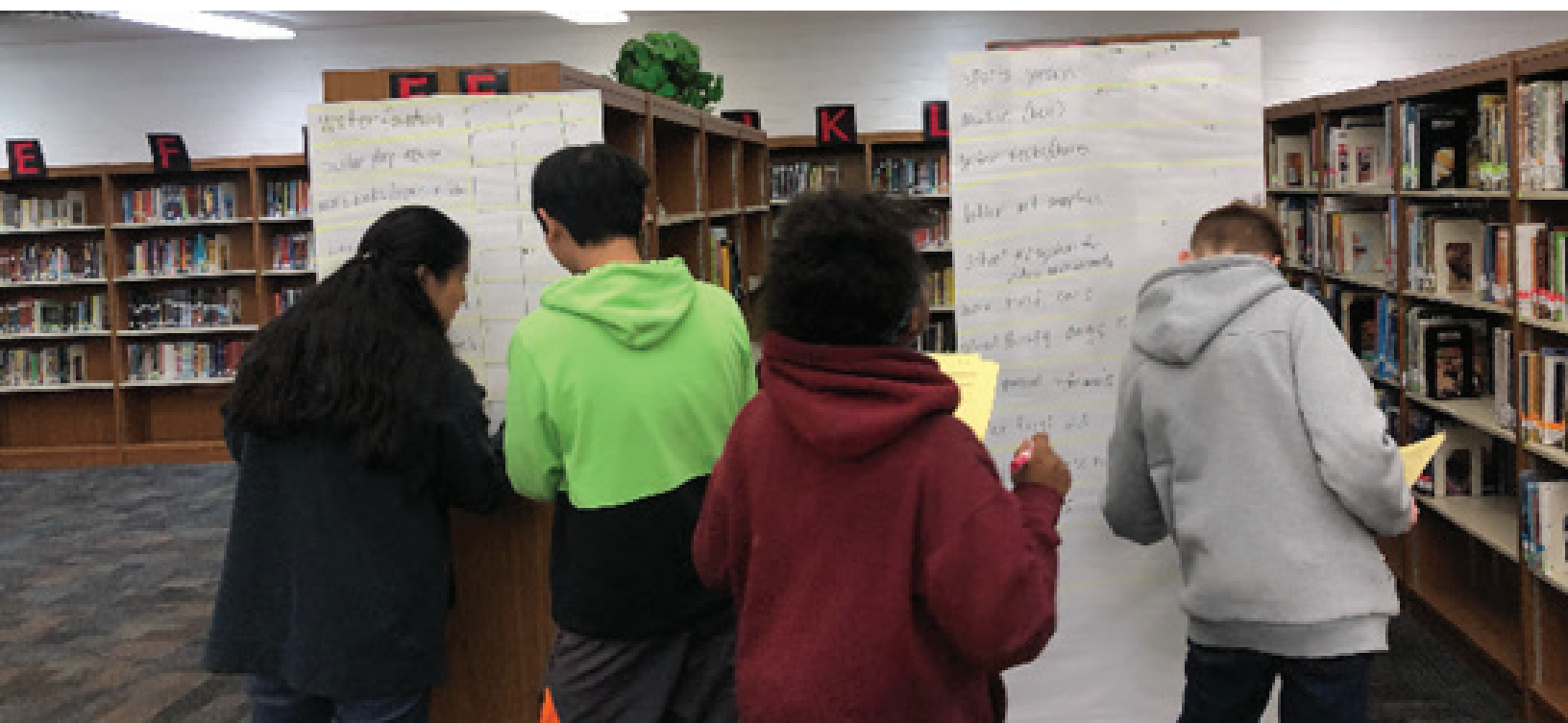
Carson Steering Committee members tallying up the results from the primary vote.

