

PRIORITIZING STUDENT VOICE IN EDUCATION SYSTEM DECISION MAKING AND TRANSFORMATION: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM INTERGENERATIONAL RESEARCH

BY: RICHAA HOYSALA, EMILY MORRIS

CONTRIBUTIONS: OMAER NAEEM

Executive summary

Young people have the most to gain or lose from education system decision making and transformation. Around the world, students are rarely intentionally and meaningfully involved in the development and implementation of educational policies, school planning, and vision setting. Students are occasionally consulted during policy development, but they are rarely positioned as equal members on intergenerational leadership bodies, and few countries have national student councils.¹ Student councils are more common at a school or education institution level, and even when countries have mandated schools to have student councils to harness the leadership of young people, these councils only weigh in on low-stakes decisions—such as organizing events—and not more high-stakes decision making like school-wide change and transformation. When students, educators, and their families work together to center young people's voices in decision making and leadership, the whole community and education ecosystem benefits.²

The Center for Universal Education (CUE) at the Brookings Institution has been collaborating with students, families, and educators around the world to understand how to build student consultation and intergenerational partnerships into decision making, and how to ensure education systems better serve students' learning, development, and well-being. As part of ongoing work on youth agency in and through education, this policy brief makes a case for why student engagement is critical to policy and decision making in education systems and institutions.³ Three key findings were developed through the analysis of the policies on student voice in policy development

1 Neil Dempster, Elizabeth Stevens, and Mary Keeffe, "Student and youth leadership: A focused literature review," *Leading and Managing* 17, no. 2 (2011): 1–20.

2 Samantha E. Holquist, Dana L. Mitra, Jerusha Conner, and Nikki L. Wright, "What Is Student Voice Anyway? The Intersection of Student Voice Practices and Shared Leadership," *Educational Administration Quarterly* 59, no. 4 (2023): 703–743.

3 Brookings Institution, "Youth Agency in and Through Education," Brookings Institution, accessed on September 9, 2025. <https://www.brookings.edu/collection/youth-agency-in-and-through-education/>

and school governance in 10 countries, as well as mixed-methods research directly with students, their parents/ caregivers, and their educators.⁴ The audience for this policy brief is policymakers and education leaders across different levels—national, subnational, and school—who oversee student engagement in decision making. Another critical audience is civil society organizations that work in collaboration with schools and student and parent/ caregiver councils. This policy brief complements a series of other briefs where the role of family, school, and community engagement in national education systems is analyzed across country contexts.

The research conducted directly with students, their families, and educators used an intergenerational approach where differences between age groups and positionalities, such as gender, socioeconomic status, and disability status, were examined to ensure that findings are relevant to a wide range of education actors and contribute to programs, policies, and practices that benefit young people.⁵ Over 9,580 young people aged 12 to 22⁶ were surveyed across the 10 countries between 2022 and 2024. In seven of these countries, follow-up focus group conversations were held with students to unpack in greater detail their perspectives, hopes, and ideas for stronger family, school, and community partnerships. Research was conducted through a collaboration between civil society organizations and schools who are active members of CUE’s Family Engagement in Education Network and were keen to study student voice in decision making. When families, students, and learning institutions work in partnership, young people benefit academically, socially, and emotionally.⁷

This policy brief starts with the conceptual framework for centering student voice in policy development and inter-generational research, followed by the research methodology and context, and concludes with recommendations.

Finding 1 Few education systems consult young people in developing national education policies, plans, and frameworks that affect their present and future.	Recommendation 1 Ensure education systems have mechanisms to meaningfully consult young people in the development of national education policies, plans, and frameworks.
Finding 2 Few education systems have clear policies to ensure students are engaged in decision making, either in intergenerational leadership bodies or student councils.	Recommendation 2 Provide guidelines and strategies that promote meaningful intergenerational collaboration and student leadership in decision making.
Finding 3 Youth acknowledge they are learning in an inherited education system, but they want to be part of reimagining education systems to better meet the needs and changing realities facing their generation.	Recommendation 3 Provide students with agency and meaningful opportunities to reimagine and re-envision their schools and education systems.

4 Bangladesh, Colombia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands, Tanzania (Zanzibar), and the United States (California). Additionally, youth between the ages of 14 to 22 were also surveyed in Ghana, India, and South Africa.

5 Alejandro Canedo-García, Jesus-Nicasio Garcia-Sanchez, and Deilis-Ivonne Pacheco-Sanz, “A systematic review of the effectiveness of intergenerational programs” *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8 (2017).

6 Although young children’s voices are also valuable to family, school, and community engagement research and practice, this research focused on adolescence—when young people become important mediators between their families and schools. The terms youth and students are used in this report to refer to the middle and secondary school age young people who were the focus of this research.

7 Karen L. Mapp et al., *Everyone wins! The evidence for family–school partnerships and implications for practice* (Scholastic, 2022).

Introduction

Student voice is critical to decision making and leadership in education systems, from the national and subnational (i.e., district) to the school and classroom.⁸ Education systems that value student voice are more inclusive and responsive, resulting in better learning outcomes⁹ and overall well-being.¹⁰ Student participation in decisions supports more effective school reform, as students provide critical insights and unique solutions to issues that affect them, allowing education systems to adapt and design interventions that are responsive and equitable.¹¹ When students and their educators communicate and collaborate in schools, it not only improves student engagement and ownership but also creates a positive environment and fosters relational trust.¹²

Student leadership is transformative not only for education systems but also for students, as it cultivates a critical pipeline of civic-minded leaders who have the capabilities to address critical issues facing their communities.¹³ As students identify problems, articulate opinions, represent peers, and engage constructively with adults, they acquire a multitude of skills, including communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-solving.¹⁴ Student voice and leadership in schools also nurture civic competencies such as empathy, negotiation, and tolerance, which are foundational for social cohesion and democratic citizenship.¹⁵

The importance of student leadership has been widely recognized by education leaders around the world, but too rarely are students given the opportunity to serve as authentic partners and leaders in practice.¹⁶ International organizations, such as UNICEF and the Organization for Economic Cooperation (OECD), have positioned youth voice and intergenerational partnerships as critical requisites for education systems transformation, yet there is a lack of systematic analysis of how different national education systems are operationalizing these mandates.¹⁷

There is a need for evidence-informed models and strategies for student participation in decision making and leadership roles across the education system that take into consideration resources constraints as well as social and cultural dynamics. Missing from global guidelines are practical and actionable guidance and strategies for schools and education systems to engage students in decision making and leadership roles. While there is significant evidence on how to promote student leadership in classrooms and schools, most of this research is concentrated in the Global North. There is also limited research on promoting student participation in decision making roles beyond schools, including at the subnational and national levels.

8 Living Democracy, "Democratic School Leadership as a Whole-School Approach," Living Democracy, accessed on August 4, 2025 <https://www.living-democracy.com/principals/leadership/democratic-school-leadership-as-a-whole-school-approach/>.

9 Joseph Kahne, Benjamin Bowyer, Jessica Marshall, and Erica Hodgins. "Is responsiveness to student voice related to academic outcomes? Strengthening the rationale for student voice in school reform." *American Journal of Education* 128, no. 3 (2022): 389–415.

10 Sue Roffey, "Becoming an agent of change for school and student well-being," *Educational & Child Psychology* 32, no. 1 (2015): 21–30.

11 Jerusha Conner, Dana L. Mitra, Samantha E. Holquist, and Ashley Boat, "How teachers' student voice practices affect student engagement and achievement: exploring choice, receptivity, and responsiveness to student voice as moderators," *Journal of Educational Change* 26, no. 1 (2025): 89–118.

12 Adam Voight, "Student voice for school-climate improvement: A case study of an urban middle school." *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 25, no. 4 (2015): 310–326; Anthony Bryk and Barbara Schneider, *Trust in schools: A core resource for improvement* (Russell Sage Foundation, 2002).

13 Zachary Billot and Emily M. Morris, "Building a Pipeline for Youth Leadership and Innovation," *Education Plus Development* (blog), Brookings Institution, April 23, 2024, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/building-a-pipeline-for-youth-leadership-and-innovation/>.

14 Ursula Mager and Peter Nowak, "Effects of student participation in decision making at school. A systematic review and synthesis of empirical research," *Educational Research Review* 7, no. 1 (2012): 38–61.

15 Ellen Quintelier, "The effect of schools on political participation: A multilevel logistic analysis," *Research Papers in Education* 25, no. 2 (2010): 137–154.

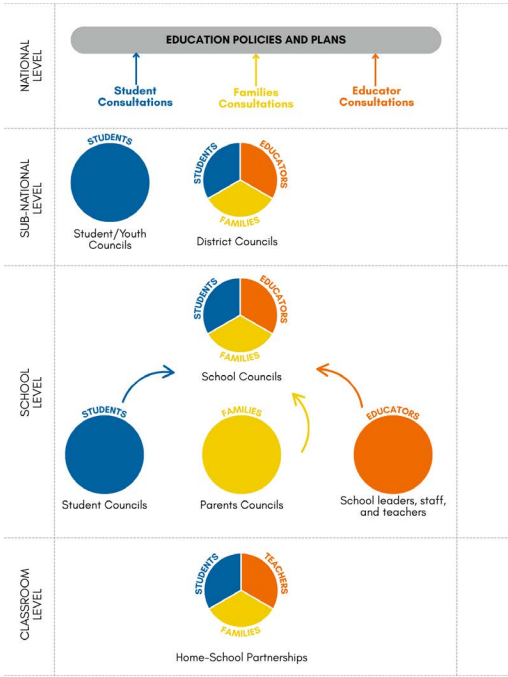
16 Astraea Augsburg, Mary E. Collins, and Riana C. Howard, "The Global Context of Youth Engagement: A Scoping Review of Youth Councils in Municipal Government," *Children and Youth Services Review* 156 (2024): 107349.

17 UNICEF, *Child and Youth Councils: Guidance to Support Meaningful Participation* (UNICEF, 2022); Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, *Student Agency for 2030* (OECD, 2019).

This policy brief examines how to harness student voice and leadership at the national, subnational, and school levels, from consultations to decision making, and presents an analysis of existing policies and practices of meaningful student engagement globally. It provides a framework that links student voice and leadership across the levels of the education system, which is often missing from global discourse and guidelines. Finally, this brief provides models and examples of meaningful engagement from diverse geographies and contexts, helping move participation of students in decision making and leadership from rhetoric to practice.

