

26 JUNE 2018

Student Voice Committees

Students can participate in a Student Voice Committee at their school. They learn about the issues at their school and find ways to resolve them.

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peaceful and positive school culture. That's why as a District we support and encourage students to participate in decision making. One way they're able to do so is through a Student Voice Committee (SVC). Each school can form one. The committee is designed to create partnerships between students and adults to help address issues students face today.

This is the third year CPS has celebrated the work done by SVC members throughout the District. On June 1, nearly 300 middle schoolers from more than two dozen schools across the city came together for the annual Middle School Student Voice Showcase held at the UIC Forum.

"This is an event for students to showcase their Student Voice Committee school improvement projects on a variety of issues," said Cristina Salgado, the Student Voice Specialist with the department of Social Science and Civic Engagement.

Those issues range anywhere from improving peer to peer relationships to changing policies around uniforms and homework. Salgado said that the showcase gives students an opportunity to present their student voice projects and learn from each other.

SVC members who attended the showcase put up poster boards that shared their project's goals, findings and solutions. Students walked the room and met students from other schools.

Members of Mahalia Jackson Elementary School's SVC focused their project on gun violence and student behavior that's often connected to trauma outside of school, said social studies teacher Erica Ferguson.

In response to the Parkland, Florida shooting that took place in February, students from Mahalia Jackson ES, and across the country, stood in solidarity by participating in one of two national walk out days, one in March and another in April. They were protesting gun violence and advocating for stricter gun laws.

"We had been learning about protests and social movements in grades fifth through eighth, when the issue about gun violence came up," said Ferguson.

continuing with a walkout each year and writing letters to lawmakers. Ferguson said the students also want to help paint a mural to dedicate their group's work.

West Park Academy also participated in the showcase. Marisa Ayala teaches kindergarten and said that her school's SVC was concerned about the root of behavioral problems.

"We all realized that it's trauma that's affecting our students," she said. "One of our main projects is having a more restorative approach. Rather than students being sent to detention, they get referred to us. We're taking baby steps."

More students have taken interest in joining the SVC compared to last year.

Ayala said that this committee has given the students a voice and that it's important for them to know their thoughts and concerns matter.

"It should be the number one thing in our agenda, but I think adults sometimes get in the way," she said. "I think the kids are so in touch on what's going on with themselves and each other and that they're the answer, we have to be the facilitators."

To learn more about Student Voice Committees or to create one at your school, visit https://cps.edu/Pages/StudentVoiceCommittee.aspx.

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