

TRAIN ME PLEASE!

Training must be provided to ensure all those involved, teaching and non-teaching staff, governors and pupils, have the appropriate skills to ensure the effectiveness of the pupil participation forum.

Why

What would happen if training were not provided to all those involved in supporting the pupil participation forum?

The school setting is the perfect environment in which to learn, if there is no training, no opportunity to learn, the forum will not develop and the school will not receive the benefits of their pupils' participation.

Positive training gets positive rewards. It builds relationships between peers, and between the adult population in the school. It also develops a sense of trust and respect between parties, as well as developing a loyalty to the post and motivation to do a good job.

How

Training may be provided 'in-house' or externally for particular elements of work. Some of the key areas for training would include:

- Negotiation skills;
- Problem solving and decision making;
- Goal setting and action planning;
- Presentation skills;
- Communication skills;
- Dealing with conflict situations;



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- Writing letters;
- Committee skills; and
- Children's Rights training.

Many of the above can be provided by existing staff within the school. Providing training also provides the opportunity for administrative staff to get involved in the pupil participation forum by, for example, delivering training in writing letters or taking minutes.

At least once a year, staff and pupils should have a training session where opinions, visions and aspirations are shared.

Overall, **training for pupils** should aim to:

- Give real examples of how pupil participation forums can make a difference;
- Identify what personal development / life skills can be attained (see below);
- Ensure that pupils have knowledge of their right to have their voice heard (Article 12 of the UNCRC), local legislation, participation strategies and the local active citizenship curriculum; and
- Develop an understanding of how young people can have a peer leadership and peer support role within their school.

Training for school staff should aim to:

- Discuss why pupil participation is important and what the benefits can be to the whole school community;
- Ensure that everyone has a common understanding of what a pupil participation forum is, what its role will be and how it can feed into the existing decision making process;
- Identify what steps need to be taken so that pupils can participate to the maximum levels;

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- Discuss how general pupil participation, and participation in the forum in particular, can support teachers and improve the school environment.

A positive attitude to training and support of the forum can have a significant impact on the individual's personal development / life skills, which can also have a positive impact on the school environment:

- Pupil participation forums provide a basis for learning important life skills, such as communication and listening skills, decision making / problem-solving skills and working as part of a team, whilst giving a sense of self-esteem and self confidence;
- Pupil participation forums' experiences can provide a vibrant basis and real context for learning about citizenship;
- Children and young people can acquire skills which help them to cope with challenging experiences in the future; and
- Participation forums and class councils enable pupils to have a voice and to understand that their opinions matter and are valued.

Checklist

Have you:

1. Identified training needs for pupils
2. Identified training needs for all school staff
3. Developed an action plan with the support of pupils and teachers to deliver training
4. Identified which training can be provided in house and where specialised support is required

Tick

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5. Ensured a budget is available for specialised support
6. Ensured that training will be evaluated

For further information on the benefits of training and examples of training, you may wish to visit the following websites:

Student Council Support:

<http://www.studentcouncil.ie/>

Pupil participation forums UK:

<http://www.schoolcouncils.org/>

Student Voice (UK)

<http://www.studentvoice.co.uk/>

Smart School Councils Community

<http://www.smartschoolcouncils.org.uk/>

Pupil Voices Wales

<http://www.pupilvoicewales.org.uk/>

Dept. of Education, New South Wales:

<http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/studentsupport/studleadsrc/index.php>

Dept. of Education, State of Victoria:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/management/Pages/schoolcouncil.aspx>

For further information, contact:

School Development Service, Education Authority: sds@eani.org.uk

Pupil Personal Development Service, Education Authority: 028 37512397



You can find out more about NICCY and the Pupils' Voices programme at www.niccy.org, 028 9031 1616 and participation@niccy.org. Please contact the Communications team at NICCY if you require alternative formats of this material.