

# MAKING THE STUDENT VOICE EFFECTIVE

FOCUS: Student governments have always had as a basis for their existence the premise that such an organization would give the students a way to impact their own educational and life experiences. Unfortunately, their voice is often stifled by those who believe they are just “kids” and not mature enough to make rational decisions or to express well-defined opinions or thoughts. Maybe some of the suggestions below will dispel the myths and open avenues that will allow the student voice to be truly heard.

- I. On the School Level
  - A. School Improvement Committee Seats.
  - B. Principal Advisory Boards.
  - C. PTSA involvement.
- II. On the County (Town) Level
  - A. Superintendents of Schools Youth Advisory Boards
  - B. Student Representative on the Board of Education
  - C. Student Members of the Board of Education
    1. Preferential Votes
    2. Partial Voting
    3. Full Voting Rights
- III. How to get there?
  - A. Start small.
  - B. Be persistent.
  - C. Work the powers that be.
  - D. Be well informed of examples where it has already been implemented and successful.
  - E. Plan carefully the selection process and hope that you get good candidates to hold the position so there is little backlash.
- IV. State Level
  - A. Governor’s Youth Advisory Council established by COMAR.
  - B. State Legislature and Governor’s Commission ask for student representatives.
  - C. State Department of Education asks for student members of commissions and committees.
  - D. Student Member of the State Board of Education with partial voting rights established by COMAR. Method of selection part of our organizations Constitution and ByLaws.
  - E. Lobbying Efforts – State Legislative Affairs Coordinators (SLACers)
    1. Lobbying Day
    2. Teach How to Lobby
    3. Take issues to our general assembly, take a stance, and then sign up to testify when bills are in committee.
    4. Support various cause via press conferences, public relation publications and speaking at local events.

