



MINNESOTA YOUTH COUNCIL

An initiative of Minnesota Alliance With Youth

Minnesota Youth Council Committee 2025-26 Annual Legislative Report

Of the 94th Legislature of the State of Minnesota

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Introduction

The Minnesota Youth Council Committee (MYCC), or Minnesota Youth Council (MYC), envisions a state that prioritizes the agency and voice of young people from all backgrounds. Established by Minnesota State Statute in 2013, the MYCC holds the formal responsibility of advising on youth-policy in the legislature, state departments, and community action organizations. Along with their adult partners and Minnesota Alliance With Youth staff, the 36 members of the MYC are change agents in their communities and across the state, leading the way with youth-centered initiatives. The MYC partners with community organizations to create change across the state, and MYC youth members are leaders in

many coalitions working for change in MN. Through community engagement events such as town hall meetings and Youth Day at the Capitol, youth members connect with their constituents to authentically represent the needs, hopes, and convictions of young people across the state.

The 36 members of the Minnesota Youth Council represent all eight of Minnesota's Congressional Districts (CD), four members in each CD and four At-Large members.

A new committee structure was introduced in August 2025 that consisted of four policy area committees that was then further broken down into project-based working groups. This structure allowed members different responsibilities, peer-groups, and balance, and proved successful through positive, productive relationships with community partners and connections to the legislature.

Moving forward, the Minnesota Youth Council will be reducing the policy area committees back to three with a renewed focus on research as well as legislative and community connections.

Over the past twelve months, the state of Minnesota faced political violence, social turmoil, and unrest. The Minnesota Youth Council focused on connecting with community partners who were working towards positive solutions and met with legislators who were working to craft policies to address challenges caused by new federal mandates and budget cuts. These challenges were met with the same deference of resilience, innovation, and passion that MYC members bring to all of their work; meeting the needs and concerns of their constituents with worthy urgency and care, seeking equity in all of their projects.

Congressional District Representatives and Issue Area Committees

Congressional District 1

Alexandra Hanks
Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton School
Ramala Dahir
Owatonna High School
Tej Bhagra
Mayo High School
Zoe Zhang
Century High School

Congressional District 2

Ankit Mukhopadhyay
Eagan High School
Feven Tesfaye
Burnsville High School
Shreya Sekar
Lakeville North High School
Zohha Khan
Math and Science Academy

Congressional District 3

Aditi Jha
Edina High School
Hasini Guntipalli
Wayzata High School
Janae Rupert
Champlin Park High School
Simon Forbes
Orono High School

Congressional District 5

Ava Northrop
Washburn High School
Aven Simmons
Minnetonka High School
Julia Rosenman
Breck School
Shivam Srivastava
Breck School

Congressional District 7

Aili Schultz
Alexandria Area High School
Aubrey Lambert
Dilworth-Glyndon-Felton High School
Avery Braun
Paynesville High School
Braden Cox
Alexandria Area High School

Congressional District 4

Aanya Mohta
East Ridge High School
Daniel Song
East Ridge High School
Srividya Vishnubhatla
Math and Science Academy
Zaara Khan
Math and Science Academy

Congressional District 6

Alexis Gosewisch
Big Lake High School
Mahi Madhan Kumar
Chaska High School
Rebecca Anderson
Spectrum High School
Samhita Krishnamurthy
Minnetonka High School

Congressional District 8

Alexander Ren
Cesilia Giron
Duluth Denfeld High School
Max Miller
Floodwood School

At-Large

Megan Burri
Eastview High School
Rachel Yin
Wayzata High School
Shyamana Kasat-Shors
Washburn High School
Sara Rosenman
Breck School

Policy Issue Area Committee Members

Uplifting Youth Voices in Local

Government

Aanya Mohta
Aditi Jha
Aili Schultz
Alexander Ren
Ankit Mukhopadhyay
Avery Braun
Braden Cox
Daniel Song
Shyamana Kasat-Shors
Zohha Khan

Substance Abuse Prevention

Alexis Gosewisch
Aven Simmons
Cesilia Giron
Hasini Guntipalli
Megan Burri
Shivam Srivastava
Shreya Sekar
Simon Forbes
Srividya Vishnubhatla
Tej Bhagra