Figure 1 shows the different levels that students can contribute to school decision making in education systems.¹⁸ Ideally, there is a link between national, subnational, school, and classroom levels. When students are consulted in policymaking and planning processes at the **national level**, decisions are more relevant to and responsive to the lived experiences of students, as are decisions made at a **national, subnational, and school level**, such as through intergenerational national, state/province, district, or municipal school boards. In **school-level** student councils, which are sometimes referred to as student governments or parliaments, student representatives take on leadership of the school and take part in important decisions.¹⁹ Finally, when students participate in decision making at the **classroom level**—shown in Figure 1 but not touched on in this brief—students gain both skills and support to take on leadership roles at other levels. Ideally, families and community leaders also support students as they take on leadership in their schools.²⁰

FIGURE 1:
Participation in decision making in education systems



As this policy brief will explore, in order to ensure that students can fully collaborate and partner in intergenerational decision making demands adults have the mindset, skills, and trust to encourage student engagement and that students have the agency and support to take on leadership.

18 Living Democracy. "A Framework for Participation and Decision-Making in School," Living Democracy, accessed on November 12, 2025. <https://www.living-democracy.com/principals/leadership/democratic-school-leadership-as-a-whole-school-approach/a-framework-for-participation-and-decision-making-in-school/>.
19 Dana L. Mitra, "The Significance of Students: Can Increasing 'Student Voice' in Schools Lead to Gains in Youth Development?," *Teachers College Record* 106, no. 4 (2004): 651–88.
20 Gregory Hine, "Student leadership experiences: A case study," *Leading and Managing* 19, no. 1 (2013): 32–50.

Meaningful student engagement in school decision making, leadership, and research

This research positions youth as experts in their educational experience and argues that alongside families and educators, students should be intentionally and meaningfully involved in school decision making and leadership. Ensuring there are clear student engagement and leadership opportunities in districts and schools is critical for designing education institutions that better serve young people and their families.

Adults engaging with students in intergenerational decision making, leadership, and research should strive to move beyond *giving* youth voices and work toward *centering* youth voices—a differentiation that is shown in Figure 2.²¹ To center student voice, adults should not just provide students with a seat at the table, but co-construct spaces and processes so that students are collaborators and partners throughout the process and ultimately can become leaders.²²

FIGURE 2.

Moving from giving to centering student voice

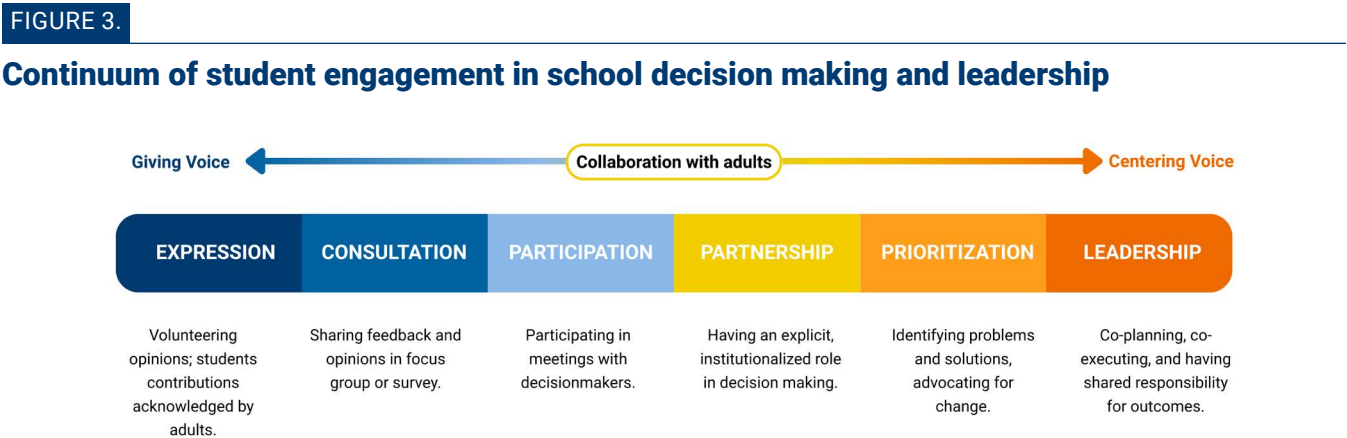


 Center for
Universal Education
at Brookings

21 Emily M. Morris and Omaer Naeem, "Handing Over the Mic: The Difference Between Centering and Giving Youth Voices in Research and Practice," *Education Plus Development* (blog), Brookings Institution, September 5, 2023. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/handing-over-the-mic-the-difference-between-centering-and-giving-youth-voices-in-research-and-practice/>

22 Morris and Naeem, "Handing Over the Mic: The Difference Between Centering and Giving Youth Voices in Research and Practice"; Omaer Naeem and Emily M. Morris, "Potential or Essential? Youth as Partners in Education Research" *Education Plus Development* (blog), Brookings Institution, August 11, 2023. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/potential-or-essential-youth-as-partners-in-education-research/>.

Student engagement and collaboration in school decision making can take on many different shapes and forms, as shown in Figure 3.²³ Sometimes school decisions demand consulting with students and capturing their expressions, while other times decisions demand active student partnership and leadership. In this policy brief, this continuum of student engagement is used to show how the different strategies and promising practices highlighted under the recommendations involve students to give school leaders examples of how they may better collaborate with students in different ways across the spectrum.



RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

There are two main methodological approaches used in this policy brief: policy analysis and intergenerational research. A policy analysis was conducted to map the opportunities and mechanisms for student decision making and leadership at the national and school levels. The analysis revealed whether students were consulted during the development of national education policies and plans, and to what extent students’ participation in school decisions were mandated and normalized across different education systems. Intergenerational research with students was conducted in 10 countries alongside perspectives collected with families and educators, using the Conversation Starter Tools research methodology, as shown in Figure 4.²⁴ The goal of this community-driven research is to guide schools, districts, and civil society organizations in examining the landscape of family, school, and community engagement in their contexts and to develop a shared vision of how to build stronger family, school, and community partnerships. The process is not intended to judge or assess schools or districts but rather to facilitate greater relational trust between families, educators, and students.

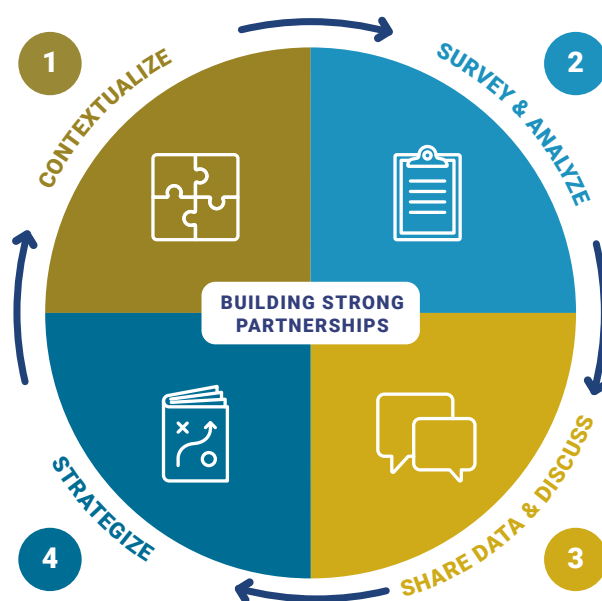
The Conversation Starter Tools were developed by the Family, School, and Community Engagement in Education initiative at CUE in collaboration with school and civil society organization teams around the world. This approach guides school teams through the process of collecting survey **data** with families, educators, and students, using these data as a springboard for **dialogues**, and ultimately generating strategies and new **directions** that can be integrated into school policies, plans, and practices. This mixed-methods suite includes surveys, focus group discussion guides, and other protocols to increase data, dialogue, and directions on how to strengthen collaboration and partnerships between families, schools, and communities.

23 Adapted from Advance CTE “Empowering Learners: Kentucky’s Learner-Led CTE Program Improvement Pilot,” (Advance CTE, 2024) and Eric Toshalis and Michael Nakkula, “The Spectrum of Student Voice Oriented Activity” (Jobs for the Future, 2012) and Dana L. Mitra and Steven J. Gross, “Increasing Student Voice in High School Reform: Building Partnerships, Improving Outcomes,” *Educational Management Administration & Leadership* 37 (4) (2009): 522-543.

24 Emily M. Morris, Laura Nóra, and Rebecca Winthrop, *Conversation Starter Tools: A Participatory Research Guide to Building Stronger Family, School, and Community Partnerships* (Brookings Institution, 2024).

FIGURE 4.

Conversation Starter Tools process



KEY DEFINITIONS: INTERGENERATIONAL RESEARCH

There are different approaches to integrating student and youth perspectives and voice in research. There is research on youth, by youth, and with youth.²⁵ This brief used intergenerational research with youth where student researchers worked in collaboration with adult researchers to capture youth perspectives, as well as those of their educators and parents/caregivers.²⁶ In more conventional research on youth, young people are the subjects and objects of inquiry through methods such as interviews or focus group discussions designed and led by adults. In youth participatory action research (often referred to as YPAR), the entire process of designing, implementing, and analyzing research is led by youth.²⁷

POLICY ANALYSIS

National policies and plans from nine of the 10 countries²⁸ were analyzed to map the opportunities and mechanisms for student decision making and leadership at the national and school levels. At the national level, policies and plans were examined to determine whether public consultations were held and documented in the policy development process and whether students were included in the consultations. National policies and plans were also examined to understand how student participation in decision making was envisioned by national governments at the school level. This analysis revealed the extent to which students had a role in intergenerational school leadership bodies and whether student councils were a normalized and mandatory component of education systems and schools.

²⁵ Naeem and Morris, "Potential or Essential? Youth as Partners in Education Research."

²⁶ Ben Kirshner, Jennifer O'Donoghue, and Milbrey McLaughlin, "Youth-adult research collaborations: Bringing youth voice to the research process," in *Organized activities as contexts of development*, ed. Joseph L. Mahoney, Reed W. Larson, Jacquelynne S. Eccles (Psychology Press, 2005), 143.

²⁷ Institute for Citizens & Scholars, *The Co-Creation Generation: The Story of the Kentucky Student Voice Team & Guide to Intergenerational Impact* (Institute for Citizens & Scholars, 2021).

²⁸ U.S. frameworks were not analyzed given the country's heavily state-based education system and lack of a clear direction in federal education policy at the time this policy brief was written.

