



Student Voice at the Board Table

Developing a Framework

Boards often ask, what is the place of the student voice in the governing of public schools, and how do we best incorporate that voice into our work? This is an important topic and one the board-superintendent team should spend time discussing and be clear about how to proceed.

Students, like any newly elected board member, require a significant amount of support to be successful. We cannot assume every new representative understands how the board operates, the laws and rules that define meetings, the culture of the board, how Roberts' Rules of Order work, or any other aspect of effective governance. We believe a young person, like an adult new to this work—who serves on a board – should receive onboarding to their role and have a mentor.

The board should develop a clear framework for meaningfully integrating student voice into its work.

To support this effort, the following thought-provoking questions are offered as a starting point for intentional dialogue. While not an exhaustive list, these questions are designed to guide the board in clarifying its goals, expectations, and approach.

By engaging in this reflection, the board will be better equipped to create a purposeful and respectful structure—one that empowers students, enriches board discussions, and ensures student voice is both heard and valued in meaningful ways.

Board-Superintendent Team Discussion Questions

PURPOSE & VISION

1. What is the purpose of a student representative?
2. What information does the board need from students, and what questions will you ask to gain information at a governance level?
3. What does your board policy say about adding a student representative to the board?
4. When and how will the board reflect on the process for improvement?

SELECTION PROCESS

1. Has the board defined a selection process for student representatives?
2. What will the application include?
3. What is the timeline of the process?
4. Who will be part of the interview/selection process?
5. How long will each term last and do students reapply each year?
6. What happens if a student is unable to complete their term and a vacancy occurs midyear?

ONBOARDING AND MENTORSHIP

1. Who will be responsible to onboard and mentor new student representatives?
2. If the board assigns a mentor, who will that person be?
3. Who will best help students understand the board's role at a governance level?
4. Who will review the purpose of board policy and the role it plays in board work?

ONGOING SUPPORT & ENGAGEMENT

1. How will the board help students prepare for meetings?
2. Will the representative have access to the necessary resources and technology to participate in the board's work?
3. Who recaps with students who were not in attendance after each meeting?

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND EXPECTATIONS

1. What are the expectations for attending board meetings? What happens if the student is unable to attend a meeting?
2. Is the student aware of the preparation time needed for each meeting, reading materials ahead of time and submitting questions to the board president?
3. Will the student be required to give a student report to the board each month? If so, what topics will be covered?
4. Will the student be expected to participate in board training?
5. What methods have been identified for the student to communicate board decisions back to the student body?