



SCHOOL PARTICIPATORY BUDGETING QUEEN CREEK UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

2023-24 Evaluation Report

In partnership with Center for the Future of Arizona, Arizona State University's Participatory Governance Initiative, and Queen Creek Unified School District.

In 2020, Queen Creek Unified School District (QCUSD) piloted School Participatory Budgeting (SPB). Through SPB, students “learn democracy by doing” through a process of generating ideas, developing proposals, campaigning and deliberating, and voting to fund improvement projects that build stronger school communities.

After a successful pilot of five schools, QCUSD scaled the process to all schools, becoming the only district partner in 2023-24 to have every campus participating. Anchored in the Lead Out Loud (LOL) club and supported by district administration, SPB has been a powerful tool for student voice in Queen Creek.

QCUSD has partnered with Center for the Future of Arizona (CFA) and Arizona State University's Participatory Governance Initiative (PGI) to pilot, implement, and evaluate the SPB process. In 2023-24, QCUSD partnered with PGI to evaluate the impact of the process from the educator's perspective. This report includes an overview of those findings.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

QCUSD District Leaders

- Dr. Perry Berry, Superintendent
- Dr. Erika Copeland, Associate Superintendent
- Robin Bayles, Director of Educational Technology and Virtual Learning
- Fernando Otero, K-12 Social Studies Academic Coach

School Leaders and Sponsors

- **Crismon High School:** Principal Elyse Torbert, Sponsor George (Luke) Delong
- **Desert Mountain Elementary:** Principal Erin Pillsbury, Sponsor Corie Incorvaia
- **Eastmark High School:** Principal Christopher Webb, Sponsors Allie Kutchev and Anissa Borgens
- **Faith Mather Sossaman Elementary:** Principal Sherry Towns, Sponsors Capri Heintz and Sophie Reyes

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Initiative
ASU Arizona State
University

EDUCATOR REFLECTIONS

- “What I’ve enjoyed the most is seeing what students are able to do once we give them a platform and an opportunity to express their voices.” –*Fern Otero, Social Studies Instructional Coach*
- “Giving [the students] more freedom allowed them to have more buy in and have it be their process rather than more teacher led.” –*Cori Incorvaia, LOL Sponsor*
- “There were students that didn’t necessarily know each other and seeing them come and work together and form those connections was really rewarding for me this year.” –*Lisa Hawes, LOL Sponsor*
- “Seeing the students standing in front of district representatives and a bunch of adults took a lot of courage. It was really great to see them have that trait and the willingness to want to be a part of a wonderful presentation.” –*Leanna Coutchie, LOL Sponsor*

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Adjust the timeline to allow for more time invested in each phase, specifically the phases that require district consultation and the winning project implementation.
- Allocate time for students in LOL Clubs to dialogue with district administration and vendors concerning project ideas.
- Explore ways to expand participation opportunities to the broader school community throughout the process.
- Partner with additional community organizations, such as the Maricopa County Records Office, to expand learning and engagement opportunities.
- Increase the number of Arizona Department of Education Seals of Civic Literacy through participation in the School PB process.

- **Frances Brandon Pickett Elementary:** Principal Stacey Duke, Sponsors Alana Jobe and Jennifer Waddington
- **Gateway Polytechnic Academy:** Principal Jeffrey Markle, Sponsors Rachel Flores and Christina Fezatte
- **Jack Barnes Elementary School:** Principal Dawn Kennaugh, Sponsor Kandace Reyes
- **Katherine Mecham Barney Elementary:** Principal Dawn Harrington, Sponsor Leanne Coutchie
- **Newell Barney Junior High:** Principal Kevin Aikins, Sponsor Megan Perry
- **Queen Creek Elementary:** Principal Dawn Michaelson, Sponsor Luke Ray
- **Queen Creek High School:** Principal Scott Lovely, Sponsor Brian Duncan
- **Queen Creek Junior High:** Principal Bev Nichols, Sponsor Lisa Hawes
- **Schnepf Elementary:** Principal Faith Orr, Sponsor Hollie Lunt
- **Silver Valley Elementary:** Principal Kelli Frazier, Sponsor Amanda Balcik

Student Steering Committee(s)

- 305 Lead Out Loud Students (4-12th grade)

SPB Advisors

- Center for the Future of Arizona Civic Health Team
- Arizona State University’s Participatory Governance Initiative

over **100** high school students were registered to vote through Maricopa County Recorder’s Office for upcoming local, state, and federal elections during their SPB Vote Days

\$76,000 public dollars invested in 14 student-developed school improvement projects

over **12,000** students cast their ballots, ensuring their voices were counted in improving their school community