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ARIZONA



School Participatory Budgeting

EVALUATION TOOLKIT

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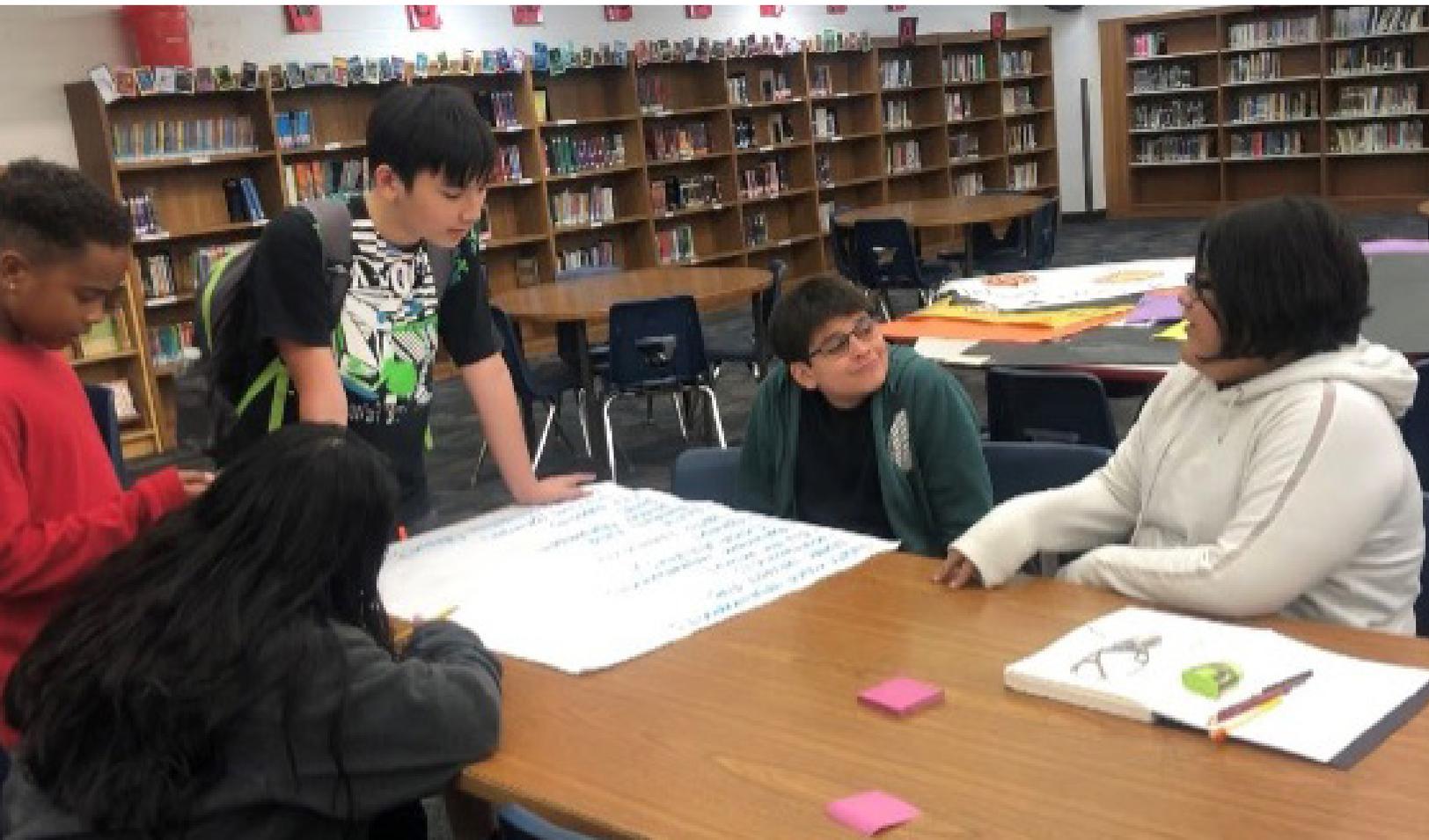


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1. Introduction

School Participatory Budgeting (SPB) is a civic learning innovation designed to build valuable student civic knowledge, attitudes, skills, and practices such as agency, collaboration, and critical thinking. SPB empowers students to “learn democracy by doing” by deciding how school or district dollars are used to improve their campus communities. The process prepares young people to be active, informed, and engaged participants in civic life. SPB also improves relationships and communication among students, teachers, and administrators, nurtures a more positive and inclusive school climate, and promotes a more cohesive school community.