The addition of a primary vote to the SPB process served as a valuable learning tool as the steering committee was able to identify common mistakes on the ballots, note the number of invalid votes, and share how we can improve voting accuracy at the final vote. Moreover, the primary vote created an additional space for students in concentric circles 2 and 3 to deliberate the pros and cons of the top 21 ideas in Social Studies classes and have greater share in the decision-making power of the steering committee. This intervention to the SPB process worked to collapse the outermost concentric circle of participation, bringing almost all students to the center two circles in which participants observe the process, influence which ideas become proposals, create project proposals, submit and deliberate ideas, and vote to fund the winning project(s).

Promising Practice 4:
**Ensure Inclusive Communication to Reach All Learners**

Promising Practice: Ensure inclusivity of students with disabilities through the use of inclusive communication methods such as visualizations and photovoice.

Carson Example: Throughout the duration of the project, the project team worked closely with Carson Special Education teachers and the steering committee to determine new ways for communicating information about the SPB process to students. These included visual art created by students on the steering committee and the broader student body to describe pros and cons of project proposals and photo voice - a Community-Based Participatory Approach (CBPA) that has participants take photographs to illustrate the problem or question, which is supplemented by interview data or simple sentences and used to influence decision makers.

Carson students and steering committee members reflecting on the pros and cons of the final five projects during lunch.

For example, the steering committee led campaign efforts among their peers by presenting and facilitating further discussion about the pros and cons of the projects using PowerPoint to showcase pictures of the different project options and locations on campus, tabling for each of the final five projects during lunch hours where students were encouraged to draw pictures to depict their opinions, and explaining vote day logistics like how to fill out a ballot using pictures and illustrated instructions during presentations in each Social Studies class before the final vote day. Campaign and vote day materials were made more accessible by utilizing large fonts, illustrations, and pictures to depict each project.
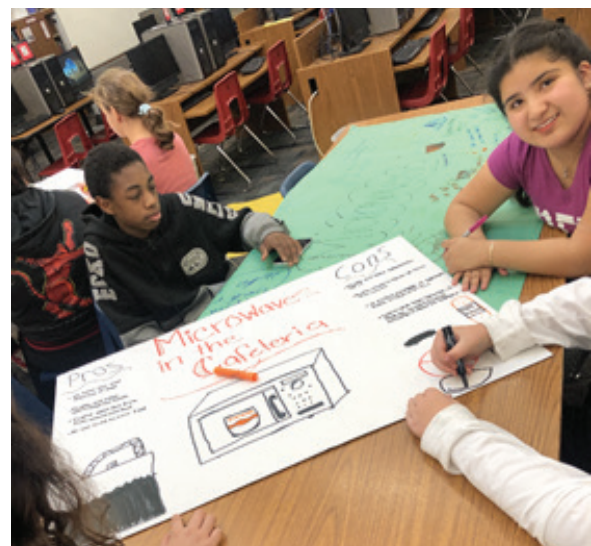
Steering committee members creating a campaign poster using photovoice to depict the "Microwaves" project proposal.

INCLUSIVITY IN THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

In most SPB processes, only students are eligible to participate, specifically during the voting phase. Observing previous SPB processes, we noted that in many cases (particularly in large schools) only a few teachers and administrators were involved in the process, and some teachers and staff either did not know much about the initiative or were interested in participating but did not find opportunities to do so. Moreover, few parents and other family members knew about the SPB process. From an inclusivity perspective, this prompted questions about how to strengthen the involvement from the broader school community (teachers, staff, administrators, parents and other family members) while still making sure that the students retained their leading role throughout the SPB process.

Promising Practice 5:
Emphasize Whole School Community Engagement

Promising Practice: Develop a system to engage community members (teachers, administrators, staff, parents, alumni, siblings, etc.) throughout the SPB process that minimizes the probability that adults overpower the students at the ballot box.

