

# Participating Student - Co-active School

Guide for student association's supervising teacher

Publications of the Ministry of Education 2006:19

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# Contents

<b>1 Civic influencing</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1 Participating Student – Co-active School	
1.2 An active citizenship	
1.3 Citizen Participation Policy Programme	
<b>2 Societal background</b>	<b>12</b>
2.1 The Constitution	
2.2 The Local Government Act	
2.3 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child	
2.4 School Acts and decrees	
<b>3 Pedagogic background</b>	<b>15</b>
3.1 The National Curriculum	
3.2 Student association – working together	
<b>4 Operation of the student association at school</b>	<b>21</b>
4.1 Judicial status of the student association	
4.2 Roles and tasks of the members of the executive committee of the student association	
4.3 Tasks of the supervising teacher	
<b>5 Selection of members for the executive committee of the student association</b>	<b>27</b>
5.1 Selection of the class representative	
5.2 Selection of the chairperson and secretary	
5.3 Selection of the supervising teacher	
<b>6 Meeting of the executive committee of the student association</b>	<b>31</b>
6.1 Co-operative meeting	
6.2 Matters to be discussed at the meeting	
<b>7 Co-operation of the executive committee of the student association at school</b>	<b>38</b>
7.1 Executive committee of the student association – class	
7.2 Executive committee of the student association – the principal	
7.3 Executive committee of the student association – the teachers	
7.4 Executive committee of the student association – the school board or the parent-teacher association	

<b>8 Democratic skills in the operation of the student association</b>	<b>41</b>
8.1 Conversational skills	
8.2 Listening skills	
8.3 Presentation skills	
8.4 Negotiation skills	
8.5 Debating skills	
8.6 Decision-making skills	
<b>9 Reporting</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>10 The pupil as an influencer</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>11 Assessment of the operation of the student association</b>	<b>55</b>
11.1 Assessment of the operation of the student association's executive committee	
11.2 Assessment of the role of the class representative	
11.3 Assessment of the operation and events organised by the student association	
<b>12 Participation of children and youth in municipal decision-making</b>	<b>58</b>
12.1 The Voice of the Young	
12.2 Youth Council	
12.3 Children's Parliament and Youth Forum	
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>66</b>
Appendix 1: Agenda	
Appendix 2: Minutes	
Appendix 3: Tasks of the class representative	
Appendix 4: Group formation methods	
Appendix 5: Information about civic influencing with co-operative methods	
Appendix 6: Participation system of children and youth	
Appendix 7: Future Workshop method	
Appendix 8: Certificate of participation - Diploma	
Appendix 9: Glossary	
Appendix 10: Websites	
List of references	

# Foreword

Participative Student – Co-active School is a project of the Ministry of Education, and its objective is to promote the active role of pupils in the development of communality and welfare in schools. This is carried on through the activities of a formal organization of the student association which we will call the "student association".

The operation of the student association is an important part of the democratic operational culture of children and youth. Acting in the student association develops pupils' potential to act as representatives of their own group and trains them for co-operation based on negotiation. Participation is not an inherent characteristic; the skills required in participation need to be learned and developed.

The objective of the operation of the student association is to arouse pupils' interest in the development of their own school. The executive committee of the student association, classes and teachers can together build a school that operates as a community.

This guide for the operation of the student association is intended for its supervising teachers as a working knowledge kit, which is adaptable for use in every school grade. The guide contains guiding principles on the Participating Student – Co-active School project, the participation of children and youth, the structure of the student association and the significance of co-operation in its operation.

There are several reasons for writing the guide. One of the most important reasons is that the student association activity has not previously been a target of interest commencing from first grade of the comprehensive school. An active role

on the part of pupils in furthering their own learning and promoting the school's communal participatory culture is emphasised in the curriculum. Student association activity is also a practical model for the implementation of the thematic entity entitled Active and Participative Citizen and Entrepreneurship.

The central content of the guide is the operation of the executive committee of the student association, the selection process of the members for the executive committee, the course of the meeting and reinforcing of the role of the members.

The guide contains methods that help the executive committee of the student association and members to practice the skills in question. This guide has emerged as a result of intensive training programmes intended for the supervising teachers of the student association. The material has been found to be very useful in practice.

“Teachers have learnt to appreciate us” notes a member of an executive committee of a student association, and an upper level comprehensive school teacher has stated: “Pupils’ faith in their own potential to influence has improved. Pupils have learnt to listen to each other better and they are more interested in the development of their own school.”

We hope that the guide will be useful in the development of the practical operation of the student association in schools.

Helsinki, 1 August 2005

Leena Nousiainen

Ulla Piekari



# 1 Civic influencing

## 1.1 Participating Student – Co-active School

A socially active childhood and adolescence is a part of growing into an active citizen. Young people are interested in participating in social activity as when a school operates as a participative community. Reinforcement of a new type of communality within the classroom and amongst the students is an important part of a school's educational task. A school where youth participate in several ways in the decisions concerning their own school, leads to a healthy and productive environment.

The right to participate in a community is not an obvious need of young people, nor is this right always considered very important among the youth themselves, because they are not accustomed to having such rights. Youth do not often start their participation suddenly of their own initiative, because they do not have the knowledge, needs, will and motivation. Preconditions need to be created for participation to become second nature.

Democracy itself is something that needs to be learned and can be learned; democracy is neither an inherent skill, nor something that necessarily develops naturally without conscious effort. One task of democracy is to perpetuate the learning that will maintain democracy.

A democratic society is, therefore, a learning society. In order for a young person to develop into an active citizen, knowledge and skills need to be acquired by him or her. These skills include communication and dialogue skills, the ability to live peacefully in a social environment, and the ability to participate in public discussion. The opportunity to interact with different communities and individuals is the foundation on which youth can exercise their civic influence.

The participation of children and youth in the social activity of schools in Finland has traditionally been negligible. An international comparison in the past has shown that Finnish youth perceive the possibility of exerting influence at school to be less than in other countries. Finnish youth participate significantly less than other northern European youth in the activity of student councils and other governing bodies in schools.

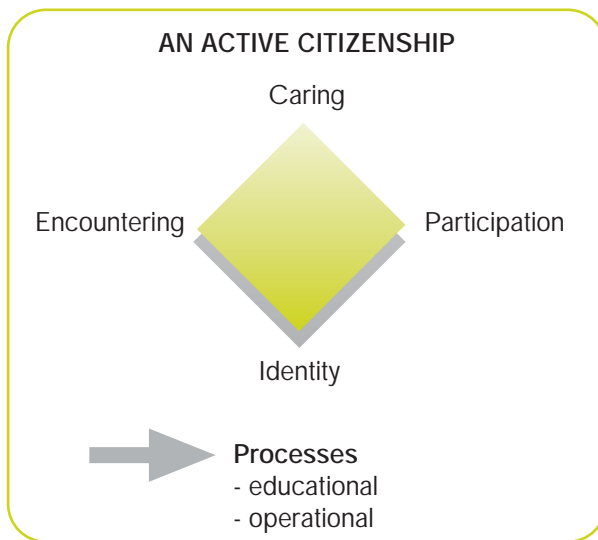
Each school and educational institute has its own culture: different methods of operating in daily life. How schools have dealt with, for example, cases of bullying, cultural or socio-economic dissimilarity among students, and how students can influence the operation of the school have recently been raised and have even been emphasised in discussion. An essential part of the operational culture of schools is the relationships between students and staff as well as the structures that promote and support the school's basic task – education and learning. Student association activity is an important part of our schools' democratic operational culture. Before the student association can be effective, communication between classes, teachers and the student executive committee must work.

Young people must feel that they have a place in their own residential environment and surroundings. They must also feel that they are competent and consider their own role significant. An indicator of whether or not young people feel they have a place is how naturally they are able to become a strong and empowered citizen, and also to what degree they feel they are able to influence the planning, implementation and assessment of matters. In the coming years, the developmental focus within schools should be the operation of the student association as a part of the daily life of school communities.

The objective of the Participating Student  
– Co-active School project is:

- To support the development of different influencing systems for children and youth in municipalities
- To build operational and co-operational networks as well as to develop co-operation with the authorities
- To develop the community operational culture within schools
- To develop the student association activity and organize national and local training as well as in-service training for staff
- To produce support material

## 1.2 An active citizen



Active citizenship can be illustrated as a four-fold table: identity, increasing of participation, enabling of encounters and genuine caring for oneself, other people and one's own community. The concept thus takes shape as a concrete matter that is close to people.

One must grow, learn and train to become an active citizen. It is not an inherent quality. It is necessary to be taught how to become an active citizen. Knowledge is a necessary ingredient, but one can only become an active citizen through action and participation. Therefore, children and youth need practical exercises in which knowledge is transformed into live action. Children and youth need encouraging examples. Only in this way will the pupils synthesize the knowledge.

**Identity** is the basis of citizenship. The basic objective of every individual is to create and maintain his or her own sound self-image and to shape his or her own identity. Identity gives people the frame of reference necessary to discern their own place in the human community and society. Without an identity of one's own, a person is not a human being, and can not be an active, contributing citizen.

Different social groups should support individuals in building their own identity with a value system that allows challenges and constructive participation. One's own identity is the core of active citizenship.

**Participation** brings out true citizenship. A completely passive person is a citizen only in status. When a person takes part in social activities, such as leisure activities, association activity, and activities of the local community, and participates in society by actions such as voting, trade union or political activity and other public expressions of opinion, he is living at the centre of social reality, participating in it and at the same time influencing it.

Participation is, above all else, a question of will and motivation, and these factors must be strengthened when the aim is to support the implementation of active citizenship. It is important to create practices and opportunities for participation where youth can participate in such groups as student associations,

youth councils, parliaments for children and youth and voice of the young meetings. Growing into an active citizen requires an active childhood and adolescence. With participation young people can influence matters that are important to them and in this way they are able to experience the feeling of having an important part to play.

**Interaction** in different situations gives birth to real citizenship. In an interaction one must learn to focus on the other person. An interactive encounter is the most important element in growing into an active citizen. A good encounter enriches, nourishes and refreshes. The atmosphere of an interacting community is healthy. Its objectives are clear, and it is able to use its energies correctly. Civic organisations and informal social co-operative networks are important enablers of interactive encounters in Finland.

People always measure themselves against each other and create differences of opinion in communities. However, this is not a dangerous thing; it is a part of life in human communities. Civilised disagreements and challenging of others with words takes creative thinking and keeps communities alive and active.

**Caring** brings an important humane and social dimension into the analysis of active citizenship. Caring should spring from within oneself. A self-destructive person is incapable of being an active citizen. Caring about oneself leads to caring about others through empathy.

The circle of caring expands from oneself and other people to local communities, the entire society and global level. The philosophy of caring brings empathy, humaneness and social responsibility to the definition of a new type of active citizenship. It strengthens the perspective of fairness and equality.

### 1.3 Citizen Participation Policy Programme

The central objective of schools and educational institutes is to support the growth of people into an active and democratic citizenship in accordance with the principle of lifelong learning. The Citizen Participation Policy Programme will help to develop new channels and opportunities for civic influencing that will support the citizens' full participation in communities and the society.

The policy programme will be implemented by the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Finance and the Prime Minister's Office in 2003-2007.

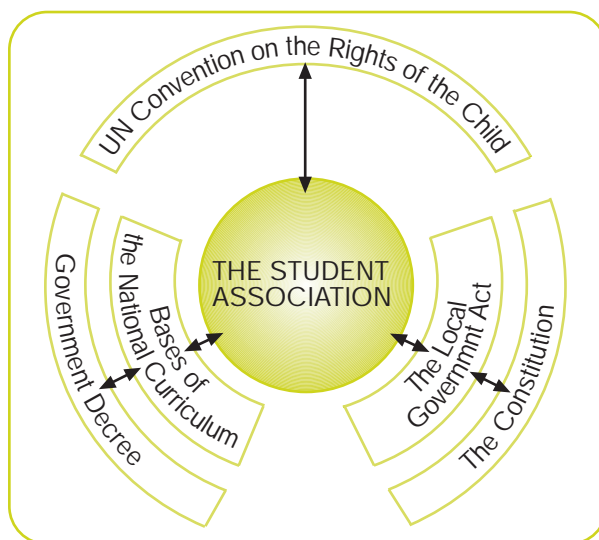
Why is a separate policy programme needed?

- In international comparison, Finnish youth perceive their opportunities to influence at school as being small.

- Finnish youth take part in the operation of student bodies and other governing bodies in schools significantly less than young people in other countries in northern Europe.
- Finnish youth are knowledgeable and skilled, but at the same time they have not adopted the skills and attitudes required for some socially relevant activities.
- Growing into an active citizen requires a socially active childhood and adolescence.

## 2 Societal background

The opportunities for children and youth to participate and influence their social environment have been fairly extensively secured, both nationally and internationally. Children and youth should be treated equally as individuals and they should be able to influence matters concerning themselves corresponding to their level of development.



Societal background of the student body

### 2.1 The Constitution

Finland's citizens' opportunities to participate and influence have been secured fairly extensively in our legislation. The premises have been written into the Constitution, and the active role of citizens can be considered a central

socio-political value, principle and goal from the viewpoint of the government and the society. The task of the public authority is to ensure that the principles of democracy and equality as well as citizens' fundamental rights and liberties and human rights enacted in the Constitution are implemented, and that the principle of law is respected (Constitution, Section 22).

It must be observed that the principles of democracy declared in the Constitution also apply to children and youth, although they are traditionally considered under age. Although children and youth do not have the right to vote in national and municipal elections, the Constitution does obligate adults to create systems within which children and youth can influence matters pertaining to themselves to a degree corresponding to their level of development (Constitution, Section 6).

No one should, without an acceptable reason, be treated differently from other persons on the grounds of sex, age, origin, language, religion, conviction, opinion, health, disability or other reason that concerns the person.

## 2.2 The Local Government Act

General provisions concerning participation in municipal decision-making have been compiled in the Local Government Act (Local Government Act, Section 27). One's own municipality is the central arena where the culture of societal participation is learned. However, this requires that children and young people know the context of matters. Children and youth should thus know those factors that are related to the operation of the school, for example. The law obligates the municipality to hear its inhabitants, including children and youth.

## 2.3 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was accepted by the UN General Assembly on 20 November 1989. The Convention is a generally accepted view of the rights all children should have irrespective of their skin colour, sex, language, religion, political opinions, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status (CRC, Part 1, Article 2).

“ The right of the child is the responsibility of adults”  
J.P. Grant, former Secretary General of UNICEF

The contracting states guarantee to a child who is able to form his/her own views, the right to freely express these views in all matters related to the child. Views of the child must be taken into account in accordance with the child's age and level of development.

In order for this to be implemented the child must be given an opportunity to be heard, especially in judicial and administrative actions concerning him/her.

