Research supporting improved school climate and academic outcomes when students are involved in school related decision making

http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/A-Civic-Literacy-What-does-a-constitutional-democratic-republic-require-of-its-schools.pdf

Research supporting meaningful student engagement in school-related decision-making show such participation reduces:

- stress caused by a lack of a sense of control over one's environment (Kohn, 1993)
- the sense of disenfranchisement—being involved in schooling decisions empowers students, preparing them for citizenship (Loflin, 2003)
- disengagement from the schooling process resulting from the African American schooling experience of mis-education, under-education, or no education (Akom, 2003; Loflin, 2007)
- powerful risk factors that influence adolescents' well being--need for control, bonding, and sense of meaning (Barnard, 1995; Holdsworth, 2003)

Meaningful student engagement in school-related decision-making promotes:

- higher order thinking skills—evaluation, synthesis, applying, etc.
- self-determination—having ownership of learning and sharing in classroom and school decisions (Scherer, 2008) is democratic self-determination (Hecht, 2002)
- self-actualization—a democratic school culture emphasizes the individual, leading to the full development of each student's uniqueness (Hecht, 2002)
- self-efficacy--countering the relationship among impotency, apathy, and lack of recognition with aggression/violence (May, 1967)
- reviving/evolving, supplementing, and complementing multicultural education—practicing democracy in classrooms and schools is the practice of multicultural education
- sustainability—a sustainable society needs sustainable schools; sustainable schools are democracy schools (Loflin, 2006)
- trust and affirmation from adults and peers, a psychological investment in schooling-- increased cooperation and enjoyment of learning, and community involvement (Fletcher, 2003)
- school connectedness and retention rates; mental, social, and physical health; and, an increase in a community's social capital (Papageorge, 2008)
- the social nature of our brain, both in its modular organization and extended development in that a collaborative classroom management model provides the best school venue for enhancing the brain maturation of students. (Sylwester, 2003)

Ownership of Learning
Currently students are playing four major roles, moving students beyond mere engagement and into ownership of learning (Fletcher, 2008):

- *Students as Planners* Selecting textbooks, creating classroom behavior guidelines, and designing new buildings.
- *Students as Teachers* Helping school staff understand technology; helping communications between adults and youth.
- *Students as Professional Development* Partners Assisting in developing new approaches to differentiating learning, transforming expectations, researching projects, and collecting data
- *Students as Decision Makers* Involvement in curriculum, policy, school climate, on boards of education, grant making, and school assessment to turn around failing schools.

Taking into account students ideas and opinions
In England (Hannam 2001; Tafford, 2003), secondary schools which took into account students' ideas and opinions when making decisions in ways that were transparent, regular, and accessible

compared to similar schools that did not, for a significant number of students their participation in school-related decisions:

- Enhanced learning across the curriculum and the full range of academic abilities
- Helped them gain organizational and time management skills
- Supported the learning of communication and collaboration skills
- Facilitated quality outcomes which led to enhanced self-esteem
- Fostered an allover sense of personal and social efficacy
- Brought a greater sense of ownership, and personal empowerment leading to greater motivation t
- Increased feelings of independence, trust, and responsibility
- Required initiative and decision-making
- Significantly lowered disruptive behaviors in classes and hallways
- Improved their attendance—and was significant for the less academic and alienated students
- Suspensions and expulsion were significantly lowered
- Helped school climate became more positive
- Improved the attitudes of teachers and staff
- Significantly lowered school violence
- Brought real-life benefits which enhanced staff-student relationships

The above research is listed on pp 11-13 of "Civic Literacy." See the list of references on pp 17-19 in Civic-Literacy: What does a constitutional democratic republic require of its schools