Carson Example: The Carson project engaged the broader school community, including teachers, administrators, staff, parents, alumni, and siblings, in three ways atypical from traditional models of SPB implementation. First, the research team presented on the SPB model and inclusivity focus to Carson teachers and staff during an all-staff meeting prior to project launch. Second, teachers, administrators, and staff were able to submit ideas in the beginning stages of the process. Lastly, the entire school community was invited to cast their ballot on the campus vote day. These three interventions created more buy-in to the process among stakeholders important to the sustainability and fidelity of the SPB model long-term.
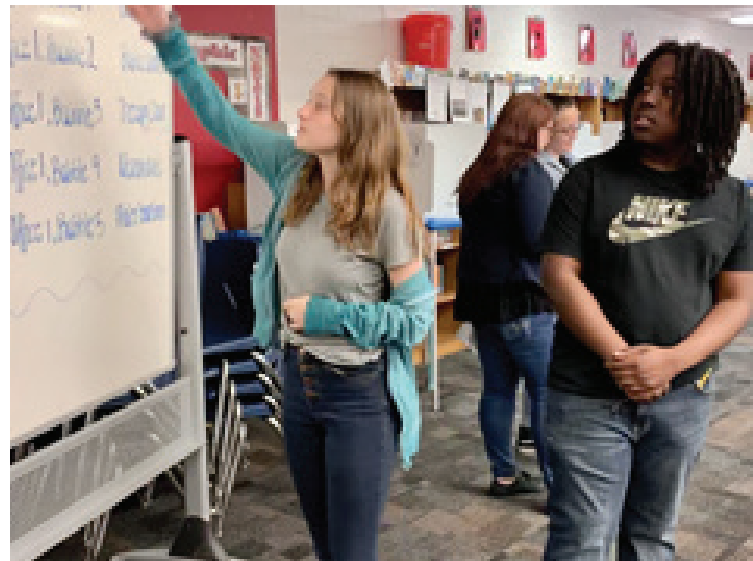
Steering committee members explaining project options and how to vote to Carson students on vote day.

Discussion: At Carson, the community vote outcomes were similar to the student preferences, but to ensure student voices were heard, the broader community votes were kept separate from the student votes. We realize the practice of inclusive community voting, however, poses an inherent challenge if adults outvote the students (Carson's community votes did not outnumber the student votes.). One way to mitigate a dilution of student votes is to keep community votes separate from student votes and address the community desired projects (if different from students) in a PTA-like meeting. Another way to address an uneven voting dynamic would be to limit the community vote to one per household or family.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

The pilot project on inclusive SPB generated the following outcomes:

Project Outcome 1: Meaningful and positive experiences with the SPB process from all stakeholders including campus-wide student body, students with disabilities, and school leaders and teachers.

From the analysis of the data collected at different points in time of the inclusive SPB process at Carson Jr. High (including interviews, surveys, focus groups and observations), we found that the process has made a positive impact on the school community, particularly on the student steering committee members and involved staff. The students reported experiencing a greater sense of belonging and collaboration, an increase in psychological empowerment, and better relationships with their teachers and peers. Teachers reported that they also observed increased confidence and leadership skills of the steering committee members, positive interactions among participants, and growth in deliberative skills and communication abilities. The following quotes illustrate the perceptions of many students about the impact of the process:

- "PB makes me feel more important because I help make decisions."
- "I learned to have more courage and self-confidence."
- "I was a loner and grew out of my shell."
- "I learned to advocate for myself because I knew I had a good idea."
- "This was the first time I was given a chance to make a difference."
- "Last year I went along with the flow and did not stand out, now I want to help the school."

Additionally, the process had more positive impacts on special education students with disabilities. Data collected from observations interviews with teachers and parents strongly suggests that students with disabilities developed more agency and confidence through the process. For instance, when students presented the ballot ideas to the social studies classrooms or discussed projects at lunch, students with disabilities were more demonstrably engaged than their general education peers. For example, one student was expecting a peer presenter from the steering committee who didn't show up for classroom presentations and still led each classroom presentation on his own, with increasing levels of self-confidence throughout the day.

Highlights from Teachers:

"Students enjoyed building friendships, another familiar face to say hi to, high fives, give hugs to...[gave] more people a sense of belonging for both students in that relationship."

- Amanda Straus, Carson Special Education Teacher and SPB Leader

Project Outcome 2: Increased likelihood of civic engagement from students with disabilities in particular.