Arizona has been at the forefront of SPB implementation and experimentation since 2013 when Bioscience High School in Phoenix, Arizona, became the first school within the US to pilot this democratic decision-making process. By 2016, Phoenix Union High School District adopted the nation’s first district-wide SPB process in partnership with **Arizona State University Participatory Governance Initiative (PGI)**, **Center for the Future of Arizona (CFA)**, and **Participatory Budgeting Project (PBP)**. Beginning in 2019, CFA and PGI have worked with the support of the **Arizona Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (ADDPC)** to expand more inclusive practices and fully engage students with disabilities in this work. SPB is implemented in 62 Arizona schools, engaging over 70,000 students every year.

In establishing and supporting SPB processes throughout Arizona, PGI and CFA have developed a strong track record of evaluating its impact and assessing stakeholder satisfaction in collaboration with PBP and school partners. This toolkit is designed to support researchers, educators, and students in evaluating the impact of an SPB process and building a better understanding of its main accomplishments and challenges.

In this toolkit:

- Justification and framework for evaluating SPB processes
- Approaches for measuring participant impact and understanding program effectiveness
- Tools and resources to support SPB evaluation, including methodologies, surveys, and interview and focus group guides

Several resources described throughout the toolkit have been created in partnership with PBP and schools across the state. The development and publication of this toolkit were made possible with the support of ADDPC.

For more information on implementing an SPB process from start to finish, contact the authors of this toolkit or check out the School PB Guide at participatorybudgeting.org. For more information about SPB in Arizona, visit arizonafuture.org/spb and check out additional resources, including:

- [School Participatory Budgeting: Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [School Participatory Budgeting: A Toolkit for Inclusive Practice](#)

2. Evaluating School Participatory Budgeting (SPB)

The SPB process is typically organized into five phases:

1. Students propose ideas to improve the school community
2. Students transform ideas into proposals by researching cost, feasibility, inclusivity, and sustainability
3. Students deliberate on viable proposals and discuss their pros and cons
4. Students vote on proposals to select winning projects
5. School improvement project(s) with the highest number of votes are funded and implemented

Before the SPB process begins, school leaders and a student steering committee design the process, set rules and regulations, and communicate these key decisions to the rest of the school community. After the final phase of the SPB process, students and school community stakeholders conduct an evaluation and make recommendations for improvements for the next SPB cycle. All phases of the process are led by students, with the support of teachers and other stakeholders within the school community.

2.a Why Evaluate SPB?

Evaluations are powerful tools for assessing the value and effectiveness of a program or process. They can assist with making decisions on program changes and improvements, encourage meaningful dialogue among stakeholders, and add to the knowledge of a particular program or process.¹ After the SPB process is completed, an evaluation is conducted by and for SPB stakeholders, including students, teachers, administrators, practitioners, and the community. The evaluation phase is a critical component of the SPB process and can serve several purposes:

- Help students, teachers, and administrators to better understand the impact of the process on participants and school communities
- Elevate essential insights and recommendations to shape the process for future cycles
- Provide evidence as to how effective the process is in meeting funder and stakeholder goals and objectives

Evaluations of the SPB process can be molded to meet different school and stakeholder needs. While this toolkit offers evaluators a broad set of approaches and resources for understanding the SPB process, schools and stakeholders can select and employ the components that suit their specific needs. In our Arizona experiences, SPB processes have typically been evaluated using two different approaches, which provide the foundation for the guiding framework and resources offered in this toolkit:

1. **Participant-Oriented Approach:** In the participant-oriented evaluation approach, the students and the school community participating in SPB are central to the evaluation. This approach measures the participant impact and relational outcomes of the SPB process. Participants consider their experiences, perceived changes, and personal learning and reflections to assess change across different indicators. These indicators include the impact on students' civic learning and practices and the broader impact on school climate. The participant-oriented approach can also directly involve participants as evaluators as a form of participatory action research.

