

Policy Code: 4004 Student Voice

A. Overview

The board strives for a system that fosters and sustains student activism and engagement and ultimately provides intentional structures for students from across the county to have an outlet to express their concerns and ideas. These structures should represent an inclusive, equitable, representative means of engagement for students that transcends an act of tokenism. This policy seeks to provide structures for students to work and collaborate with equal voice with adult decision-makers so there are options and opportunities for students to impact decisions that have a direct impact on them.

B. Principles supporting the policy

All students have valid opinions and come from unique backgrounds and should be encouraged to express how something, including policies, may affect them differently. Student Voice structures seek cooperation, collaboration, and co-construction between students and adults. Authentic Student Voice structures make students feel more involved, heard, and valued because they include students in decisions and actions that directly impact them and their peers.

C. Key Terms & Definitions

1. Student Voice: Recognizing and acting upon the fact that students are the primary stakeholders of their education and should be partners in shaping it.
2. Tokenism: In the context of Student Voice work, a form of inauthentic inclusion of young people where:
 - a. a student is asked to represent the experiences of all students or all those they share an identity group with;
 - b. young people are invited into spaces primarily to validate the perspectives of adults without being integrated into decision-making processes.
3. Equity: Providing people with different resources or opportunities according to their unique circumstances in order to succeed.
4. Equality: Providing people with the same / equal resources or opportunities in order to succeed.
5. Opportunity gap: When students are not being given equal resources and opportunities based on certain characteristics about them, causing these students to experience unequal opportunities to succeed when compared to other students. The opportunity gap recognizes there are systems at work impacting individual opportunities.
6. Achievement gap: Refers to the outputs of unequal or inequitable distribution of educational results and benefits, which are a result of the opportunity gap.

D. Student Voice Structures and Standards

The superintendent or designee (primarily the Chief Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Officer) will establish and maintain the following structures each academic year to reach the goal of increased student voice in NHCS.

1. **Convene a Superintendent's Student Advisory Council**
 - a. Meet quarterly to inform the Superintendent;
 - b. Includes representation from all high schools **and middle schools**;
 - c. Selection determined upon input from school principals and student leaders.

2. **Convene Student Equity Teams in middle and high schools**
 - a. Meets regularly in individual schools to inform school leadership;
 - b. Convenes biannually as a full district as coordinated by the Chief Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Officer and/or Communications Officer with support from the Operations Office as needed;
 - c. Selection is determined by adult liaisons in each school ~~with assistance from the Chief Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Officer.~~

3. **Provide opportunities to include at least one high school student on all board committees, board advisory committees, and ad hoc committees.**
 - a. Student members inform board members and other committee members;
 - b. Student members should have representation and be given voting privileges (where allowed) that are proportionate to other committee members;
 - c. Term limits and expectations of commitment for student members serving on such committees should be consistent with other committee members;
 - d. Selection is determined by application in collaboration with students, district leadership, and committee members.

4. **Establish a NHCS Student Engagement Team, which is a body of students established to maintain and strengthen Student Voice structures in NHCS.**
 - a. This team includes, but is not be limited to, students from the Superintendent's Student Advisory Council; middle and high school students from the Student Equity Teams and other school clubs and organizations such as Student Government Association and Student Councils; high school students on other board committees, board advisory committees, and/or ad hoc committees; and additional middle and high school students in the district;
 - b. Provides opportunities for student representation from each middle and high school;
 - c. Selection will be coordinated by students and school leaders in collaboration with the Chief Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Officer, the Communications and Outreach Division, Instruction and Accountability Division, Finance Division, and the Student Support Services Division;
 - d. Students and adult allies in Central Office and schools will host training for student representatives on youth voice opportunities on how to consistently gather peer input in an equitable manner, including from elementary students, when possible;
 - e. The Student Engagement Team will engage with adult allies, including the school board, district leaders and staff, school leaders, and community representatives via

- information sessions with opportunities to learn about and provide feedback on the current issues that district administration and the school board are trying to address;
- f. Structures in sections D4b and D4c will be coordinated by students and school leaders in collaboration with the Chief Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Officer, the Communications and Outreach Division, Instruction and Accountability Division, Finance Division, and the Student Support Services Division;
 - g. Add a standing Student Voice agenda item to the monthly Regular Board of Education meetings to provide updates and student feedback.
- 5. Provide opportunities for connecting and convening any students who are included in the formal structures of sections D1 - D4 above as well as students who are not participating in any of those formal structures.**
- a. A yearly kickoff summit for students identified in structures in section D1 - D4 to work with district adults to set goals and objectives for the school year, planned in partnership with students participating in formal structures D1 - D4;
 - b. A closing yearly summit for students identified in structures in sections D1 – D4 to reflect on, improve and revise Student Voice structures, planned in partnership with students participating in formal structures in sections D1 - D4;
 - c. Summits coordinated by students, the Chief Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Officer, the Communications and Outreach Division, Instruction and Accountability Division, Finance Division, and the Student Support Services Division.
 - i. Elementary school leadership is encouraged to engage students in similar leadership opportunities as outlined above and can work with the Chief Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Officer to ensure longevity of student voice through the grade spans.
- 6. The school board encourages schools to include students on their School Improvement Teams.**

References:

- **Selection Criteria & Processes for the 2021-22 Student Voice Project in NHCS**
- **Policy 2230 Board Committees**
- **Policy 2330 Board Meeting Agendas**
- **Policy 4000 Focus on Students**

Adopted: