

Communication

A public meeting agenda is a democratic element of transparency

Openness and transparency are key requirements for building accountability and trust, which are necessary for the functioning of democratic institutions.

Now: do you want your school to be an example of such a democratic institution?

One obvious way is to make your meetings transparent with enhanced accountability for your decisions. Preparing a public agenda and writing and publishing the minutes (on your website?) are key elements. You can begin with the process or improve it right away.

Make sure to everybody that this is ONE WAY to make your school more democratic. However, you still have to justify decisions you take in a meeting. Being transparent does not mean that everybody has a say in every decision. There are tasks that were entrusted to you as head of the school. Just be clear and transparent about your decisions, especially in meetings. That's why a (good) agenda has an important role to play!

Five Elements for a good agenda:

1. Create your meeting **agenda** 3 days in advance and forward it through email. Distribute a printed version, or display one in the staff room. Make sure that everyone knows what to expect.
2. Start with the **simple details**: What time should the meeting start? When will it end? Who should attend?
3. Are the **meeting objectives** clear to you? Before you start writing an agenda, what is your goal for this meeting? Then prioritize the list to ensure that the most important goals get accomplished.
4. **Time** per topic: Let the content define how long the discussion of each topic should take.
5. Keep the agenda to **less than 5 topics**. No one wants to spend two hours in a meeting.

Decide who will take the minutes and prepare this with the respective person. You might decide to rotate the task so that every staff person takes his/her turn in recording the minutes.

Pre-planning of the meeting minutes:

- Date and time of the meeting
- Names of the meeting participants and those unable to attend
- Acceptance or corrections/amendments to previous meeting minutes
- Decisions made about each agenda item, for example:
 - Actions taken or agreed to be taken
 - Next steps
 - Voting outcomes
- Next meeting date and time
- Exact moment and place when and where the minutes will be published for the attendees.

