

This response was prepared for the Vermont House Education Committee

Recent research and advocacy efforts related to student membership on local school boards have highlighted the importance of student representation in fostering more inclusive and effective governance. In 2023, the [National Student Board Member Association](#) was formed to support and empower student board members by providing training and resources related to board governance processes and effective representation. In addition, ongoing [research projects](#) at the Center for Educational Equity at Columbia University's Teachers College provide analyses of student representation on school boards in several states.

Policies related to student representation on local school boards exist in several states, though the specifics of these policies vary. While at least four states require all school boards to include at least one student member, others allow for the decision to be made locally. In addition, student board members in different states may have different rights; while some are permitted to vote on issues in the same manner as regular board members, others have only preferential voting rights or serve as nonvoting members. Student members are also selected in different ways, with some elected by their high school peers, while others are appointed by regular school board members.

The examples below provide insight into the range of approaches states have taken to including student representation on local school boards.

State Examples Regarding Student Representation on Local School Boards

California ([Cal. Educ. Code § 35012](#)) allows students in any district with one or more high schools to petition for the district governing board to appoint one or more student members. The petition must have the signatures of either 500 students or at least 10 percent of the number of students enrolled in the district's high schools, whichever is less. A student member has preferential voting rights, meaning that they may provide a formal expression of opinion recorded and cast before an official governing board vote. A student member may be chosen by the students enrolled in the district's high schools in a manner prescribed by the governing board, and serves a one-year term.

Illinois ([105 Ill. Comp. Stat. Ann. 5/10-10](#)) allows a board of education to appoint a student to serve in an advisory capacity for the length of a term determined by the board. Student members do not have voting rights and are not permitted to participate in executive sessions.

Maryland ([Md. Code Ann., Educ. § 3-101](#) et seq.) outlines membership requirements for each county board of education. While all county boards include at least one student member, selection processes and rights of student members differ between counties. The selection process typically involves a vote by high school students in the county; however, some counties impose additional requirements around the nomination and election of a student member, such as approval of nominations by the county board or requirements for a student to be in a specific grade level or to meet certain academic criteria. In most counties, a student member is non-voting. However, some counties provide student board members with voting rights, with some restrictions. For example, Montgomery

County ([Md. Code Ann., Educ. § 3-901](#)) allows its student member to vote on all matters except those related to the suspension or dismissal of school employees.

Massachusetts ([Mass. Gen. Laws Ann. ch. 71, § 38M](#)) requires each city, town, and regional district's school committee to meet at least once every other month during the school year with a student advisory committee that consists of five members elected by the students of the high schools the committee oversees. The student advisory committee chooses a chairperson by majority vote each year, and this chairperson serves as an ex-officio, nonvoting member of the school committee.

Minnesota ([Minn. Stat. Ann. § 123B.09](#)) encourages the board of an independent school district to adopt a process to include student representation to advise the board.

Nebraska ([Neb. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 79-559](#)) allows a school board to include at least one public high school student as a nonvoting member. The board may decide who the student member is, of the following options: the student body or student council president, the senior class representative, or a representative elected by the entire student body. A student member serves a one-year term, and must be excluded from executive sessions.

New Hampshire ([N.H. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 189:1-c](#)) requires that a school board has at least one nonvoting student member from each public high school within its district. State statute ([N.H. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 194:23-f](#)) specifies that a student board member is chosen by a majority vote of the high school student body, serves a one-year term, and has all the rights of a regular board member except the right to vote.

New York requires the board of each union free school district ([N.Y. Educ. Law § 1702](#)), central high school district ([N.Y. Educ. Law § 1901](#)), city school district ([N.Y. Educ. Law § 2502](#) and [N.Y. Educ. Law § 2553](#)), and board of cooperative educational services ([N.Y. Educ. Law § 1950](#)) to establish a process for designating at least one student as an ex officio board member. A student member may sit with the board at all public meetings but is not permitted to vote or attend executive sessions or closed meetings. For most district types, the student member may be any of the following: the high school student president, a student elected by the student body, a student selected by the student government, a student selected by the principal, a student selected by the superintendent, or a student selected by a majority vote of the board.

Virginia ([Va. Code Ann. § 22.1-86.1](#)) allows a school board to adopt procedures for the appointment of a student representative, who serves in a nonvoting, advisory capacity only. The board may determine the length of a student representative's term, and may choose to exclude the student representative from executive sessions or closed meetings.