Analysis of post surveys and interviews with steering committee students showed important improvements in civic knowledge, skills, attitudes, values and dispositions. The research team developed a thorough evaluation process from project launch through completion, with a focus on data collection of impact from student and staff perspectives. This included pre- and pre/post-survey interviews on key indicators of civic knowledge, attitudes, skills and practices, as well as school climate (KASP + SC). The KASP survey instrument developed by Daniel Schugurensky has been used to evaluate the impact of SPB processes in Arizona (Phoenix, Chandler, and Mesa - Carson Junior High) and Miami, Florida and Syracuse, New York. The KASP protocol is intended to be administered as an interview or a focus group. The numerical changes are important, but more important are the narratives and experiences of students explaining and illustrating those changes. The following quotes demonstrate a desire in pursuing civic-based activities in the future:

- "Ever since we started to vote, I heard and listened to ideas; I talked more about school with my mom and dad on how school should change."

- "Now I actually discuss problems."

- "I would just go home before and not really think about it, but now I want to fix things at school."

- "I am more focused on solutions."

- "Something told me to express myself more because I thought it could change something."

- Before, "I didn't understand the purpose of voting", and after, "I got to understand how voting changes lives and the world."

Highlights from School Leaders:

"Seeing students shine and be confident to speak publicly in front of the student body."
- Dawn Harrington, Carson SBP Leader, Title I Specialist

"Opportunity for kids to learn how to organize a large school event, learning... the importance of the democratic process, that students' voices really do matter, and how to create a process for change."
- Tony Elmer, Carson Principal

This is relevant because the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) mandates that States ensure that persons with disabilities effectively and fully participate in political and public life on an equal basis with others, promote actively an environment in which persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in the conduct of public affairs without discrimination and on an equal basis with others, and encourage their participation in public affairs. SPB provides a safe environment to practice the exercise of these rights, encourages participation and helps students with disabilities to develop capacities for civic and political participation on an equal basis with other students.

Project Outcome 3: Project proposals and ideas more responsive to the needs and voices of students with disabilities, as a result of engaging them meaningfully in the process

Interestingly, several of the most popular ideas proposed by students centered on health and wellness or are used in accommodations for students with disabilities. For instance:

- equipment to play sports outdoors during lunch hours
- more landscaping
- school garden
- more outdoor seating around campus
- improved desks and chairs, like flexible seating in classrooms
- more art supplies
- an audiovisual system to broadcast daily announcements
- a school therapy dog (final vote winner!)
- better first aid kits in every classroom
- a zen or anti-stress room

Although it is difficult to prove that the active engagement of students with disabilities in the process and the inclusion of students with disabilities on the steering committee resulted in ideas that were responsive to the needs of these students, the ideas proposed show an inclusive mindset emerging campus-wide.

Highlights from Teachers:

"The students felt especially empowered. (Especially the 7th graders). There was also great and supportive interaction between the students with disabilities and the general population."
- Darrell McRae, Carson Social Studies Teacher

"I saw students develop stronger social skills and form friendships with others outside of their normal friend groups"
- Melissa Groff, Carson Social Studies Teacher

In the post survey interviews, students with disabilities who participated in the steering committee reported an increased sense of agency and voice. They also reported being respected by their peers and by the Carson Junior High staff.

Several of the quotes illustrate this:

- On making decisions in a group: "I learned to advocate for myself because I knew I had a good idea" and "It's better to work together and that it's not all about me"

- On public speaking: "At first I was nervous, but now I know I can do it"; "I was shy, but PB made me give presentations, this made me better at public speaking and less afraid"

- On connections to the school community: "This was the first time I had the chance to make good decisions, not bad ones"; "I was able to make a change in my school"; "I became more convincing and cared more about what happened to us"

- On making a difference in the school: "I believed in myself when I started being better"; "knowing that I can give presentations and be told I did a good job"

- When asked about any additional thoughts to share: "PB got me excited and I enjoyed being in an after-school club".

