

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE!

PUPILS' VOICES: MAKING A DIFFERENCE!

The pupil participation forum should be comprehensively and regularly evaluated and incorporated into a review of the school's activities.

Why

The pupil participation forum must be comprehensively and regularly evaluated by pupils as part of the School Development Plan, to ensure and reaffirm that the forum is being effective and give further confidence to move ahead.

An evaluation can:

- Measure progress – is the forum meeting its original aims and objectives, and achieving its goals?
- Produce evidence that the forum is working;
- Reveal benefits of having the forum that may not be recognised at first; and
- Reveal best practice to improve communication and / or methods of running meetings and making things more efficient.

How

There are a number of questions that need to be asked before you start your evaluation:

- **Who is the audience that the evaluation is aimed at?** In other words, who will be interested in reading the evaluation when it is done and who will help implement any recommendations?

- **In what format should the evaluation be delivered?** The evaluation should be presented in a way that is useful to your audience to ensure crucial information can be easily found.
- **Is there any money available to carry out the evaluation?** Will it be done in-house or by using an independent evaluator?
- **Which are the most appropriate tools for asking your evaluation questions?** There are many ways to find out the information you need to know. e.g.:
 - Structured questionnaires;
 - Interviews;
 - Group interviews or focus groups;
- **Some of the key issues to look at include:**
 - Are forum members respected and encouraged to be actively involved regardless of their age?
 - Are elections for forum members considered seriously and conducted formally?
 - Are pupils encouraged to reflect on the difference between popularity and leadership in the election of the council?
 - Are pupils involved in the negotiation of school issues e.g. discipline, bullying?
 - Are pupils aware of key policies and priorities within the school?
 - Are pupils involved in the implementation and evaluation of these policies and priorities?
 - Is there good communication between pupils and teachers?
 - Does the forum give all pupils an opportunity to discuss issues of concern?
 - Are the meetings well organised?



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- Are the meetings frequent so enabling the forum to be effective?
- Does the forum meet with senior staff at least once a term?
- Do pupils have the opportunity to communicate directly with school governors?
- Is the workload of the forum shared across its members?
- Does the forum organise a variety of activities for pupils?
- Is the forum involved in school assemblies?
- **What will you do with the information?**
 - Share the findings with the school population and ask for their comments. It is vital that the information is used in a positive way, both practically as in making recommended changes and more strategically, perhaps by incorporating findings into the School Development Plan.

Checklist

Have you:

1. Agreed on the format of your evaluation
2. Decided whether it will be carried out in-house or by using an independent evaluator
3. Set boundaries / objectives for the evaluation
4. Told all key stakeholders that the evaluation is taking place
5. Agreed a timescale for the evaluation to take place

Tick

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6. Agreed whether the evaluation is going to be acknowledged and recommendations incorporated into the School Development Plan/review
7. Included acknowledgements of the skills, values, knowledge and attitudes that pupils will learn from participation

For further advice and direction of planning an evaluation of your school council, you may wish to visit the following websites:

Student Council Support:

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

School Councils 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/student-support/studleadsrc/index.php>

Dept. of Education, State of Victoria:

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



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.