Education Attendance & Engagement

Alexandra Hanks
Aubrey Lambert
Ava Northrop
Feven Tesfaye
Max Miller

Education Access & Opportunity

Janae Rupert
Julia Rosenman
Mahi Madhan Kumar
Rachel Yin
Ramala Dahir
Rebecca Anderson
Samhita Krishnamurthy
Sara Rosenman
Zaara Khan
Zoe Zhang

2025-26 Policy Priorities

In August 2025, the MYC engaged in thorough discussion to reframe their policy priorities from 2024-25 in order to better meet the wants and needs of MYC Representatives and youth in their communities. The following are reports from the committees on their work over the past year.

Uplifting Youth Voices in Local Government

Committee Purpose

The Uplifting Youth Voices in Local Government Committee is committed to ensuring youth voices are heard and considered in local decision-making. During the past year, the committee focused on developing legislation to increase student representation in local government, particularly on school boards.

Key Activities and Accomplishments

In October 2025, the committee hosted **Students on School Boards: A Conversation** at the Minneapolis Central Library. This town hall-style event brought together school board members, youth leaders, legislators, and stakeholders from across Minnesota to discuss opportunities for increasing student representation on school boards and to gather feedback on proposed legislation.

Based on these conversations, the committee developed a [sample framework](#) that would require every Minnesota school board to designate at least one non-voting student representative beginning with the 2027–2028 school year. Under the proposal, each school board would determine its own selection process, student representative roles, responsibilities, and terms of service while ensuring student representatives are invited to participate in all public school board meetings and provide input on matters affecting students.

Legislative and Policy Work

The committee drafted a [policy brief](#) and worked to pass [SF4930](#) / [HF4822](#) to require every Minnesota school board to adopt a process to include student representation to advise the school board in a non-voting capacity.

Looking Ahead

The committee plans to continue working with school boards, legislators, and youth organizations to strengthen the proposal for the next legislative session and expand opportunities for meaningful youth participation in local government.

Educational Access and Opportunity Committee

Committee Purpose

The Educational Access and Opportunity Committee is focused on expanding career education opportunities and promoting civic engagement among Minnesota students.

Key Activities and Accomplishments

The committee identified several areas for improvement related to educational access and opportunity and developed a statewide student survey to gather input from students. Although participation was limited and the results were not representative of Minnesota students, the process helped inform the committee's priorities.

The committee ultimately focused on two primary initiatives:

The first is the promotion and implementation of career education opportunities for students. The committee is working to provide more opportunities for students to engage directly with practitioners as part of the school curriculum, allowing them to learn about dozens of careers before graduation. Not only does direct outreach to practitioners increase students' knowledge of careers, but it also helps them to gain professional skills, build their networks, and better understand how to apply the information they are learning in school to the workforce. Committee members met with school officials, teachers, and legislators about our work, with the goal of mandating this form of learning in schools through legislation.

The committee also compiled a list of career education resources and pathways available to Minnesota students. While the resource list has been developed, the committee continues to explore sustainable methods for maintaining and sharing these resources statewide.

The committee's second initiative focuses on promoting civic engagement among students. To support this goal, committee members engaged directly with youth to encourage participation and interest. One project development is hosting a town hall meeting to bring together students with their school board members and local representatives, providing an opportunity for youth to ask questions, discuss issues important to them, and gain a greater understanding of how their local communities and governments function. Additionally, committee members presented to youth organizations and clubs regarding the importance of civic engagement and youth advocacy. The committee conducted research on the causes of low youth civic engagement. Based on these findings, one committee member drafted the Minnesota Youth Civic Recognition Act, with the goal of having it introduced during the next legislative session.

Legislative and Policy Work

The committee's work to increase opportunities for students to learn directly from practitioners as part of the school curriculum is advancing. The committee has gained bipartisan support from members of the Minnesota Senate, and is planning to introduce legislation next year.

Looking Ahead

The committee plans to continue advancing career education legislation while expanding civic education opportunities that empower students to participate in their schools, communities, and local government.