## 2.4 School Acts and decrees

In its decree the Council of State defines the task of education (Chapter 2, Section 2), among other things, as follows: Education also supports a person's growth into an active member of the society and gives readiness to act in a democratic and egalitarian society as well as promotes permanent development.

In accordance with the Act on General Upper Secondary Education, every educational institute that organises education referred to in the Act has a student association composed of students. Students of upper secondary schools belong to the student association directly by the regulations of the Act. The task of the student association is to promote students' co-operation and school work. In accordance with the Act on General Upper Secondary Education the organiser of education must provide students with the opportunity to participate in the development of the education as well as hear students before making decisions on studies and other matters that substantially influence the status of the students. In these matters the student association uses the students' voice. The operation and plans of action of the student association are not regulated in the legislation; hence, the student association decides on them itself. The organiser of the education decides on the organisation of the operation of the student association, such as whether the student association is shared with one or several other educational institutes or operational units.



## 3 Pedagogic background

### 3.1 The National Curriculum

The values underlying the bases of the National Curriculum (2004) are human rights, equality, democracy, maintenance of diversity of nature and viability of the environment as well as acceptance of multiculturalism. Basic education promotes communality, responsibility as well as honouring of the rights and liberties of the individual.

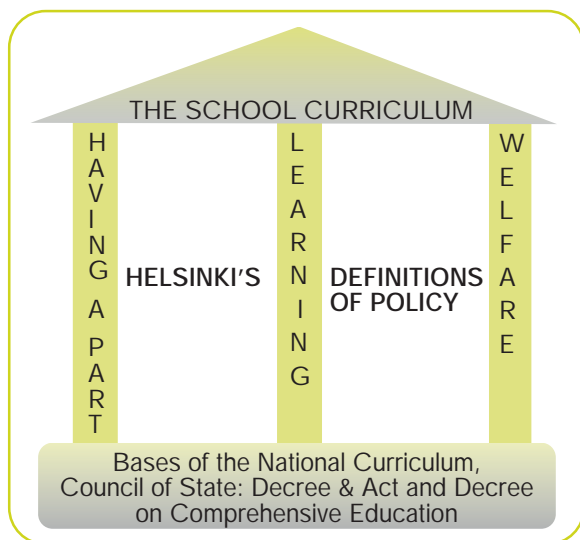
The task of basic education is both to educate and to teach. The task of education is to give the society a tool to develop educational capital and to increase communality and equality. Basic education should give a pupil an opportunity to develop within a democratic society as a participative citizen.

The task of upper secondary school education is to continue the educational and teaching task of basic education, and also to provide extensive all-round education. Upper secondary school should provide readiness to respond to the challenges of the society and the environment as well as skills to examine issues from different perspectives. Students should be guided to act responsibly and to take care of their responsibilities as citizens in the society and in future working life.

The role of pupils is, thus, based on both the values of education as well as the objectives and tasks. Therefore, the role of pupils and students can be chosen as one of the development objectives of municipalities.

“Strengthening of the part of pupils is a precondition for democracy in the schools in Helsinki. In Helsinki, the part of pupils and student is developed in particular, and through it good learning and growth into an individual and a member of the society is supported.

Having a part refers to such activity in which children and youth set objectives,



Example of Helsinki's definition of policy

discuss and consider different options as well as make decisions and take responsibility for their actions. Activity provides an experience of having a part for all children and youth and generates change in their environment.

Operation of student bodies is a significant part of the democratic operational culture. Operation of the student association develops the potential of students to act as representatives of their own groups and trains them for co-operation based on negotiation.”

### Thematic entities

Thematic entities in the curriculum are central focus areas in education and teaching work, and their objectives and contents are embedded in several school subjects. Thematic entities such as the thematic entity of Participative / Active Citizenship and Entrepreneurship are socially significant educational and schooling challenges; at the same time, they are also topical statements on values.

Thematic entities are implemented in different school subjects in a manner that is characteristic to them and appropriate for the student's level of development. Thematic entities should be embedded in different subjects and they should be visible in the school's operational culture.

The objective of the thematic entity of Participative / Active Citizenship and Entrepreneurship is to help pupils and students to perceive the society from the perspective of different roles, to develop the potential required in participation and to create a basis for entrepreneurship-like operation. A school's learning culture and operational models should support the development of pupils and students into participative citizens who are independent and show initiative, are co-operative, critical and have a sense of direction, in addition to helping them build a realistic picture of their own possibilities to influence.

Pupils and students should have an opportunity to practice different ways to participate in and influence the society on different levels - local, national, European and global. Operation of the student association at school gives pupils and students an encouraging opportunity to practice the skills of influencing and participation.

Youth's own participation in and shaping of the operational culture of the school gives pupils and students a concrete opportunity to influence the well-being of the school. Accepting different opinions and tolerating conflicts becomes a natural part of daily life and a cornerstone of participatory democracy.

### 3.2 Student association – working together

This chapter describes what is referred to as a co-operative work attitude. It is especially important to emphasise that it is a way of thinking: it is not a bundle of systematic tricks. Co-operation is a social structure that supports democracy, participating and collaborating, and is based on empirical learning and a constructive conception of learning. By working together, helping each other and learning from one another, we strive for social change, which is characterised by openness, dynamic relationships, group discussions and collective handling of matters. Individual growth and independence in children and youth progress in parallel with social growth and development. In order to be useful to his/her class and school, a student needs to have a subjectively experienced spiritual and intellectual role.

The following factors in co-operative work attitude promote the development of communal thinking:

- Creation of a positive mental atmosphere encourages risk-taking, identification of issues and development of discussion and helps students to appreciate the student association as a democratic community.
- The expectation that the members of the student association's executive committee must be able to explain matters to others in a well-structured manner, and to negotiate, summarise, debate and motivate decisions requires a high level of cognitive organisation and reasoning.
- Discussion and negotiation in co-operative groups improves the capacity for drawing conclusions orally, developing explanations, assessments and consideration of what an individual knows and thinks. With the help of the deliberation and negotiation process the matters discussed become communally significant.
- Heterogeneous groups, such as the executive committee of the student association, having tasks that require various skills, force individuals into divergent thinking, creative reactions and use of their individual talents. Differences between the group members becomes an asset instead of a problem.
- Members of the executive committee of the student association influence each

other's learning by modelling different levels of thought, explaining how they would solve a problem as well as by giving each other feed-back and encouragement.

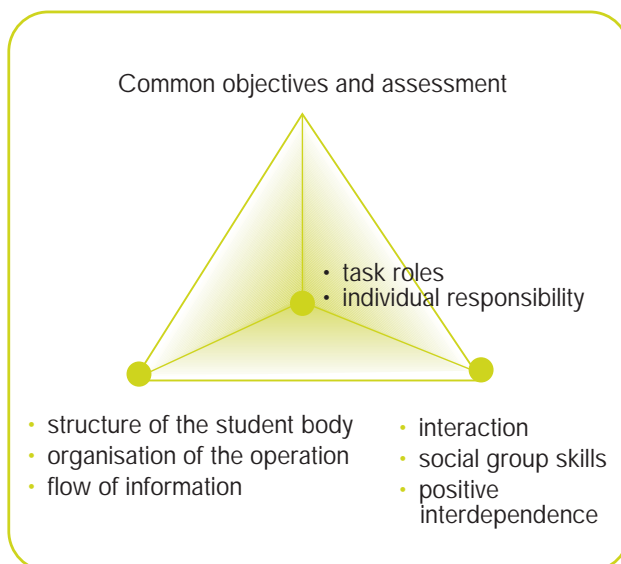
- Conflicting opinions, interpretations and explanations need to be solved. This forces the members of the group to engage in thoughtful dialogue. Structured conflict may be an excellent means for finding a solution.

If schools are to seriously encourage students to participate, become independent and boost their self-image, as well as strive to influence the development of their co-operational skills, these skills should be practiced in connection with every school subject and other school activities. Students need to consider the school's daily life and educational values together with the teachers and interest groups. Operation of the student association and teaching of different school subjects can be analysed so that, in coordination, they support the implementation of the school's educational objectives. Co-operation on the part of students and teachers is the key to a participative working culture.

### Principles of co-operation in the student association

There are four principles in the co-operative operation of the student association that support the school's participative working culture.

- Common objectives and positive interdependence
- Interaction and social group skills
- Individual responsibility
- Collective assessment of the student association's objectives and its participatory process



## Common objectives and positive interdependence

A working culture in which its objectives and the means to reach them are set up together, is created in the student association's operation. Discussions on the objectives should be diverse and contain different viewpoints, and the objectives should be programmed and formalized into practical measures. This creates a basis for commitment and positive interdependence between the members of the group.

Students' positive interdependence develops when they feel that they need each other as they execute tasks through the student executive committee. Positive interdependence is the core of the entire co-operational work attitude. Without it, the co-operation will disintegrate into individual work executed in a group. Members of the student association's executive committee must feel that they have joined together and that their collective success will benefit the entire school. They thus have the motivation and a reason to act together as well as to co-ordinate their efforts in order to execute the task. Getting to know each other, setting up common objectives and agreeing on the rules create a good basis for developing positive interdependence. However, it must be developed continually using different means, such as discussions, group-forming exercises and self-assessment.

## Interaction and social group skills

Interactions inside the student association's executive committee as well as interactions between the class representatives and their classes are developed methodically and co-operatively. Key forms of interaction include sharing experiences, summarising, giving and listening to explanations, creating rules, specifying information and comprehension and searching for solutions as well as making decisions by discussion and negotiation. Such forms of interaction are best practised under the conditions created for the operation of the student association's executive committee.

Skills of social influencing are practiced in the student association's executive committee. Accordingly, leadership skills, orderliness, (discipline?) mutual trust, appreciation of others, attentive listening, negotiation, decision-making and coping in conflict situations must be specifically taught to its members. Common rules are the basis of social intercourse. It is important for the student association's executive committee to also appreciate the significance of social skills to the operation of the student association.

## Individual responsibility

The co-operative executive committee of the student association has succeeded in its task only when every member has taken responsibility for the tasks and actively participated in the operation. Each member of the executive committee is also

responsible for his or her own learning and development. In addition to their individual responsibilities, members are also accountable for the functionality of the executive committee and the class they are representing. Every member must be able to report what was discussed in the group, how the group's common solution was reached and how it can be achieved. The executive committee of the student association should allow neither hitchhikers nor authoritarian workhorses among its ranks; all members should be equal. Individual responsibility is a key to success, but responsibility for the functioning of the whole committee guarantees the best end result and development in terms of both attitudes and behaviour.

### Collective assessment of the student association's objectives and its participatory process

Achievement of the student association's objectives as well as open and collective assessment of its participatory process is essential for the development of the operation of the student association. After work has been completed, experiences are shared, what has been done together is deliberated and evaluative conclusions are drawn on the achievement of the objective. Another dimension of the assessment is to consciously learn to monitor and assess the process of participation of the student association, the development of co-operational skills and the individual's own actions, e.g. with the help of the following questions: What did we achieve? How did I feel about the process? How did we work? How can we improve our collective work?

Collective deliberation on the work enables students to learn from the experiences and utilise the experience in future activity as well. Assessment of the experiences develops the student association members' metacognitive skills, i.e. comprehension of how they evolve, how they influence as well as how they are being influenced. Self-knowledge is the key to the adoption of new matters and modes of operation.

Internalisation of the above-presented principles is a prerequisite for an efficient use of the work attitude in accordance with the co-operational philosophy.

## 4 Operation of the student association at school

Operation of student bodies is an important part of a democratic participatory culture. It develops students' abilities and skills to act as representatives of their own groups and trains them in co-operation based on negotiation.

All the pupils and students of a school belong to the student association. The task of the student association is to guide students to mutual co-operation, aim at improving the status of students at school and to promote students' leisure activities as well as responsibility for the management of collective matters.

### 4.1 Judicial status of the student association

In accordance with the Act on General Upper Secondary Education, Section 31, Sub-section 1, every educational institute, where education is organised according to the Act on General Upper Secondary Education, has a student association composed of students. Upper secondary school students belong to the student association directly on the basis of the provisions of the law. In accordance with the Sub-section 2, the task of the student association is to promote students' co-operation and school work. In accordance with the Act on General Upper Secondary Education, Section 27, the organiser of education must allow students the opportunity to participate in the development of the education as well as to hear students before making decisions that substantially influence studies and other matters concerning the status of students. In such matters the student association uses students' voice. The operation and plans of action of the student association are not regulated in the legislation; hence, the student association decides on them itself. The organiser of education decides on the organisation of

the operation of the student association, such as whether the student association is shared with one or several other educational institutes or operational units.

An upper secondary school student association cannot be considered a separate association subject to public law that has a status of an independent legal person. In the Associations Act (503/1989), the principles contained in the provisions concerning unregistered associations can be applied to the operation of the student association.

An unregistered association cannot obtain rights on its name or make commitments. Persons who have participated in or decided on an action made on behalf of an unregistered association are personally as well as jointly and severally liable for the obligation resulting from such an action. In accordance with the provisions of the Guardianship Services Act (442/1999), a person under eighteen years of age has neither the right to administrate his/her property him/herself nor make contracts or other legal acts unless otherwise provided by law.

In accordance with the Associations Act, Section 5, an association is only allowed to be engaged in such trade or gainful employment that has been legislated in its regulations or that is otherwise directly related to the implementation of its purpose, or which should be considered as having economically insignificant value. This provision is also applied to an unregistered association. However, the liability for obligations of the person who has acted on behalf of an association has to be taken into account.

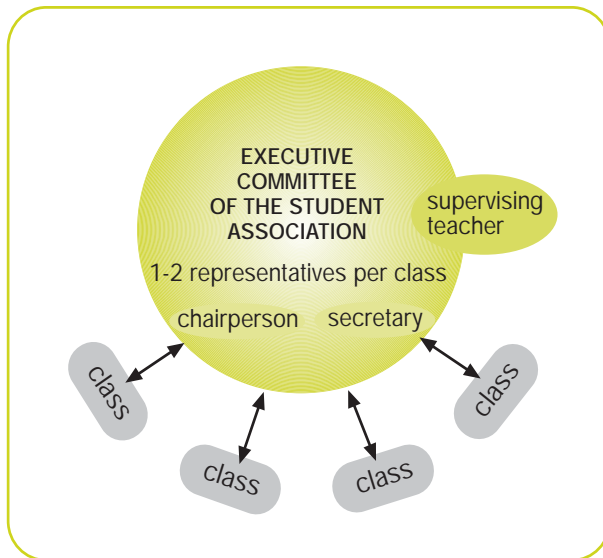
An unregistered organisation may have so-called “intention capital”, which is in the possession of the persons belonging to the association and used for the implementation of the purpose of the association.

