

Connecticut's

VOICE  **CHANGE**

Giving Students a Say in Education Funding



VOICE CHANGE

a **statewide 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

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TODAY'S AGENDA

- Purpose & Overview
- CSDE Support for Students
- District Participation
- Assurances / Opt-in Process
- Timeline
- Next Steps
- Q&A

PURPOSE:

“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 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?



WHY SHOULD YOUR DISTRICT PARTICIPATE?

- 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>



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



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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

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

THANK YOU FOR HELPING GIVE CT'S YOUTH A

VOICE CHANGE

QUESTIONS?

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