2. **Process-Oriented Approach:** The process-oriented evaluation aims to learn more about the key features of the SPB process. This approach focuses on the outcomes of the process as measured by specified goals and objectives. Throughout the SPB process, data is collected by the evaluation team and other stakeholders to analyze the extent of inclusive participation during each phase of the SPB process and to what extent each phase has been effectively implemented. Additionally, participant satisfaction at the conclusion of the process helps determine overall outcomes and effectiveness and guides future SPB implementation.

2.b Guiding Framework: Impact, Relationships, Inclusivity, and Satisfaction (IRIS)

CFA and PGI have created the Impact, Relationships, Inclusivity, and Satisfaction—or IRIS—Framework to organize the different approaches to SPB evaluation.

This framework builds upon the two evaluation approaches: *Impact* and *Relationships* for the Participant-Oriented approach and *Inclusivity* and *Satisfaction* for the Process-Oriented approach. The table below organizes the approaches within the IRIS Framework, along with guiding questions and evaluation tools for each focus area.

IRIS Framework			
	FOCUS	GUIDING QUESTIONS	TOOLS
Participant-Oriented Approach	Impact	How does SPB impact students' civic knowledge (K), attitudes (A), skills (S), and practices (P) or (KASPs)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KASP+SC Surveys & Interviews • Reflections
	Relationships	How does SPB improve school climate (SC) and build trust, communication, and cohesion among school stakeholders?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participatory Action Research
Process-Oriented Approach	Inclusivity	How effective is the SPB process in engaging the voices and opinions of all students on campus? How effective is the SPB process in bringing together the broader school community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Data Analysis • Focus Groups
	Satisfaction	How satisfied are stakeholders with the implementation of the SPB process? What are the main accomplishments, challenges, and recommendations to improve the model for the next cycle?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder Checks

In collaboration with PBP and school partners across the state, CFA and PGI developed and tested several evaluation tools and strategies based on their experience supporting Arizona SPB processes.

The next two sections of this Toolkit provide insights and examples of tried and tested evaluation tools and techniques. The entire collection of resources linked throughout this guide can be found in the very last section of the document.

3. Participant-Oriented Approach: Impact & Relationships

In this section, readers will explore objectives for implementing a Participant-Oriented approach and three methodologies for collecting and analyzing data, including:

- Civic Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills, and Practices + School Climate (KASP + SC) Surveys & Interviews
- Reflections
- Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Youth PAR (YPAR)

Participants are integral in providing valid, useful information that outside stakeholders may not have experienced or been aware of during the process. The primary purpose of the Participant-Oriented evaluation approach is to deepen the overall understanding of participant learning, experiences, and changes.

This approach focuses on better understanding the IRIS Framework's *Impact* and *Relationships* of participants involved with and affected by the SPB process. Participants may include: students on the student steering committee, the broader student body, educators, administrators, and other school personnel and stakeholders.

In assessing the impact of the SPB process, attention is paid to changes in the civic Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills, and Practices (KASPs) among students.³ The decision-making and deliberative functions of the SPB process are designated to students as a “redistribution of power” and serve as an opportunity to develop effective civic participation capabilities.⁴

The development and changes in relationships among participants engaged in the SPB process are also considered to be significant in shaping a safe and democratic school climate based on respect, tolerance, and fairness. Studies have emphasized the vital role of adult allies in sharing power dynamics with youth. They have also shown that fostering students' voices is critical to high-quality, effective civic learning.⁵

Participant-provided information can:

- Validate key features or phases of the SPB process
- Provide grounded context of participant needs and views of the process
- Assist in shaping the broader knowledge of SPB for future cycles

The following methods are designed to assist with these goals by tracking and measuring participant learning, experiences, and changes because of participation in the SPB process.

