Acting as a Student Representative on a Governing Board

Québec 🙟🙟

ACTI JEUNES

GUIDE
FOR STUDENTS
AND TEACHERS

Acting as a Student Representative on a Governing Board

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Introduction

The *Education Act* stipulates that schools with Secondary Cycle Two instruction must have student representatives on their governing boards. These students must already have been elected to sit on the school's student committee. This Acti-Jeunes guide has therefore been developed to help students understand the role they will play as members of the governing board. It provides answers to questions raised by students and their resource persons, and responds to their needs by suggesting various training activities. The activities will allow students to take a more dynamic approach and hone their skills as they take part in implementing their school's educational project.

In addition, this guide contains an overview of the new values of partnership that underlie the concept of governing boards, an outline description of how each board is constituted, an examination of the attitudes the student representatives must develop if they are to play their role to the full, and information on deliberative assemblies. The Appendix contains training activities and a support kit to be photocopied and handed out to interested students at the beginning of the school year.

1   A new sharing of powers

1.1   Sharing of powers

The reform of the education system launched in 1997 is designed to ensure the success of the greatest possible number of students within the framework of Québec's educational project by means of decentralizing powers in order to give schools more autonomy.

> To this end, a new sharing of powers has been introduced that assigns new roles to the Ministère de l'Éducation (MEQ), school boards and individual schools.

Role of the MEQ:

– determine the broad educational policy guidelines

– allocate resources fairly among the school boards

– guarantee quality education by deciding on the diplomas to be awarded and the requirements for obtaining them

Role of the school board:

– ensure that students in its territory receive the services provided for by the *Education Act* and by provincial guidelines

– allocate resources fairly among schools under its authority

– report to the public on the type and quality of the services offered

Role of the school:

– dispense educational services to students on the basis of the principle of equal opportunity

– instruct and socialize students, and ensure that they acquire qualifications, as specified in its mission

> Giving schools more autonomy means giving schools powers and responsibilities with respect to educational services by[1]:
>
> – involving the school community in defining the policy guidelines and operating procedures of the school
> – recognizing the autonomy of teachers and school administrators and giving students and parents an opportunity to make their views known as essential partners for educational success
>
> creating a decision-making body within each school, namely, **the governing board**[2], and by the same token, establishing a new management relationship between the school and the school board.

In short, the school must be given the leeway it requires to meet the educational needs of all students, by granting the governing board powers to be exercised in partnership (by administrators, teachers, parents, support staff and students). The governing board, through its composition and method of operation, encourages its members to make decisions freely, taking into account the respective roles and rights of all players, always in the best interest of the students.

The first beneficiaries of this partnership, the students, are also given a role to play: they are represented on the board by members of the student committee (Secondary Cycle Two). The student committee is primarily an instrument that allows young people to take part in organizing the operating procedures of the school while teaching them about democracy. The commitment made by the students is described in *Schools: a Place to*

Grow, which states that schools must provide students with the means to "participate in the various decisions which affect the quality of school life and its organization."[3] The document also states that, since the mission of the school is to provide instruction, socialization and qualifications, the quality of teaching practices should be a major concern for all. "It is important that students, as those most concerned with their own education, be well informed about the objectives and methods of teaching and evaluation. They must also be able to express their views on the teaching/learning process and the materials used."[4] The student committee is a key element in ensuring that this objective is attained. As a result of the reform, students now have a role to play in the decision-making process.

The students who represent their classmates on the governing board face a major challenge. After their initial year of participation, students value the trust placed in them when their opinion is sought and taken into account in the decisions made, even if they sometimes have difficulty expressing themselves clearly. However, their first-hand knowledge of student life allows them to present facts in a new light. In some cases, they still seem unsure of their role; they do not always share the same concerns as the adult members, and focus less on administrative and pedagogical aspects; all these obstacles sometimes make them feel they are being manipulated by the adults, who are more experienced debaters, and often involved in internal power struggles. Attending the meetings of the governing board takes time and requires the students to understand the basic principles of the activity and to master specific behaviour patterns and communication techniques.

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1. Basic training on governing boards given by the Commission scolaire de Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, September 14, 1998.

2. See the details given in Chapter 2 concerning the composition and operation of the governing board.

3. Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec. *School: A Place to Grow. Organizational Framework for Student Services.* Québec, 1988, p. 16.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 15.

1.2   New values

The *Education Act* is designed to "establish a better balance in the sharing of powers and responsibilities among the various partners in educational projects at the elementary and secondary levels, in order to provide higher-quality education leading to educational success for the greatest possible number of students."[1]

This new balance is based on recent changes in social and family structures. Schools must be reorganized to take into account lower student enrolment, because of the declining birthrate, and a reduction in human and financial resources. New values have emerged from this change in direction: "today's values promote participation rather than passive obedience, conflict resolution, even if it results in a less serene atmosphere, a collective examination of the issues rather than executive decisions, and learning from mistakes rather than working to avoid mistakes."[2]

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1.   Speech given by the Minister of Education, Pauline Marois, to the Fédération des comités de parents de la province de Québec on November 13, 1997.

2.   Vivi Koffi, Paul Laurin and André Moreau. *Quand l'école se prend en main.* Sainte-Foy: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1998, p. 6.

The following table, adapted from Patterson[1], draws comparisons between the old and the new approaches.