Persons belonging to the student association or a sub-group of students may, if they choose, found a registered association for joint action relating to a focus of interest. Three of the founding members must be at least fifteen years of age. However, it is the student association as a whole, rather than the voluntary membership of the registered association, that has the students’ voice in matters referred to in the Act on General Upper Secondary Education, Section 27.

The Basic Education Act does not contain provisions on the student association. However, there is no impediment in basic education that hinders students’ co-operation. Nevertheless, the age of the pupils must be taken into account. Students receiving basic education are restricted from founding a registered association because of the minimum age of founding members.



## 4.2 Roles and tasks of the members of the executive committee of the student association



The student association selects from among its members the executive committee, which represents the entire student body. Each class annually selects one or two representatives for the executive committee of the student body.

### Tasks of the executive committee

- To run and coordinate the operation of the student association.
- To discuss matters brought forward by students, parents and other co-operation parties.
- To initiate ideas to be discussed as well as to prepare suggestions and proposals for co-operation partners, such as the student association, teachers, the principal and the school board.
- To aim at developing opportunities for students to have a role in decisions and increasing students' participation in matters concerning them.
- To make the final decisions on the use of available funds.

Students have different tasks in the student association. However, everyone shares one task: all the members of the executive committee strive, with their own example, to emphasise the school's collective spirit.

### Tasks of the chairperson

- To prepare the agenda and the meeting together with the secretary, vice chair person and the student association's supervising teacher.
- To convene the meetings of the executive committee together with the student association's supervising teacher, and to chair them.
- To lead the meeting, recognise speakers as well as to strike the gavel for decisions.

- Together with the supervising teacher, to monitor that the executive committee does not violate anyone's rights with its decisions, make an illegal decision, overspend the student association's funds or act otherwise negligently.
- To encourage other members of the executive committee in their own roles.
- To represent his/her own school in functions outside the school.
- To act in co-operation with the teachers and the principal.

#### Tasks of the secretary

- To draw up the agenda, the minutes or memorandum together with the chairperson, the vice chairperson and the student association's supervising teacher and to forward them to the class representatives and/or put them up on the student association's notice board.
- To act as secretary of the meeting.
- To get the signature of the chairperson and the scrutinisers of the minutes (two persons) on the transcribed minutes.
- To file the minutes or memoranda.

#### Tasks of the vice chairperson

- To provide support and encouragement for the chairperson.
- To execute the tasks of the chairperson in a meeting which the chairperson is prevented from attending.
- To act e.g. as leader of a work group.
- To monitor the student association's finances and their development together with the chairperson.

#### Tasks of the treasurer

- To monitor the student association's finances, their development and the expediency of their use together with the vice chairperson.
- To look after financial management and bookkeeping.
- To look after the student association's payment of bills, billing and other monetary transactions.
- To develop new fund-raising means together with the other members of the executive committee.

The treasurer, the chairperson and the student association's supervising teacher all have the right to use the student association's account. In comprehensive school, the supervising teacher generally manages the account, but in upper secondary school students are active developers and administrators of the finances.

## Tasks of the spokesperson

- To be responsible for putting the agendas and the minutes of the student association's executive committee on display, e.g. on the notice board.
- To look after the student association's notice board and to keep it up-to-date and reliable.
- To look after the reporting of the decisions of the executive committee, e.g. over the intercom.
- To report on the activities of the student association, e.g. to local newspapers, and to organise the reporting in connection with student association events.

## Tasks of the person in charge of the meetings

- To arrange the tables and chairs in the meeting room into discussion groups.
- To supply the required papers, felt-tip pens and an overhead projector, etc. for the meeting.

## Tasks of the association committees

The tasks of the association committees are determined in accordance with the areas of emphasis considered important by the school. Representatives of the executive committee gather students from different grades interested in the subject of the committee. For example, there can be an environmental committee, festivity committee, a committee discouraging bullying, etc. in the school.

## Tasks of the class representative

- To negotiate, and to communicate messages from the class to the meeting of the student association as well as to communicate messages back from the meeting.
- To be active in the meetings and, if necessary, participate in the work of the committees.
- To act as an intermediary on the matters of the class: all the students can influence the matters at school through the class representative.

## 4.3 Tasks of the supervising teacher

The role of the supervising teacher is significant. At the beginning the teacher organises and firmly guides the operation of the executive committee of the student association. As the operation of the executive committee is established, the

role of the teacher is to support the executive committee towards self-direction. The supervising teacher is always a representative to the executive committee of the student association.

- To develop and monitor the operation of the student association.
- To draw up a plan of action and a schedule together with the members of the executive committee.
- To co-operate with the members of the executive committee in the planning, implementation and assessment of the activities.
- To support and ensure that the chairperson and the secretary regularly organise and conduct meetings of the executive committee.
- To listen to and motivate students to participate in the promotion of welfare of the entire school.
- To develop co-operation between the student association and the teachers.
- To monitor, together with the chairperson of the student association, the decisions of the executive committee to ensure the decisions do not violate any one's rights, are not illegal or beyond the purview of the student association, do not result in over expenditure of the student association's funds or are otherwise negligent.

# 5 Selection of members for the executive committee of the student association

## 5.1 Selection of the class representative

When selecting members for the executive committee of the student association at school, it is important to focus attention on the selection process. It is necessary to review with students what the responsibilities of the class representative are and what it means for the entire class. With a careful and well-conducted selection process, students chosen for the executive committee know their purpose and what their tasks are.

The selection is always made from a group of volunteers. It is important not to make the selection too hastily.

### Introduction to the selection

At the beginning of the selection of the class representative, information is given to classes and teachers about the student association's executive committee and the tasks of the representatives as well as how the selection will happen.

Examples of the process:

- In the assembly hall, students tell everyone about their own experiences of being in the executive committee, both the advantages as well as disadvantages.
- After this, students familiarise themselves in class with the tasks of the representatives of the executive committee of the student association and discuss what kind of representatives the class wants.
- Two students and the supervising teachers go around in each class and describe the tasks and the expected attributes of the representative of the student association's executive committee.
- Students read the introduction of the executive committee of the student association and the experiences of the members on the school's website or online magazine.
- On the student association's notice board, the operation of the previous executive committee is presented in summary, and the experience of being in the executive committee is commented on.

### Selection of the representative in class

A lot of time is spent on the selection of the class representative as an indication of the seriousness of the decision?. When selecting the representative, the task of the teacher responsible for the group is to make the students consider the tasks of the class representative and their own group's expectations for him/her. Subjective consideration is also needed on the part of the individual students as to whether they might be ready to be the representative of their class.

The teacher tells the class what the executive committee of the student association is, what it does and what the tasks of the class representative are. The objective is to make the general criteria and the tasks of the representative clear. Students list the tasks of the executive committee and the representative on the chalkboard or a flap board. (See Appendix 3)

After this, the teacher guides the students in a discussion of the group's expectations for the representative in small groups ( 3-4 persons). The use of small groups is important, so that each student gets involved in discussion and is thus more committed to the activity.

The task of the students is to think about the following questions in small groups:

- + What are the attributes of a good representative?
- What are the attributes of a bad representative?

Students list the plusses and minuses that come up in the groups on a shared flap board or on the chalkboard.

### Standing for representative

The teacher guides the students to discuss, in small groups, how each student would act and what they would consider important if they were representatives.

After this, each student first considers the question: “Would I be ready to be the representative this year?” The answer options are:



In conclusion, students tell each other in the groups of their own willingness to stand for representative. After this, students state in class whether they are willing to stand for representative. Together the class looks at how many candidates there are in the class.

### Voting and selection

Selection of the class candidate happens after this, either by voting or by negotiating together according to the number and willingness of the candidates. Before the selection, the candidates tell others why they would be most suitable for this task and why they should be selected.

The voting may be a closed ballot or a collective negotiation.

Names of the class candidates are announced to the student association's supervising teacher.

## New executive committee of the student association

Selection of the new executive committee of the student association is announced in the school's assembly hall, over the intercom, on the school's website or on info TV.

Students selected for the executive committee of the student association give an account of how they intend to act in the executive committee and as messengers to the classes and back to the executive committee. The representatives also tell other students how proposals can be made to the members of the executive committee.

The names, contact information and possible pictures of the members of the new executive committee are put up on the student association's notice board as well as announced by other means that reach all the students.

### 5.2 Selection of the chairperson and secretary

The tasks of the chairperson and secretary will be discussed in the executive committee, and their importance will be examined in small groups. Execution of the tasks of the chairperson and secretary requires good reading and writing skills as well as a good knowledge of the workings of the school.

Students standing for candidacy tell others how they would act if chosen for the task, how they would co-operate as chairperson-secretary work partners, and what matters they consider important, such as prevention of bullying.

### 5.3 Selection of the supervising teacher

The supervising teacher of the student association's executive committee is selected from among the teachers. The supervising teacher must be interested in the operation of the student association. S/he must have knowledge of the working culture of the school and a desire to develop the opportunities of pupils and students to influence the school culture. An important part of the task of the supervising teacher is to commit the teachers to the promotion of the participation of students and to increase the students' opportunities to influence.



## 6 Meetings of the executive committee

The objective of the meetings of the executive committee is to train different skills of democracy in practice as well as to make decisions on matters concerning students. The meetings progress in accordance with meeting technique, and skills such as listening, debating, ideation, argumentation, critical discussion will be learned at the same time.

In order to create a culture of interactive discussion, attention should be drawn to the organisation of the meeting facilities. The meetings should be held in a room where students are able to form groups of 3-4 persons, e.g. around two desks. An auditorium setting does not create a good atmosphere for discussion at the meeting.

The rights and responsibilities of the participants are discussed in the first meetings of the executive committee in order to make it clear for everyone how the participants should act in the meetings. These rights and responsibilities should be discussed in the executive committee from time to time. The participants discuss 2-3 rights and responsibilities and look at what they comprise and how they have been implemented in the executive committee.

The executive committee may be made up of students from different grades that do not know each other. In order to facilitate their getting to know each other, every member of the executive committee should also have a name tag with his/her name and grade written on it. In order to ensure the flow of information

from the executive committee to each class and back, each member of the executive committee must have a student association notebook at every meeting where they write down the decisions.

The rights and responsibilities of the class representative at meetings:

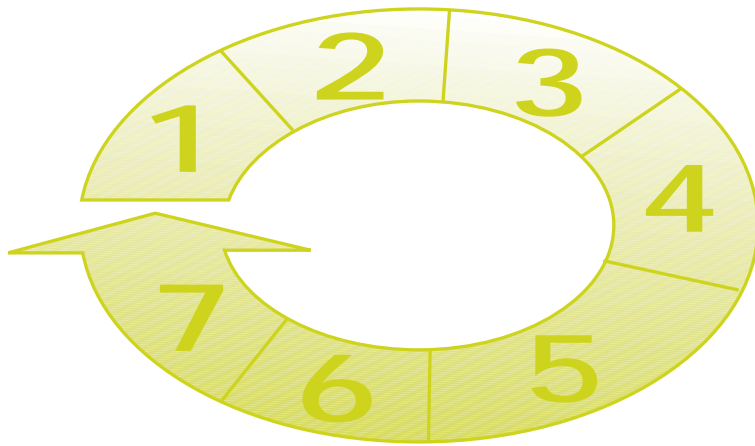
- Right to be heard
- Right to his/her own opinions
- Right to obtain enough information
- Right to prepare matters
- Right to personal inviolability
- Right to ask anything related to the matter being discussed
- Right to ask why a certain matter is being discussed
- Right to be treated amicably
  
- Responsibility to listen to the opinions of others
- Responsibility to express a stand
- Responsibility to respect the work tasks of others
- Responsibility to find out information about matters at hand
- Responsibility to stick to the point
- Responsibility to communicate information forward

## 6.1 Co-operative meeting

The executive committee should hold meetings regularly. The chairperson and the secretary are usually the convenors of the meetings, but the executive committee may also decide the time of the next meeting during its meeting. In order to ensure the continuity and efficiency of the operation it is advisable to hold meetings regularly, e.g. every other week.

The meeting facility should be such that the participants have an opportunity to discuss matters in small groups. Participation in the meetings is meaningful if everyone feels that they can participate in and influence the decisions. The chairperson must have good command of meeting procedures. If the meeting conduct is businesslike and assertive, there will be time for diverse and open interaction.

The supervising teacher provides support for the chairperson and organises the course of the meeting, especially co-operative discussions, together with the chairperson.



### 1. Preparation for the meeting

- The chairperson, secretary and the supervising teacher get together regularly one week before the meeting.
- They set the agenda and hand it out to the members of the executive committee.
- The matters that need to be discussed in classes or groups to provide feedback to the executive committee prior to the meeting should be listed in the agenda.
- Before the meeting, the persons in charge of the meeting will arrange the tables and chairs in the meeting room into discussion groups and supply the necessary tools and materials (among other things, the chairperson's gavel, an overhead projector or a flap board, felt-tip pens, paper and the necessary handouts) to the meeting room.

### 2. Opening of the meeting

- The members sit down in groups of 4-5 students around one desk or in a circle of chairs and the secretary checks the members present, for example with an attendance list.
- Everyone introduces themselves to the members of their own table.

### 3. The chairperson reads out the minutes of the previous meeting

- Table by table, the members assess whether anything has happened regarding the matters read or whether there are any questions.
- The persons in charge report on the situations.
- The chairperson makes a verbal summary.
- The secretary notes reports to be given and amendments to minutes.

#### 4. The chairperson reads out the agenda

- In tables, the members review the items in the agenda and additional items are added to the “Other” section.
- The secretary draws up the amended agenda.
- The members may choose which items will be reported, which items require more extensive discussion and on which items decisions will be made.

#### 5. Discussion of the agenda items

- Items are discussed table by table, ideation stage
- Table by table ideas are condensed into 1-2 solution proposals, opinions or viewpoints.
- One matter is gathered from the table to be discussed at first, after this more matters can be added
- Proposals +/- are discussed one item at a time at the tables —> if necessary, participants vote —> a decision is made and the gavel is struck.
- Participants should be prepared so that any member of the table can present the proposal.
- Discussion of items continues.

#### 6. Assessment of the meeting

- Opinions are first exchanged for a few minutes within their own group:  
Did we make any progress in the matters?  
Did everyone express their opinion?  
Did we listen to the opinions of others?  
Was I active in the meeting?
- A summary of the success of the meeting can be made, for example by putting up fingers as a sign of success: 5 = very successful – 1 = not yet successful etc.

#### 7. Agreeing on the continuation

- Participants agree on who will do what and what will be done before the next meeting.
- Time and date of the next meeting is agreed on.
- Participants decide on the information to be given to their classes and how it should be done.
- The items agreed to are written down in the notebook.

- The secretary takes the minutes to the notice board of the executive committee of the student association and the spokesperson takes care of other reporting.

