

SPB INITIATED BY TEACHERS:

CARSON JUNIOR HIGH, MESA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Snapshot

STEERING COMMITTEE DESIGN*: Year 1 Classroom Model; Year 2 Existing Club Model

STEERING COMMITTEE RECRUITMENT: Year 1 Appointment; Year 2 Appointment & Self-Appointment

BUDGET ALLOCATION: \$1,500 - \$2,000

BUDGET SOURCE: Year 1 Capital Funds; Year 2 Student Council Funds

WINNING PROJECT(S): Hydration Stations; School Spirit Mural

Details

In academic years 2017-18 and 2018-19, Carson Junior High School in Mesa Public Schools implemented School Participatory Budgeting (SPB). The process was initiated and led by an English Language Arts (ELA) teacher in partnership with the Social Studies department. During the first year, the student steering committee was formed with students in one of the ELA classes. Students from that class led the SPB process phases either through their ELA class period or during each of their Social Studies class periods. They collected ideas from their peers during lunch times and through their Social Studies classes, researched the ideas and created the project proposals during their ELA class, and worked with their Social Studies classes to deliberate on the different idea proposals. The Vote Day was held during the different lunch times using paper ballots and ballot drop boxes, and the winning project was to install two hydration stations—one in a common breezeway and another in the gym—using capital budget funding.

In the second year, the SPB student steering committee was formed through existing student members from other civic-related clubs like Kids Voting, We the People, and Project Citizen. Additionally, a few other students chose to join the after-school meetings that were dedicated to SPB. This club met after school with the same ELA teacher, the school's Title I Specialist, and one Social Studies teacher to design and implement the SPB process. Again, some of the SPB process activities were implemented during Social Studies classes, such as idea collection and deliberation, while the research and proposal development was done during the time the club met after school. The Vote Days were again held during the different lunch times using paper ballots and drop boxes. The winning project during this iteration was a school pride mural to be painted near the largest outdoor seating area outside of the cafeteria. The student steering committee worked with a local artist to capture all the proposed elements of the mural (the school's cougar mascot, Arizona landscape, school colors, etc.). Because the mural reflected the school's pride and representation, the Carson student council funded the painting of the mural.

SPB WITH AN INCLUSIVE APPROACH:

CARSON JUNIOR HIGH, MESA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Snapshot

STEERING COMMITTEE DESIGN*: Year 3 New Extracurricular Model; Year 4 Classroom Model

STEERING COMMITTEE RECRUITMENT: Year 3 Representation; Year 4 Appointment

BUDGET ALLOCATION: \$1,500 - \$2,000

BUDGET SOURCE: Year 3 Principal Discretionary Funds; Year 4 District Foundation Grant

WINNING PROJECT(S): School Therapy Dog; Scooter & Skateboard Transportation

Details

Given a track record of success of School Participatory Budgeting (SPB) in Arizona and the opportunities to deepen engagement and inclusivity, Center for the Future of Arizona (CFA) and partners at Arizona State University Participatory Governance Initiative (PGI) developed a project with Carson Junior High in the city of Mesa in 2019-20 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.

With technical assistance and training provided by CFA and PGI, the project focused on the 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). The steering committee had 32 students that represented the school demographics in terms of gender, age, race and ethnicity, with an overrepresentation of students with disabilities (18% of the student population; 41% of the steering committee). In the first phase of the SPB process, students submitted 281 ideas to improve the school. After reviewing submitted ideas for viability and redundancy, the steering committee selected 21 ideas for a school-wide primary vote, which took place in December 2019. In the primary, Carson students narrowed down the 21 ideas to the top 5 project ideas for the final ballot: school therapy dog, better bell music, microwaves for student use in the cafeteria, bathroom renovations, and filtered water stations. The iterative election cycle (with a primary and a final vote) encouraged more active participation of the whole student body, with a focus on special education students, to participate more actively in deliberation and decision-making.

Throughout January and February, the steering committee led campaign efforts among their peers by presenting the projects and facilitating discussions about their pros and cons, tabling for each of the final five projects during lunch hours, and explaining Vote Day logistics like how to fill out a ballot during Social Studies classes before the final Vote Day in late February. The final vote was open to the entire school community (students, teachers, staff, and family members) and mirrored the actual voting process through a partnership with the Maricopa County Recorder's Office. Ultimately, the winning project (school therapy dog) was a testament to the pilot's objective of inclusivity.