VALUES

Formerly	**Today**
Our organization values employees listening to the organization's leaders and doing what the leaders tell them to do.	Our organization values employees actively participating in any discussion or decision affecting them.
Our organization values employees communicating a climate of group harmony and happiness.	Our organization values employees resolving conflict in a healthy way that leads to stronger solutions for complex issues.
Our organization values employees conveying a climate of decisiveness. Firm decisions are made and implemented without looking back.	Our organization values employees reflecting on their own and others' thinking in order to achieve better organizational decisions.
Our organization values employees concentrating on making no mistakes and working as efficiently as possible.	Our organization values employees acknowledging mistakes and learning from them.

1.   Adapted from: J. L. Patterson. *Leadership for Tomorrow's Schools*. Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1993, p. 9.

The traditional organizational pyramid has been affected by the new approach that leaves little room for isolated intervention to solve a problem. Now, all the forces within the organization are expected to help establish a diagnosis and seek and apply a solution. Among these forces, certain players (including the students) have received many new powers based on dialogue and consensus-seeking to attain a shared goal: educational success for the students.

"School Based Management or School Site Management is a management system that considers each school to be a unique entity that functions as a relatively autonomous component of the school board. This system generally brings together various staff members, such as teachers, the principal and the non-teaching professionals, to make decisions concerning programs, staffing and budgets, with input from the parents, the students in the case of Secondary Cycle Two, and the community."[1]

Underlying the new management approach is the notion of the team, which takes responsibility for ensuring educational success within the conditions and parameters defined by the *Education Act*. In this case, the team is the school team, whose mission is to ensure that the school becomes
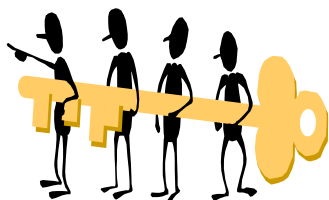
–   "a learning centre for all
–   a collegial group united in its concern for advancing knowledge
–   a place where a joint examination of the issues is used to renew the organization."[2]

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1.   Vivi Koffi, Paul Laurin and André Moreau. *Quand l'école se prend en main*. Sainte-Foy: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1998, p. 32.

2.   *Ibid*., p. 37.

This new approach requires an adjustment in the organization, behaviour, attitudes and roles of each group participating in the operating procedures of the school: administrators, parents, teachers, non-teaching staff and students. The authority and powers of each group have been transformed, and as for any transformation it will take time to learn, to implement mechanisms based on the new roles, and to acquire new competencies in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes. Thanks to its new competencies, the school team will be able to create favourable conditions for ensuring the educational success for the greatest possible number of students.

Acquiring this new operational mindset will be an exacting, complex process. As they move away from the "bureaucratic model", schools will have to obtain more latitude from the school boards. This same latitude must also exist within each school; for example, students will be given more leeway and will be encouraged to participate. Each component of the school team, including the students sitting on the governing board, will have to act with rigour and honesty (knowledge, altruism, competence, power, participation in decisions) in representing its constituents. In this sense, the idea of **partnership** is at the centre of the new approach, placing the direction and organization of each school in the hands of the people most directly concerned.

Participatory management

Underlying the objective of partnership is the notion of participatory management, which is a dynamic approach to human resources management, in which the administrative team allows the personnel to participate in an active and meaningful way. Its purpose is to focus more clearly on objectives by encouraging the active participation of the students in making the decisions that affect them. It also involves increased participation by various players in the decision-making process, and a sharing of authority and responsibility between the

various hierarchical levels of the organization to narrow the "student/decision" gap. In other words, it brings decisions closer to the day-to-day context of the students. Participatory management increases the satisfaction level of the individuals and groups working to provide education.

1.3 The concept of partnership

The evolution of values is based on the concept of partnership, which it is appropriate to define here in terms of its nature, requirements and issues.

Partnership: nature of the concept

Partnership, as part of a participatory management system, is the approach that best reflects the spirit of the *Education Act*. It is a way of bringing people together that is both complex and difficult to implement within an organization; it leads to the emergence of a collective dynamic and a new professional awareness of the sharing of responsibilities and resources.

Partnerships raise new challenges, including the need for each participant to make a firm commitment and a personal investment in order to attain a common objective – from which the participant will also benefit.

The mandate for participation in the governing board is defined in the *Education Act* in relation to objectives that can be of varying interest for the members of the board (rules of conduct, recreational projects, programs of study, budget, social problems, etc.). Partnership means more than a joint analysis of problems and solutions.

Partnership: requirements

Partnerships are based on several ground rules:

–   **an understanding of the role of each party represented**, and of the roles and powers assigned by the *Education Act.*

–   **joint responsibility for the completion of the shared project of educational success**. The relationships developed must be based on equality, meaning that the students must be considered full members of the governing board. In addition, although the principal has most of the information, the concept of partnership refers to a type of leadership that is shared and that facilitates a pooling of efforts to ensure the success of the educational project in which each member has an interest. In this sense, the key elements are the pooling and continuous transmission of information, and harmonious, confidence-based relations with the school administration and staff. When responsibility is concentrated in the hands of a single person or a small group, the other participants cannot feel fully involved and tend to consider themselves as spectators or part-players.

–   **respect for the powers and mission of each participant or group of participants**. Each member must have an interest in participating, while supporting the objectives and feeling comfortable with the culture of the group. Without getting sidetracked from his or her individual mission, each member must participate in a committed way and agree to change approaches, as needed, to share power and ensure the success of the partnership-based project.