## 6.2 Matters to be discussed at the meeting

Matters that will be discussed at the meetings should be diverse. It is motivating for students to feel that they can truly influence the issues of the daily life of the school. It is important that the issues are as concrete as possible and students can truly influence their planning, implementation and assessment together with teachers. In the beginning the concerns are small and their implementation immediate. As skills grow the matters that will be decided on will involve more responsibility, and make up a part of the school's systematic development.

### Strategy of the school

- The following can be discussed in the student association's executive committee: what projects or focus areas are ongoing at the school, how students can participate in them and influence them, what is their aim, what other projects or themes could there be at school in the students' opinion and how students could make better use of different projects. At the same time the themes of the academic year and the operation of the school's clubs are discussed.
- Students should be able to influence the themes of the academic year and their implementation plans. The needs and wishes of students should be taken into consideration in the planning of the club activity of the school.

### Improvement of the school environment

- Students should be able to influence their own school environment. One good method in the improvement projects of the school environment is the Future Workshop (Appendix 10).

### Dealing with problems at school

- Problems manifesting themselves at school that concern everyone or the majority of students can be discussed in the student association. Together, the students consider what the problem is, possible interventions as well as what everyone could do to eliminate the problem.

## School regulations

It is important that students participate in the creation and practical implementation of regulations or rules and also consider what could be done if the regulations and rules are not complied with.

### **A process how students can take part is described below:**

The regulations of the school can be created in co-operation with the executive committee of the student association so that each class discusses and considers the following issues: Why are regulations needed? What would be the most important ones?

- 3-5 rules are picked from each class into the discussion.
- The negotiator of the class presents the most important rules of his/her class in the executive committee of the student association.
- The proposals of different classes are discussed in the executive committee and a list is made of the (10) key rules.
- The negotiator of the class takes back the message to the classes and explains the executive committee's motivations. The students of the class express their stand and make possible proposals.
- A final rule proposal is then made in the student association's executive committee and presented to the teachers. A representative of the student association presents the students' rule proposal.
- Teachers express their stand on proposals and draw up the regulations on the basis of the students' views.
- The executive committee of the student association then discusses them and the negotiator brings the message to the classes.
- A representative of the students also presents the regulations at the meeting of the school board. The final regulations are completed under the guidance of the negotiators and the teacher in each class.

"Enjoying our school" – promoting a positive operational culture at school

- The school's collective approaches to work and practices are good topics that can be worked on with the student association. Teachers can discuss with students different kinds of approaches to work that are used in different school subjects as well as alternative approaches to work: in their own opinion, by using which approaches do the students think they would learn? It is advisable to also consider together with the students what the

atmosphere at school is like, where it emerges from and how it can be influenced. If, for example, older students do not help the younger ones, students might consider where this stems from and what could be done to remedy it.

- Students can also consider how the school's collective events influence the atmosphere at school: what can be done so that everyone can enjoy being at school.

### Collective decision-making in class

- The executive committee of the student association can also consider and decide how decision-making should take place in classes, how students may take part in the decision-making in class, what things the students have the possibility of influencing and in what issues the students may want to participate in terms of decision-making.

### The curriculum

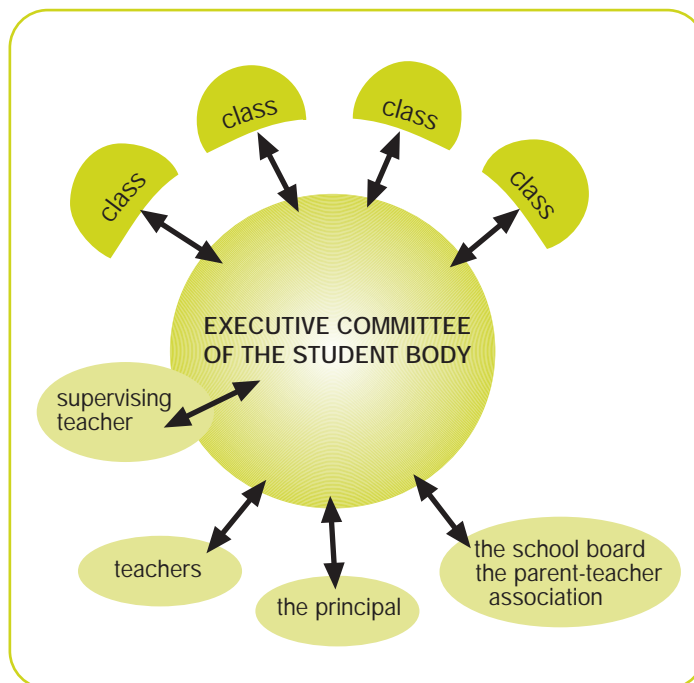
- The school's values, learning environment etc. can be discussed with students. Students can express their stand e.g. on what values are and what they mean in their opinion, what they think about the school's values, what other values in their opinion there should be at school and what a commitment to values means on a concrete level: how is it evident in the daily life of students and teachers.

### Different strategies of the school

- Students can express their stand e.g. on the school's security and substance use strategies as well as the crisis plan from their own viewpoint.
- The objective is to make students aware of the school's strategies: what they mean and what their purpose is as well as to commit students to comply with them.
- A perspective to strategy work could be e.g. "Path to intervention from the viewpoint of students", or how to act if a student suspects that his/her friend uses drugs/alcohol or is otherwise worried about his/her friend - who should be told, what possibilities there are to solve the problem, how matters progress officially, and what is the student's own responsibility.
- The process progresses similarly to the handling of school regulations.

## 7 Co-operation of the executive committee of the student association at school

Co-operation of the executive committee of the student association inside the school and with interest groups is important. The co-operation should be regular, and the objective is the development a communal operational culture.





## 7.1 Executive committee of the student association – class

Representatives of the class communicate fresh information on the matters discussed in the meeting of the executive committee to the students and teacher of the class/group. The task of the teacher is to enable the communication of the message from the meeting of the executive committee. In practice this means negotiation between the representatives of the student association's executive committee and the teachers, during which it is agreed when and how the communication of the message takes place.

It is important to create a regular routine. The objective is interaction in the co-operation between the class and the executive committee of the student association. This is implemented when students discuss important, problematic matters of the class or the school and gather the thoughts for the representative to take to the meeting of the executive committee. In the meeting the matter is discussed and the representative of the executive committee brings back information on the progression of the matters to the class.

## 7.2 Executive committee of the student association – the principal

Good co-operation between the executive committee of the student association and the principal requires regular reporting and interaction. Getting to know one another and listening to each other help to create good interaction and trust. Negotiating matters with the principal in advance guarantees good co-operation. The chairperson and the secretary of the executive committee of the student association, the supervising teacher and the principal should get together at regular intervals, at least twice during the academic year. New ideas on development of the school are thought up together in the meeting. If necessary, the operational authority and the power of decision-making of the executive committee will be discussed.

Members of the executive committee bring messages of the matters and questions that the class considers important to the principal's question hour. It is advisable to organise the principal's question hour twice during the academic year. The objective is to achieve interaction between the student association's executive committee and the leadership of the school as well as make the students' voice heard.

### 7.3 Executive committee of the student association – the teachers

There must be a good flow of information and a dialogue between the teachers and the executive committee. Representatives (2-4) of the executive committee should attend staff meetings to report and provide an opportunity for discussion of the matters discussed in the executive committee and those coming to the agenda. Thus, prejudices and misunderstandings can be prevented. The better the teachers are able to participate in the discussion of the executive committee, the more smoothly will the collective development of the school be. It creates the feeling that students and teachers are in the same boat.

There must be an item on the agenda of staff meetings entitled “student association executive committee concerns”. In this way teachers can prepare themselves for discussion with the members of the executive committee. The matters can be discussed near the beginning of the meeting after which students leave the meeting. It should also be determined which, if any, matters on the agenda of the staff meeting the teachers can ask the students to give their opinion on.

### 7.4 Executive committee of the student association – the school board or the parent-teacher association

The objective is to increase the executive committee’s and the parents’ collective knowledge and understanding of the school situation and its development needs. Representatives (2-4) of the student association’s executive committee should visit the meetings of the school board or the parent-teacher association at least once during the academic year and explain the operation of the classes or the school and the executive committee. Similarly, the school board should explain its activity and matters of concern. There will be discussion and exchange of opinions on the school’s current topics. The student representatives convey must convey information to the executive committee. Thus, joint responsibility grows.

# 8 Democratic skills in the operation of the student association

## 8.1 Conversational skills

### Setting an objective

A conversational skill is an important democratic skill. Expressing one's own thoughts and listening to another person is important in discussion. We can talk about good dialogue and interactive listening.

What is a good conversationalist like?

- Brings new perspectives to the discussion.
- Links his/her own speech to that of the previous person.
- Does not interrupt others.
- Listens to and strives to understand the message of others.
- Asks clarifying questions.

### Exercise:

In the meeting, discussion groups are formed out of pairs or groups of 3-5 students in accordance with the task and the discussion time. The question or discussion task must be well-defined and clear. At first the group may consider what the theme brings to mind, shares its experiences and collects previous information on the matter. After this the group summarizes the results of the discussion. The group prepares itself so that anyone from the group can act as the presenter of the group's proposals.

Presentation of the proposals to other groups takes place so that one member from each group explains one of the group's proposals to everyone. The round is continued for as long as any of the groups have new thoughts or ideas to present. It is advisable to let the group present only one matter at a time so that everyone can focus on listening to the opinion of each group.

If it is difficult for a group to initiate discussion they can be given a theme that interests youth and is easy to discuss. After the discussion exercise, the students assess what their own role in the discussion was and why. In the exercises students can also be observers, observing the course and the roles of the discussion.

## 8.2 Listening skills

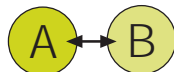
### Setting an objective

Listening skills need to be practiced. Sometimes it is good to make listening intentional and observe one's own actions as well as to consider the characteristics of a good listener and their importance, e.g. in one's own class or the student association's executive committee.

What is a good listener like?

- Likes to listen when others speak.
- Strives to understand the message of others.
- Is equally happy to listen to everyone.
- Establishes direct eye contact with the speaker.
- Encourages the speaker with expressions and gesticulations.
- Encourages others to speak, e.g. by asking questions and asking them to continue.
- Allows others to finish their speech.

#### Exercise 1:



A topical discussion theme interesting students is chosen together. Students pair off and they sit down facing each other.

The pair talks simultaneously about the chosen theme. Thus, both are talking, but neither is listening. One minute is reserved for talking. After the exercise the pairs assess how the experience felt.

#### Exercise 2:

The theme remains the same, but only one of the students talks and the other

listens carefully, so that s/he can explain what s/he heard the other say. One minute is reserved for talking. The pairs agree between themselves who starts first.

The listener describes what s/he just heard the narrator say. One minute is reserved for this. The roles are then changed and the same exercise is done in reverse roles. After the exercise the pairs discuss how the experience felt.

### **Exercise 3:**

Each student considers alone and writes down how they know that the other person is listening. After a few minutes students tell their partners their own thoughts on the characteristics of a good listener. After the discussion the pairs form groups of four in which the students gather and write down a list of the characteristics of a good listener on the basis of discussion. The group prepares each member of the group to tell about the group's thoughts to others.

Two scribes are chosen who ask one student from each group to say one thought of the group's list of characteristics of a good listener. The scribes write them down for everyone to see.

In the next round someone else from the group tells another characteristic of a good listener.

Listening skills are always assessed after discussions in the meetings on the basis of the criteria of a good listener that have been created by using the above method.

## **8.3 Presentation skills**

### Setting an objective

Presentation skills give self-confidence and facilitate the presentation of one's own opinion. If the presenter has a clear and appealing manner of presenting his/her point, s/he will be better heard. Establishing contact with the listeners, e.g. by making direct eye contact, is essential in presentation skills. The objective of presentation is to make the listeners understand the presenter's own message.

What is a good presenter/performer like?

- Establishes contact with the listeners.
- Speaks clearly and calmly.
- Has understood him/herself the matter s/he talks about.
- Explains things thoroughly.
- Is consistent.
- Takes the listener into account.
- Does not panic when s/he gets muddled with his/her words.

### **Exercise 1:**

Students choose one chapter from a schoolbook and everyone practices presenting it by reading it out loud simultaneously. The objectives of presentation are credibility, clarity and coherence.

After this, the same chapter is presented to one's own partner in turn, and in addition to what was stated previously, the objective is to establish contact with the listener.

In the third stage, the story is told to groups by standing up and speaking in turn. The students take their turn in the order that they want. In addition to the previously stated, the objective is to take one's own space and to make a presentation to a large group.

### **Exercise 2:**

The texts of the exercise are in appendix 5.

The objective of the exercise is for the students to familiarise themselves with how decision-making takes place at school, in the municipality and in other decision-making bodies of society with the help of examples. The presentation is, therefore, practiced. Students divide themselves into groups of three.

- At first students discuss in groups and then together what they already know about the discussion theme.
- Students familiarise themselves with the stages of the exercise. Students divide themselves into groups of three.
- The groups agree on who is A, who is B and who is C. Every individual is given an excerpt from a text that they are responsible for.
- Students read through the text alone and search for the five most important points and underline them.
- Students find themselves a pair from another group, which has the same text. They compare the important points with the pair and enrich their own skills. They learn the text well enough that everyone is able to teach the important points to others. Students also consider how the points will be taught.
- Students return to their original groups A, B and C. A teaches his/her own area to the others, and so do B and C in turn.
- After the exercise students assess what was good in each student's presentation and teaching. Each student assesses his/her own success and gives feedback to others.

## 8.4 Negotiation skills

Negotiation skill is one of the most important skills of the class representative. A good negotiator is able to explain his/her point, make compromises, listen to others and report what s/he has heard.

### Setting an objective

The significance and use of negotiation skills are discussed with the students. Students consider together the skills of a good negotiator and how they can be learned. This way the students will realise that they need practice. The objective of the practice is to implement the principle that everyone is a winner.

What is a good negotiator like?

- Is able to justify his/her points.
- Listens to the opinions and justifications of others.
- Defends his/her own opinion.
- Is prepared to make compromises.
- Wants to reach a collective negotiated decision.
- Stays on the topic.
- Participates diversely.
- Takes the negotiation forward.

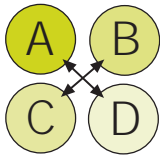
### Exercise 1:



Students choose pairs. The instructions are as follows: one of the pairs wants to exchange five of his/her CDs e.g. for something that the other one owns. During the negotiation both of the parties present at least five motivations for the exchange. One party listens carefully and asks defining questions. The pairs need to reach a solution that is satisfactory to both by negotiation.

After the exercise, the pairs discuss how the criteria for a good negotiator were fulfilled and how the agreement was reached. Both assess themselves and give feedback to each other.

### Exercise 2:



Negotiators are divided into groups of four. They negotiate about a holiday trip. Two students want to go on a boat trip and two want to go hiking in Lapland. The pairs agree on a holiday destination among themselves.

