

POLICY #3

School Councils

What if students were the boss of the principal?

Description:

School councils allow teachers, parents, administrators, and students to come together to make decisions about school budget, staff, curriculum, school policies, and academics. Depending on the state, students on these councils may or may not have voting rights, and their decisions may be binding or advisory. In other words, some principals may be bound by the decisions of the school council whereas others only have to consider the suggestions of school councils before making their own decisions.

Examples:

- In Massachusetts, school councils must include students, but their decisions are only advisory to the principal.
- In Chicago, school councils make binding decisions over school budget, school policies, principal evaluation, and the school improvement plan. These school councils include middle and high school students.





School Councils (Continued)

Pros	Cons
Student power: Students receive a vote, learn skills on school budget, and gain real world experience. Students are also able to provide their own perspective.	Student power: Students only have a small number of votes on a larger council.
Inclusion: Students on the councils represent their entire student body and are more accessible to students at their school. Many students elected to these councils are involved in a range of activities, broadening the ideas brought to the council.	Inclusion: Only one or two students have the opportunity to be on a school council.
Likelihood of passing: Powerful school councils have been implemented in other states with success.	Likelihood of passing: Lawmakers may not want youth with little training making education decisions because they may think they lack important skills and knowledge.

If we chose School Councils, we would want to make sure that:

- Students can vote on committee decisions
- Decisions are binding on the school improvement plan