INTERGENERATIONAL RESEARCH

Intergenerational research was conducted in schools in all 10 countries between 2022 and 2024. Civil society organizations and researchers worked with middle and secondary schools to not only involve students in the data collection, analysis, and development of strategies but also to center their perspectives. Youth surveys were administered on paper or through a virtual link that students accessed in their classrooms at school. Students were between 12 and 17 years of age. A youth researcher or trusted leader led students through the survey questions, giving them an opportunity to ask clarifying questions as needed. For example, in Tanzania (Zanzibar), youth researchers led students in their third year of secondary school through the survey by reading the questions out loud and having students record their responses individually, either electronically or on paper.

In addition to the school-based research, a representative sample of youth between the ages of 14 and 22 were surveyed by GeoPoll in India (Maharashtra and Himachal Pradesh states), Ghana (national), and South Africa (national) over mobile phones; all the youth respondents had finished school within three years of the survey. Survey languages were tested by research teams during field testing and are outlined in Table 1.

TABLE 1.

Survey languages

Country	Survey Language(s)	Country	Survey Language(s)
School-based Research		Community Research	
Bangladesh	Bangla	Ghana	English
Colombia	Spanish	India	Hindi, Marathi, English
Hungary	Hungarian	South Africa	English, Isizulu
Kazakhstan	Kazakh, Russian		
The Netherlands	English		
Tanzania (Zanzibar)	Swahili		
U.S. (California)	Arabic, English, Spanish, Vietnamese		

Research teams in Bangladesh, Hungary, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands, and Tanzania (Zanzibar) presented the data to each school and held dialogues with student respondents either in an all-class discussion or through focus group discussions. In Kazakhstan and Tanzania (Zanzibar), youth researchers led these conversations with the students. In Colombia, three to four students participated in intergenerational conversations with parents/ caregivers and educators.

Student dialogues delved into the thinking behind the responses and were opportunities to brainstorm strategies to strengthen family and school partnerships. The data and findings²⁹ provide insight on how students see the role of education in their communities, and how they would like to see schools and education systems be transformed to better serve their needs.

29 This research is exploratory and was conducted with a limited number of schools and students. Findings are not meant to be generalizable to all youth.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF STUDENTS AND YOUTH

Age, Gender, and Disability Status

In total, 9,580 youth participated in this research, ranging in age from 12 to 22 years. All were from Gen Z, which includes young people born between 1997 and 2012. Of the youth surveyed, roughly 50.1% were female and 45.8% were male. Overall, only 3.5% of participants reported having a disability, though the actual number is expected to be much higher due to insufficient identification mechanisms and underreporting. Youth in the school-based research were from public schools, except for Bangladesh and Colombia, where 86% and 40% of students were respectively from private schools. In Bangladesh, most secondary schools are privately operated due to low state capacity.

TABLE 2.

Demographics (age, gender, and disability)

Country	Number	Age Range	Percent Female	Percent Male	Percent with Disability
School-based Research					
Bangladesh	973	14-15 years	61.9%	38.1%	1.4%
Colombia	2,478	15-16 years	54.9%	44.5% ³⁰	4.8%
Hungary	182	15-16 years	50.9%	49.1%	1.7%
Kazakhstan	209	15-16 years	55.8%	44.2%	2.5%
The Netherlands	159	15-16 years	47.4%	52.0% ²	9.0%
Tanzania (Zanzibar)	1,139	14-17 years	64.1%	35.9%	2.3%
U.S. (California)	1,463	12-13 years	n/a	n/a	4.7%
Community Research					
Ghana	609	20-21 years	51.9%	48.1%	4.0%
India (Maharashtra and Himachal Pradesh)	474	15-22 years	50.1%	49.9%	0.2%
South Africa (national)	1,894	20-21 years	49.6%	50.4%	3.3%
Total or Mean	9,580	12-22 years	50.1%	45.8%	3.7%

³⁰ Note that Colombia and the Netherlands also collected data on young people who did not identify with female or male categories (0.6% in Colombia and 0.5% in the Netherlands respectively). Note that gender was not asked in the U.S. (California).

Education Level, Socioeconomic Status, and Languages Spoken at School and Home

Education levels of students' parents/caregivers and socioeconomic status of the household were analyzed together. Global research shows that parents/caregivers with higher socioeconomic statuses are often more involved in their children's schooling.³¹ While families from lower socioeconomic statuses reported that they are often eager to participate in their children's schools, they are often unable to do so as they lack the time and financial resources needed to support learning at home.³²

Languages of instruction (LOI) spoken at school were also analyzed relative to the languages spoken at home to understand to what extent the home language varied from the school language. The biggest discrepancy was in Tanzania (Zanzibar), where the official language of instruction in secondary school is English, but students and their families speak almost exclusively Swahili in the home. In the U.S. (California), the families spoke predominantly Spanish, English, and Vietnamese in the homes and the schools were largely dual language with a mixture of English and Spanish language instruction.

31 Laura Cashman, Ricardo Sabates, and Benjamin Alcott, "Parental Involvement in Low-Achieving Children's Learning: The Role of Household Wealth in Rural India," *International Journal of Educational Research* 105, (2021): 101701; Cheng Yong Tan, Meiyan Lyu, and Baiwen Peng, "Academic Benefits from Parental Involvement Are Stratified by Parental Socioeconomic Status: A Meta-Analysis," *Parenting* 20, no. 4 (2019): 241–87.

32 Debra Malone, "Socioeconomic Status: A Potential Challenge for Parental Involvement in Schools," *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin* 83, no. 3 (2017): 58–62.

TABLE 3.

Demographics (parental education, socioeconomic status, languages)

Country	Number of students	Highest level of education for parents/caregivers			Socioeconomic status			Languages		
		Primary or less	Secondary	Post-secondary	Never or sometimes	Mostly	Always	LOI	Use LOI at home	Languages spoken by families at home
School-based Research										
Bangladesh	973	28.7%	27.6%	43.7%	13.6%	26.8%	58.5%	Bangla	99.3%	English (0.3%), Urdu (0.4%)
Colombia	2,478	6.5%	38.2%	55.3%	8.4%	21.6%	70.0%	Spanish	98.3%	English (1.7%)
Hungary	182	0.6%	47.6%	51.8%	0.7%	14.5%	84.8%	Hungarian	100.0%	n/a
Kazakhstan ³³	209	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Kazakh Russian	82.0% 29.6%	Other (0.6%)
The Netherlands	159	0.0%	54.2%	45.8%	0.0%	23.9%	76.1%	Dutch	95.2%	Other (4.8%)
Tanzania (Zanzibar)	1,139	29.2%	44.0%	26.8%	45.0%	5.3%	49.6%	English	0.0%	Swahili (99.1%), Arabic (0.4%), Other (0.5%)
U.S. (California)	1,463	25.0%	20.4%	54.6%	8.4%	21.3%	70.3%	English Spanish	60.5% 71.4%	Vietnamese (10.8%), Arabic (0.4%), Other (0.8%)

33 In Kazakhstan, only highest level of education in the household and socioeconomic status were asked to families directly but not collected from students.

Country	Number of students	Highest level of education for parents/caregivers			Socioeconomic status			Languages		
		Primary or less	Secondary	Post-secondary	Never or sometimes	Mostly	Always	LOI	Use LOI at home	Languages spoken by families at home
Youth Research (Representative Samples)										
Ghana	609	32.2%	25.5%	42.3%	33.2%	20.4%	46.4%	n/a	n/a	Languages spoken at home not reported. English used for surveying
India	474	25.8%	18.7%	55.5%	24.6%	8.6%	66.8%	n/a	n/a	Hindi (95.0%), Marathi (5.0%), English (0.0%)
South Africa	1,894	16.0%	27.3%	56.7%	27.2%	31.1%	41.7%	n/a	n/a	English (99.8%), Zulu (0.2%), Afrikaans (0.0%), Xhosa (0.0%)
Total/Mean	9,580									

Findings and recommendations

Three key findings and recommendations emerged from the research. Recommendations are aimed at two audiences. The first is education leaders across national, subnational, and school levels. The second is civil society organizations (CSOs) and researchers actively supporting schools in developing youth leadership and supporting family, school, and community partnerships.

Recommendation 1 provides guidance on how to consult with students in national policy development and decisions using diverse mechanisms and institutional support. Recommendation 2 provides guidance on how to involve students in intergenerational councils and how to normalize councils across the education system. Recommendation 3 offers guidance on how to involve students in designing schools to meet different purposes of education.

Finding 1: Few education systems consult young people in developing national education policies, plans, and frameworks that affect their present and future

Although global frameworks like the Convention on the Rights of the Child³⁴ recognize students' rights to participate in decisions that affect their lives, students are often seen as recipients of the education system. Young people under the age of 24 years make up 41% of the global population, yet they have few meaningful opportunities to inform and shape educational decisions and policies that affect their lives and futures.³⁵ Meaningful and intentional engagement of students in policy development helps ensure education systems are responsive to the rapid changes and advances in education and are more relevant to the economic, social, and other realities students are facing.³⁶ Meaningful student engagement also benefits young people, as they gain deeper knowledge of the education system and develop civic engagement skills.³⁷ One mechanism used to incorporate diverse student voices into policy development is consultations.³⁸ Table 4 shows whether students were consulted in policy development in nine of the countries in this research. The U.S. was not included in this analysis as education policy is largely implemented at a state or district level.

TABLE 4:

Student consultations in policy development

Country	Education Framework	Involved consultations?	Involved student consultations?
Bangladesh	National Education Policy (2010)	Yes	Yes
	Education Sector Plan (2020–2025) (2020)	Yes	No
Colombia	Ley 115 of 1994 [National Education Act of 1994]	Not mentioned	N/A
	Plan Nacional Decenal de Educación 2016 – 2026 [National Education Plan 2016–2026] (2017)	Yes	Yes

34 United Nations, *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UN, November 20, 1989).

35 Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2024: Population by Select Age Groups, Both Sexes* (United Nations, 2024).

36 OECD, *Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions: Catching the Deliberative Wave* (OECD Publishing, 2020).

37 Barry Checkoway, "What is youth participation?" *Children and youth services review* 33, no. 2 (2011): 340–345.

38 Sunil D. Valliyil, "Stakeholder Consultations in National Education Policy (2020): A Qualitative Evaluation of Consultations in India's Education Policy Landscape" (Master's thesis, University of Oxford, 2022).