–   **complementarity in the pooling of resources, as distinguished from concerted action**. The active collaboration of all the people involved in a project is an indicator of success and goes further than simply keeping people up to date with events.

Partnership: the issues

Working in partnership offers advantages but also involves challenges. The advantages include:

– the possibility of escaping from hermetic systems and breaking down barriers to offer appropriate, high-quality responses to problems

– a balanced sharing of responsibilities

– a demonstration of shared responsibility

– responses and solutions that result from more immediate, better adapted actions

The challenges to be faced include:

– overcoming the passive resistance of certain groups

– overcoming prejudice (for example, concerning the ability of students to represent their classmates)

Partnership: conditions

To establish a genuine, durable partnership as the basis for the work of a governing board, it is necessary to:

– **define a strategic development plan**, setting out actions and projects; the development and presentation of the plan will be beneficial for students

– **grant power to act** and latitude to each group involved (mutual trust, the right to make mistakes, permission to take risks, etc.)

– **require a personal commitment** (attendance at meetings, involvement in communications and actions)

– **require a clear definition of interests**; defining the interests of each group leads to sharing, convergence and conciliation

– **provide for the exchange of information** (finding, processing, and presenting information)

– **require agreement on expected results** to make all the partners jointly responsible for their actions

In short

A new balance between the MEQ, school boards and schools is beginning to emerge. Schools have obtained decision-making powers in educational and pedagogical matters. A new balance must also be defined within each school, by establishing ties between administrators, teachers, professional and support staff, parents and students. The ties derive from an educational project based on participatory management to bring decisions closer to the students, given that section 64 of the Education Act mentions that decisions must be made "in the best interests of the students."

2   The governing board

2.1   Composition[1]

A governing board must be established for each school and begin its operations no later than September 30 each year.

The governing board has a maximum of 20 members, including the following:

– **at least four parents of students attending the school**; the parents must not be members of the school staff, and are elected by their peers

– **at least four members of the school staff**, including at least two teachers and, if the persons concerned so decide, at least one non-teaching staff member and at least one support staff member, elected by their peers; the number of members

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1.   *Education Act*, sections 42, 53 and 96.6.

representing the school staff must be at least equal to the number of parents' representatives

– **two representatives of the community** who are not members of the school staff, appointed by the other members of the board

– **in the case of a school providing education to students in the second cycle of the secondary level, two students in that cycle elected** by the students enrolled at the secondary level or, as the case may be, appointed by the student committee or the association representing those students. Once appointed to the governing board, the students cannot be replaced, even temporarily, by others unless they resign from their position as student representatives on the governing board

It is important to note that the function of the student committee is to promote student input in the preparation, implementation and evaluation of the school's educational project, and the involvement of students in school activities and educational success. The students sitting on the governing board act as the representatives of the student committee.

2.2   Operation

The chair, appointed for one year, directs the business of the governing board. The other members of the board are also appointed for one year, except the parents, who are appointed for two years. The chair has a casting vote in the event of a tied decision.

The school principal, school board commissioners (who can attend and take part in the meetings with authorization from the members of the governing board), and the community members are not entitled to vote, as specified in sections 42, 45 and 46 of the *Education Act*.

According to section 68 of the *Education Act*, the meetings of the governing board are open to the public. Staff members and students can attend and intervene at the end of the meeting, at the "questions from the public" item on the agenda.

2.3   Responsibilities

The *Education Act* stipulates that the governing board is responsible for:

– adopting the school's budget

– adopting the school's educational project, and overseeing its implementation and evaluation

– approving the implementation of special and complementary services

– approving the student supervision policy

– approving the programming of educational activities that entail changes in the timetable or require students to leave the school premises

– approving the approach proposed by the principal for the implementation of the basic school regulation

– approving rules of conduct and safety measures

– approving the time allocation for each subject

– approving the overall approach for the enrichment or adaptation of programs of study

– approving the use of the premises or buildings placed at the disposal of the school

In addition, the governing board:

– must be consulted concerning the choice of subjects and instructional materials for teaching programs of study

– encourages the communication of information and the exchange of ideas and

proposals between students, parents, the principal, teachers and other school staff members and community representatives

– informs the community of the services provided and report on their level of quality

– may enter into a contract for extra-curricular services after submitting the draft contract to the school board

– may enter into a contract for the supply of goods or services with a person or body

– may organize educational activities other than those provided for in the basic regulation, and social, cultural and sports services

– may, in the name of the school board, solicit and receive amounts of money

– is responsible for preparing and adopting an annual report

2.4 Role of the student committee

Under sections 96.5 and 96.6 of the *Education Act*, the government guarantees student involvement in the development, implementation and evaluation of the school's educational project by providing for the establishment of a student committee in every school with Secondary Cycle Two instruction. In addition, section 74 of the *Education Act* specifies that, in developing its educational project, the governing board must promote concerted action with the students. This is a major change, since the former student councils were not legally recognized; they were organized as a complementary service and their activities were limited to aspects of student life.

It is important to remember that, in a school dispensing instruction at the Secondary Cycle Two level, the school administration is responsible for establishing the student committee. However, the committee is then responsible for defining its own rules of internal management.

The purpose of the student committee is to promote students participation in developing, implementing and periodically evaluating the school's educational project, in fostering academic success, and in school activities. Two members of the committee, generally the chair and vice-chair, can make suggestions to the governing board on behalf of the students likely to facilitate the proper operation of the school. To enable the committee to function, section 96.7 of the *Education Act* gives the student committee the right to meet on school premises.