Partners and Stakeholders

- Spectrum High School
- Breck School
- Champlin Park High School
- FAIR School for Arts
- Big Lake Middle School
- Justice Page Middle School
- Washburn High School
- Association of Metropolitan School Districts
- Senator Scott Dibble
- Senator Julia Coleman
- Senator Liz Boldon
- Minnetonka High School
- Minnetonka Middle School West
- Spark Civics
- Minneapolis Youth Congress
- Brooklyn Park Youth on Board
- Century High School
- Mayo High School
- School District 833
- Minnesota Technology Association
- Aspirations in Computing

Educational Engagement and Attendance Committee

Committee Purpose

The Educational Engagement and Attendance Committee is committed to addressing chronic absenteeism by identifying causes of declining attendance and developing strategies to improve student engagement and attendance across Minnesota schools.

Key Activities and Accomplishments

Over the past year, the Educational Engagement and Attendance committee has focused on gathering data and information surrounding the current attendance policies in various schools around the state. The committee has reached out to schools, districts and organizations in order to discuss the policies they have implemented to combat low attendance. The Minneapolis Public School district shared data about their attendance trends from the past several years. The committee also reviewed responses from the Minnesota Student Survey.

The committee reached out to the Minnesota Department of Education and developed a partnership with the MDE COMPASS team. Through this work, the committee learned more about the role that MDE has played when it comes to attendance research and policy. They also connected committee members with other organizations that are doing similar work.

The committee really enjoyed working with the MDE COMPASS team throughout this year. Across a few meetings, the committee was able to get feedback on ideas, find new opportunities, and make connections with other organizations and people. It was great to have a partnership with an adult group that felt like an equal relationship. The committee hopes to continue working with the COMPASS Team in future years as there are a lot of important things that this partnership could do.

On June 16th Educational Engagement and Attendance committee members presented at the COMPASS Summer Institute with the COMPASS attendance team about their work.

Finally, the committee created and distributed a survey for young people on the topic of engagement and attendance. The goal of the survey is to gain information about the students' feelings on current attendance policies at their schools and the attendance policies that they feel would be helpful. Currently, the survey has received over 150 responses from various schools across the state, and the committee plans to continue surveying students in order to get a more representative sample of students.

Legislative and Policy Work

In March, committee members testified in support of HF 3585, legislation establishing an Interagency Council on Attendance. The proposed council would include representatives from multiple state agencies, including the Minnesota Youth Council, to identify the causes of and solutions to chronic absenteeism.

Looking Ahead

As a first-year committee, Educational Engagement and Attendance successfully established partnerships with schools, organizations, legislators, and state agencies while centering youth perspectives throughout its work. The committee plans to create a report using the responses from the attendance survey that can be shared with school districts, organizations, MDE, and legislators to highlight the opinions of youth surrounding attendance.

Partners and Stakeholders

- Minnesota Department of Education COMPASS Attendance Team and COMPASS Institute
 - Roosevelt High School Attendance Team
 - Minneapolis Public Schools
 - Matt Shaver, EdAllies
 - Representative Heather Keeler
 - Shakur Smith, Catalyst for Systems Change
 - Khaliq Rogers, Catalyst for Systems Change
 - Joe Nathan, Catalyst for Systems Change
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Substance Abuse Prevention Committee

Committee Purpose

The Substance Abuse Prevention Committee is leading a youth-driven effort to transform how Minnesota prevents and responds to youth substance misuse through education, policy development, coalition building, and youth advocacy.

Key Activities and Accomplishments

During the past year, the committee reviewed and strengthened its policy priorities, built upon previous research, and identified coalition-building as a central strategy for advancing prevention efforts. Committee members strengthened partnerships with prevention coalitions and statewide organizations, including ANSR Minnesota, the American Lung Association, Region 7 Coalition affiliates, educators, healthcare professionals, students, and individuals with lived experience.

One of the committee's primary accomplishments has been advancing access to Life Skills Training. Committee members developed a framework for student-led workshops focused on decision-making, stress management, and coping strategies. Skills proven to help build self confidence before substance misuse begins. By equipping student representatives with structured materials and resource guides, the committee is preparing to expand these trainings into at least ten schools. Several schools have already expressed interest in collaboration, demonstrating growing youth-led prevention education.