Country	Education Framework	Involved consultations?	Involved student consultations?
Ghana	Education Act (2008)	Not mentioned	N/A
	Education Strategic Plan 2018–2030 (2019)	Yes	No
Hungary	Törvény a Nemzeti Köznevelésről [National Public Education Law] (2011)	Not mentioned	N/A
	Köznevelés-fejlesztési Stratégia [School Education Development Strategy] (2021–2030) (2014)	Not mentioned	N/A
India	National Education Policy (2020)	Not mentioned	N/A
	Samagra Shiksha: Integrated Scheme for School Education (2022)	Not mentioned	N/A
Kazakhstan	Об образовании [On Education] (2007)	Not mentioned	N/A
	State Program for the Development of Education and Science 2020–2025	Not mentioned	N/A
The Netherlands	Leerplichtwet [Compulsory Education Law] (1969)	Not mentioned	N/A
	Wet medezeggenschap op scholen [Participation in Schools Act] (2007)	Not mentioned	N/A
South Africa	South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 (1996)	Not mentioned	N/A
	Action Plan to 2014: Toward the Realization of Schooling 2025 (2011)	Yes	No
Zanzibar, Tanzania	Zanzibar Education Policy (2006)	Yes	No
	The Zanzibar Education Development Plan II (2017)	Yes	No

Across the nine countries, five governments noted that they consulted with key education actors during policy development, but only two countries openly noted that they sought students’ perspectives. Bangladesh consulted students in the policy development process and Colombia consulted students in the development of their national plan. Bangladesh’s *National Education Policy* (2010) included “relevant views, recommendations and suggestions” from students, but it was not clear the extent of these consultations and whether they were more meaningful than symbolic.³⁹ It is possible that other countries consulted with students but did not openly share details on these consultations. In summary, although consultations are a common practice in policy development processes, few education systems openly and actively include student perspectives. In the case of Bangladesh and Colombia, it was unclear whether students were involved in substantial, rather than symbolic ways.

Recommendation 1: Ensure education systems have mechanisms to meaningfully consult young people in the development of national education policies, plans, and frameworks.

As the primary beneficiaries of education systems, students can play a critical role in ensuring policies, plans, and frameworks for the national, subnational, and school levels are relevant and responsive to the lived experiences of young people. Creating meaningful opportunities for students to develop, implement, and evaluate education policies, plans, and frameworks enhances their civic engagement and leadership. Education systems benefit from diverse student perspectives.

³⁹ Government of Bangladesh, Ministry of Education, *National Education Policy 2010* (Government of Bangladesh, 2010).

Consultations may be designed for different purposes and participants. Full public consultations, which invite all members of the public, promote transparency, awareness, and public accountability, whereas targeted consultations invite specific individuals or groups who may be directly affected by a policy and ensure diverse voices are heard and included.⁴⁰ Consultations can take different forms, including surveys, written submissions, public meetings or hearings, focus group discussions with different groups, or advisory and expert groups.⁴¹

Consultations are successful when there are diverse participants represented in the consultations, the topics and purpose are made clear to the participants, appropriate approaches are used to ensure that all participants can meaningfully participate, and there are mechanisms to document the information and provide feedback to the participants. There are different examples of meaningful consultations in policy development from around the world. Table 5 shows a few examples of where they fall under the continuum of student engagement.

TABLE 5:

Examples from the continuum of student engagement (expression and consultation)

Expression	Surveys, written submissions, and public meetings enable diverse individuals and groups to express their perspectives and opinions. While developing the <i>Parents and Partners: Parent Engagement Policy</i> for Ontario Schools, the Ministry of Education held several public meetings with over 500 parents/caregivers. In addition, they received over 1,150 written submissions from families and parent organizations. ⁴²
Consultation	Focus group discussions and interviews provide a platform for different individuals and groups to share their perspectives. While developing the <i>Cinéaltas: Action Plan on Bullying</i> , a policy to improve school safety, the Irish Department of Education consulted 170 students and youth from diverse backgrounds, using focus group discussions. ⁴³ Special efforts were made to include students with disabilities and students with refugee status.

In summary, meaningful student consultations in the development and implementation of education policies, plans, and frameworks ensure that these policies, plans, and frameworks reflect and respond to the lived experiences, needs, and aspirations of young people.

Finding 2: Few education systems have clear policies to ensure students are engaged in decision making, either in intergenerational leadership bodies or student councils

Youth are growing up with very different generational realities, challenges, and opportunities than the adults in their lives. Their perspectives are critical to education system decision making and transformation. According to this research, there are two key mechanisms for involving students in policymaking and decision making in education systems and schools, intergenerational bodies and student councils. Intergenerational leadership bodies include national education councils as well as school management committees and school councils within education systems. On student and youth councils, young people serve as leaders among their peers and ideally collaborate with intergenerational leadership bodies on education decision making and agenda setting. For example, active consultation with student councils during policymaking on mobile phone or generative artificial intelligence (AI) policies to ensure guidelines are based not only on the needs of schools and students but also fairly and ethically implementable across school communities.⁴⁴

40 Office of Impact Analysis, *Best Practice Consultation* (Australian Government, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, July 2023).
 41 World Bank, *Consultation Guidelines* (World Bank, June 2019).
 42 Ontario Ministry of Education, *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools* (Queen’s Printer for Ontario, 2010).
 43 Government of Ireland, Department of Education, *Cinéaltas: Action Plan on Bullying* (Government of Ireland, 2022).
 44 Government of Ireland, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, *National Youth Assembly on Artificial Intelligence Report* (Government of Ireland, 2023).

The policy analysis of student engagement in intergenerational school leadership bodies revealed that six of the nine countries have clear descriptions of student participation in intergenerational bodies. As shown in Table 6, student participation is mandated in Colombia, Kazakhstan, the Netherlands, and South Africa, whereas in Ghana and Hungary it is optional. There is no clear mention of student engagement in intergenerational school leadership bodies in policies in Bangladesh, India, or Tanzania (Zanzibar). In countries where student engagement in intergenerational school leadership bodies is mandated, there is little to no research or evaluation on whether student engagement is effective and meaningful, or merely symbolic. For example, in Colombia, the elected student delegate on the school board of directors is mandated, but in practice, it is often not implemented. Additionally, student engagement is limited to a single student as opposed to meaningful engagement of diverse students and/or a clear link to the student councils.⁴⁵

TABLE 6:

Designated roles for students in decision making and leadership roles in education systems

Country	Body	Student Representation in Education Frameworks	
		Referenced	Description
Bangladesh	School Management Committee	No	School leadership body with families and educator representatives.
	Student Cabinet	Yes (Required)	Student leadership body in secondary schools with elected student representatives.
Colombia	School Board of Directors (Consejo Directivo)	Yes (Required)	School leadership body where one student representative (from final grade, elected by the Student Council) participates.
	Academic Council (Consejo Académico)	Yes (Optional)	Academic affairs body where one student representative may be included.
	School Coexistence Committee (Comité de Convivencia Escolar)	Yes (Required)	School climate and safety body, where a student ombudsperson (a final year student elected by peers) participates. Other students may be included.
	Student Council (Consejo Estudiantil)	Yes (Required)	Student leadership body with one student representative elected from each grade to form the Student Council.
Ghana	School Management Committee	Yes (Optional)	School leadership body for basic education with families and educator representatives. It can include representatives of past students.
	Board of Governors	Yes (Optional)	School leadership body for senior secondary schools with representatives from the district education offices, along with families, and educator representatives. It can include representatives of past students.
	Students' Representative Councils	Yes (Optional)	Student leadership body with elected representatives of the student body of a school.

⁴⁵ Personal communications with education leader, Colombia July 30, 2025.

Country	Body	Student Representation in Education Frameworks	
		Referenced	Description
Hungary	School Board (Iskolaszék)	Yes (Optional)	School leadership body with an equal number of representatives from families, teaching staff, and the Student Council.
	Institutional Council (Intézményi Tanács)	Yes (Optional)	School leadership body with representatives from families, educators, local municipalities, and community groups. Student representatives may be included.
	Student Council (Diákönkormányzat)	Yes (Required)	Student leadership body with elected representatives of the student body of a school.
India	School Management Committee	No	Student leadership body with elected representatives of the student body of a school.
	Student Councils	No (Common practice)	Student leadership body with elected representatives of the student body of a school is a common practice.
Kazakhstan	Board of Trustees	Yes	School leadership body with families and educators. Student participation is required.
	Self-Governing Body	Yes (Optional)	Students may create self-governing bodies and elect or appoint their leaders in secondary school.
The Netherlands	Participation Council	Yes (Required)	School management body with representatives from families, community, and civil society.
	Student Council	Yes (Required)	Student leader(s) elected or appointed by educators or students, who are also members of the Participation Council.
South Africa	School Governing Body	Yes (Required)	School management body with students, families, and educator representatives. Student participation is required in secondary schools but optional in primary grades.
	Representative Council of Learners	Yes (Required)	Student leadership body with elected student representatives in secondary school grades.
Tanzania (Zanzibar)	School Management Committee	No	School management body with families and educator representatives.
	Student Government	Yes (Optional)	Student leadership body in schools. Policies do not specify their roles or composition.

The second part of the analysis revealed that student councils are mandated across schools in six countries – Bangladesh, Colombia, Hungary, the Netherlands, South Africa, and Tanzania (Zanzibar). Student councils within schools are typically involved in planning student activities and events; on occasion students may weigh in on school policies, plans, and practices but rarely have a formal role in the school decision making processes.⁴⁶ For example, in Bangladesh, student councils organize events and inform school administration but there are few

⁴⁶ Personal communication with education leader on July 31, 2025.

details on how this occurs.⁴⁷ In the Netherlands, secondary school student councils typically weigh in on school assessment systems, disciplinary measures, student code of conduct regulations, and special needs support mechanisms.⁴⁸ In Hungary, student councils have the right to be involved in all decisions related to student affairs, including developing or changing school rules, planning events and extracurricular activities, and deciding on how national youth programming funds are used in schools.⁴⁹

Despite these policy mandates, few education systems and institutions offer resources and support to schools to systematically implement student councils. As a result, civil society organizations often play a role in supporting student councils. For example, in one Hungarian school, the student council led a participatory budgeting initiative to gather students' perspectives on how to allocate the school budget with the help of their teachers and a civil society organization. Throughout the process, students developed proposals and voted to implement three ideas: a game and relaxation room, free sanitary products in the restrooms, and a dance rehearsal space.⁵⁰

Across the nine countries, there was limited guidance on how student councils should: a) select, elect, and ensure diverse participation of students in these councils; b) inform school decisions and planning (opposed to one-off consultations); c) receive support by schools or government bodies; d) contribute an equal voice in decision making. Bangladesh provides a promising example of a policy coupled with guidance for how schools can support student councils. Bangladesh's guidelines, *Regarding the Formation of Student Cabinets*, mandate annual, school-wide elections of student representatives from grades 6 to 10 and provide detailed guidance for elections. School leaders and teachers are required to mentor the student council through structured monthly meetings and report this mentorship to district authorities, who track that guidelines are implemented in practice.⁵¹ In Colombia and the Netherlands, students have equal voting rights to inform school decisions.⁵²

In summary, involving young people in student councils and intergenerational leadership bodies helps ensure education policies, plans, and practices are more relevant and implementable. Yet, student engagement is not a regularized and required practice in most countries in this research. Only six countries have clear policies that ensure schools have student councils, which are a critical mechanism for ensuring student voice and leadership in schools. In cases where governments include student representation in school governance, it was not clear whether youth engagement was more symbolic—*giving* them a voice—as opposed to intentionally and meaningfully *centering* their voices. Where student councils did exist, their role was commonly limited to organizing events and activities for students. Critical to meaningful student engagement are designated youth leadership bodies, mandates and frameworks for engagement, and technical assistance to ensure that youth and adults have the knowledge, skills, and resources to contribute to decision making and leadership.