3 Developing aspects of attitudes

The concept of partnership described above allows decision to be based on real-life situations, to be brought closer to the people involved, especially the students, and to increase their level of satisfaction with the decisions made. To attain these results, some basic rules need to be observed:
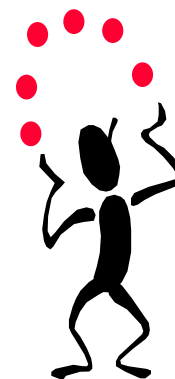
– progress and success depend on the involvement of all players

– autonomy must be permitted and encouraged

– all players must demonstrate their trust in other people

– information must be provided honestly

– the value of all contributions must be emphasized

The successful implementation of the approach depends on the fact that all players:

– recognize the need for change

– have a clear vision

– base authority on credibility

– take an interest in their role

3.1 Recognizing the need for change

This is the key to successfully changing an ingrained way of doing things; it is also where resistance may be encountered. Sometimes people mention the past successes of the traditional management approach as a reason for keeping the related powers and privileges.

3.2 Having a clear vision

A vision is an ideal that a person believes in and pursues. This vision defines an ideal situation for the school, for the school's activities, and for educational success. For the student representatives, targeting success involves becoming aware of trends, listening to their fellow students and being present in the school. Several methods and techniques, official and unofficial, can be useful provided they are applied correctly.

3.3 Basing authority on credibility

It is important to base authority on credibility, rather than on power. Student representatives must apply their influence strategically, use appropriate communication techniques, and behave in a suitable way.

3.4 Taking an interest

The students elected to the governing board must be willing to make a commitment, make themselves available, remain open to others and make decisions based on partnership. Naturally, they must be aware of the rights and duties, as defined in the *Education Act*. This means that the student representatives must

– **be fully aware of the role they will be playing** in the new school context, and especially of their duty to represent all students when they sit as members of the governing board.

– **act with transparency and daring;** by remaining sincere, and at the same time innovative and imaginative, they will be able to overcome resistance and find solutions in the best interest of all the students.

– **understand the structure and operations of the governing board,** and the principles of management and organization set out in the *Education Act*. A proper understanding of the powers delegated to each player will allow them to participate confidently, and knowledge of how meetings are conducted will allow them to intervene effectively.

– **be able to master complex situations**. Every student representative must learn how to present specific problems or situations clearly and calmly, and to suggest realistic solutions. The ability to present a subject in a succinct, structured way, highlighting the positive aspects and presenting arguments that are relevant to the role played by the governing board, will help demonstrate the value and seriousness of the student representatives.

– **display appropriate attitudes.** By adopting appropriate attitudes and behaviour patterns, the student representatives will be able to exercise the influence that is theirs by right as the representatives of all the students at the school. In addition, they will be expected to comply with basic ethical rules, listen actively and use communication skills.

In this way, the student representatives will be able to play their role effectively and exercise their influence with their adult colleagues.

4 Special assets

4.1 Motivation

Student participation

Further to the tour conducted in the fall of 1999 to gather information and testimony concerning the experience of student members of governing boards, it became evident that in general, student members were not very interested in the subjects discussed. As a result, they tended to withdraw by participating less. This, in turn, led to a drop in the confidence felt by students in general towards the student committee and toward student participation in the governing board. Power struggles between adult members, poorly organized meetings, incomprehensible language, the time commitment required, and the inability of the students to present and defend their concerns were some of the difficulties mentioned by the student representatives that prevented them from fulfilling the role expected of them.

Sources of motivation

Motivation is often the energy source that helps students play an effective role within a group. It is therefore essential for resource persons to identify the main sources of motivation for students to sit on a governing board. Some of these sources are discussed below.

a. *Mobilization*

To be mobilized means to identify with a group and share its interests, and to be willing to make the extra effort that distinguishes "doing more" from just "doing what you have to."

In order to mobilize or motivate students, they must be given responsibility and must feel that their efforts are recognized.

b. *The need to identify with a group and a cause*

It is hard to meet this need, because the group formed by the governing board is a working group that carries out specific tasks, and whose members have a wide range of different concerns. Students who feel that their interests are not being addressed will be unwilling to invest their energy. As a result, the governing board should find a way to structure its activities that is based on respect, and offer training accessible to all members at the same time.

Once the student representatives are aware of their own role and of the objectives of the governing board, they will be in a better position to collaborate, and less likely to lose interest. Sitting as a member of the governing board gives them personal pride and earns them respect from the other members of the

board, other students and teachers. Student representatives who are deprived of one of these forms of recognition quickly become dissatisfied and tend to abandon their position.

c. *The need to act*

The students sitting on a governing board need to feel that their presence is useful for their fellow students through concrete action with short or medium term objectives and clearly observable results. The feeling of being part of a group that is actively looking for solutions is clearly a source of motivation.

d. *Self-realization*

Self-realization is "the process of becoming aware of and developing one's own abilities and talents."[1] It can only be achieved through hard work, proper planning, and the ability to carry the work through.

Group motivation of a governing board depends largely on the ability of the chair and the school principal to take steps to facilitate the quest for "success" by the various partners in the educational project, all of whom can become agents for mobilization.