3.a Method 1: Civic Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills, and Practices + School Climate (KASP+SC) Surveys & Interviews

Surveys are one of the most effective evaluation tools since they can promptly gather many participant responses to specific research questions. However, highly structured, self-administered surveys run

Research has shown that participatory models of evaluation:

- enhance the overall relevance of findings
- foster a greater sense of ownership over the program or process being evaluated
- produce outcomes rooted in social justice and democratic values.²

the risk of low response rates and inaccurate answers, or the evaluators are often left wanting to clarify or know more about the participant experience.⁶ To overcome some of the challenges of traditional survey administration, surveys can be administered as a Semi-Structured Interview (SSI) to allow evaluators to ask the survey questions with follow-up questions and probes and for participants to explain or add details to their chosen responses.⁷ The SSI method for survey administration entails the survey being conducted in a relaxing, engaging conversational manner with one participant at a time. The dialogue of this conversation is grounded within the survey items, but participants can share additional insights and divulge extended details beyond the scope of the survey questions. Further, when surveys are conducted as SSIs, they can provide more descriptive responses and often have higher response rates and more accurate answers overall.⁸

Student experiences of the SPB process and self-perceived changes are assessed through the KASP+SC survey administered as an SSI by a school community stakeholder or research team member. The KASP+SC is composed of two parts. The KASP portion of the survey is comprised of items that represent key civic indicators within the SPB context:

- **Knowledge (K)**
Student knowledge of key traits, processes, and policies of their school community and participatory democracy.
- **Attitudes (A)**
Student disposition toward the school community, common good, and learning environment with an emphasis on service, responsibility, and trust.
- **Skills (S)**
Student skills and competencies related to civic character (i.e., leadership, problem-solving, critical thinking, collaboration, public speaking, mobilizing, etc.)
- **Practices (P)**
Student actions that further engagement within the school community, the SPB process, and eventually, processes of democracy, like voting

The KASP survey instrument, developed by Daniel Schugurensky, is used to evaluate the impact of SPB processes in Arizona (Phoenix, Chandler, Mesa, and Tucson); Miami, Florida; and Syracuse, New York.¹⁰ The KASP survey has also been used to evaluate the learning and change experienced by participants in other countries, including Iceland, Romania, and Slovenia.¹¹

The second part of the KASP+SC survey measures changes in school climate (SC), adapted from the [California Healthy Kids Survey](#) and the [National School Climate Center Survey](#). The items encompass statements on student-to-student relationships and behaviors, adult-to-student relationships and behaviors, and school environment behaviors.

The KASP+SC survey creates opportunities to document the shared narratives and experiences of the students alongside their numerical self-evaluation of perceived learning and changes. The KASP+SC survey assesses student growth using a 1-5 point Likert scale, where 1 represents a very low score and 5 is a very high score.¹² Upon completion of the SPB process, students are asked to rate their learning and change before SPB and after SPB across the KASP+SC

While survey data on civic readiness among K-12 students has been historically limited in the scope of questions beyond civic knowledge, recent collaboration among civic education researchers has provided schools and community partners with an array of survey instruments and scales to measure not only civic knowledge but also civic attitudes, behaviors, and skills.⁹

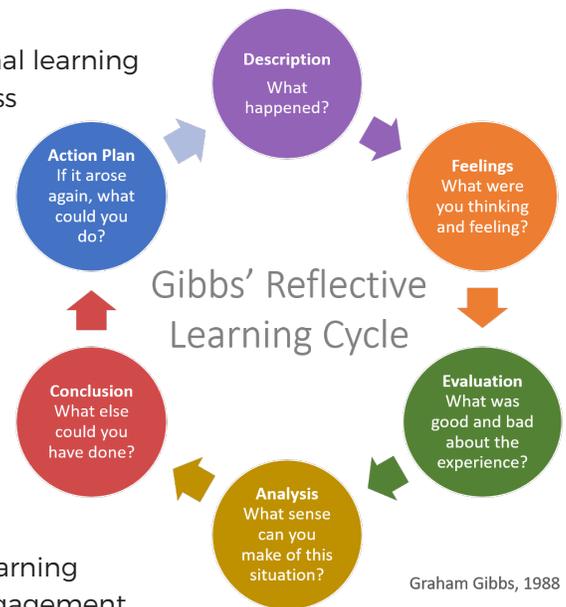
indicators. In the KASP+SC survey analysis, researchers measure the mean change of each indicator, pre- to post-process. Although the quantitative data is critical to understanding the measurable impact of the SPB process, the stories of learning and change shared by participants during the interviews are also important.