The committee has also made progress toward expanding school-based mental health supports. Through collaboration with the Minnesota Department of Health and the Minnesota Department of Education, committee members explored alignment with statewide health standards and identified pathways for integrating prevention focused mental health programming. Committee members initiated conversations with mental health

organizations to explore partnerships that increase student access to services, recognizing that prevention and mental wellness are deeply connected.

In the area of harm reduction, the committee built upon prior naloxone research about increasing access to Naloxone (Narcan) kits and fentanyl test strips where legally permissible. By advocating for overdose response education and life-saving tools, the committee is reinforcing that prevention includes both proactive education and immediate safety measures.

The committee's awareness efforts have expanded through student-led initiatives and prevention messaging designed to normalize conversations around substance misuse and overdose recognition. Members are closely monitoring legislation such as HF 2023 / SF 2234, which would integrate overdose prevention education into Minnesota's health standards, and the committee stands ready to support implementation should it pass.

Legislative and Policy Work

Policy advocacy remains a central pillar of the committee's work. One priority is a proposed tobacco ordinance that would modernize outdated regulations, prohibit flavored vape sales, strengthen ID-checking requirements, and better protect youth from targeted marketing.

The committee supported local initiatives to reduce youth access to commercial tobacco products, including local flavored tobacco restrictions, and presented at local government meetings in support of these efforts. The committee monitored successful initiatives in communities including Plymouth and ongoing efforts in Orono.

At the Minnesota Youth Council Legislative Hearing, members adopted reducing youth access to commercial tobacco products as a legislative priority for the 2026–2027 biennium. The committee also monitored legislation related to overdose prevention education, opioid prevention funding, Tribal and local prevention grants, and statewide addiction planning.

Looking Ahead

The Minnesota Youth Council Substance Abuse Prevention Committee is not simply discussing change, it is helping build it. The committee plans to continue strengthening prevention coalitions, expanding youth advocacy opportunities, supporting local tobacco prevention initiatives, and advancing partnerships that improve youth mental health and substance misuse prevention throughout Minnesota. Committee members are also assisting with planning for the Minnesota Prevention Program Sharing Conference.

Legislative Committee Hearings

On March 3rd and April 30th, 2026, the MYC held legislative committee hearings at the Capitol to hear from stakeholders on youth-facing issues and legislation. The bills and topics heard are as follows.

March 3rd, 2026 MYC Legislative Committee Hearing

[HF 3557](#) / [SF 3659](#) - Seal of Climate Literacy

Hearing from Catalyst for Systems Change on their Youth Legislative Priorities

[HF 3433](#) / [SF 3654](#) - Ban on Semiautomatic Military-Style Assault Weapons

[HF 3585](#) / [SF 4445](#) - Interagency Council on Student Attendance

[SF4930](#) / [HF4822](#) - Students on School Boards Mandate

April 30th, 2026 MYC Legislative Committee Hearing

Topic: Ending the sale of all commercial flavored tobacco products and enacting policies to reduce youth access and appeal to commercial tobacco and nicotine products.

Topic: Federal action opening the Boundary Waters Canoe Area for mining and possible state actions. [HF 309](#) / [SF 875](#) referenced.

[HF 3409](#) / [SF 3803](#) - Denial of an education based on immigration status prohibited, and civil cause of action provided when right to education is denied based on immigration status.

[HF 4198](#) / [SF 4939](#) - Student mental health grant funding provided, and money appropriated.

[SF 1557](#) - Constitutional amendment proposal to allow school districts to lower the voting age to 16 for school elections.

[HF 4972](#) / [SF 3699](#) - Civil arrests for persons attending court proceedings prohibited, and civil remedies provided.

[HF 2908](#) / [SF 3120](#) - Children's savings account program for higher ed and pilot grant project establishment and appropriation.