47 Government of Bangladesh, Ministry of Education, *Students Cabinet Manual in Secondary School and Dakhil Madrasa* (Government of Bangladesh, 2015).

48 Personal communication with education leader on July 22, 2025.

49 California School Boards Association, *Student Board Member Fact Sheet* (CSBA, 2021).

50 People Powered, "Democracy is a Common Action that Should Begin in Schools," *News* (blog), People Powered, August 12, 2022 <https://www.peoplepowered.org/news-content/democracy-in-schools>.

51 Government of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics, *Regarding the formation of Student Cabinets for students* (Government of Bangladesh, 2015).

52 Government of Colombia, *Law 1620 of 2013: Establishing the National System for School Coexistence and Training for the Exercise of Human Rights [Ley 1620 de 2013: Por la cual se crea el Sistema Nacional de Convivencia Escolar y Formación para el Ejercicio de los Derechos Humanos]* (Government of Colombia, 2013).

Recommendation 2: Provide guidelines and strategies that promote meaningful intergenerational collaboration and student leadership in decision making.

Centering young people’s voices in both student councils and intergenerational leadership bodies help ensure that education policies, plans, and practices reflect the needs and realities of current generations. Given that the young people from Gen Z are the first of many forthcoming generations growing up immersed in widespread access to mobile phone technology, the Internet, and social media, they think differently and have experienced school differently from the parents/caregivers and education leaders making decisions over their lives.⁵³ Younger generations are increasingly engaging with the digital landscape to learn, stay informed, and participate in civic dialogues.⁵⁴ They are also navigating school in a time when skills for the workforce are changing.⁵⁵ Education systems benefit when school decision making and leadership councils, advisory groups, or committees have clear roles for students, and they can share their unique viewpoints and perspectives.

One important way to ensure student voices are centered in intergenerational leadership bodies is to devise clear roles, responsibilities, and expectations with young people on their engagement in these bodies. Examples of how to involve student voice in decision making based on the continuum of student engagement are presented in Table 7.

TABLE 7:

Examples of student expression and consultation (expression through leadership)

Expression	Many secondary schools and universities provide mentorship to students to express their ideas and opinions include art, oral, or written expressions (videos, letters, etc.), posters, social media, and beyond. For example, student newspapers and presses that support young people in ideating, writing, and publishing a book on topics that are relevant and meaningful to them. These projects provide an avenue for students to discuss and express their ideas and perspectives on their school experiences. ⁵⁶
Consultation	Suggestion boxes are a common practice to listen to students’ concerns in confidence, such as worries about examination fees, corporal punishment, and time-consuming household chores. ⁵⁷ Other mechanisms to capture student perspectives and feedback include listening sessions and light-touch surveys on topics ranging from school climate, curriculum, and student support. ⁵⁸
Partnership	Youth councils are a vital mechanism and practice for ensuring young people have formal roles in decision making and informing policies and plans at different levels. ⁵⁹ For example, in Brazil, municipal governments run the Seal of Approval program to promote collaboration between youth councils and policymakers in creating and implementing plans that promote children’s rights; this includes promoting positive social norms and behaviors that encourage student participation. ⁶⁰

53 Jonathan Haidt, *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness* (Penguin Press, 2024).

54 UNICEF, *Digital Civic Engagement by Young People* (UNICEF, 2020).

55 Molly Kinder et al., *Generative AI, the American Worker, and the Future of Work* (Brookings Institution, 2024).

56 Center for Professional Education of Teachers, “Student Press Initiative,” Teachers College, accessed on September 9, 2025. <https://cpet.tc.columbia.edu/student-press-initiative.html>.

57 James Chavula, “Simple box gives learners a say: Children seek support through complaint system,” UNICEF Malawi, October 31, 2023, <https://www.unicef.org/malawi/stories/simple-box-gives-learners-say>

58 Jerusha Conner and Caitlin Wilson, *Classroom Student Voice Practices* (Villanova University, 2023).

59 UNICEF, *Child-Friendly Cities and Communities Handbook* (UNICEF, 2018).

60 UNICEF, *Advancing Child-Centered Public Policy in Brazil through Adolescent Civic Engagement in Local Governance* (UNICEF, October 2020); UNICEF, *Must-Do for Consultations with Young People* (UNICEF, 2022).

Prioritization	Student councils help student leadership provide feedback, co-develop school budgets and policies with educators and family representatives, ⁶¹ and advocate for positive changes in school climate, physical infrastructure, nutrition, and curriculum. ⁶² For example, in a cohort of schools in mainland Tanzania, student councils played a central role in elevating students' voices, and particularly girls, in school decisions on water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) and corporal punishment. ⁶³
Leadership	Clear structures and mechanisms that promote equal and shared decision making responsibilities with adults, such as equal voting rights, can promote students' leadership capacities. ⁶⁴ For example, in England, young people lead councils, set agendas, and facilitate discussions with policymakers on promoting children's rights. ⁶⁵

To ensure that students have intentional and meaningful roles in decision making and leadership through inter-generational bodies, policy guidance for councils working at the national, subnational, or school levels on how to establish student engagement is needed. Student leadership not only improves decision making and policies but also boosts academic performance and self-esteem of youth leaders and instills life skills and democratic values into school leadership.⁶⁶ Laying out clear guidelines on how to ensure democratic, inclusive, and equitable leadership of student representatives on these councils helps make them more impactful and implementable.

In summary, despite growing evidence of the positive impact of student voice and leadership in school improvement, young people around the world are still largely excluded from decisions that impact their own educational experiences.⁶⁷ Ensuring students have an active, meaningful, and impactful role in intergenerational leadership bodies helps ensure that education frameworks and practices are responsive to the current generation and their unique needs and perspectives.

Finding 3: Youth acknowledge they are learning in an inherited education system, but they want to be part of reimagining education systems to better meet the needs and changing realities facing their generation.

Young people's beliefs on education are often intertwined with those of their families, but they also bring unique and contemporary perspectives to education systems transformation. One of the youth researchers in Tanzania (Zanzibar) said during the data collection process, "I never imagined that the education system could change." Her point was that as a young person, the purpose of school appeared to be set in stone. This young woman, like most students, did not have historical insight into the evolution of the education system in Tanzania over the decades nor could she imagine how it may be designed differently. One of the outcomes of the intergenerational research was students started to imagine how education systems can change with political, social, and economic will and resources.

In conversations with students during this research, they questioned not only the feasibility of education systems transformation—from curricular changes to implementation of new technologies—but they also questioned the vision of the education system. They raised concerns about whether schools were preparing them for a future

61 Justin Patrick, "Student Leadership and Student Government," *Research in Educational Administration & Leadership* 7, no. 1 (2022): 1–37.

62 Ursula Griebler and Peter Nowak, "Student Councils: A Tool for Health Promoting Schools? Characteristics and Effects," *Health Education* 112, no. 2 (2012): 105–32.

63 Oxfam, *My Rights, My Voice Tanzania Project Overview* (Oxfam GB 2013).

64 Van T Lac and Katherine Cumings Mansfield, "What do students have to do with educational leadership? Making a case for centering student voice," *Journal of Research on Leadership Education* 13, no. 1 (2018): 38–58.

65 Foundation for Education Development (FED), "FED Learners Council," FED, accessed October 31, 2025, <https://fed.education/fed-learners-council/>.

66 Anna Keogh and Jean Whyte, *Second Level Student Councils in Ireland: A Study of Enablers, Barriers and Supports* (The Children's Research Center, 2005).

67 Dana L. Mitra, "Student voice in school reform: From listening to leadership," *International handbook of student experience in elementary and secondary school* (2007): 727–744.

in an evolving ecosystem and whether all purposes of education were reflected in education policies, plans, and practice. They also urged decision makers to include youth voices in developing a shared vision of education.

As an entry point into this research, youth, their families, and their teachers and school staff were asked what they saw as the main purpose of school and the extrinsic role of school in society. They were also asked when they were most satisfied with education as shown in the questions below.



SURVEY QUESTION
(Families, Educators, and Students)

What do you believe is the most important purpose of school? [Select top one]

- ☐ To prepare for further education (e.g., university, vocational, technical school)
- ☐ To develop skills for work
- ☐ To be active citizens and community members
- ☐ To understand oneself and develop social skills or values
- ☐ Additional (please specify)
- ☐ Don't know/Prefer not to answer



SURVEY QUESTION
(Families)

When are you most satisfied with your child's education? When your child is ... [Select top one]

- ☐ Gaining skills to understand themselves, developing social skills or values
- ☐ Participating in community service/learning
- ☐ Gaining skills for work
- ☐ Getting good marks in your subjects/exams
- ☐ Additional (please specify)
- ☐ Don't know/Prefer not to answer

As detailed in Table 8, most students in seven out of 10 of the countries said that the main purpose of school was furthering their education—such as vocational, technical, or other forms of tertiary education—or what is referred to as academic learning. The three countries where young people leaned toward a different purpose of school were Ghana, Kazakhstan, and the Netherlands; students chose social and emotional learning (SEL), economic learning, or both as the top purpose. Families aligned with their children’s top purpose of school in all countries but often varied with the beliefs of educators.

When it came to satisfaction with education, students also leaned toward academic learning. One exception was students in Bangladesh and Colombia where young people gravitated toward being satisfied with education when they were gaining SEL skills.