At first the pairs discuss among themselves and record as many good points as possible on why the entire group should go to Lapland or on a cruise. After this, the members of the group tell each other their own rationale. After the justifications, the group needs to find, through discussion, a common holiday destination that has as many good points, from both destinations, as possible. The holiday destination should be one of the given destinations or a new negotiated destination, which fulfils the wishes of both of the pairs.

The teacher randomly selects one person from each group to report the results and justifications of the negotiation.

After the exercise, students assess how the process of finding the justifications went. Was it difficult or easy to listen to the justifications of others or to abandon your own holiday destination? In the discussion, students assess themselves and give feedback to others.

## 8.5 Debating skills

### Setting an objective

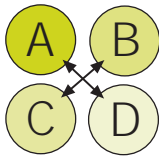
Practising debating skills strengthens the presentation skills of argumentation and justification. The objective is a co-operative debate in which students listen to the viewpoints of others and constructively present their own propositions and justifications. As the debate continues, mutual understanding and compromises are searched for. Students discuss the significance of the skills of constructive and co-operative debate in small groups.



What is a good debater like?

- Is able to justify his/her own argument and opinion.
- Listens to the speech of the opponents.
- Is able to grasp the shortcomings of the counter-argument.
- Responds to the doubts presented against his/her argument providing good motivation.
- Has familiarised him/herself with the topic.
- Takes the debate forward, brings new perspectives to it.
- Is able to act in a group.

**Exercise 1:**



Students divide themselves into small groups of four, e.g. according to the first letter of their first names. Students write down at least five characteristics of both a constructive debate and a quarrelling debate in the groups. The thoughts of the groups are compiled, so that one characteristic at a time is taken from each group.

**Exercise 2:**

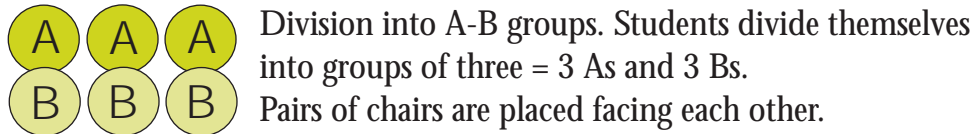
Students practice debating themes related to the daily life of the school.

Themes of debate:

- Students should be given the power of decision-making. / Students should not be given the power of decision-making.
- Students should be able to leave the school grounds during breaks. / Students should not leave the school grounds during breaks.
- Football goals should be purchased for the school. / Benches should be purchased for the school.
- All glassware in the school should be replaced by plastic.
- Our school is a model school.
- Students have too little free time at school.
- Our school building is great.
- Every pupil in Finland should wear a school uniform.
- Guarding service professionals should patrol the school corridors.
- Every pupil's hair should be shaved off.

Students move from one stage of the exercise to the next in a brisk manner.  
The teacher leads the exercise.

**1. Division into groups:**



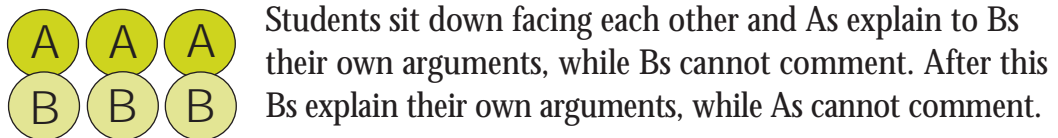
**2. Gathering the arguments:**

Members of the group retire together to gather justifications, one person acting as a scribe. Students find a pair who has the same letter A-A, B-B and tell them their own group's justifications.

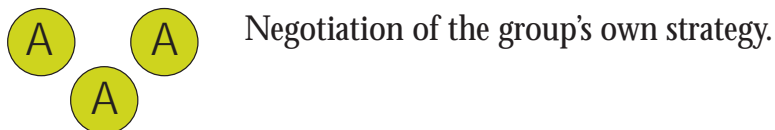
**3. Expressing the line of reasoning:**

Students express the line of reasoning they have heard from others to their own group.

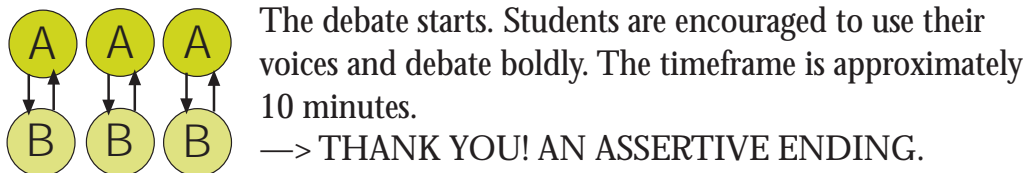
**4. Explaining the arguments to the opponents:**



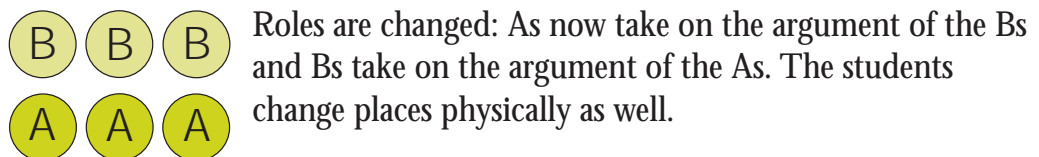
**5. Debate strategy:**



**6. Debate:**



**7. Taking the opposite view:**



### **8. Gathering arguments:**

Students consider arguments for their new position within their own groups. The timeframe is a few minutes.

### **9. New debate:**

Students engage in a new debate. The timeframe is approximately 6 minutes.

### **10. Mutual understanding:**

Chairs are placed in a circle. Students consider together whether a mutual understanding and consensus can be reached.

### **11. Sharing the experiences:**

The stages of the process are visually drawn on the transparent of the overhead projector or on the chalkboard. After this, students discuss what happened at the beginning of the exercise and how they felt about it. What did it feel like to change roles and what happened in the end? What was the students' own role during the exercise?

## **8.6 Decision-making skills**

### Setting an objective

Different decision-making practices have an impact on how well people commit themselves to the decision. An uncontested decision made without negotiation cannot be implemented in practice. Decision-making routines that call for commitment need to be practiced in the meetings of the student association's executive committee.

It is also important that decisions are clear and understood by everyone.

What is a good decision-maker like?

- Gets acquainted with matters impacting the decision.
- Considers the relationship between reasons and consequences.
- Listens to the justifications of others.
- Strives for a consensus decision.
- Commits to the decision and takes responsibility for its implementation.

### **Exercise 1:**

In small groups, students share good experiences of different decision-making practices and commitment to the implementation of a decision. They discuss the factors that influence their own decision-making, such as friends' attitudes or new information. They also share experiences of unsuccessful decision-making practices and consider the reasons for failure.

### **Exercise 2:**

Students check that they all have the same conception of the implications of the decision being made. They chart the current situation of the matter by discussing it in small groups. Solution proposals are drafted. Proposals are not criticised during the ideation phase. Decision proposals are considered critically. The proposals that receive backing are examined from several viewpoints: what will happen if we make this decision?

During the negotiation preceding the decision, students strive for a real consensus. They ensure that everyone is committed to a majority decision. They express in concrete terms what the decision will mean in practice. Students recap and write down the decision made as well as agree on the division of work on its implementation.

### **Examples**

- Choosing a charity fundraiser target
- Organising a school event
- Deciding on a trip of the executive committee
- Organising a school theme day
- Designing the school logo

## 9 Reporting

It is important to consider together what matters will be reported. The decisions of the student association's executive committee as well as the decisions of the principal and the teachers are always reported on the notice board as well as a more inclusive information source, e.g. via morning assemblies, the school's website or over the intercom. The student association should have its own regular morning assembly. This ensures that pupils and students always know that their voices are heard on certain days.

### Notice board

The notice board is an easy and the most common way of informing. The notice board should display the names and pictures of the members of the executive committee. This ensures that everyone knows and recognises them and is able to contact them if necessary. The person in charge of reporting puts up on the notice board the meeting agendas, minutes and a time line, in which the meeting times and agenda of the executive committee can be seen. The notice board should be informative, visual and up-to-date. Outdated bulletins should be removed. In this way everyone learns that it is worthwhile to monitor the notice board.

### The school intercom

The school intercom is the best channel for reporting critical issues. Matters are reported via the intercom just before the start of lessons so that it does not disrupt them. During breaks, on the other hand, messages are lost among the commotion.

## Website

A website is set up for the student association's executive committee. Upcoming matters, decisions and events of the executive committee are reported via the website. The executive committee should have its own e-mail address, which should be made known to other pupils at school as a channel to propose initiatives and express opinions.

The student association may also compose its own bulletins, which are distributed in classes or groups. These bulletins or flyers should be interesting and eye-catching so they are read.

## Bulletins

Reporting should be interesting. Sometimes it is also worthwhile to try out methods that are a bit more showy, such as drawing advertisements of an upcoming event on old T-shirts that the members of the executive committee wear before the event.

## The media

Local media, newspapers, radio and TV are also interested in the operation of the student association. At the start of the academic year and each term the student association can do articles in which they tell about their tasks and how the association works and give concrete examples on how youth participate in the operation of the daily life of the school.

## 10 The pupil as an influencer

Every student at school - not only the members of the executive committee - has the possibility to influence matters. Reporting about this requires a pro-active attitude from the members of the executive committee and teachers. A description of how a student can influence matters could be put up on the notice board of the executive committee. Idea boxes can also be used for this purpose. However, it should be remembered that the ideas should be gone through regularly in the meetings of the executive committee. All the pupils should be informed of followup actions.

### **When you want a change in matters at school, act as follows:**

- Bring the issue up in your class and ask for the opinion of other pupils on the matter.
- Contact the representative of your class and ask him/her to take the matter to the executive committee.
- Contact the chairperson of the executive committee or the supervising teacher.
- Make a suggestion in the idea box.

### **Why matters need to be taken to the executive committee?**

- When the matter is taken further by the entire executive committee, the presenter of the idea is not left alone with the matter.
- It is easier for the executive committee to carry the matter forward to the teachers, the principal and the school board.

### **What happens if the proposal is rejected?**

- If the proposal can be implemented and it receives backing from the other students, the school staff, and possibly even the school board, it will, in all likelihood, be implemented.
- Everything is not always possible, but it is important to bring matters forward and discuss them jointly with those adults who are responsible for them.
- If a proposal is rejected, the presenter of the idea will, however, hear the justifications for it. Others who have considered the matter will also hear why this outcome was reached.
- The proposal may be such that it will not be discussed at all in the executive committee. This means that the proposal was not quite as important in the opinion of others, that it is beyond the jurisdiction of the committee or that it would have been impossible to implement.



# 11 Assessment of the operation of the student association

The operational culture of the school strives to influence the structures of the learning environment, especially the pedagogical practices. An essential part of the operational culture of the school is the interactive relationship between the students and the adults at school. How adults encounter students and how a student is being heard are also important. Youth's participation in the operation of the school, such as the work of the student association's executive committee, reflects an interest in managing collective matters. That socially oriented groups operating in schools offer youth an opportunity to reflect experiences and discuss them is a value in itself. This often has significance also for the development of the atmosphere in the school and the class. Later on, it has an impact on the students' interaction with society as well.

## 11.1 Assessment of the operation of the executive committee

The operation of the executive committee is assessed regularly. The executive committee carries out self-assessment and gathers feedback on its operation from other students and teachers. A reflective assessment should be carried out after every meeting and more extensive assessment once every semester. The most important method of assessment is an open discussion in small groups and collective evaluation. Results of the assessment are documented so that the development of the operation of the executive committee can be seen. The assessment targets of the operation of the executive committee are as follows: What kind of matters have the executive committee influenced? How has the executive committee acted? The chairperson and the secretary make a summary of the minutes as part of the assessment.

The following matters need to be emphasized in the assessment:

### **Organisation of the executive committee**

Have meetings been held regularly? Has a quorum of the members of the executive committee been present? Has the time used for the meetings been sufficient? Has the exchange of information among the members of the executive committee been active? Has the flow of information to other students at school served its purpose? What tools have been used to manage the flow of information? How often and in what ways has the executive committee been in contact with the principal, the teachers, the school board and external co-operational partners?

### **The matters discussed in the executive committee**

How have the matters come to the executive committee? Have the matters discussed in the executive committee been broad in scope? What type of matters have decisions been made on? What type of matters have remained unfinished?

### **Working methods of the executive committee**

How have the different task roles of the members of the executive committee been managed? What has the interaction in the meetings been like? What has the members' part in the meetings been? What has the atmosphere in the meetings been like?

## **11.2 Assessment of the role of the class representative**

The role of the class representative on the executive committee changes with age and experience. The role of the representative and its development along with its practice is like the steps of a staircase. When a student first commences his/her activity in the executive committee, it is most important to learn to attend the meetings of the executive committee regularly.

Neither the regularity of meetings nor participation in them is self-evidently important even to upper secondary school students. When the development of the student association's operation commences, the operation must have a clear structure: the meetings are held regularly in a certain place and all members should be aware of them as well as participate in them. Class representatives learn the structure of the organization, then the operation of meetings, then the basic roles to be played, then how to develop useful skills, knowledge and attitudes through participation and finally how to participate and make decisions at increasing levels of responsibility. The different skills that help to develop a student's role from a member into a negotiator are practiced in the meetings of the student association.

The class representative first self-assesses his/her actions with the help of the staircase. After this, students of the class discuss in small groups and give feedback on the actions of the representative. The objectives set in the selection situation are also utilised in the assessment.

1. MEMBER

Belongs to the executive committee, attends the meetings occasionally, but does not take a stand on the decision-making.

2. REPRESENTATIVE

Represents his/her own class, attends the meetings and uses addresses occasionally.

3. COMMUNICATOR OF MESSAGES

Is the representative of his/her own class, asks the opinions of the class on the matters to be decided on and brings messages from the meetings of the executive committee.

4. NEGOTIATOR

Actively negotiates in the meetings of the executive committee defending the opinion of his/her own class and communicates the decisions to the class (also compromises).

### 11.3 Assessment of the operation and events organised by the student association

In the assessment of the operation and events, assessment discussions are held in classes and groups. The objective is learning an open and constructive assessment culture. Feedback can be collected also with the aid of handouts or an online questionnaire. It is important that the executive committee make a summary of the feedback and that it is discussed in the meeting of the executive committee and in classes. On these grounds, new ideas are created for the development of the operation.

Assessment discussion is held with the help of the following questions:

Has there been a sufficient number of meetings?

Has the organisation of events been carried out with each member and the committee as a whole taking its responsibility?

How have other pupils of the school had a part in the organisation and the events themselves?

What type of feedback have other pupils given on the events?