On the other hand, the main reasons why student representatives lose interest and even abandon their position on a governing board are as follows:[2]

– lack of leadership
– poor organization or structure
– incompatibility between the members
– feeling of uselessness

1. Association des élèves du Cégep de Sainte-Foy. *Guide de formation continue*, 1999, p. 2, 17.

2. *Ibid*., p. 2, 20

- feeling of powerlessness
- lack of participation by the other members
- overly ambitious or unrealistic expectations
- lack of enjoyment

4.2   Communication

The primary ability that a person must possess or develop in order to exert any form of influence is clearly the ability to communicate, "a process by which people establish relations with each other,[1]" in order to facilitate understanding.

To exercise influence, a student representative who has the ability to communicate must also be able to:

- motivate and inspire people to make a genuine commitment
- establish relationships based on cooperation and trust
- remained focused on the questions at hand
- solve conflicts
- provide accurate information
- prevent communication breakdown

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1.   Ronald Adler and N. Town. *Looking Out / Looking In*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1987, p. 21.

With regard to difficulty in communicating, it is important to distinguish between:

What I think	What you want to hear
What I mean	What you think you are hearing
What I think I am saying	What you are hearing
What I say	What you understand
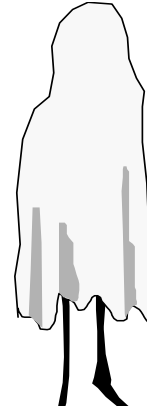
Source: *The Empire of the Ants*, Bernard Weber

Student representatives must master the basic techniques of verbal and nonverbal communication and select types of behaviour to match a specific context, goal or audience (see Support Kit in the Appendix).

[1]

TOUT VOIR ET BIEN VOIR

TOUT ENTENDRE ET SAVOIR ECOUTER

SAVOIR PARLER ET SE FAIRE COMPRENDRE
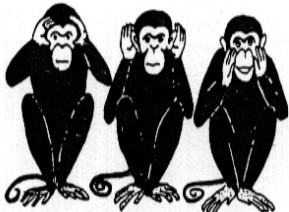
WATCH AND SEE
HEAR AND LISTEN
SPEAK AND COMMUNICATE

Types of interpersonal communication

Verbal communication

Verbal communication relies on the memory of the listener. It is possible to receive immediate feedback from the listener and to adjust the message or adapt it to the specific situation.

Verbal communication requires speakers to possess several key aptitudes: the ability to listen and to observe, and to show empathy with the listener. It is often supported by other types of communication, such as facial expression, gestures, signs and so on.

Nonverbal communication

Most (in fact, 80 percent) of the information we receive is nonverbal. The main elements of nonverbal communication are looks, posture, distance, movement, tone of voice, gestures, repetitive movements, and touch. They are more difficult to decode than a verbal message, but are especially valuable in that they are often involuntary.

Six important elements for getting a message across[2]

1. Have a clear image of what you want to communicate.

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1. Cégep de Rivière-du-Loup. *Notes and exercises for the "Communication techniques" course.* 1998, section 2, p. 1.

2. Cégep de Rivière-du-Loup. *Notes for the "Group leadership and teamwork" course.* 1998, p. 28.

2. Know the person you're talking to and adapt your communication style accordingly.

3. Use the vocabulary of the person you're talking to rather than your own.

4. Use as few words as possible when speaking.

5. Repeat key elements of the message.

6. Encourage feedback, check that the other person has understood, ask questions, and ask for information to be reformulated.

The ten commandments of active listening[1]

1. Let the other person speak, otherwise how can you listen?

2. Put the other person at ease by making clear that he or she is free to speak.

3. Show that you're willing to listen, show your interest and avoid doing something else at the same time.

4. Avoid distractions.

5. Try to put yourself in the other person's shoes in order to understand his or her point of view.

6. Be patient and leave the other person enough time to speak, without interrupting.

7. Stay calm, to make sure you don't misunderstand anything.

8. Try not to be critical or judgmental, which would put the other person on the defensive.

9. Ask questions to show the other person you're listening and encourage him or her to continue; this will also help introduce a new point of view.

10. Always pay attention to what the other person is saying.

Since we have two ears and only one mouth, shouldn't we be twice as good at listening as we are at talking?[2]

4.3 Participation

Ground rules for being a good participant[3]

1. Arrive on time.

2. Listen.

3. Give your opinion.

4. Try to understand.

5. Trust other people.

6. Take other people's point of view into account.

7. Respect the agenda.

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1. Cégep de Rivière-du-Loup. *Notes for the "Group leadership and teamwork" course.* 1998, p. 30.

2. Cégep de Rivière-du-Loup. *Notes and exercises for the "Communication techniques" course.* 1998, part 2.

3. Cégep de Rivière-du-Loup. *Notes for the "Group leadership and teamwork" course.* 1998, p. 9.

8. Try to establish a consensus.

9. Let people know if you're not going to be there.

10. Think positively.

11. Ask questions if you don't understand.

12. Be clear, precise, concrete and concise.

Advice on how to participate actively

Be prepared

Official meetings require preparation. The representatives of each group must prepare carefully. The student representatives:

–   must have gone over the agenda carefully (before the meeting!)

–   must have gathered information about the items on the agenda that could affect school life

–   must have established the best ways to present the points they want to discuss

–   must make sure they have brought along all the documents they will need to back up their point of view

Focus on the topics of the discussion

During a meeting, the discussions sometimes get off-topic. For various reasons, especially when the participants introduce new subjects, secondary matters can be raised or two subjects can be discussed at the same time. By asking the questions "What are we doing right now?" or "What are we actually discussing right now?" a participant can

exert influence and suggest that the discussions be brought back onto the main topic.