TABLE 8:

Top purpose of school and satisfaction with education, by participant groups

Country	What is the purpose of school?			When are you most satisfied with education?		
	Students (n = 9,162)	Families (n = 3,451)	Educators (n = 1,424)	Students (n = 9,214)	Families (n = 3,460)	Educators (n = 1,428)
School-based research						
Bangladesh	Academic (47%)	Academic (58%)	Economic (30%) SEL (30%)	SEL (52%)	SEL (43%)	SEL (55%)
Colombia	Academic (67%)	Academic (64%)	Civic (63%)	SEL (46%)	SEL (64%)	SEL (76%)
Hungary	Academic (48%)	Academic (52%)	Academic (36%)	Academic (43%)	SEL (42%)	SEL (54%)
Kazakhstan	SEL (43%)	SEL (44%) Academic (43%)	SEL (59%)	Academic (54%)	SEL (56%)	SEL (68%)
The Netherlands	Economic (43%)	Academic (34%) Economic (33%)	SEL (50.0%)	Economic (34%) SEL (36%)	Academic (35%) SEL (33%)	SEL (58%)
Tanzania (Zanzibar)	Academic (45%)	Academic (54%)	Economic (37%) Civic (37%)	Academic (69%)	Academic (64%)	Academic (49%)
U.S. (California)	Academic (50%)	Academic (54%)	Academic (35%) Civic (31%)	Academic (67%)	Academic (52%)	SEL (62%)
Youth research (representative samples)						
Ghana	Economic (25%) SEL (37%)	n/a	n/a	SEL (38%)	n/a	n/a
India	Academic (33%)	n/a	n/a	Academic (53%)	n/a	n/a
South Africa	Academic (40%)	n/a	n/a	Academic (40%)	n/a	n/a

NOTES: Shaded squares indicate an alignment in beliefs between participant groups in a country for a given question. No shading indicates a gap in beliefs.

As revealed in the larger body of research in the *Six Global Lessons on How Family, School, and Community Engagement Can Transform Education*,⁶⁸ many education policies, plans, and frameworks around the world heavily emphasize the belief that academic learning leads to economic outcomes. Policies often presume that students should aspire to go as far as they can in school so they can get better jobs, earn higher incomes, and therefore better support themselves and their families. This human development thinking suggests that the more educated a country's youth population is, the greater the country's economic potential and stability. For countries and communities that have a high proportion of families living in poverty, this belief was even more prevalent, and students and families saw education as a critical solution to poverty. As one rural secondary school student said in Tanzania (Zanzibar), "In our community, the rise in poverty levels is huge, and education serves as a solution."

In conversations, students explained why they held these beliefs on academic learning and how they may differ from those of educators. A student in rural Bangladesh noted that "In the post-COVID era, many boys have become addicted to games like PUBG [Player Unknown Battle Grounds] and social media. Teachers are working on developing their socio-emotional skills to bring them back to a regular routine." Young people were aware that their teachers were often thinking about civic and SEL outcomes as they prepared lessons and activities, but they highlighted how teachers were often forced to orient teaching and learning towards high-stakes tests. A young secondary school student in urban Tanzania (Zanzibar) said, "Many parents and students think that studying is to be employed and to get a job. But to study, as teachers think about it or how they teach is to gain self-awareness."

Students also emphasized how important school was for building community cohesion, interpersonal understanding, and coexistence—elements of civic learning in changing demographics and societies. A student in Colombia described how school "prepares us first and foremost to be good people and humans and gives us knowledge on how to advance in the future." One student in the Netherlands noted, "In our area, we traditionally have diversity, many people live here who come from former [Dutch] colonies, but lately we have a lot of newly arrived people who don't speak Dutch and have different values and traditions, we need to learn to live together with them as a community." In conversations with one another and with educators and families, students stressed the importance of multiple purposes of school. A student in a vocational secondary school in the Netherlands reiterated, school should be "all the purposes." A secondary school student in Kazakhstan stated that "nowadays academic knowledge can be gained on your own online, but we need the community of our class and school to gain skills for living in a community and also for finding our own way."

In summary, while students tended to view academic learning as the main purpose of school, this was often because education systems and policies placed heavy emphasis on human development outcomes, framing school as a pathway to the world of work. Yet, young people also recognized the importance of schooling in fostering SEL capabilities alongside civic engagement. As they described in their conversations, they saw a need to reimagine education systems to better meet the needs and changing realities of their generation and to ensure peaceful societies.

68 Emily M. Morris and Laura Nóra, *Six Global Lessons on How Family, School, and Community Engagement Can Transform Education* (Brookings Institution, 2024).

Recommendation 3: Provide students with agency and meaningful opportunities to reimagine and re-envision their schools and education systems.

Schools and students are at the center of education systems transformation. Young people are having to adjust their hopes for the future and respond to climate change, political crises, the rise of generative AI, and pressures to move and migrate, among other things. They are trying to juggle their day-to-day studies alongside anxieties about the skills and capabilities they need for the future. For example, with the rise of generative AI, educators must balance students’ eagerness to embrace new technologies⁶⁹ with families’ concerns and worries about online safety⁷⁰ and the reality that the workforce is changing.⁷¹

As heterogeneous and diverse spaces, education systems and schools encompass multiple visions of beliefs on the purpose of education. Collaborative efforts that bring students, families, and educators together to develop a shared vision of education that reflects diverse beliefs, perspectives, and strategies are critical. Collaboration can take place through intergenerational leadership bodies and student councils. School redesign is one way to involve students in developing a shared vision with educators and families. A few examples of how to involve student voice in school redesign are presented in Table 9 based on the continuum of student engagement.

TABLE 9:
Examples from the continuum of student engagement (participation through leadership)

Participation	An intergenerational approach led by a U.S. civil society organization, Transcend Education , brings together students, educators, and families to reimagine and redesign the school experience. School leaders lead this redesign while inclusively consulting with students and families. ⁷² Transcend Education’s vision is that “education should be rigorous, relevant, and joyful,” and they have developed a school design blueprint process for reimagining schools’ vision, purpose, and ecosystem. Students participate through a survey, providing feedback on how to improve student engagement and teacher-student relationships. ⁷³
Partnership	Collaboration with students on curricular revisions and changes is another important part of school redesign. In a secondary school in Australia, students participated in making decisions on school curricula through their student council of 70 elected student leaders. ⁷⁴ The student council also conducted a curriculum audit together with school staff to gather student perspectives to inform changes and shared these with intergenerational leadership bodies.

69 Cecilia Ka Yuk Chan and Wenjie Hu, “Students’ Voices on Generative AI: Perceptions, Benefits, and Challenges in Higher Education,” *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education* 20 (2023).
70 Barna Group, “6 Tech Habits Changing the American Home,” *Technology* (blog) (Barna Group, April 18, 2017) <https://www.barna.com/research/6-tech-habits-changing-american-home/>.
71 Molly Kinder et al., *Generative AI, the American Worker, and the Future of Work*.
72 Transcend Education, *Blueprint Guide: Documenting the Design of Your Learning Environment* (Transcend Inc., 2025); Jenny Anderson and Rebecca Winthrop, *The Disengaged Teen: Helping Kids Learn Better, Feel Better, and Live Better* (Crown, 2025).
73 Transcend Education, *LEAPS Student Voice Survey* (Transcend Inc., 2023).
74 Victorian Schools Innovation Research Centre (VICSRC), “Case Study: Frankston High School,” *Resource Hub*, VICSRC, Accessed on November, 12, 2025, <https://vicsrc.org.au/resources/case-study-frankston-high-school>.

Prioritization	The Design for Change social movement in India brings intergenerational groups together to conduct school redesign. In this approach, student leaders, as opposed to school leaders, do the work of identifying the problem and designing and testing a solution. ⁷⁵ In one school in Taiwan, students identified safety risks during school drop-off and pick-up and developed solutions with peers. They presented recommendations to their school leaders, which resulted in safer roads. ⁷⁶ Students in Chile redesigned the school canteen to make it more accessible to younger students. ⁷⁷ Engaging youth in school design not only improves the learning experience for students but also helps students develop civic engagement, problem-solving, and leadership skills.
Leadership	In and beyond schools, community efforts are critical for supporting young people in developing leadership capacity. In the U.S., the Kentucky Student Voice Team , a civil society organization, is building a cadre of youth leaders in research and policymaking. In their model, students conduct research in collaboration with adults—such as a school climate audit to understand students’ perspectives on teaching and learning, assessments, and school culture. Intergenerational audits examine the enablers of student success with the intention of informing school decisions and building student leaders. ⁷⁸

In summary, centering student voice and engagement in school redesign gives students ownership of school visions. Students can and should be involved in different parts of the process on the continuum of student engagement. When education leaders center student voice in the process of education system design, schools are relevant, responsive, and inclusive for all.

⁷⁵ Design for Change, “We Believe Every Child CAN Design a Better World Today!,” Accessed on November 13, 2025, <https://www.dfeworld.org/SITE>.

⁷⁶ Design for Change, “BTC2015 Taiwan – Our Safe Way to School,” YouTube video, 2:15, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bWEEwac_08E.

⁷⁷ Design for Change, “BTC2014 Chile: A CANteen for All,” YouTube video, 2:24, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IS1qnVcHpkA>.

⁷⁸ Kentucky Student Voice Team, *STEAM ON CAMPUS: Student Success Snapshot Report* (Kentucky Student Voice Team, 2025).

Conclusion

Young people today continue to be excluded from decisions that affect their education. As this policy brief highlighted, few national education systems provide meaningful opportunities for students to consult and co-design education plans, policies, and practices that affect their educational experiences. Meaningful student engagement in education systems transformation can benefit not only students' learning and development, but also ensure schools are enacting changes relevant and responsive to young people and society.

One way of ensuring prioritization of student voice and leadership in decision making is to develop a shared vision of education with students, rather than for them. Through student councils and intergenerational leadership bodies, students can consult and inform education policies, plans, and practices. At the national and subnational levels, students can be consulted during the policy development process. Students can also inform the implementation of policies and plans in their schools and communities and share feedback and suggestions on curriculum, school climate, and student support services, among other critical topics.

To ensure that student engagement is impactful, rather than symbolic, education system leaders should create formal policies that institutionalize student councils and outline students' decision-making and leadership responsibilities in intergenerational school leadership bodies. In addition, resources, training, and support to both students and adults on positive social norms and behaviors that further intergenerational collaboration are vital. To support young people's agency in their learning and development and to foster greater student leadership in their schools, schools must build a culture of listening and mentorship. Adults can offer their networks and experiences to mentor youth leaders, and youth can share new ways of thinking about and seeing the future with adults. For education to keep evolving and transforming, student leadership and engagement cannot be merely an afterthought; it must be a primary consideration in education policies and partnerships.