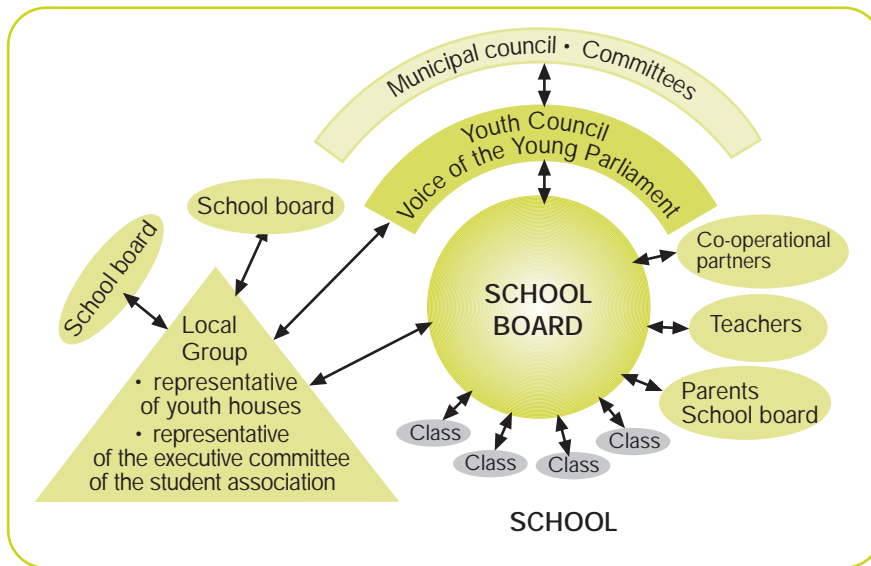
What will we do similarly and what differently next year?

## 12 Participation of children and youth in municipal decision-making

Active participation of children and youth in municipal decision-making is the core objective when creating different participation and influencing structures. Structures are created in co-operation with municipal youth and education departments. Young people's ideas and projects are implemented from beginning to end in co-operation among children, youth and adults. Children and youth participate in the designing, implementation and assessment of their own residential environment and surroundings.

The most essential place of operation is the school, because it always covers the entire age group. Operation of the student association is developed so as to become a part of a municipal participation and influencing system by providing student bodies real opportunities to influence.

Local influencing is put in motion by forming Local Groups where the representatives of the student association's executive committees of different schools and representatives of youth houses in the area assemble. Children and youth discuss themes that interest them in the Local Groups and plan how shortcomings can be remedied and how new ideas of young people can be put into action.



## 12.1 The Voice of the Young

A participation system of children and youth called The Voice of the Young in Helsinki has been developed in Helsinki. There are also Voice of the Young groups in Kempele and in Jyväskylä rural municipality. The following describes the Voice of the Young in Helsinki campaign. Its vision is that children and youth experience Helsinki as a city in which they are heard and can influence matters important to themselves.

The objectives of the campaign:

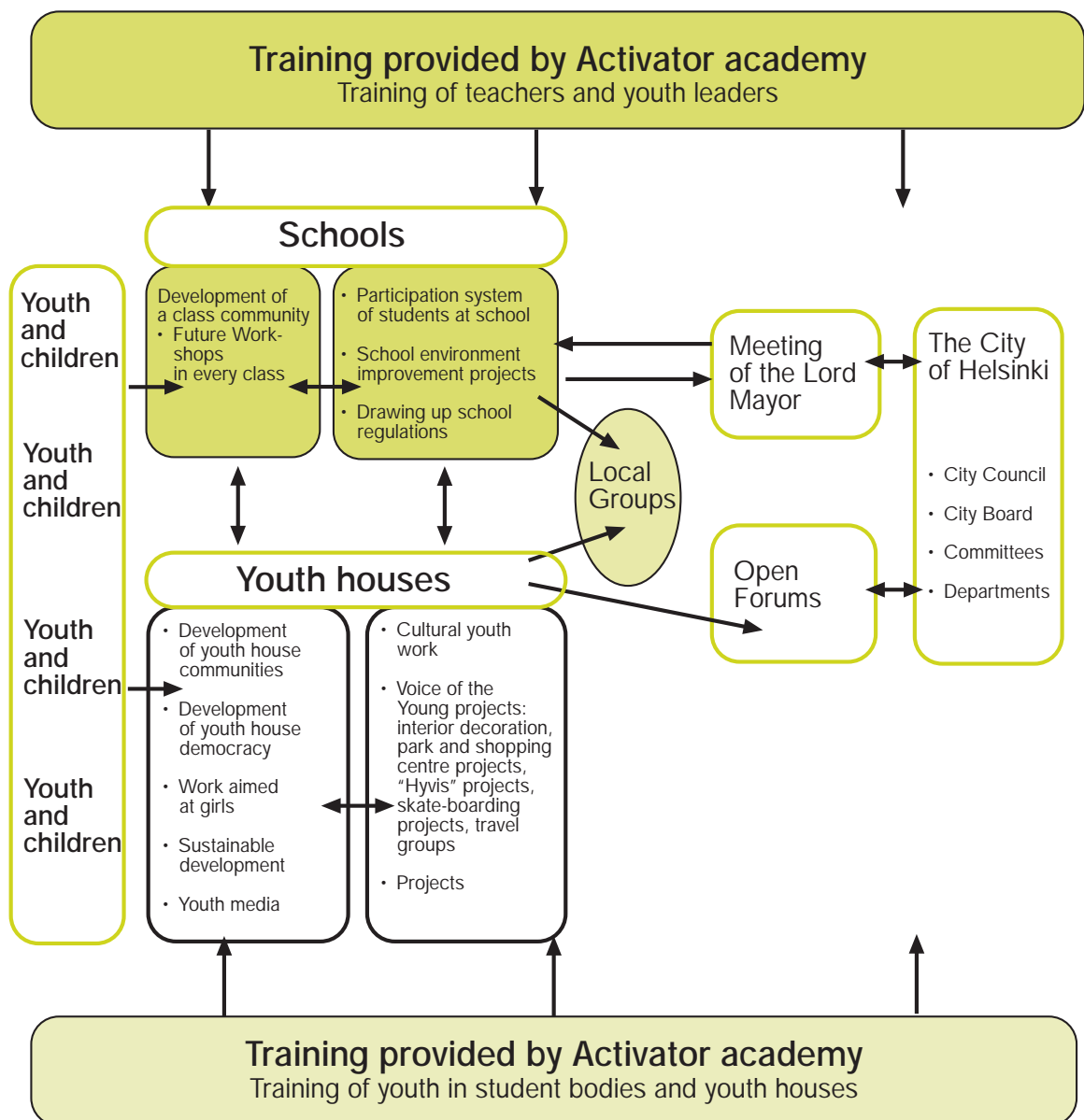
- Children and youth gain experience by playing a part in generating changes in their own residential environment and surroundings.
- The communality of children and youth as well as an operational culture based on negotiation is strengthened in schools and youth houses.
- Children and youth have an opportunity to participate in the development of services and societal decision-making in Helsinki.

### The Voice of the Young meeting

Representatives of all the schools participating in the project attend the Voice of the Young meeting led by the Lord Mayor. The meeting is held in the City Council Hall. Students present their schools' projects, and the amount of money intended for the use of each school is confirmed in the meeting in the form of a grant allocation.. The decisions are no longer submitted to different administrative departments in order to be confirmed. In the Voice of the Young meeting led by the Lord Mayor, students decide on the grant allocated for improvement

projects for the school environment. The grant is money intended for the maintenance of schools, and an annual sum is separated from it to be divided between schools for the needs prioritised by the users, such as schoolyard physical exercise equipment, painting of hallways, furnishing the room of the student council, library corners, etc. Future Workshops (Appendix 7), discussions in the executive committee on class projects and the final decision on the project proposed by each school take place in each class in schools preceding this event. The final decision is made in the executive committee.

PROGRESSION OF THE PROCESSES FROM CLASSES TO THE MEETING OF THE LORD MAYOR



## **Open Forums**

Open Forums are held in the autumn and intended for students of higher classes of basic education, students of upper secondary schools and vocational institutes as well as older youth at youth houses. The theme of the forums is always related to some current issue concerning either young people or the society. In the Open Forums youth interact with leading politicians and officials of the city.

### **Objectives of Open Forums:**

- Youth learn to discuss social issues with both a peer group and decision-makers.
- To create a positive picture and experience of managing collective matters as well as youth's possibilities to influence decision-making concerning them.
- To strengthen the processes that promote societal activity in schools and youth houses.
- To familiarise youth with city officials and city councillors.

The themes are chosen from current issues that have relevance to young people. Previous themes have been "Court sessions on alcohol", "Helsinki of the young – does it exist?" and "Reform of the School Act".

## **Local Groups**

The student association's executive committees also need to be bound to the co-operation between schools, educational institutes and interest groups. The representatives (4 per school) of the student association's executive committee of different schools should assemble at regular intervals. These groups are called Local Groups. They may assemble at the local youth house. In this way, the municipal youth department participates in the development of the student association's operation and establishes contact with the entire age group.

### **Objectives of the Local Group:**

- To train members of the executive committees in their tasks.
- To promote the participation of youth in its own area.
- To create structures for managing local matters.
- To communicate information and share experiences between adults, children and youth.
- To clarify the co-operation between the school and the youth department.
- To substantiate the principle of the Local School.

This way, student bodies are also in both direct and indirect contact with the city's decision-makers.

## 12.2 Youth Council

Youth councils are selected through elections. Those entitled to vote are often persons of 13-20 years of age residing in the municipality, but the age limits vary slightly case by case.

Youth councils do not have the power of decision-making in municipal matters. Their most important task is to communicate youth's viewpoints, wishes and proposals for action to municipal decision-makers. In some municipalities the youth council has the right to present initiatives directly to the municipal council, which has the duty to deal with the matters officially. In other municipalities the youth council has been able to participate, e.g. in the planning of new youth premises right from the beginning.

At its best, the youth council can be an efficient tool for involving young people in the decision-making process. Young people can easily give the youth council members ideas and suggestions, and there is no reason for anyone not to stand for candidacy. What is more, youth council is the best opportunity for efficient learning when it comes to influencing and participation! An office holder that acts as a supporting adult towards the youth council must be appointed in municipalities. His/her task is to encourage and guide youth councillors in presenting initiatives, for example.

The co-operation between student bodies and youth councils has a huge significance for the establishment and strengthening of participation and influencing culture in municipalities. For example, the representatives of the student association's executive committee of schools meet the representatives of youth councils biannually and discuss matters concerning their own municipality's children and youth, and make collective agreements on projects to be taken forward.

Representatives of the youth council should be able to meet leading municipal office holders regularly so that an operational culture promoting the part of students can develop.



## 12.3 Children's Parliament and Youth Forum

The objective of the Finnish Children's Parliament Association is to promote the participation and influencing possibilities of comprehensive school-age children in Finland. The ideological basis of the operation is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The association is a member organisation of the Finnish Youth Cooperation - Allianssi. In addition to an executive committee and a guidance group, a consultative committee with a representative from every parliamentary party supports the operation of the association.

### **Objectives of the association:**

- To act as a municipality-specific assembler of participation and influencing forums for comprehensive school-age children.
- To develop and diversify the interaction between the public administration, schools and pupils.
- To help municipalities establish their own influencing forums in accordance with the model of the Tampere Children's Parliament.
- To bring forward statements and declarations of municipality-specific Children's Parliaments and the Finnish Children's Parliament as well as to assist the progression of initiatives taken.
- To help the authorities report on the decision-making concerning children and youth that is already in the preparation phase.
- To keep in touch with the authorities, especially the Ministry of Education, and report on the current matters related to participation and influencing of comprehensive school-age children.
- To organise an annual meeting of the Finnish Children's Parliament, commencing in 2007, the year when the Finnish Parliament celebrates its 100th anniversary.
- To present initiatives and make proposals by decision of its executive committee.
- To organise training meetings and produce material promoting influencing skills directed at comprehensive school-age children.

### Tampere Children's Parliament

Children's Parliament has operated in Tampere since 2001. Its operation was established as part of the youth services of the city's culture department in 2004. A youth leader, supported by the country's first municipal children's spokesman in Tampere, is responsible for the operation of the Children's Parliament.

The Children's Parliament model is based on participative operational culture.

In accordance with an initiative made to the training committee by the Tampere Children's Parliament, student bodies' executive committees comprised of class representatives commence their operation in all comprehensive schools with grades 1 through 6 in the autumn. Teachers, pupils, representatives of parent-teacher associations and youth workers will also start to receive training in participative operational culture. It is important that every citizen in Tampere is able to have a part in matters concerning their own school, residential area and city. The school representative in the Children's Parliament brings initiatives arising from his/her school concerning the school's mandate either directly to the government or to a major meeting. The model of representation of the Children's Parliament is based on school mandate.

The city of Tampere has asked the Children's Parliament to provide statements on various issues, and it has invited representatives of the Children's Parliament to participate in the planning and preparation phase of matters. The Children's Parliament has presented numerous initiatives to the city officials either by direct contact or as written initiatives. The initiatives have concerned various matters such as ventilation at schools and possibilities linked to the use of computers, acquisition of pigeonholes with locks, skate-board ramps and increasing the number of litter bins at beaches.

The representatives of the Children's Parliament have been elected in elections from comprehensive school grades 5-7 in Tampere. The representatives assemble in the Council Hall for major meetings twice a year. In addition to an executive committee a school, a city planning as well as a culture and leisure-time committee is elected for a two-year term in the first major meeting of the term. Meetings are organised approximately once a month and the committees are open to all those interested. Increasingly, attempts are also made to utilise the potential provided by the Internet in making an impact. The Children's Parliament co-operates with Tampere Youth Forum and has contact persons from all political parties represented in the council.

When the next representative term commences in November 2006, the Children's Parliament will comprise pupils from grades 1-6. There will be one primary representative from each school and a first and a second deputy representative are elected as substitutes for him/her. Pupils from grades 4-6 are candidates in the school elections and the pupil who has received the most votes will become the primary representative. The deputy representatives will be elected from pupils in grades 4 and 5, amongst those who have received the most votes. If a possible sixth grade representative moves on to seventh grade in his/her second year of activity the first deputy representative will become his/her school's primary representative. The term is still a two-year term.

## Tampere Youth Forum

The key task of the Tampere Youth Forum is to influence decisions relating to young people's lives and the things they enjoy. The Youth Forum monitors the decision-making concerning youth and creates its own initiatives on matters that it considers important. The objective is to function as a sort of lobby group or influencing channel for youth from seventh grade onwards in Tampere.

The Youth Forum has presented initiatives on issues such as increasing the number of premises for bands, setting up of a youth café in Tampere as well as receiving a right to participate and speak in committees of its choice. Some of the initiatives have been made in co-operation with the Children's Parliament.

The Youth Forum organises a major meeting twice a year to which two representatives are elected from all schools in Tampere from grades 7–10, upper secondary schools and vocational institutes with election processes chosen by the school.