Method 1 Resource:

- [KASP+SC survey: grades K-5](#)
- [KASP + SC survey: grades 6-12](#)
- [Additional civic readiness scales and survey items](#)

3.b Method 2: Reflections

Reflection is an essential step in undergoing transformational learning and enacting change. Reflective thinking is an active process used to critically analyze formations of knowledge and assess how this knowledge is mobilized to solve complex problems.¹³ As an evaluation tool, reflection invites participants into a space of self-awareness, self-understanding, and critical evaluation of experiences and knowledge formation following a specific process or treatment.¹⁴ Through the reflection process, participants impart reflective knowledge in the form of actionable knowledge for evaluators to assess.¹⁵ The sequence of this knowledge transfer typically follows Gibbs' Reflective Learning Cycle.¹⁶



When used in the K-12 setting, reflection as a method for learning and self-evaluation has been shown to increase student engagement, academic achievement, and critical thinking and inquiry skills.¹⁷ Reflection tools can span many modalities, including written response, artwork, performance, audio/visual recordings, meditation, etc. CFA and PGI have used both written responses and audio/visual recordings to capture participant reflections on their experience engaging with the SPB process.

Method 2 Resource:

- [Principled Innovation video with participant reflections](#)

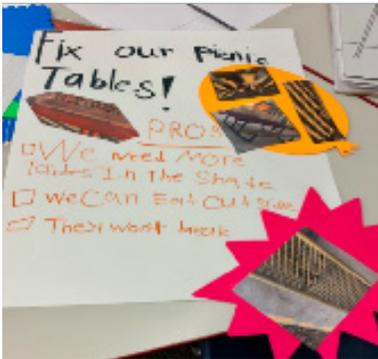
3.c Method 3: Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Youth PAR (YPAR)

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a methodology in which community participants collaborate with researchers to examine and solve a social problem. In effect, PAR emphasizes the role of participants in the evaluation process to link experiences (input) to knowledge (output). This process involves four key steps:

1. designing a research or evaluation plan,
2. collecting data per the plan,
3. analyzing the data collected,
4. and drawing conclusions from the data to inform future processes and stakeholder goals and objectives for community-driven change.¹⁸

Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) expands on the foundations of PAR and functions as a pedagogical tool to equip young people with critical inquiry, research, and leadership skills to better analyze social processes and problems that affect them and create transformational action plans for systemic change.²¹ CFA and PGI have implemented elements of the YPAR methodology in SPB evaluations with students charged with evaluating the impact of the SPB process amongst the broader student body and school community.

An important tenet of YPAR is the youth-adult relationships that further develop intergenerational trust, social justice awareness, and cognitive development.¹⁹ Additionally, YPAR has been associated with youth outcomes such as agency, belonging, conflict resolution, problem solving, and critical consciousness.²⁰



The SPB YPAR includes a photo-voice activity during the proposal development phase and student-led exit poll surveys during the final vote phase. Photo-voice is a participatory action research tool used by participants for visual communication and construction of the research question or problem.²² As an SPB photo-voice activity, students take pictures of different spaces across their campus to complement the idea proposal being developed for a school-wide vote. These photos are then featured on the campaigning materials for the idea's proposal. Some examples have included pictures of a space where a school garden would be established, a picture of the water bottle refill drinking fountains already on campus in a proposal to install more, and pictures of outdoor picnic tables in need of repair and replacement.

SPB YPAR also uses exit poll surveys, with students on the steering committee conducting the surveys with students from the broader student body on the final vote day. These surveys intend to predict the final vote results and gauge the school communities' overall satisfaction with the process. Students assist in writing the survey questions, administering the survey one-on-one with other students, and analyzing the combined results.

