

# **An Analysis of the Attributes of Effective District Student Leadership Councils**

By

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study examines three student leadership councils from three school districts. Each of these councils is composed of students from secondary schools across their respective school district, organized to provide a student voice to trustees and district administrators. Student leadership councils allow students to become authentic partners in educational reform, bringing students' unique knowledge and skills to shared decision-making and restructuring efforts. There are many reasons to believe that engaging students in school governance has positive effects for student achievement, but little is known about the district council attributes that might increase the effectiveness of student voice. The purpose of this study is to discover the structural and relational attributes that enhance the effectiveness of these student-led organizations. District student council members completed questionnaires and sponsor district administrators were interviewed. Four conclusions are discussed: the function of clear and explicit council goals, the impact of structured district council meetings, the role of communication structures for council effectiveness, and the desire of council members to feel heard and respected. Clear and explicit goals are strongly associated with district student council effectiveness. There are also strong positive effects for structured council meetings and effective communication structures. District student council members also need to feel heard and respected within the school district. There are recommendations for policy and practice of district student leadership councils. Meeting schedules, agendas and minutes should be published. School districts should provide student access to the organization's communication structures and support a student council website. Trustees and administrators should provide opportunities for direct communication with district student councils. Trustees should recognize and publicize those instances when district student councils had an impact on district decisions.

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