Adapt to variations in attention levels

During a discussion by a working group, not all participants are as involved as others, depending, for example, on how much they know about the topic. Some people will try to monopolize the debate. The other participants must be aware of this and react to move the discussion forward; this is another way to exert an active influence.

Recognize underlying interactions

At times, some participants begin discussions among themselves without addressing the meeting, while others listen distractedly or just act as observers. There is a risk that the group will fall apart and that only a few people will take part in the discussions. By observing who is speaking and who is listening, a participant can get a better idea of how to direct his or her comments when the time comes to present an opinion.

Know what the effects of the decision will be

It is important to pay attention to the details and consequences of the decisions made by the group. Not all the decisions are important for all the members, and some members sometimes feel they are not affected. However, some decisions may have considerable consequences for the students, or even for the student representatives themselves.

5 Procedure for a deliberative assembly

What is a "deliberative assembly?"

"A deliberative assembly is a meeting where people come together to examine, discuss and state their position on a question of shared interest. In other words, they must come to an agreement as a group on a particular question, or find a solution to a problem or a way of settling a strategic situation."[1]

5.1 Vocabulary[2]

Adopt

To "adopt" means to select and support a solution, or to make a decision or define a position on a subject. For example: the governing board adopts the school's educational project (section 74 of the *Education Act*.)

Adoption

A motion may be adopted unanimously or by a majority vote; "unanimously" means that all the members vote for the motion, while "by a majority vote" means that at least one member votes against. A person who "abstains" decides not to vote either for or against the motion; a person who votes against a motion may ask that his or her reasons for voting against the motion be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

Adjourn

To "adjourn" a meeting means to end it, and to postpone discussions to another time or another day. If the period between the two meetings is quite short, it is not necessary to send out a new notice convening the members to the meeting.

Amendment

An "amendment" is a change made to a motion that has already been tabled; the amendment can add, replace or remove certain words in the motion, but must leave it essentially intact. The amendment itself must be accepted before the motion itself is voted on. If the amendment changes the nature of the motion, it must be rejected and a new amendment must be presented.

Approve

To "approve" means to indicate agreement, and also to accept a decision; it is the last decision that is made on a particular topic. For example, the governing board approves the student supervision policy proposed by the school principal (section 75 of the *Education Act*). If the board decides not to approve the policy, the principal must prepare a new policy.

"Whereas..."

The word "whereas" is used to introduce an important fact that all the parties must be aware of. For example, a motion might begin as follows: "Whereas section 96.6 of the *Education Act* states that the student committee must encourage the collaboration of students in fostering academic success and in school activities...".

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1. Victor Morin. *Procédure des assemblées délibérantes*, Laval: Éditions Beauchemin, 1991.

2. Fédération des comités de parents de la province de Québec. *Guide de fonctionnement des comités*, 1998, chap. 3, p. 1.

"Considering that..."

The words "considering that" are used to introduce a supporting argument that needs to be brought to the attention of the other parties; the argument often refers to the problem that needs to be solved. For example, a motion might begin as follows: "Considering that after conducting a poll of the students, the student committee holds that the solution proposed is not in the best interest of the students...".

Consult

To "consult" means to ask someone for information, an explanation or an opinion. When you consult someone, you acknowledge their expertise. For example, the parents' committee must be consulted on various matters (section 193 of the *Education Act*.)

Table

To "table" a document means to bring it to the attention of all the participants. The document will be examined and discussed at the appropriate time.

Give an opinion

To "give an opinion" means to say what you mean or to express yourself on a particular subject. For example, the parents' committee gives its opinion on matters likely to improve the operation of the school board (section 192.2 of the *Education Act*.) The opinion is intended to provide information and guide the person or body responsible for actually making the decision.

Elect

To "elect" somebody to a position means to vote for the person best suited to fill the position. An election officer is appointed to oversee the process by calling for candidates and organizing a vote, if necessary.

Participate

To "participate" means to play an active role in a conversation, activity or working group in which several people are involved.

Question of order

A "question of order" is raised when the rules for the meeting have been broken, the discussions are off-topic or someone is behaving improperly.

Question of privilege

A "question of privilege" is not directly connected to the subject under discussion, but concerns the rights and privileges of the members of the assembly; it must be dealt with immediately.

Propose

To "propose" (or "move") means to suggest a specific action or express a specific intention.

Motion

To make a "motion" means to suggest a course of action; it must be proposed and seconded. First, the proposal is clarified to make its meaning clear, and then discussed. If the proposal is adopted, it becomes a decision and is recorded in the minutes. Only one motion can be debated at a time. The motions must be voted on one by one; they can be adopted by the group unanimously or by a majority vote. A motion is sometimes called a "resolution". It must be clear; where necessary, it must specify to whom it applies, the deadline for applying it, and who must follow up on it. A motion could be phrased as follows: "We move that the governing board review the situation at its next regular meeting and present a solution that responds to the needs of the students more effectively."

Quorum

A "quorum" is the minimum number of members who must attend a meeting to make the proceedings valid. For example, to obtain a quorum at a meeting of the board of governors, at least half of the members must be present, including two out of four parents' representatives (section 61 of the *Education Act*.)