In the following academic year, the Carson Junior High Special Education teacher, Amanda Gonzales, and the students with disabilities who participated in the Carson Jr. High Inclusive SPB process in 2019-20 were so thrilled by the experience that they wanted to do it again. To do so, Mrs. Gonzales successfully raised additional funds through a Mesa Public Schools grant to implement the process in the 2020-21 academic year. Mrs. Gonzales spearheaded the process within her classroom, comprised entirely of students with disabilities. The students began the process with an overview of American democracy and government curriculum to deepen teaching standards alignment and learning outcomes from the outset. The steering committee brainstormed and prioritized ideas on how to improve their classroom with the allocated budget. Top ideas included:

- Safe ride campaign with skateboards and scooters to assist students with traveling to and from campus – Winning Project
- Flexible seating options and sensory adaptations for the classroom
- Game room
- Outdoor sports equipment

Mrs. Gonzales further embedded the process in STEM curriculum standards and design thinking by supporting her students to create prototypes for each of the top projects. The students presented their projects to campus leadership and community partners before finalizing the top project (skateboards and scooters) with a classroom vote. The steering committee worked with the art teacher to customize the skateboards and scooters with school spirit designs. Students also created a campus-wide safety campaign based on their winning project to inform their fellow students important safety precautions and rules of the road when utilizing skateboarding and scooters to get to school.

SPB IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS:

QUEEN CREEK UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Snapshot

STEERING COMMITTEE DESIGN*: Existing Club Model

STEERING COMMITTEE RECRUITMENT: Appointment

BUDGET ALLOCATION: \$5,000 (Elementary) - \$7,000 (Secondary)

BUDGET SOURCE: District Capital Funds

WINNING PROJECT(S): Outdoor Seating and Shade Structures; Recess Equipment (soccer goals, gaga pit); School Spirit Murals and Statues; Water Bottle Refill Stations

Details

In 2019-20, Queen Creek Unified School District became the first unified school district in Arizona to pilot the SPB model in elementary schools. The district launched the SPB initiative with five schools, including one elementary school (K-6), two junior high schools, and two high schools.

CFA worked closely with district and school leaders to design the SPB process to align with the district's overall strategic plan and goals. Queen Creek opted for an existing club, Lead Out Loud, to act as the steering committee. The Lead Out Loud group consists of students who have not yet had leadership opportunities on campus and is designed to empower students to be champions in their community, raise school spirit, and energize leadership activities. The SPB process was a natural complement to advance the club's objectives.

Throughout the academic year, CFA led virtual trainings for teachers who guide the SPB process at their school (i.e. SPB Sponsors) before each key phase of the process, including kickoff and idea collection, proposal development, campaigning, and planning for each school's Vote Day. Steering committee students led the process of collecting ideas from their peers using Google Forms and paper surveys. The steering committees researched top ideas, developed proposals, and pitched their projects to the district's executive committee for final approval. In the weeks leading up to the SPB Vote Days, the steering committees campaigned for the final projects and registered students to vote in the SPB election by issuing special voter identification cards to each student. Students at each campus cast their votes in a centralized location that mirrored a real polling place. They presented their voter identification cards to receive their ballot, made their choices at an individual polling station, and cast their vote in a ballot drop box before receiving an "I Voted!" sticker from members of the steering committee. Students at the participating high schools also had the opportunity to register to vote with the Maricopa County Recorder's Office.

Due to the success of the initial pilot, Queen Creek continues to implement the SPB process district-wide which includes nine elementary schools, two junior high schools, and two high schools.

*For more information regarding Steering Committee Design and Recruitment, [please see this resource](#).

SPB WITH ALTERNATIVE FUNDING SOURCES: SUNNYSIDE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Snapshot

STEERING COMMITTEE DESIGN*: New Extracurricular Model

STEERING COMMITTEE RECRUITMENT: Combination (Appointment; Self-Apppt; Representation)

BUDGET ALLOCATION: \$15,000 per site

BUDGET SOURCE: Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Funds

WINNING PROJECT(S): Outdoor Seating and Shade Structures

Details

In the 2021-22 academic year, students across two high schools in Tucson, Arizona's Sunnyside Unified School District decided how to allocate \$30,000 in ESSER dollars using the SPB process. In Sunnyside, teachers who would guide the SPB process at their school (i.e. SPB Sponsors) invited students to participate in the steering committee at the beginning of the academic year. The steering committees at each campus met once a week after school to complete tasks for each phase of the SPB process. Before each key phase of the process, CFA led workshops designed to equip SPB Sponsors and steering committee members with the knowledge and resources to effectively execute each phase at their school.

Initial idea proposals included new community gathering spaces, murals, and gardens to improve school beautification, and additional resources for managing mental health. The process culminated in campus-wide Vote Days that were modeled after real-life elections in which students would cast their ballots across the two schools. The vote resulted in the funding of additional outdoor seating options for students and the installation of a traditional tribal shade structure created in partnership with the Tohono O'odham community. Thirty-five students were registered to vote for the next state and federal elections during SPB Vote Days. This process is a replicable example of how to empower student-led decision-making and develop civic leaders for the long term while ensuring ESSER funds address real needs and advance community priorities.

In addition, the Sunnyside SPB model informed community-led action at the city level. Throughout Fall 2022, several of the Sunnyside student leaders worked alongside city staff in the Office of Vice Mayor Lane Santa Cruz to develop and implement a city-level PB process empowering residents to allocate \$600,000 in American Rescue Plan Act funding.

*For more information regarding Steering Committee Design and Recruitment, [please see this resource.](#)