

# Connecticut's VOICE 4 CHANGE Challenge:

## ★ Giving Students a Say in Education Funding ★

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a large increase in funding for schools across the country. Specifically in Connecticut, the latest round of American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief (**ARP ESSER**) funding allocated **\$1.1 billion** to education. \$990 million of this is going directly to school districts, and the other \$110 million is called the “state set-aside.”

Voice4Change will allow students to suggest how \$20,000 of the ARP ESSER state set-aside be spent in their school. Seventy-six Connecticut high schools representing more than 55,000 students are participating, meaning **students will decide how more than \$1.5 million of ARP ESSER funding will impact their schools.**

Each high school in a participating district is eligible. Proposals from students at participating high schools will be submitted, vetted to ensure they are allowed given the rules that come with the ARP ESSER funding (don't worry—we'll provide guidance!), and put onto schoolwide ballots. Students will then campaign for their proposal to gather support within their school. **On March 11, 2022—one year after the historic American Rescue Plan was passed—high schoolers across Connecticut will vote for the initiative they want to see come to life in their school.** Afterwards, students, school administrators, and the CSDE will work together to implement the winning proposals in each school.

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### WHY SHOULD YOU PARTICIPATE?

This is your chance to **use your Voice4Change to impact your school community**, and the CSDE and your school district officials stand ready to support you!

### WHAT HELP WILL BE PROVIDED ALONG THE WAY?

The CSDE will host webinars to help you brainstorm, craft, and campaign for your proposals—skills you will use in the real world! These webinars will be both live and recorded to ensure all students have access; and the CSDE will provide guidance documents so that students can be sure that their proposals are allowed under the federal ARP ESSER rules.

### READY TO GET GOING?

A preview of the application can be found here: <https://ct.gov/voice4change>

### STILL HAVE QUESTIONS?

Send them to [SDE.ARPESSER@ct.gov](mailto:SDE.ARPESSER@ct.gov), and we'll be sure to get back to you.

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