

*Participation***Class council**

Class Councils usually take place once a week per lesson in every class of a school.

The class council is an institutionalized structure that enables students to articulate their concerns and to discuss them with their teachers and classmates. Usually, there is a written class council constitution to determine the main features and basic conditions. You can establish such a constitution together with the staff and use the action plan in this section to facilitate the implementation of the class council step by step. As a democratically-minded principal, you are interested in having these councils in every class. Make sure that the teachers are well prepared for them. Prepare a teacher training event in your school with a group of committed teachers to support your effort. The following information needs to be shared by all:

Main components of class councils:

- Finding and collecting issues to discuss (conflicts, infrastructure, school trips, rules, instruction etc.); the students can list their concerns in a class council file or post them in a letter box that are permanently accessible.
- Adopting roles and functions, e.g. president, vice-president, chair, recorder, time-manager. All roles are practised in the beginning with the help of the teacher/mentor.
- **Goal:** The mentor/teacher gradually withdraws, and the students manage themselves.

A class council session: a step by step guide:**Preparation of the class council sessions:**

- Before the sessions: the topics/issues to be discussed are registered (collection of topics).
- The minutes of the last session and a minute template for the next session are prepared.
- Chairs are arranged in a circle and material is provided.
- The president of the day is elected (maybe already for the whole semester).

Introduction:

A class council can start with welcoming words by the president, an expression of mutual acknowledgement or desires.

Check the decisions from last session:

The council checks the decisions, collects the decisions and maybe integrates some issues into the list of topics.

Clarify the minutes for the session:

The council checks the current list of topics.

- Are the topics still urgent? Do they still need to be discussed?
- Are there new issues/urgent issues?
- Is there anything else to be informed about, discussed or decided on?

Discuss concerns/resolve conflicts:

The students express their concerns, search for solutions and consider suggestions. The student who comes up with a topic starts with explaining the concern. The other students obtain information and ask follow-up questions to fully understand the issue, express arguments and collect suggestions (in small groups or in the plenary sessions).

Making decisions:

After debating and discussing an issue, there needs to be a common decision (through voting or finding consensus) and a procedure for guiding the process.

Recording of decisions:

Decisions are recorded and stored as documents in a class council file. After a while, the class council must check if the decisions have been realized (why, why not).

Reflection and feedback on the session:

Students reflect on their experiences in the class council and ask themselves what worked well/not well, and what they could change individually and together.

Closing the session:

The president presents the decisions once again, clarifies organizational issues etc.

Reflection on the class council sessions:

The mentor reflects on the class council with the student(s) and their performance of tasks (chair, recorder etc.) and finds out if the students still need support in terms of chairing or leadership of the council, and other concerns and suggestions.