Acknowledgments

CUE is enormously grateful for the deep collaboration and partnership of the following organizations and institutions who led this research with students, namely Alianza Educativa (Colombia), Community Schools Learning Exchange (U.S.), Education & Cultural Society (Bangladesh), GeoPoll (Ghana, India, South Africa), Milele Zanzibar Foundation (Tanzania), Parents International and Maral Nuridin (Kazakhstan), and Red PaPaz (Colombia). CUE would also like to acknowledge the students, parents/caregivers, teachers, and education leaders who participated in the research, and whose contributions are monumental.

A huge note of gratitude to Omaer Naeem for his thought partnering that was central to the conceptual framing of intergenerational research and for helping to identify strategies and contributing to peer review. Thank you to the four peer reviewers Pragya Upreti, Sweta Shah, and Emily Gustafsson-Wright and to CUE colleagues Nina Fairchild, Izzy Thomas, and Esther Rosen for their support.

The Brookings Institution is a nonprofit organization devoted to independent research and policy solutions. Its mission is to conduct high-quality, independent research and based on that research, to provide innovative, practical recommendations for policymakers and the public. The conclusions and recommendations of any Brookings publication are solely those of its author(s), and do not reflect the views or policies of the Institution, its management, its other scholars, or the funders acknowledged below.

Brookings gratefully acknowledges the support of the LEGO Foundation.

Brookings recognizes that the value it provides is in its absolute commitment to quality, independence, and impact. Activities supported by its donors reflect this commitment.

For more information, please contact fscengagement@brookings.edu.

References

POLICIES ANALYZED

- Government** of Bangladesh, Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics. *Regarding the Formation of Student Cabinets for Students*. Government of Bangladesh, 2015. <https://file-rajshahi.portal.gov.bd/uploads/28d300e3-823c-4884-9862-91836d54a56f/629/5e7/98d/6295e798d48b7729659013.pdf>
- Government** of Bangladesh, Ministry of Education. *National Education Policy 2010*. Government of Bangladesh, 2010. https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/bangladesh_national_education_policy_2010.pdf.
- Government** of Bangladesh, Ministry of Education. *Students Cabinet Manual in Secondary School and Dakhil Madrasa*. Government of Bangladesh, 2015. https://file-rajshahi.portal.gov.bd/files/uitrce.paba.rajshahi.gov.bd/notices/0dda14e2_4eda_4f64_ac38_2362a85620bf/9b658d8bf925d8a896ed435954647da8.pdf
- Government** of Bangladesh, Ministry of Education. *Education Sector Plan for Bangladesh: Fiscal Year 2020/21–2024/25*. Government of Bangladesh, 2020. <https://www.globalpartnership.org/node/document/download?file=document/file/2020-12-Bangladesh-ESP.pdf>.
- Government** of Colombia. *Law 1620 of 2013: Establishing the National System for School Coexistence and Training for the Exercise of Human Rights* [Ley 1620 de 2013: Por la cual se crea el Sistema Nacional de Convivencia Escolar y Formación para el Ejercicio de los Derechos Humanos]. Government of Colombia, 2013. Accessed on July 18, 2025. <https://www.suin-juriscol.gov.co/viewDocument.asp?ruta=Leyes/1685356>.
- Government** of Colombia, Ministry of National Education. *Decreto 1860 de 3 de agosto de 1994: por el cual se reglamenta parcialmente la Ley 115 de 1994 en los aspectos pedagógicos y organizativos generales* [Decree 1860 of August 3, 1994: Which Partially Regulates Law 115 of 1994 Regarding General Pedagogical and Organizational Aspects]. Government of Colombia, 1994. https://www.mineducacion.gov.co/1621/articulos-172061_archivo_pdf_decreto1860_94.pdf.
- Government** of Ghana, *Education Act*. Government of Ghana, 2008. https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/ghana_education_act_2008.pdf.
- Government** of Ghana, Ministry of Education. *Education Strategic Plan 2018–2030*. Government of Ghana, 2018. <https://www.globalpartnership.org/sites/default/files/2019-05-education-strategic-plan-2018-2030.pdf>.
- Government** of Hungary. *Törvény a nemzeti köznevelésről* [Law on National Public Education]. Government of Hungary, 2011. <https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=A1100190.TV>.
- Government** of Hungary, Ministry of Human Resources. *Köznevelés-fejlesztési stratégia* [Public Education Development Strategy]. Government of Hungary, 2014. <https://2015-2019.kormany.hu/download/6/fe/20000/K%C3%B6znevel%C3%A9s-fejleszt%C3%A9s.pdf>.
- Government** of India. *The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009*. Government of India, 2009. https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/upload_document/rte.pdf.
- Government** of India, Ministry of Education. *Samagra Shiksha: An Integrated Scheme for School Education*. Government of India, 2023. https://samagra.education.gov.in/docs/samagra_shiksha.pdf
- Government** of India, Ministry of Human Resource Development. *National Education Policy 2020*. Government of India, 2020. https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf.
- Government** of the Netherlands. *Wet medezeggenschap op scholen* [Participation in Schools Act]. Government of the Netherlands, 2006. <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0020685/2017-01-01#origineelopschrift-en-aanhef>.
- Government** of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Ministry of Justice. *Об образовании* [About Education Act]. Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2007. https://adilet.zan.kz/rus/docs/Z070000319/_z070319.htm.
- Government** of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Ministry of Justice. *On State Youth Policy*. Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2015. <https://adilet.zan.kz/eng/docs/Z1500000285>.

- Government** of the Republic of South Africa. *South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996*. Government of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. <https://www.education.gov.za/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=alolZ6UsZ5U%3D&tabid=>.
- Government** of the Republic of South Africa, Western Cape Education Department. *Representative Councils of Learners*. Government of the Republic of South Africa, 2004. Accessed on August 1, 2025 https://wcedonline.westerncape.gov.za/circulars/2004/e56_04.html.
- Government** of the Republic of South Africa. *Basic Education Laws Amendment Act 32 of 2024*. Government of the Republic of South Africa, 2024. <https://www.gov.za/documents/acts/basic-education-laws-amendment-act-32-2024-english-afrikaans-16-sep-2024>.
- Revolutionary** Government of Zanzibar. *The Education (Amendment) Act, 1993*. Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar, 1993. <https://www.zanzibarassembly.go.tz/storage/documents/acts/english/all/1674626226.pdf>.
- Revolutionary** Government of Zanzibar, Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, Revolutionary. *Zanzibar Education Policy*. Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar, 2006. https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/zanzibar_education_policy_2006_0.pdf.

OTHER REFERENCES

- Advance** CTE. *Empowering Learners: Kentucky Case Study*. Advance CTE, 2024. <https://careertech.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Empowering-Learners-Kentucky-Case-Study.pdf>.
- Anderson**, Jenny, and Rebecca Winthrop. *The Disengaged Teen: Helping Kids Learn Better, Feel Better, and Live Better*. Crown, 2025.
- Augsberger**, Astraea, Mary E. Collins, and Riana C. Howard. "The global context of youth engagement: a scoping review of youth councils in municipal government." *Children and Youth Services Review* 156 (2024): 107349. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2023.107349>
- Barna** Group. "6 Tech Habits Changing the American Home." *Technology* (blog), Barna Group, April 18, 2017. <https://www.barna.com/research/6-tech-habits-changing-american-home/>.
- Billot**, Zachary, and Emily M. Morris. "Building a Pipeline for Youth Leadership and Innovation." *Education Plus Development* (blog), Brookings Institution, April 23, 2025. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/building-a-pipeline-for-youth-leadership-and-innovation/>.
- Brookings** Institution. "Youth Agency in and through Education." Accessed on September 9, 2025. <https://www.brookings.edu/collection/youth-agency-in-and-through-education/>.
- Bryk**, Anthony, and Barbara Schneider. *Trust in schools: A core resource for improvement*. Russell Sage Foundation, 2002.
- California** School Boards Association. *Student Board Member Fact Sheet*. CSBA, 2021. https://www.csba.org/-/media/CSBA/Files/GovernanceResources/ResearchPapers/CSBA-Student-Fact-Sheet-11-2021_pdf
- Canedo-Garcia**, Alejandro, Jesus-Nicasio Garcia-Sanchez, and Deilis-Ivonne Pacheco-Sanz. "A systematic review of the effectiveness of intergenerational programs." *Frontiers in Psychology* 8 (2017): 1882. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01882>.
- Cashman**, Laura, Ricardo Sabates, and Benjamin Alcott. "Parental involvement in low-achieving children's learning: the role of household wealth in rural India." *International Journal of Educational Research* 105 (2021): 101701. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2020.101701>
- Center** for Professional Education of Teachers. "Student Press Initiative." Teachers College. Accessed September 9, 2025. <https://cpet.tc.columbia.edu/student-press-initiative.html>.
- Chan**, Cecilia Ka Yuk, and Wenjie Hu. "Students' voices on generative AI: Perceptions, benefits, and challenges in higher education." *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education* 20, no. 1 (2023): 43. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-023-00411-8>.
- Chavula**, James. "Simple box gives learners a say: Children seek support through complaint system." UNICEF Malawi, October 31, 2023. <https://www.unicef.org/malawi/stories/simple-box-gives-learners-say>.