Method 3 Resource:

- [YPAR Exit Poll Survey](#)

4. Process-Oriented Approach: Inclusivity & Satisfaction

In this section, readers will learn about the Process-Oriented approach and corresponding methods for collecting and analyzing data, including:

- School Data Analysis
- Focus Groups
- Stakeholder Check-ins

The primary purpose of a Process-Oriented approach to evaluation is to provide stakeholders with useful information about a process or program to make more effective decisions for their overall community.²³ The Process-Oriented approach to evaluation measures the efficacy of implementation, key elements, and outcomes of the process.²⁴ Overall, the aim of this approach is continual improvement and development of programs and processes by instilling new ways of thinking and knowing to guide judgment and decision-making.

The Process-Oriented evaluation approach focuses on the IRIS Framework's inclusivity and satisfaction throughout the various phases of the SPB process. Although the SPB process is an inherently inclusive model designed to engage historically underrepresented students in leadership and decision-making roles, it is important to emphasize the inclusivity of the process. Inclusive processes or programs must meet the needs of all students' academic, social, and functional skills by planning for and promoting provisions for all students to participate in meaningful ways.²⁵ This entails a proactive effort to bring together the broader school community, especially students and families who are traditionally marginalized from leadership and decision-making due to factors like race, gender, ability, socioeconomic status, or language barriers.

Likewise, the Satisfaction level of all stakeholders for various facets of the SPB process can illuminate the accomplishments and challenges of the process and reveal recommendations for continuous improvement. Detailed information garnered through the Process-Oriented approach is imperative to informing decisions and judgments about the process's initial adoption, continuation, or expansion. The following evaluation tools are designed to measure the extent of Inclusivity and the level of Satisfaction with the SPB process.

4.a Method 4: School Data Analysis

A primary evaluation tool is existing school community data. This includes the total number of students and other school community stakeholders, demographic information for all stakeholders, school climate data, organizational knowledge of the school, and any other data points specific to the evaluation. The collection and organization of school data provide a baseline of information and help shape the goals and objectives to be measured by program or process progress.

For SPB, school community data provides valuable insight into the extent of inclusivity of the process. This can include the school's demographic data to ensure equal and equitable representation throughout the process, specifically within the student steering committee. This can also include school climate data trends to monitor student disciplinary referrals, attendance records, and academic

Research has shown that students involved in inclusive, school-based community projects associate such experiences with increased self-esteem, self-advocacy, confidence, and determination, thereby increasing overall engagement in the school community.²⁶

achievement. To ensure inclusivity in student steering committee representation, school data is often used to build a “mini public” representative of a “portrait of the people.”²⁷ In effect, the demographics of the steering committee members should be representative of the school’s overall demographics. Overall, outcomes of the SPB process shown in the analyses of school data have been helpful for CFA and PGI in shaping future process implementation and reporting. The information has also supported applications for funding and school community stakeholders with guiding overall school climate decisions.

Method 4 Resource:

- [Arizona Department of Education Public Data Sets](#)

4.b Method 5: Focus Groups

Stakeholders of the SPB process play an important role in shaping process improvements by sharing major accomplishments, hurdles and barriers encountered, and recommendations. To explore stakeholder feedback and insights along these lines, focus groups are a data collection method conducted as an in-depth listening session to provide a clearer understanding of the collective experience of the SPB process.²⁸ As an evaluation tool of the SPB process, CFA and PGI use a focus group strategy with two research team members.²⁹ One research team member moderates the conversation by asking questions, probing for further information, and ensuring all participants have the chance to respond. Simultaneously, another researcher actively listens, takes notes alongside the recording, and summarizes responses back to participants in real time to welcome additions, ensure accuracy, and allow for further clarification. Although the actual wording of questions asked during the focus group may vary among SPB processes, the focus group ultimately seeks descriptive answers to the following questions:

1. What were the key accomplishments of the SPB process?
2. What were the main challenges?
3. What recommendations do you have for improving the process in the future?

Additionally, the focus group questions can be posed to participants to inquire about the SPB process as a whole more broadly, beginning from process design unto project implementation unto final projects) outcomes, or these questions may specifically be asked in inquiring about each separate phase of the SPB process.

CFA and PGI have conducted focus groups with teachers and school site administrators to garner their perspectives on their SPB process. The separate focus groups provide teachers and administrators the opportunity to reflect on the main accomplishments, challenges, and recommendations for future processes while describing their opinions on the extent of learning growth of students, inclusivity of the model, and improvements to school climate.

