Connecticut’s VOICE 4 CHANGE

Giving Students a Say in Education Funding
a state**wide civic engagement initiative** investing $1.5 million in high school students to reimagine Connecticut’s schools. **Students will submit proposals** to the CSDE outlining how they would spend a portion of the funds in their school. Proposals deemed eligible to receive ARP ESSER funds will ultimately be **voted on by their peers on March 11, 2022**—one year after the historic American Rescue Plan Act was passed.
“We owe it to our children to make sure that they receive an education that **broadens their worldview** and **prepares them to thrive in a global economy and civic life**. And in order to prepare our students to participate meaningfully in society and the economy, our schools need to challenge students to think critically and solve real-world problems.”

– CT State Board of Education’s 5-Year Plan: Ensuring Equity and Excellence
OVERVIEW:

VOICE 4 CHANGE is...

• A First-of-its-kind
• A student-based participatory budgeting campaign
• Using ARP ESSER state set-aside, *not your district’s funds*
• Aimed at boosting engagement of high school students
CSDE’S SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

• ARP ESSER Funding Guidance: adapted from CSDE’s guidance for districts specifically for students
• Designated ARP ESSER e-mail inbox: SDE.ARPESSER@ct.gov
• Webinars on brainstorming and crafting effective proposals
• Webinars on effective campaigning (special guests and experts TBA!)
WHY SHOULD YOUR DISTRICT PARTICIPATE?
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• Get students excited about civic engagement and the impact they can have

• You will receive additional ARP ESSER funds to implement winning projects

• Voice4Change will be largely advertised across the state
THE **POWER** OF PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING

Additionally, studies have shown that allowing students to be stakeholders in their own learning and promoting youth civic engagement **can lead to increased academic performance and improved social-emotional well-being**. Beyond the immediate impact in schools, focusing on youth civic engagement is that such participation is a habit like any other: starting early can form a habit of civic engagement that will last a lifetime.

Source: [https://circle.tufts.edu/understanding-youth-civic-engagement/why-it-important](https://circle.tufts.edu/understanding-youth-civic-engagement/why-it-important)
ASSURANCES / OPT-IN PROCESS

To Opt-in:

• Fill out a brief survey (released next week) by **Friday, November 5, 2021, 12:00 p.m.** agreeing to the funding assurances and informing CSDE of how many high schools will participate
BY OPTING IN WE ASK THAT YOU...

• Share communications promoting Voice4Change
• Welcome possible CSDE visits promoting Voice4Change
• Oversee the campaign process to ensure fairness at the school level
• Work with CSDE to disperse election day form to students
• Support students’ winning proposal(s) (as Superintendent and building principals)
TIMELINE

- **October 21, 2021**: Superintendent Opt-in Opens
- **November 5, 2021**: Superintendent Opt-in Closes at 12:00 p.m.
- **November 29, 2021**: Voice4Change student application opens
- **November–December 2021**: CSDE webinars and guidance to support students crafting policy proposals
- **January 9, 2022, 11:59 p.m.**: Voice4Change student application closes
- **January 2022**: CSDE announces and informs eligible proposals
- **January–March 2022**: Students with eligible proposals campaign within their high school to gather votes, supported by additional CSDE webinars on effective campaigning
- **March 11, 2022**: Voice4Change Friday – high school students across Connecticut vote on proposals
- **Mid-March 2022**: CSDE announces Voice4Change winners
- **March 2022–onwards**: CSDE works with districts and students to disperse funds and fulfill winning proposals
NEXT STEPS

1. Share this opportunity with your 9-12 principal(s)

2. Complete opt-in survey by **Friday, November 5, 2021, 12:00 p.m.**

3. CSDE publicly launches Voice4Change in **early November**

4. Students begin to develop proposals

**IMPORTANT NOTE:**
Districts will not be allowed to opt-in after November 5, 2021 at 12:00 p.m., as the number of high schools participating will dictate the funding cap for student proposals
THANK YOU FOR HELPING GIVE CT’S YOUTH A VOICE 4 CHANGE

QUESTIONS?
You may also direct questions to SDE.ARPESSER@ct.gov