

Student Perspectives on Learning and Assessment

May 17, 2024

Goal

The goals for this session are to gain a better understanding of what students think adults need to know about: (1) how the pandemic impacted their K-12 learning experience and (2) how they feel about their preparation for life after high school.

Overview

Students who serve as members of their states' boards of education and are experienced in representing the perspective of their peers to adults making policy decisions will share their thoughts about education. Board member Dilhani Uswatte will facilitate the session. There will be time for questions and discussion with them.

Background

Board members have expressed interest at recent Board meetings in their desire to engage directly with students, and members responded enthusiastically to the opportunity to talk with students during the school visit in Tennessee in March.

Through its work with the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE), the Board has invited student members of state boards of education to meet with Board members and share their perspectives.

There are currently 23 states that have student members serving on state boards. In some states, these students are voting members of the Board; in other states they are not. A few more states also have student advisory councils.

Bios of Session Participants

Abisola Ayoola serves as the current Student Member of the Maryland State Board of Education. In her role, Abisola represents students kindergarten through 12th grade across the state of Maryland, serving as an avenue for amplifying student voices. Previously a member of the Howard County Board of Education, she has been an advocate for student participation in policy making and revision.

Abisola is a senior at Wilde Lake High School, where she is a part of various clubs such as Student Government, Class Council, Rise Up Mentorship, and Active Minds. Additionally, she is a member of the Spanish Honor Society, Scholars Leadership and the National Honor Society at Wilde Lake.

Outside of school, she is particularly involved in the Howard County Association of Student Councils, which fosters leadership and advocacy skills within middle and high

school students. In her free time, Abisola enjoys playing piano and cello, sewing, and listening to music.

Ryan Hafener is a student at Hampden Academy. He was appointed to the Board by the Governor in May of 2022 and has served in his position since June of 2022. He previously interned in legislative affairs for a state education agency. Ryan is passionate about creating long-lasting, impactful policy change for students while involving youth-voice in the process. As a part of his role, he co-chairs the Maine Department of Education's Student Cabinet, which he helped to transition to a student-led model in 2022.

In 2023, he participated in a climate policy intensive run by the Governor's Office of Policy Innovation and the Future, focused on climate workforce development. In his policy research and reporting, Ryan chose to focus on career and technical education as a vessel to advance high-paying, high-quality 'green' jobs for Mainers. Ryan is the president of the Hampden Academy Student Council and serves as a student representative on the RSU 22 School Board.

Ryan is a member of the National Honor Society and serves on the GLSEN National Student Council. In 2022 and 2023, he attended the leadership and peacebuilding camp Seeds of Peace, which he credits as a life-changing experience.