Rules of internal management

The rules of internal management are the rules that a committee establishes to govern its own operations. They are generally discussed and accepted at the first meeting of the governing board, and are then reviewed each year. The rules can be temporarily suspended during a meeting if a majority of the members agree to do so.

The rules must be based on the compulsory provisions of the *Education Act* concerning governing boards. The rules may state how the students at the school will be represented on the governing board, by specifying the status, rights and duties of the student representatives as voting members of the governing board.

The rules of internal management are official rules and everyone must comply with them.

In general, "a vote of two-thirds of the members is required to make, change or abolish a rule of internal management."[1]

Postpone

To "postpone" something means to decide to deal with it later. An item on the agenda can be postponed for various reasons and examined at a later date.

Casting vote

When a vote is tied (an equal number of people have voted for and against), the person chairing the meeting has a casting vote. In other words, in a deadlock situation, the chair has the final say.

5.2   Agenda

To make it easier to examine and deal with the topics, an "agenda" is generally prepared before each meeting that brings the topics together under various headings.

a.   At the beginning of the meeting, the chair asks the members present to approve the agenda. A motion is made and seconded, and a vote is taken.

b.   To change the order of the items on the agenda, two thirds of the members must vote in favour.

c.   Here is an example of an agenda:

   1.   Opening of meeting and verification of the quorum.

   2.   Reading and adoption of the agenda.

   3.   Reading and adoption of the minutes of the previous meeting.

   4.   Business arising from the last meeting.

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1.   Victor Morin. *Procédure des assemblées délibérantes.* Laval: Éditions Beauchemin, 1991, p. 27.

5. Information and reports from committees.
The student representatives can take the floor here to inform the meeting of their concerns.

6. New business.
The student representatives can speak here about the projects of interest to them.

7. Miscellaneous business.

8. Question period for questions from the public.

9. Adjournment of meeting.

5.3 Minutes

At the beginning of the meeting, the secretary reads out the minutes of the previous meeting and the chair asks the members present to approve them. If the members have already read the minutes before the meeting, it is not necessary to read them aloud at the meeting. Any mistakes or omissions are corrected immediately. The minutes must be signed by the secretary, who prepared them, and by the chair of the meeting, who moves that they be adopted.

The minutes must include the following:

– the date, time and place of the meeting, the name of the person chairing the meeting, and the names of the present and absent members

– a brief report on the discussions

– the decisions made at the meeting, the names of the people who proposed and seconded each motion, and the results of the votes

– the time at which the meeting was adjourned

Only a member who attended the meeting concerned and is entitled to vote can propose or second the adoption of the minutes.

Since the minutes are a public document, the student representatives on the governing board can present them to the student committee. This brings the students up to date with the decisions and projects that may have an impact on the students' activities or on school life.

5.4 Rights and duties of the chair

– The chair opens the meeting at the scheduled time or when a quorum is attained.

– At the appropriate time, the chair presents each item on the agenda.

– The chair directs the debate and gives the floor to the members who wish to speak.

– The chair can interrupt a member who speaks without authorization or who takes the discussion off-topic.

– The chair clarifies each proposal made, by rephrasing it to make sure its nature and meaning are absolutely clear. Questions may be asked to ensure that all the members understand the proposal in the same way, but this is not the time to make extensive comments. The chair then submits the proposal to the meeting for discussion, until a member asks for a vote. The chair can then ask if at least two thirds of the members are ready to vote. If the proposal is to be amended, the amendment must be voted on. If it is passed, the chair reads out the amended proposal and discussion resumes. If a sub-amendment is made, the members must vote first on the sub-amendment,

next on the amendment, and finally on the amended proposal.

– The chair rejects any proposal that is not in compliance with the rules of internal management of the board of governors or that is outside its authority.

– The chair declares that digressions, arguments and personal attacks are against the rules and has the right to expel any member who does not comply.

– The chair may (but this is not the ideal situation) take part in a discussion and provide information for the members, but must allow them to speak. The chair may explain the effect of a proposal (and, for example, ask for the opinion of the student representatives), and call the meeting to order if the discussion is not in compliance with the rules.

– When a member invokes the rules, the chair must rule on the question of procedure concerned and give the reasons for the decision.

– In the event of a tied vote, the chair has a casting vote (section 63 of the *Education Act*.)

5.5   Deliberations

A deliberative assembly expresses its opinion on every question brought before it, by adopting a motion proposed by a member and seconded by another member (according to the rules of internal management). The motion is read out by the chair; it becomes the matter under examination and is open for discussion by the group. At this point, the students can make their opinions known. Only one motion may be discussed at a time.

Once a motion has been proposed, seconded and read out by the chair, it may be

– discussed; in other words, any member may express an opinion

– amended; words may be added to the motion to make its meaning clearer

– sent to committee; in other words, it may be assigned to a small group of members to be examined in more detail

– withdrawn; the consent of the meeting is required before a motion can be withdrawn

– voted on; all the participants with the right to vote may vote for or against the motion

– reconsidered; in this case, the motion is set aside for further examination later during the same meeting

Discussion of the motion

The member who originally proposed the motion usually begins the discussion. Each member is entitled to speak once, but may speak again with the permission of the chair and the unanimous consent of the assembly, unless the member simply wishes to correct an incorrect interpretation of what he or she originally said (this rule is valid for meetings with 20 or more participants, but it is often bypassed by the rules of internal management).

The person who proposed the motion is generally entitled to respond to the arguments raised against it before a vote is taken, but should not begin any new explanations at this time.