The executive committee and other committees began their operation in the autumn 2001. The committees comprise those for school, city planning as well as culture and leisure-time concerns. In addition to these, there is an event group, which primarily manages music and sports events.

The most significant annual event is the band competition entitled Tampere Ilmiö. The next Ilmiö will be organised in May 2005. Currently, over 30 young people are involved in the work of the executive committee and committees of the Youth Forum. The Youth Forum has contact persons from all political groups in Tampere.

Members of the Children's Parliament and the Youth Forum received the right to participate and speak on matters concerning children and youth in the culture and leisure-time committee as well as the education committee during the 2004 autumn term. One member at a time from both forums participated in the meetings. The agendas of the committees in question were reviewed in the meeting of members' own committees. Continuation of the new participation model will be decided on after the experiences gained from the participation experiments are assessed at the end of spring 2005.

# THE AGENDA

( — — — items with a dashed line are intended to be filled out)

Name and address of the student association of the school

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## AGENDA

Time -----

Place -----

Participants -----

### **1. Opening and news of the meeting**

### **2. Noting and quorum of the members present**

The members present are identified: a name list is circulated and the chairperson notes whether the representative of each class is present. If a quorum exists, the meeting is declared open.

### **3. Selection of the scrutinisers of the minutes (if necessary)**

Two scrutinisers of the minutes are selected. If voting is carried out in the meeting persons counting the votes are selected.

### **4. Accepting the rules of procedure of the meeting**

The agenda of the meeting is gone through and accepted. Additions to the existing agenda may be accepted at this time. Matters to be decided on, discussed and reported are selected from the items to be dealt with.

### **5. Notices**

Notices are gone through, if there is something to be reported.

### **6. Items to be dealt with**

Items on the agenda are dealt with.

### **7. Other matters**

In this section matters that were not yet on the agenda at the beginning of the meeting are dealt with.

### **8. Assessment and close of the meeting**

## THE MINUTES

Name and address of the student association of the school

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## THE AGENDA

Time -----

Place -----

Participants -----

### 1. Opening and news of the meeting

The chairperson opened the meeting at \_\_\_ \_\_ \_\_

News brought by the members of the executive committee is written down.

### 2. Noting and quorum of the members present

It is noted that the meeting is regularly convened and that it has a quorum.

The list of members present is added to an appendix.

### 3. Selection of the scrutinisers of the minutes (if necessary)

The names of the selected scrutinisers of the minutes and persons counting the votes are written down.

### 4. Accepting the rules of procedure of the meeting

The agenda of the meeting is accepted as are the rules of procedure.

### 5. Notices

Notices brought forward in the meeting are marked down.

### 6. Items to be dealt with

Motions made and carried are written down here. Other motions which have been discussed but not carried are also written down.

Motion 1 -----

Decision -----

Motion 2 -----

Decision -----

Implementation, roles of responsibility and reporting of decisions are agreed on together.

7. Other matters

Other matters that have been brought forward in the meeting are written down.

8. Assessment and close of the meeting

Summary of the assessment of the meeting as well as the date of the next meeting are written down.

The chairperson ended the meeting at — — — —

In fidem

\_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson

\_\_\_\_\_

Secretary

We have audited the minutes and found them to be accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_.\_\_\_\_\_200\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Scrutiniser of the minutes

\_\_\_\_\_

Scrutiniser of the minutes

# THE TASKS OF THE CLASS REPRESENTATIVE ARE:

**1**

To negotiate and communicate messages from the pupils of the class to the meeting of the student association as well as to communicate them back from the meeting.

**2**

To be active in the meetings and, if necessary, to participate in the work of the committees.

**3**

To act as a link to other pupils.  
All the pupils can influence the matters of the school through the class representative.

## GROUP FORMATION METHODS

The objective of the exercise is to create a safe atmosphere in the meetings of the student association's executive committee. Getting to know one another helps to set up a good atmosphere and to promote open discussion. A positive feeling of familiarity and skills of acting together are strengthened in the meetings of the executive committee. The objective is to achieve a feeling that we are in the same boat, considering school matters together.

### Getting to know one another

At the beginning of the exercises of getting to know one another all the pupils stand up and divide into pairs or groups with those members who they do not know.

- Find yourself a new pair and tell him/her who you are, from which grade and what you hope the operation of the executive committee will be like.
- Form groups of four and introduce yourselves as before. Discuss what you hope the operation of the executive committee will be like and make a list of 3-5 points that you cover. The entire group stands up and members introduce themselves one at a time. Finally, one member from the group tells one point from the wish list. In this way each group presents itself and pupils continue to voice their hopes in a new round until all the hopes have been told to others.
- One pupil takes the chairperson's gavel in his/her hand and tells who s/he is and from which grade. After that s/he passes the gavel to another pupil and s/he again tells who s/he is and from which grade. The round continues until everyone has presented him/herself.
- Pupils divide into groups of three. With discussion they search for a factor that connects the members of the group. They present themselves to all the other members in turn and tell what connected the group.
- Divide into groups of three. Tell each other in the group why each wanted to become a member of the executive committee.
- Divide into groups of three. Tell each other of the executive committee's accomplishments in previous years, what has been good and what each would have liked to change.
- In groups of three, tell a few things about yourself that you are especially good at. Highly emphasise your strengths. Present yourselves to the entire group and similarly emphasise your strengths.

### Revision of names

Write name tags for everyone using e.g. masking tape. Find yourself a pair that you do not know yet. Walk around in pairs, pointing at each other and repeating everyone's names out loud. If you do not remember someone's name, go and check their name tag. Continue



walking around learning the names until you think you know them. Finally, stand in a circle and say everyone's name out loud in pairs. Give applause. The same can also be done sitting down.

Draw and label lines 1-10 on a paper. The lines are places for names. Go and collect on the paper the names and signatures of the members of the student association that you do not know yet. At the same time also ask them a mutually agreed upon question, such as: What is one of the good features of our school? What do you enjoy doing at school? What is your favourite colour? Next time make a follow-on list to the original list so that everyone collects everyone's names. Ask e.g. the following questions: Name one point of how a good student association operates? What helps the student association to operate well? What do you consider as being the most important task of the student association?

## **INFORMATION ABOUT CIVIC INFLUENCING WITH CO-OPERATIVE METHODS**

The following are texts for the presentation exercise in chapter 8.3. There are two texts for each of A and B content, one of which can be chosen according to the situation. The name of the exercise is Jigsaw.

### **Municipal council (text A)**

Municipal council uses the ultimate municipal power of decision, and its tasks are composed, among other things, of deciding the key objectives of the municipality's operation and finances: how the administration, finances and services are organised in the municipality. For example, health care services, libraries and schools as well as services of the youth department are all municipal services.

The council decides the bases of the finances and funding: including the municipal tax rate and other fees charged.

The municipal council approves the entire municipality's budget and financial statement including how much money is available for use at the beginning of the year and how much of it has been used by the end of the year.

The council also selects the leading office holders (for example, the director of the education department) as well as members for the municipal institutions.

The council monitors the management of municipal programs and their outcomes by using the financial statement, annual report and auditor's report.

### **The school board (text A)**

School boards guide the development and the operation of schools and educational institutes. The school board is a governing body operating in every school in Helsinki representing the guardians of the schoolchildren, who are the school's clients. Via the school board, the parents and guardians have an opportunity to participate in and influence the operation of the school. A parent-teacher meeting selects guardian members for the school board every four years, when also municipal elections take place. The school board is a municipally elected organization.

In addition to the guardians, the principal, a representative of the teachers and a representative of the school's other staff (such as school secretary) belong to the school board. There are two members representing the pupils and students in the school boards of comprehensive schools, upper secondary schools and vocational institutes. Divisions of the education committee appoint school boards to their tasks.

The school board generally meets 3-4 times during an academic term.

The school board may be contacted in all matters that concern the family, relating to schools and their operation.

The tasks of the school board are, among other things, to approve the school curriculum

and monitor its changes and support the co-operation between the school and home. The board selects teachers for permanent positions and decides on the school working times and holidays. The board approves the regulations of the school and takes care of maintaining a calm working environment and sets rules, e.g. for the use of cell phones at school. The school boards operate also as links to the surrounding society.

### **Democracy (text B)**

The thought that all humans are equal is central in democracy. Everyone is equally valuable as a human being and as member of the society. No-one should be put down or discriminated against; we must listen to one another and respect each other's opinions instead.

In democracy everyone has the right to influence the decision-making of the society. There is trust in the ordinary person and his/her ability to make sensible decisions. Everyone is able to make sensible decisions if they are given enough information about the issues of concern. When a decision is made on a matter, everyone concerned should have equal opportunities to express what outcome they are prepared to support. Everyone must also have an equal right to vote.

Democracy trusts that the best outcome is reached by examining matters in collective negotiations. When matters are negotiated, it is important to hear everyone's opinions and viewpoints. The opinion presented by one person is as important and respectable as another's. In order for democracy to come to fruition it is important to negotiate thoroughly and critically. Before the final decision is made on a matter, a solution has to be found that satisfies as many people as possible.

### **Rights of the members of a municipality (text B)**

Members of a municipality have a full right to participate in the operation and decisions of the municipality. The Local Government Act even ordains that municipalities have a responsibility to ease the participation of the members of the municipality in the preparation for and process of decision-making.

Voting in municipal council elections is an important form of influencing, but in addition to that, members of municipalities can at any time propose reforms, present initiatives or complain about problems directly to administrative persons and persons elected to positions of trust in the municipality. More detailed information on how matters are brought forward can be attained from the office holders in the municipality or city.

The reception of feedback and proposals for action is the work of office holders and the responsibility of elected councillors. Expressions of opinion and participation in decision-making are the rights of the members of a municipality.

In accordance with the law, the main task of a municipal or a city council is to be responsible for the operation and finances of the municipality. The council is, thus, the core of municipal decision-making.

Councils are elected in municipal elections held every four years. Councillors are persons elected to a position of trust for the length of their mandate; however, their primary employment is elsewhere in the community.

The work of the council is to define the objectives and operational activities of the municipality. Because it is also responsible for the use of municipal funds, it decides what services and projects the municipality invests money in and what it can actually afford. It is, therefore, in a deciding position also in matters concerning youth. In order to have an impact as a citizen in a municipality, a person has to know who makes the decisions in the municipality and how. The council makes its decisions in public sessions, and it is entirely possible to influence its decision-making. In several municipalities, the citizens may familiarise themselves with agenda items that will be voted on in the upcoming sessions e.g. on the council's website.

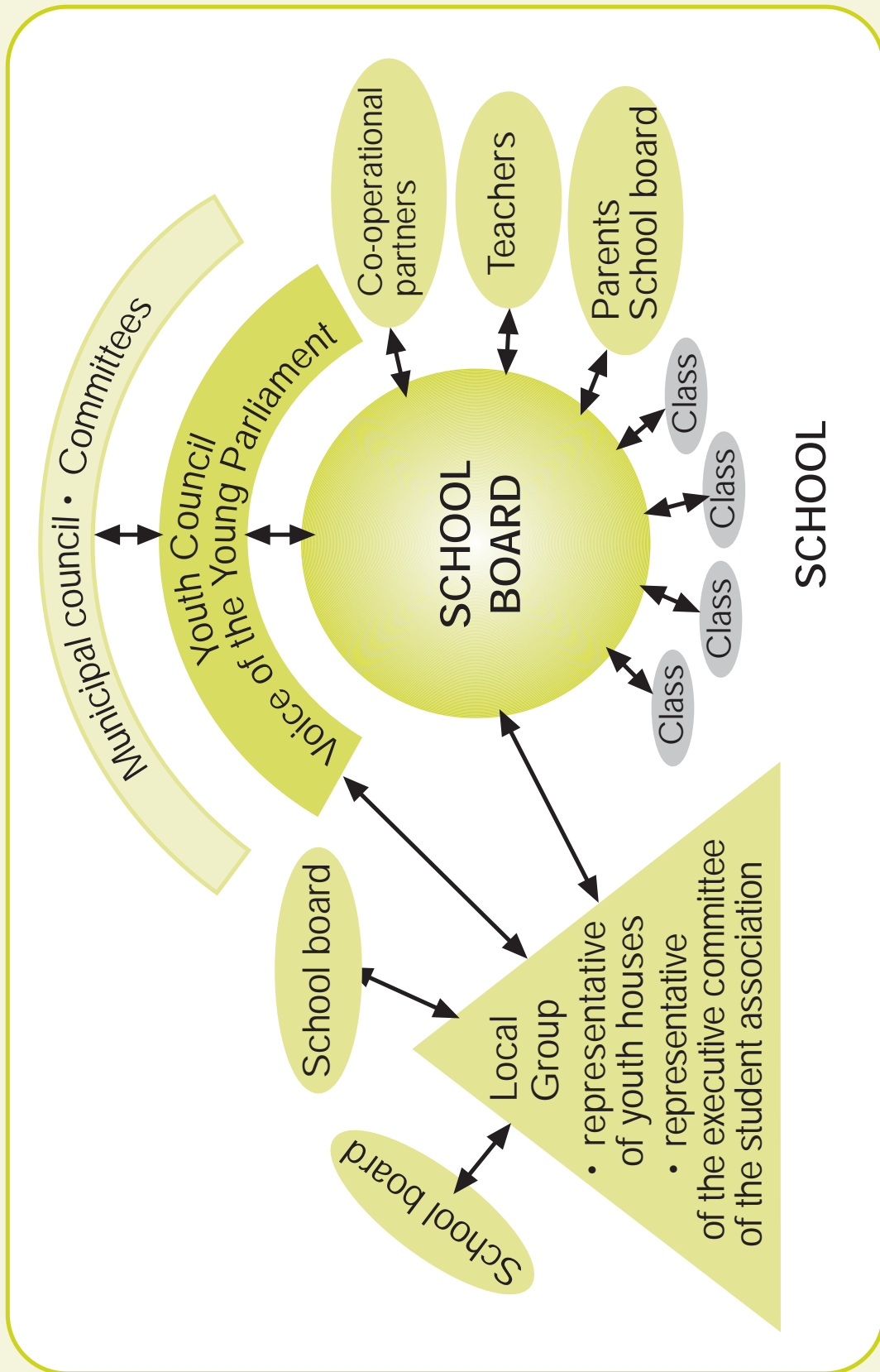
### **Participation of youth (text C)**

Attending and participating in something have slightly different meanings. Attendance means being present in a certain situation that is often organised by other people and which the person has not influenced in any way him/herself. Participating in something, on the other hand, means that a person commits him/herself to an activity and wants to influence the course of matters as well as to take responsibility for the consequences. Participating refers to one's own experience of decision-making and influencing matters as well as a commitment that emerges with experience.