To evaluate the SPB process, focus groups can be conducted with different participant samples including:

- stakeholders from multiple schools across one school district
- stakeholders from one school site
- students from the steering committee who were directly engaged in the process

Although each of these participant samples can yield different insights and results, the overall number of participants per focus group is advised to be less than ten.³⁰

Method 5 Resources:

- [Teacher & Administrators Focus Group Guide](#)
- [SPB Satisfaction Focus Group Guide](#)

4.c Method 6: Stakeholder Check-ins

The participation of all stakeholder groups in a process or program is imperative in ensuring continued success. In evaluations, the term “stakeholders” can encompass a range of individuals:

- people who have authority over the program or process
- people who deliver the program or process
- people who benefit from the program or process³¹

Stakeholder check-ins serve the purpose of clear and consistent communication between different stakeholder groups throughout an evaluation of the process.³² A timeline of these check-ins is established at the onset of the evaluation and are regularly scheduled to take place throughout the process with different stakeholder groups involved in the process. These check-ins begin with stakeholders establishing the goals and objectives, along with the protocols and regulations, of the process. In the SPB context, stakeholders include the students and their families, educators, school administration, community organizations (if any), the funders (if any), and the research evaluation team (if any).

Stakeholder check-ins throughout the SPB process include planning meetings with all stakeholders during the initial formulation of the process to shape the goals and objectives, as well as the protocols and regulations, of the process. As the SPB process continues to unfold, these check-ins may become more frequent and targeted, with check-ins regularly fluctuating between one group of stakeholders and the research evaluation team. In addition to short, 20-minute weekly check-ins with student steering committee members, CFA and PGI organize check-ins throughout the academic year with the different stakeholder groups to impart relevant information and kick off each phase of the SPB process. A detailed timeline of stakeholder check-ins is included at the end of this section under Method 6 Resources.

Stakeholder check-ins have shown to be effective in embedding teamwork, compromise, and open communication within the evaluation process.³³

There are a variety of ways to conduct stakeholder check-ins during the SPB process:

- In-person student steering committee meetings are typically held in a neutral, inclusive space such as the school library and mirror open public meetings, so anyone interested is welcome to attend and join in on the meeting activities.
- The student steering committee meetings have also been held virtually, with the meeting link disseminated to steering committee members and interested students from the broader student body ahead of time.
- With school personnel, check-ins are held either in-person or online during specific department meetings and school staff meetings, depending on the type of information shared.
- For funders, check-ins have existed as both virtual and in-person meetings, with the in-person meetings functioning as a site visit to the school site implementing the SPB process.
- Additionally, online tools such as [padlet.com](#) and [Google Jam Board](#) have helped to facilitate remote check-ins throughout the SPB process.

Method 6 Resources:

- [Stakeholder Check-In Timeline](#)

5. Resources

5.a A Note on Virtual & Interactive Tools

Recognizing the need for the ability to conduct a virtual evaluation of the SPB process, CFA and PGI have implemented a variety of engaging online tools to increase participation in the assessment of SPB processes. In partnership with PBP on early evaluations of SPB, CFA and PGI have merged the questions posed in the SPB Satisfaction Focus Groups with customizable game platforms, including kahoot.com and jeopardy.com, to create a fun and exciting atmosphere for participants to share their levels of satisfaction with different aspects of the SPB process. These game-like evaluations also lend themselves to conducting virtual evaluations with program participants. Further, online versions of the KASP survey have been built into Google forms, and focus groups have used Google docs for real-time note-taking with participants.

5.b Links & Downloads

- i. [KASP+SC survey: grades K-5](#)
- ii. [KASP + SC survey: grades 6-12](#)
- iii. [Additional civic readiness scales and survey items](#)
- iv. [Additional civic readiness scales and survey items](#)
- v. [Principled Innovation video with participant reflections](#)
- vi. [YPAR Voting Exit Poll](#)
- vii. [Arizona Department of Education Public Data Sets](#)
- viii. [Stakeholder Check-In Timeline](#)
- ix. [Teacher & Administrators Focus Group Guide](#)
- x. [SPB Satisfaction Focus Group Guide](#)

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