

Advice Sheet 13

CLASS MEETINGS

Class Meetings can be an effective way of:

- Formulating a Class Behaviour Agreement
- Dealing with matters that cause tension (e.g. bullying, homework, break-time activities etc.)
- Teaching pupils how to listen to others and how to communicate effectively
- Operating a 'democratic classroom' and modelling democratic values
- Empowering pupils to recognise that they have a voice worth using and that it will be listened to
- Celebrating successes (e.g. exams, art exhibitions, sports) or reflecting on sad events (e.g. bereavement, injury / sickness of a class colleague)
- Building relationships among pupils and between pupils and staff members.

In planning Class Meetings, it's good practice to consider the following:

- *What is the agenda for the meeting?*

It's good to have a clear vision of what you want to achieve, and what will be included and not included. For example, if the Class Meeting is designed to formulate a Class Behaviour Agreement, it may not be possible to work through all aspects in one meeting, so decide that an initial meeting might explore with pupils what are their rights and responsibilities. A follow-up meeting might involve pupils discussing and outlining consequences for not abiding by the Class Behaviour Agreement.

- *What do I want the pupils to learn from this meeting?*

Consider all the possible outcomes – learning about rules and routines, learning how to listen, learning about myself and others, etc. Perhaps you will identify different learning outcomes for different pupils.

- *Do participants sit in circle or stay in their regular seating arrangement?*

Preferably pupils should sit in a circle so that everyone can see everyone else. That's not always possible though because of space or time restrictions. If it's not, at least set up the ground rules that each person gets an opportunity to speak and only one person speaks at a time. It's a good idea to have a speaking object (toy, card, ball) so that only the person with the object is allowed to speak.

- *How will the meeting's ideas and suggestions be recorded?*

Are some pupils able to act as recorders / secretary? If possible, ask two pupils to act in this role so that what they record can be cross-checked. If pupils can't do it, should it be taped or can a staff member record? It's also good practice at various points, and especially at the end, to summarise the points that have been raised and explain to pupils what will happen next e.g. –"*What I have heard from the meeting is that you are bored at lunchtime and you want lunchtime activities. The suggestions from the meeting are What will happen next is that I will ask each of you to select one activity from the list. We will then arrange to set up these activities for the next four weeks, and you will all help in working this out. At the end of this time, we will have another Class Meeting to see how it worked. Is that ok?*"

For more: http://www.educationworld.com/a_curr/profdev/profdev012.shtml