A person's own experience of really being able to make a difference in his/her own life and environment is central to participation. Such experiences of influencing or taking part, increase youth's experience of their own ability to have an impact in society. Young people gain a feeling and an experience that "I am able to influence what happens around me".

Finland's Constitution expressly emphasises that the equality of human beings before the law also concerns children, who must be treated equally as individuals according to the Constitution. Opportunities should also be created for children to influence matters concerning themselves according to their level of development. This section of the law obliges adults to avoid dealing with issues that affect children using only such practices as are based on the knowledge, viewpoints and experiences of adults. This obligation concerns the authorities in particular.

# PARTICIPATION SYSTEM OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH



## FUTURE WORKSHOP - METHOD

Future Workshop is a problem-solving method in which students work democratically as a group to consider the problems and ideas related to a mutually agreed matter that will then be implemented.

### Different phases of the Future Workshop

- **Preparation phase:** Participants are given a motivational introduction to the workshop, and the course of the workshop is explained to them.
- **Problem phase:** The problems and criticisms, negative feelings and reasons for them related to the chosen problem, task, challenge or matter of interest are gone through.
- **Ideation phase:** Students dream, compose and create utopias of how the matter at hand could be influenced so that the situation improves or how the entire problem could be solved differently.
- **Realisation phase:** Implementation possibilities of different ideas are assessed, development projects are chosen and strategies are drawn up.

**In the preparation phase**, participants are informed of the workshop and motivated, the necessary supplementary material is acquired, a comfortable atmosphere is created among the participants (e.g. with group formation exercises) and the course of the workshop is explained.

**In the problem phase** it is important that dissatisfaction can be clearly expressed and that all possible criticism and bad feeling related to the theme is voiced. The better the participants succeed in this, the easier it is to develop solutions. The task of the supervisor is to begin this phase with appropriate questions and guide the situation so that everyone expresses his/her criticism concisely on the chalkboard or on large sheets of paper. The supervisor should discourage all discussion and point out that it will be done later. The objective is that the criticism presented by the participants gives rise to associations in others and sets off a fast-flowing chain of criticism and bad feeling. Now is the time they can complain to their heart's content. The criticisms presented in this phase are written down and the validity of the problems is voted on. They are placed in the order of priority and the supervisor makes a compilation of 4-6 problems.

**In the ideation phase**, solutions for the problems presented are searched for and expressed without judgement by other group members. The objective is to make the participants express their hidden ideas as to the means of solving the problems. In this process, the task of this phase is to encourage the participants to let go of their usual habits, to loosen up and create something new. It is essential that the participants abandon the constraints and limitations set by practical concerns, at least for a moment, and break the barriers that prevent them from seeing new horizons as well as throw off the restraints of daily life that tie down the imagination. Due to this, participants must neither discuss nor criticise matters during the problem and ideation phase. People are afraid of each other's criticism and critique so much, that even a

small discussion easily disturbs one's own work and quickly turns into criticism.

The flow of ideas gathers strength gradually and the process should therefore be continued for a sufficient length of time. The supervisor can once again encourage the process in different ways (by preventing criticism or asking questions that encourage ideas). The result of this phase should be a huge amount of utopian solution proposals related to the problems and participants' wishes that were outlined in the problem phase. The ideas are voted on, they are placed in an order of priority, and the supervisor makes a compilation of the ideas.

**The realisation phase** is the final phase of the actual workshop (a continuous event). The utopian plans are put face to face with reality. The participants now have the liberty to evaluate the implementation possibilities of the projects. In this phase, to begin with, those proposals are eliminated that the participants cannot in any way imagine being implemented, at least at the moment. Those proposals that the participants want to take further remain. The participants consider in small groups what could be done in order to implement the ideas and draw up a plan of the procedures and the progression. At the end of the workshop participants discuss the proposals of the groups and try to develop clear proposals and ideas based on them for follow-up measures.

In the Future Workshops none of the phases can be skipped. In this method, it is essential that each phase be implemented exactly as planned, i.e. that the process gathers speed during the different phases. Otherwise the dynamics characteristic of the process do not evolve and the resulting experience is not what was originally planned. The supervisor acts as the organiser of the group, and together with the group sees to it that all that has been said is written down. Participants are encouraged to write down their opinions on the flap board.

A successful Future Workshop brings joy to the participants, strengthens their self-confidence and makes them feel that their own opinions are valuable and their participation meaningful. The proposals of classes are taken to the student association's executive committee. The project proposals of one's own class are discussed, debated and defended in the student association's executive committee. Finally, the project of the school will be either voted on or a unanimous decision made.

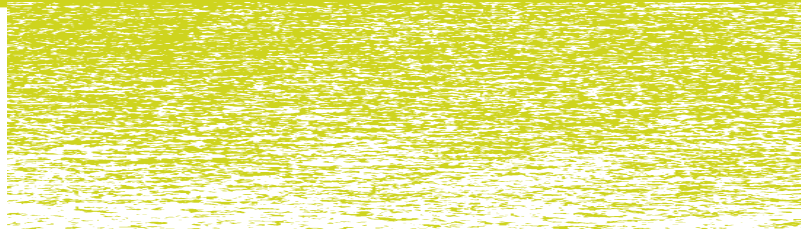
## FUTURE WORKSHOP INSTRUCTIONS

The motivation phase is carried out earlier, e.g. with the use of a school map, etc.

	TIME	MATERIAL	ACTION OF THE SUPERVISOR
PREPARATION		Felt-tip pens, big sheets of paper to be put on the walls	Emphasise the fact that the participants will today consider the improvement of the school environment!
MOTIVATION PHASE	Is held the previous day	Outside or inside map of the school	
<p>PROBLEM (DEFINITION) PHASE</p> <p>Searching for, writing down and recognising problems</p> <p>Identifying why the situation or condition is a problem that has to be solved; what makes it a problem, where it came from, what effects it has, etc.</p> <p>The principle: "What we do not have, what is boring, what troubles us, what annoys us..."</p> <p>NO CRITICISM, NO DISCUSSION</p>	Approx. 30-40 min.	5 big sheets of paper placed here and there on the wall fastened with masking tape, the title "problems" and class is written on the upper edge of the papers.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Encourage students to search for problems. Ask students to write down the problems on a sheet of paper with a pencil. Make sure that there is no discussion or criticism. The more problems/defects are written down the better the progression of the process.</li> <li>2. Read out loud the problems that have emerged. Ask students to give points to the problems according to logger's tally": each student has 3 points to give, the points can be scattered and given to different problems or all 3 given to one big problem. Finally, identify the 4-5 biggest problems according to the points they have received.</li> <li>3. Take one more sheet of paper and write down "PROBLEMS" as the title. Gather 4-5 of the most central problems of the class on the sheet of paper with an indelible pen. Take this sheet of paper to the hallway at the end of the day.</li> </ol>
<p>IDEATION PHASE</p> <p>Ideation phase continues directly after the problem phase, there is no break.</p> <p>Change the problem compilation into positive things (there are no swings in the schoolyard --&gt; nice swings will be purchased for the schoolyard).</p> <p>Students write down answers to the problems, or dream: "If I was a king".</p> <p>NO CRITICISM, NO DISCUSSION</p>	Approx. 30-40 min.	5 sheets of paper placed here and there on the walls and tables, fastened with masking tape, the title "IDEAS" and class is written on the upper edge with an indelible pen.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Encourage creation and dreaming. Ask students to write down ideas on a sheet of paper with a pencil. See to that there is no discussion or criticism. The more ideas and dreams there are the better a project suitable for implementation can be found!</li> <li>2. Read the created ideas out loud. Ask students to give points to the ideas logger's tally-style: each student has 3 points to give, the points can be scattered and given to different ideas or all 3 given to one big idea. Finally, find 4-5 biggest ideas according to the points they have received.</li> <li>3. Take one more sheet of paper and write down "IDEAS" as the title. Gather 4-5 of the most central ideas of the class on the flap board with an indelible pen. Take this sheet of paper to the hallway at the end of the day.</li> </ol>
LUNCH BREAK			



	TIME	MATERIAL	ACTION OF THE SUPERVISOR
<p><b>REALISATION PHASE</b></p> <p>STUDENTS DISCUSS, ASSESS, CRITICISE, agree, disagree...</p> <p>Every student chooses what idea s/he wants to work on.</p> <p>In each group STUDENTS elaborate, assess and criticise ideas and draw up a strategy.</p> <p>Finally, the groups gather into a big group composed of the entire class and discuss and assess the strategies jointly.</p>	Approx. 30-40 min.	<p>A4 papers (to the teachers' room).</p> <p>A sheet of paper on which students write down the project of the class with an indelible pen (to the hallway).</p>	<p>1. Put the IDEA compilation on display. Divide students into groups according to the idea they want to work on. If several students want to work on the same idea divide them into different groups. Max. 4 students per group.</p> <p>2. Instruct students to make a strategy for the implementation of the idea. Are the ideas suitable for implementation? How and by whom will they be implemented, who carries the process forward? Aim to influence the strategy as little as possible, let the students realise themselves e.g. what ideas are impossible. The teacher can guide the students to realise which ideas are impossible by using questions!</p> <p>3. The possible project of the class is discussed. Students consider if there is enough money for it, whether it can be implemented, etc.</p>
Co-operative debate (chapter 8.5)	Approx. 30-40 min.		<p>CO-OPERATIVE DEBATE on two projects worth consideration. Voting only if solution is not reached in any other way!</p> <p>4. Students continue to discuss their collective class project after a conclusion is reached: how everyone must commit themselves to furthering the project during break discussions; the class representatives commit themselves to defending the proposal in the executive committee.</p>
<b>POST-WORK DURING BREAK</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The teacher takes the project of the class written on the A4 to a liaison teacher.</li> <li>• Take the PROBLEMS compilation to the hallway.</li> <li>• Take the IDEAS compilation to the hallway.</li> <li>• Take the PROJECT compilation to the hallway.</li> </ul>	



CERTIFICATE OF PARTICIPATION

DIPLOMA

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

*Has participated in the operation of the executive committee  
of the student association.*

*His/Her task has been:*

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
*S/he has been an active, co-operative and responsible member  
of the executive committee of the student association.*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Time and place

\_\_\_\_\_  
Principal

\_\_\_\_\_  
Supervising teacher of  
the student association

## GLOSSARY

**Agenda:** A list of matters to be dealt with in the meeting. The agenda is not final as matters can still be added to it as the meeting commences.

**Meeting:** A gathering where several persons have assembled to discuss and make decisions. Meetings always have a task to be accomplished, they always have a purpose.

**Opening a meeting:** A meeting is opened with the words "I open this meeting" as well as striking the gavel once.

**Ending a meeting:** A meeting is ended with the words "I end this meeting" as well as striking the gavel twice.

**Meeting technique:** Meeting technique refers to the rules and procedures on the basis of which meetings progress. Learning and knowing meeting procedural rules gives confidence and makes participation in the meetings easier.

**Meeting functionaries:** Meeting functionaries refer to the chairperson, secretary, scrutinisers of minutes and persons counting the votes in the meeting.

**Decision:** The chairperson does not make decisions; all the decisions are made by the meeting or all the participants together.

**Minutes:** All the decisions and matters discussed in the meeting are written down for re-examination. The minutes are drawn up on the basis of the agenda. In order for the minutes to be effective the scrutinisers of the minutes must verify them with their own signatures.

**Scrutinisers of the minutes:** There are two scrutinisers of the minutes. When the secretary has transcribed the minutes of the meeting, the scrutinisers of the minutes read through the minutes and with their own signatures verify that they correspond to the course of the meeting. In order for the minutes to be effective the scrutinisers of the minutes must verify them with their own signatures.

**Work order:** Work order refers to the order in which matters are discussed in the meeting. The agenda becomes the work order when the agenda is accepted as the work order of the meeting.

**Unanimous decision:** When all the participants in the meeting basically agree on a matter, the decision is unanimous.

**Persons that count the votes:** If some matter is voted on in the meeting two persons are chosen to count the votes. Their task is to give out the voting tickets (if needed), to collect them and count the votes. The persons that count the votes may also vote themselves.

## WEBSITES:

### PARTICIPATION FORUM

Generation Europe

The Voice of the Young in Helsinki

Club centre – schoolwork support

Children’s Parliament

Children’s City

The Finnish Youth Council Association

Youth Forum

Youth Academy

The Voice of the Young

Little parliament – Kempele

Northern Karjala Youth Forum

The Finnish Children’s Parliament Association

The Finnish Youth Co-operation – Allianssi

Vaikuttamo

Valtikka

### WEBSITES

[www.generationeurope.eu.com/default.asp](http://www.generationeurope.eu.com/default.asp)

[www.edu.hel.fi/yleissivistäväkoulutus/kehittämishankkeet](http://www.edu.hel.fi/yleissivistäväkoulutus/kehittämishankkeet)  
[www.nk.hel.fi/hna](http://www.nk.hel.fi/hna)

[www.koulunkerhokeskus.fi](http://www.koulunkerhokeskus.fi)

[www.haulitorni.fi](http://www.haulitorni.fi)

[www.lastenkaupunki.net](http://www.lastenkaupunki.net)

[www.nuva.fi](http://www.nuva.fi)

[www.tampere.fi/osallistuminen/nuoret](http://www.tampere.fi/osallistuminen/nuoret)

[www.nuortenakatemia.fi](http://www.nuortenakatemia.fi)

[www.jklmlk.fi/nuortenaani](http://www.jklmlk.fi/nuortenaani)

[www.kempele.fi/Kunta/pikkuparlamentti/index.html](http://www.kempele.fi/Kunta/pikkuparlamentti/index.html)

[www.ponu.net](http://www.ponu.net)

[www.lastenparlamentti.fi](http://www.lastenparlamentti.fi)

[www.alli.fi](http://www.alli.fi)

[www.vaikuttamo.net](http://www.vaikuttamo.net)

[www.valtikka.fi](http://www.valtikka.fi)

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- 3 Kuka ostaisi sivistystä; Raportti kirjastopalveluiden määrittelystä sopimusohjausjärjestelmässä
- 4 Korkeakouluopetus kestäväksi; Opas YK:n kestävästä kehitystä edistävän koulutuksen vuosikymmentä varten
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- 6 Taiteen ja kulttuurin saavutettavuus; Opetusministeriön toimenpideohjelma 2006–2010
- 7\* Opetusministeriön hallinnonalan ammattikorkeakoulujen EU:n rakennerahastohankkeiden laadun arviointi aluevaikutusten kannalta
- 10 Liikuntatoimi tilastojen valossa; Perustilastot vuodelta 2004
- 11 Opetusministeriön toimintakertomus 2005
- 13\* Lika tillgång till konst och kultur; Undervisningsministeriets åtgärdsprogram 2006–2010
- 18 Ammattien kutsu; Ammattikorkeakoulut ja estetiikka



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