Testimony Provided on Bills

[Wednesday, February 25, 2026 Senate Education Policy Committee:](#) **Simon Forbes** - Education Protection Bill - SF3803

[Wednesday, March 4, 2026 House Education Policy Committee:](#) **Feven Tesfaye** - Seal of Climate Literacy - HF3557; **Ava Northrop** - Interagency Council on Student Attendance established - HF3585

[Thursday, March 12th House Education Finance Committee: Aanya Mohta](#) - Lease levy authority restored for space necessary for graduation ceremonies - HF3790

[Wednesday, March 25th Senate Education Policy Committee: Aanya Mohta](#) - School board requirement to include student representation - SF4930

2025-26 MYCC Highlights

Full Council Meetings

September 21, 2025: **Northfield, MN** (CD 2)

October 12, 2025: **Rochester, MN** (CD 1)

November 9, 2025: **Plymouth, MN** (CD 3)

December 13, 2025: **Sandstone, MN** (CD 8)

January 18, 2026: **Afton, MN** (CD 4)

February 15, 2026: **Online**

March 1, 2026: **Waconia, MN** (CD 6)

April 25, 2026: **Paynesville, MN** (CD 7)

May 17, 2026: **St. Paul, MN** (CD 4)

Students on School Boards: A Conversation

On October 26th, 2025, the Uplifting Youth Voices committee hosted Students on School Boards: A Conversation. This town-hall style event in Minneapolis welcomed a group of educators and stakeholders from across Minnesota to engage in a discussion about mandating student representation on school boards statewide.

Legislative Committee Hearings

The MYC's aforementioned legislative committee hearings allowed MYC Representatives to hear youth-related legislation and, through testimony, hear directly from the individuals and communities that those bills affect. These hearings help inform the MYC's advisory opinions to the Governor and state legislature on youth-facing issues.

Youth Day at the Capitol (YDAC)

On March 3rd, 2026, in collaboration with a coalition of state and community organizations, the MYC executed another successful Youth Day at the Capitol with more than **425** middle and high school students from across the state in attendance. Students engaged in advocacy training sessions, heard from advocacy experts, and met with their legislators at the Capitol.

YDAC On Your Corner

In 2026, Minnesota Youth Council staff and members ran a pilot of Youth Day at the Capitol On Your Corner to ensure accessibility for students who are unable to attend Youth Day at the Capitol in-person, especially students outside of the Twin Cities metro area.

In partnership with Empower Martin, over 75 students in Fairmont, MN learned beginner-level advocacy skills and gained an understanding of how state government works.

The Minnesota Youth Council is looking forward to continuing this work to connect more students in greater Minnesota to their state legislators.

Minnesota Youth Council Members Tabling and Presenting

The Blake School's Plank Institute presentation on Supporting Youth Leadership Teach For America - Choose the Twin Cities 2026 Panel "Reimagining Learning for All, Together"

Project Success Martin Luther King Jr Event at the Science Museum
MN School Board Association Conference Tablin

Service projects (Winter and Spring Retreats)

Minnesota Youth Council members helped prepare maple syrup bags and oiled the walls for restoration of a historic site at Osprey Wilds over their Winter Retreat.

During their Spring Retreat, MYC members packaged over 100 snack packs to donate to [YouthLink](#).

Media Features

AUTHORED: Feven Tesfaye, Congressional District 2 Representative
[Opinion: We should be able to vote with our phones](#) - Star Tribune

FEATURED: Feven Tesfaye, Congressional District 2 Representative
[Burnsville High School Senior make history with NHS Scholarship](#)

FEATURED: Tej Bhagra, Congressional District 1 Representative
[Olmsted County advocates launch anti-tobacco campaign, warn against teen addiction](#) -
KTTC

FEATURED: Aditi Jha, Congressional District 3 Representative
[Edina students help draft gun safety bills at the Capitol](#) - Sun Current

FEATURED: Samhita Krishnamurthy, Congressional District 6 Representative
[Power to the youth: How a Minnetonka High School student is representing young Minnesotans](#) - Hometown Source

FEATURED: Ankit Mukhopadhyay, Congressional District 2 Representative
[Eagan student joins Minnesota Youth Council](#) - SUN This Week

FEATURED: Simon Forbes, Congressional District 3 Representative
[Orono junior selected for Minnesota Youth Council](#) - Laker Pioneer

FEATURED: Aubrey Lambert, Congressional District 7 Representative
[Glyndon teen brings rural viewpoint to Minnesota Youth Council](#) - Echo Press