- Checkoway**, Barry. "What is youth participation?" *Children and Youth Services Review* 33, no. 2 (2011): 340-345. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2010.09.017>.
- Conner**, Jerusha, and Caitlin Wilson. *Classroom Student Voice Practices*. Villanova University, 2023. <https://d2pck61xhq74q6.cloudfront.net/Student-Voice-Practices-in-the-Classroom.pdf>
- Conner**, Jerusha, Dana L. Mitra, Samantha E. Holquist, and Ashley Boat. "How teachers' student voice practices affect student engagement and achievement: exploring choice, receptivity, and responsiveness to student voice as moderators." *Journal of Educational Change* 26, no. 1 (2025): 89-118. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-024-09513-0>.
- Dempster**, Neil, Elizabeth Stevens, and Mary Keeffe. "Student and youth leadership: A focused literature review." *Leading and Managing* 17, no. 2 (2011): 1-20. <http://hdl.handle.net/10072/44107>.
- Department** of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2024: Population by Select Age Groups, Both Sexes*. United Nations, 2024. <https://population.un.org/wpp/downloads?folder=Special%20Aggregates&group=Economic%20and%20trading%20groups>.
- Design** for Change. "BTC2014 Chile: A CANteen for All," YouTube, October 11, 2014. Video, 2 min., 24 sec., <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IS1qnVcHpkA>.
- Design** for Change. "BTC2015 Taiwan – Our Safe Way to School." YouTube, February 12, 2016. Video, 2 min. 15 sec., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bWEEwac_08E.
- Design** for Change. "We Believe Every Child CAN Design a Better World Today!." Accessed on November 13, 2025. <https://www.dfcworld.org/SITE>.
- Foundation** for Education Development (FED). "FED Learners Council." Accessed October 31, 2025. <https://fed.education/fedlearners-council/>.
- Government** of Ireland, Department of Education. *Cinéaltas: Action Plan on Bullying*. Government of Ireland, 2022. <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-education/publications/cine%C3%A1ltas-action-plan-on-bullying/>.
- Government** of Ireland, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment. *National Youth Assembly on Artificial Intelligence Report*. Government of Ireland, 2023. <https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/publications/national-youth-assembly-on-ai-report.html>.
- Griebler**, Ursula, and Peter Nowak. "Student councils: a tool for health promoting schools? Characteristics and effects." *Health education* 112, no. 2 (2012): 105-132. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09654281211203402>.
- Haidt**, Jonathan. *The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness*. Penguin Press, 2024. <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/729231/the-anxious-generation-by-jonathan-haidt/>
- Hine**, Gregory. "Student leadership experiences: A case study." *Leading and Managing* 19, no. 1 (2013): 32-50. <https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/ielapa.569444790636726>.
- Holquist**, Samantha E., Dana L. Mitra, Jerusha Conner, and Nikki L. Wright. "What is student voice anyway? The intersection of student voice practices and shared leadership." *Educational Administration Quarterly* 59, no. 4 (2023): 703-743. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X231178023>.
- Institute** for Citizens & Scholars. *The Co-Creation Generation: The Story of the Kentucky Student Voice Team & Guide to Intergenerational Impact*. Institute for Citizens & Scholars, 2021. <https://citizensandscholars.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/The-Co-Creation-Generation.pdf>.
- Kahne**, Joseph, Benjamin Bowyer, Jessica Marshall, and Erica Hodgins. "Is responsiveness to student voice related to academic outcomes? Strengthening the rationale for student voice in school reform." *American Journal of Education* 128, no. 3 (2022): 389-415. <https://doi.org/10.1086/719121>.
- Kentucky** Student Voice Team. *STEAM ON CAMPUS: Student Success Snapshot Report*. Kentucky Student Voice Team, 2025. https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/630e58db6406d5a8f8a3ab90/681d9deb-47d29e90086f165e_STEAM-ON-CAMPUS-Student-Success-Snapshot-Report%20small.pdf.
- Keogh**, Anna Fiona, and Jean Whyte. *Second Level Student Councils in Ireland: A Study of Enablers, Barriers and Supports*. The Children's Research Center, 2005. <https://www.tcd.ie/tricc/assets/pdfs/crc-archive/2005-Keogh-Whyte-Student-councils.pdf>.

- Kinder**, Molly, Xavier de Souza Briggs, Mark Muro, and Sifan Liu. *Generative AI, the American Worker, and the Future of Work*. Brookings Institution, 2024. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/generative-ai-the-american-worker-and-the-future-of-work/>.
- Kirshner**, Ben, Jennifer O'Donoghue, and Milbrey McLaughlin. "Youth-adult research collaborations: Bringing youth voice to the research process." In *Organized activities as contexts of development*. Edited by Joseph L. Mahoney, Reed W. Larson, Jacquelynne S. Eccles. Psychology Press, 2005. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410612748>.
- Lac**, Van T., and Katherine Cumings Mansfield. "What do students have to do with educational leadership? Making a case for centering student voice." *Journal of Research on Leadership Education* 13, no. 1 (2018): 38-58. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1942775117743748>.
- Living Democracy**. "A Framework for Participation and Decision-Making in School." Accessed on November 12, 2025. <https://www.living-democracy.com/principals/leadership/democratic-school-leadership-as-a-whole-school-approach/a-framework-for-participation-and-decision-making-in-school/>.
- Living Democracy**. "Democratic School Leadership as a Whole-School Approach." Accessed on August 4, 2025. <https://www.living-democracy.com/principals/leadership/democratic-school-leadership-as-a-whole-school-approach/>.
- Mager**, Ursula, and Peter Nowak. "Effects of student participation in decision making at school. A systematic review and synthesis of empirical research." *Educational Research Review* 7, no. 1 (2012): 38-61. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2011.11.001>.
- Mapp**, Karen L., Anne T. Henderson, Sylvia Cuevas, Maria C. Franco, Stephanie Ewert, and Vivian J. Borrello. *Everyone Wins! The Evidence for Family-School Partnerships and Implications for Practice*. Scholastic, 2022.
- Mitra**, Dana. L. "Student voice in school reform: From listening to leadership," *International handbook of student experience in elementary and secondary school* (2007): 727-744. https://doi.org/10.1007/1-4020-3367-2_29.
- Mitra**, Dana L. "The significance of students: Can increasing "student voice" in schools lead to gains in youth development?." *Teachers College Record* 106, no. 4 (2004): 651-688. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9620.2004.00354.x>.
- Morris**, Emily M., Laura Nóra, and Rebecca Winthrop, *Conversation Starter Tools: A Participatory Research Guide to Building Stronger Family, School, and Community Partnerships*. Brookings Institution, 2024. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/conversation-starter-tools/>.
- Morris**, Emily M. and Omaer Naeem. "Handing Over the Mic: The Difference Between Centering and Giving Youth Voices in Research and Practice." *Education Plus Development* (blog), Brookings Institution, September 5, 2023. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/handing-over-the-mic-the-difference-between-centering-and-giving-youth-voices-in-research-and-practice/>.
- Morris**, Emily M., and Laura Nóra, *Six Global Lessons on How Family, School, and Community Engagement Can Transform Education*. Brookings Institution, 2024. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/six-global-lessons-on-how-family-school-and-community-engagement-can-transform-education/>.
- Naeem**, Omaer and Emily M. Morris. "Potential or Essential? Youth as Partners in Education Research." *Education Plus Development* (blog), Brookings Institution, August 11, 2023. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/potential-or-essential-youth-as-partners-in-education-research/>.
- Office of Impact Analysis**. *Best Practice Consultation*. Australian Government, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, July 2023. <https://oia.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-08/best-practice-consultation.pdf>.
- Ontario Ministry of Education**. *Parents in Partnership: A Parent Engagement Policy for Ontario Schools*. Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2010. <https://www.ontario.ca/page/parents-partnership-parent-engagement-policy-ontario-schools>.
- Organization for Economic Cooperation**. *Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions: Catching the Deliberative Wave*. OECD Publishing, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.1787/339306da-en>.

- Organization** for Economic Cooperation. *Student Agency for 2030*. OECD, 2019. https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/about/projects/edu/education-2040/concept-notes/Student_Agency_for_2030_concept_note.pdf.
- Oxfam**. *My Rights, My Voice Tanzania Project Overview*. Oxfam GB 2013. <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/my-rights-my-voice-tanzania-project-overview-305547/>.
- Patrick**, Justin. "Student leadership and student government." *Research in Educational Administration and Leadership* 7, no. 1 (2022): 1-37. <https://doi.org/10.30828/real.951165>.
- Quintelier**, Ellen. "The effect of schools on political participation: A multilevel logistic analysis." *Research Papers in Education* 25, no. 2 (2010): 137-154. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02671520802524810>.
- Roffey**, Sue. "Becoming an agent of change for school and student well-being." *Educational & Child Psychology* 32, no. 1 (2015). <https://doi.org/10.53841/bpsecp.2015.32.1.21>.
- Tan**, Cheng Yong, Meiyan Lyu, and Baiwen Peng. "Academic Benefits from Parental Involvement Are Stratified by Parental Socioeconomic Status: A Meta-Analysis." *Parenting* 20, no. 4 (2019): 241–87. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15295192.2019.1694836>.
- Transcend Education**. *Blueprint Guide: Documenting the Design of Your Learning Environment*. Transcend Inc., 2025. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jXHym-geTSxDdEgMZUD3KCCoW_n0p4Y0/view.
- Transcend Education**. *LEAPS Student Voice Survey*. Transcend Inc., 2023. <https://transcendeducation.org/leaps-student-voice-survey/>.
- UNICEF**. *Child-Friendly Cities and Communities Handbook*. UNICEF, 2018. <https://www.unicef.org/eap/reports/child-friendly-cities-and-communities-handbook>.
- UNICEF**. *Digital Civic Engagement by Young People*. UNICEF, 2020. <https://www.unicef.org/innocenti/reports/digital-civic-engagement-young-people>.
- UNICEF**. *Advancing Child-Centered Public Policy in Brazil through Adolescent Civic Engagement in Local Governance*. UNICEF, 2020. <https://www.unicef.org/documents/advancing-child-centred-public-policy-brazil-through-adolescent-civic-engagement-local>.
- UNICEF**. *Child and Youth Councils: Guidance to Support Meaningful Participation*. UNICEF, 2022. <https://www.unicef.org/youthledaction/documents/child-and-youth-councils>.
- UNICEF**. *Must-Do for Consultations with Young People*. UNICEF, 2022. https://www.unicef.org/youthledaction/media/736/file/UNICEF-Briefer_Must-Do-During-Consultations.pdf.pdf.
- United Nations**. *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. UN, 1989. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>.
- Valliyil**, Sunil. D. "Stakeholder Consultations in National Education Policy (2020): A Qualitative Evaluation of Consultations in India's Education Policyscape." Master's thesis, University of Oxford, 2022. <https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:dc24c2dd-d64f-4820-a57f-0583d9278620>.
- Victorian Schools Innovation Research Centre (VICSRC)**. "Case Study: Frankston High School." *Resource Hub*, VICSRC. Accessed on November, 12, 2025, <https://vicsrc.org.au/resources/case-study-frankston-high-school>.
- Voight**, Adam. "Student voice for school-climate improvement: A case study of an urban middle school," *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 25, no. 4 (2015): 310-326. <https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.2216>.
- World Bank**. *Consultation Guidelines*. World Bank, 2019. <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/248301574182372360-0290022019/original/WorldBankconsultationsguidelines.pdf>

BROOKINGS

1775 Massachusetts Ave NW
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 797-6000
www.brookings.edu