

Running successful meetings

Overview

These activities explore challenges related to meetings and examine suggestions for running meetings efficiently and respectfully.

Learning intentions

- Students develop an understanding of how efficient meetings can be planned.
- Students identify opportunities to improve existing meeting practices.

Resources

- 'Running successful meetings' handout
- Large space, 4 tables, chairs.
- 4 sheets butchers' paper.

Activity 1: Who are we and who do we want to be?

Instructions

- In this activity, students will evaluate how the student leadership meetings currently operate. Begin by saying:
'Let's have a think about how our student leadership meetings run and see if there are things we can improve to be more efficient.'
- Give students 'Running successful meetings' handout.
- Read aloud the statements from column one and after each statement, have participants show 'thumbs up' for 'I agree' or 'thumbs down' for 'I don't agree'. Keep an approximate tally of the responses – not a precise count but the general consensus.
Option: students can move between two locations in the room to demonstrate their response to questions. This can help show the group's response and also acts as an energiser.
- Repeat the same process using the statements in the second column. If using movement for the students to illustrate a response, you might like to change the action for example, 'stand up' (I agree) or 'sit down' (I disagree).

- Have a group discussion about the results: highlight statements that the majority of the group agreed or disagreed and invite students to comment and offer an explanation for this decision.
- Create a list of the key things students feel should happen during meetings, based on the team's response to the statements, and how they might action each. For example, if everyone agreed that meetings should run to a set time, the team could decide to set a time limit for each meeting agenda item.

The final list could be used to plan actions for an upcoming meeting, or written into a guide for student leaders to refer to.

Activity 2: Global café

Instructions

This activity builds on the team's review of existing meeting practices, and looks at the different 'roles' that might be needed to facilitate meetings.

- Divide the students into **4** groups and give each table one of these questions:
 - **What do we currently have in our Student Leadership team?**
Prompt: think about positions, people, practices
 - **What do we need to include to our meetings?**
Prompt: refer back to activity one and things the group agrees were needed
 - **What roles do we need in our Student Leadership team?**
Prompt: these could be formal roles, or relate to tasks team members complete
 - **How will we know when things are working well?**
Prompt: what changes will be seen? How will people feel?
- Ask each group to democratically elect a recorder (for example, each person votes for the person they think will be best for the task).
- Groups will spend 3-5 minutes discussing the question at their table. The recorder will note the responses from the group.
- When asked, groups move to the next table; the recorder stays at the table ready for the next group to arrive. They provide a summary of the previous group's responses and then continue to add notes from the next group's discussion.
- Once all groups have visited 4 tables, recorders give feedback to whole group.
Students have the opportunity to clarify any comments or add further information. The facilitator works with the group to highlight the top three responses for each question. For example,
 - What do we currently have in our Student Leadership team?

- representatives from each year group; a teacher coordinator; a vision statement
- What do we need to include to our meetings?
 - a meeting agenda; set time for discussion; record of discussion
- What roles do we need in our Student Leadership team?
 - a chairperson; minute taker or secretary; an elected leader
- How will we know when things are working well?
 - meetings will run to time and follow an agenda; the team will make decisions and plan actions; team members work well together to achieve team goals.

The group should then discuss which of the suggestions should be actioned.

Activity 3: Top tips for running successful meetings

Instructions

Share the following tips with students and see whether they can add any more. For each 'top tip', have a student suggest if and why this would benefit the team.

Before meetings

- ☐ Define the goals of the meeting beforehand
- ☐ Let people know in advance how long the meeting will go for
- ☐ Prepare and share an agenda
- ☐ Identify people to run each section or agenda item of the meeting
- ☐ Check meeting room arrangements, including:
 - Is the room the right size for the group?
 - Are the chairs set up so that it's easy to see and hear each other?
 - Is there a whiteboard for brainstorming?
- ☐ Have a sign-on sheet to record attendance
- ☐ Have copies of materials for people to read or take

During Meetings

- ☐ Discuss expectations for behaviour such as: speaking respectfully and politely to everyone, taking turns to speak, actively listening to others.
- ☐ Take notes during the meeting
- ☐ Set an agreed timeline for completing tasks if people offer to do something
- ☐ Make sure the meeting keeps to the agenda and the set time.

Debriefing questions

Suggest to the group that they bring together all the information from the three activities to make a document, outlining agreed actions to support how the student leadership team will run.

The group can decide whether to include some or all of the 'top tips', the ideas collected from the Global café including team roles, and actions for running meetings.

Concluding comments

Efficient and respectful meetings are really important. They ensure people stay focused, engaged and committed to their involvement and responsibilities. As student leaders, we need to recognise that our peers (and the supervising teacher) are volunteering their lunchtime or afternoon to meet, so using the available time carefully is essential.

Efficient meeting help to ensure the team can plan and action their goals, and as a result, are more likely to achieve success.

Running efficient meetings also develops valuable skills to support us in the future, such as: managing our time and working with others in a respectful manner. This can earn the respect of others by demonstrating our commitment and willingness to act responsibly.

Running successful meetings

Activity 1: Who are we and who do we want to be?

Is this our student leadership group?	Is this what our student leadership group should be like?
• No agenda is prepared • Meeting starts late • No time schedule has been set for the meeting • No one is prepared • No facilitator is identified • No one agrees on anything • No action plan is developed • Everyone is off task • Negative tone throughout the meeting	• Agenda is published beforehand, has who is speaking to each topic and is used to guide the meeting • Has a start and finishing time • 75% of team members are present and engaged in topic(s) • A system is used for monitoring progress of implemented solutions (Action Plan) • A system is used for documenting decisions (Minutes) • Facilitator & minute taker and come prepared for meeting and complete during the meeting responsibilities • Next meeting is scheduled • All regular team members (absent or present) have access to the meeting minutes within 24 hours of the meeting • Decision makers are present when needed

Activity 2: Global café (recorders to write notes on this sheet)

What do we currently have in our student leadership group?

What's missing from our meetings?

What roles do we need in our student leadership group?

How will we know when things are working well?