From the anecdotal observations of the research team and Carson Jr. High's leaders and teachers, as well as the survey interview data, the inclusive SPB process has positively impacted the student steering committee members and involved staff. The students reported experiencing a greater sense of belonging and collaboration among themselves, and increased relationships with their teachers and peers. The staff and parents of students on the steering committee also provided feedback in observing increased confidence and leadership skills of the steering committee members.

Parent Highlight:

"I saw an impact on [them] and how [they] changed was for sure by how [they] was able to feel more comfortable in front of people, because ... [they've] always kind of been the person that sat back and let somebody else take charge. And It was good to see the change in [them] that [they] were more willing to step forward and say, "Hey, no, I can do that." To hear [them] talk in front of people, that was a good change for [them] because [they] never...before you could just see the anxiety on [their] face . . . to where [they've] changed that and have really enjoyed it."
- Parent, Carson Student Steering Committee Member

CONCLUSION

SPB is a promising civic learning tool designed to prepare young people to be active, engaged participants in civic life for the long-term by developing students' civic capacities like sense of agency, collective problem-solving, and communication and research skills, deepening relationships, trust, and cohesion in the school community, and making meaningful improvements to the school campus through democratic decision-making. Building on these important impacts, the Carson SPB project focused on inclusion of students with disabilities to address the civic opportunity gap found in K-12 civic learning, with long-term impacts and implications for adults with disabilities. Students with disabilities are usually underrepresented in spaces that promote civic engagement in schools. Previous studies have found that youth civic engagement is a strong predictor of civic and political engagement in adulthood. This gap in opportunity for civic engagement and civic learning has long-term implications, as adults with disabilities are less likely to be civically engaged.

This project advocates for strategic and intentional interventions to the SPB process aimed at engaging students with disabilities in all phases of the process and, in turn, preserving the model's intrinsic elements of inclusivity. These include 1) demographic representation of the student body on the steering committee which guides the SPB process, 2) implementing the phases of the SPB process through core classroom instruction to ensure the broader student body is engaged in making important decisions throughout the process 3) introducing additional opportunities for shared decision-making, deliberation, and dialogue throughout the SPB process among students outside of the steering committee, including a primary vote 4) creating inclusive mediums for communicating with all students about the process and projects, 5) engaging the broader school community, including teachers and family members, in the final vote. The practices and lessons learned through this project serve as a promising model for other SPB processes in Arizona and around the world that are striving to increase inclusivity.

Highlights from Teachers:

"School wide, the student body felt more involved and [were] given authority on something that connected and affected them."
- Roger Lyman, Carson Social Studies Teacher

"I think the process allowed students with disabilities to make new social connections. [They] seemed to be the most enthusiastic and took their roles very seriously."
- Ryan Doty, Carson Social Studies Teacher

"I enjoyed seeing the growth of the students' public speaking skills and confidence -I was so proud of them all, even the students I didn't even know!"
- Bobbi Doherty, Carson Social Studies Teacher

General Resources
- Video on Carson Jr. High Inclusive SPB - ASU Mary Lou Fulton/Teachers College (coming soon!)

- Short Video on School PB in Phoenix, Arizona - Participatory Budgeting Project

- School PB in Arizona Overview - Center for the Future of Arizona

Lesson Plans
- SPB Relevant Arizona (grades 6-12) Standards-based Social Studies lesson plans developed in partnership with Katie Duke, Arizona State University MPA Graduate

Evaluation Tools
- KASP + SC indicators: Self-evaluation tool for students to reflect on personal growth in civic knowledge, attitudes, skills, and practices as well as changes in overall school climate. The survey is intended to be used in conjunction with focus groups or interviews.

- Student Evaluation Tool: Designed for teachers/researchers to reflect on in-class presentations and indicate the perceived growth made by the student steering committee members throughout the academic year.

- YPAR Voting Exit Poll: Student-administered survey designed to gather opinions from the broader student body on the accomplishments, challenges, and recommendations of the SPB process.

- Leadership/Teacher Interview Guide: Intended to gather insights, accomplishments, challenges, and recommendations from teachers and administrators engaged in the SPB process.

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