The member may restate the arguments supporting the motion. The members of the meeting who take part in the debate (including student representatives) must be clearly for or against the motion under discussion.

Amendments to the motion

A motion may be amended to make it clearer, provided its basic meaning is not altered. Words may be added, deleted or replaced. However, only one amendment may be considered at a time.

Referral to committee

If additional information is needed, or when a motion has been heavily amended, it is sometimes appropriate to form a sub-committee, or for the group as a whole to temporarily form itself into a committee, to examine it in more detail. In this case, the members are no longer restricted by the rule allowing them to speak only once; the discussion may be broader, but must still focus on the question under consideration.

Usually, one of the members will propose that the question be referred to a committee, which will present its report at the next meeting. This allows as much information as possible to be gathered before a decision is made. **To avoid delaying the decision, it is important that the student representatives prepare their comments or arguments, along with all the documents they will need during the discussion**. It is important to note that support from two-thirds of the members is required to allow a question to be examined again at a time other than the time scheduled in the agenda.

Withdrawal of a motion

Once a motion has been submitted by a member and accepted by the chair, it is open for discussion. The supporters of the motion cannot withdraw it without the consent of the member who proposed it, the member who seconded it and a majority of the other members.

Vote on a motion

Once the discussion is over, the chair asks the members if they are ready to vote, reads out the motion, and asks the members with the right to vote to indicate whether they are for or against the motion.

A member can ask for a vote at any point in the debate, even before speaking on the motion; the member's request must be seconded, but cannot be debated. If two-thirds of the members support the call for a vote, the vote is taken. It is important to note that, officially, the school principal is not entitled to vote at meetings of the governing board (section 46 of the *Education Act*).

Reconsideration of the motion

A motion that is adopted or rejected during a meeting may be reconsidered at the same meeting if two-thirds of the members agree, if all the members who voted for the motion are still present, if there are new facts to support the reconsideration, and if it can be dealt with quickly.

Adjournment of meeting

At the beginning of the meeting, a motion is usually presented stating the time at which the meeting will end. Sometimes, it is appropriate to adjourn the meeting in order to continue it at another time. Any question that is still under consideration when the meeting is adjourned or suspended is abandoned automatically, and must be reintroduced later by a new motion.

6   Web sites

Information on governing boards:

http://www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/conseil/

This Web site contains a variety of information for members of governing boards. There is a discussion area where members can post their questions and obtain the opinion of members of other governing boards throughout Québec.

Acti-jeunes:

http://www.acti-jeunes.qc.ca

The Web site contains information on a wide range of Acti-jeunes activities and training sessions.

Acti-jeunes is a network for the exchange of materials and information and a place to share enriching experiences. It is designed for use by students and staff members in all schools in Québec. It provides support for students' learning by encouraging them to play an active role in school life.

Acti-jeunes offers training sessions on various topics, such as student representation on governing boards, student radio stations, or various projects such as regional symposiums organized by students.

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Student Training Activities
(Activity Sheets 1 to 8)

"Gathering opinions"

Each player must ask the members of the group whether or not they support a particular statement, and why. If they agree, they sign underneath the statement; if they disagree, they do not sign. The player must be able to explain to the group the reasons given by each person for agreeing or disagreeing with the statement.

The only way to promote democracy at school is to let students have a say in decisions affecting school life. _____	In terms of attitudes, listening is more important than communicating. _____	It is possible that some people in a school may have powers without responsibilities. _____	Students with voting rights can be influenced by parents and teachers. _____
The adult members of the governing board are afraid that the students will take power; they are afraid of invasions on their territory. _____	The involvement of the student representatives on the governing board is limited to extracurricular activities. _____	When students feel that "a school" has become "their school", they are more likely to attend, work hard and succeed. _____	The lack of participation is due to individualism and nothing can be done about it. _____
A strong governing board is made up of members who basically share the same opinions. _____	Young people who take part in public activities are at an advantage for developing their social conscience. _____	Boys have less social conscience than girls and are not as good at representing other students. _____	Young people have less credibility than adults because of their short-term vision. _____
Young people hesitate to make commitments (at school and elsewhere) because they feel they are not entitled to act. _____	It is more advantageous to exert an influence on a public meeting when you do not have the right to vote. _____	The students at a school must be in charge of their own projects. _____	Girls often chair meetings, take the floor and become leaders. _____

Activity Sheet 2

Label game[1]

Learning objectives

➢ Highlight the attitudes that create barriers for democracy.

➢ Recognize that the exercise of democracy requires that student representatives avoid negative stereotyping and adopt an open-minded attitude to the opinions, preferences and interests of all the groups they represent on the governing board.

➢ Recognize that, as members of a working team that they have not chosen, the participants often act with the best intentions but sometimes under the influence of various preconceived notions.

Procedure

The activity leader prepares a set of sticky labels, each with one word on it (see below), and then sticks a label on each student's back. The students move around the classroom for a few minutes, choosing the people they want to work with after studying their label. They can choose to work with other people, or on their own. Once the students have had a chance to see everyone's label, they form their working groups.

Role of activity leader

The activity leader asks the students who have chosen to work on their own if they made the decision themselves, or if it is because nobody else wanted to work with them. The activity leader then collects all the labels and presents them to the group.

A short survey is conducted by the activity leader to find out what each participant felt during the game, by asking the question "In general, what was the reaction of the other players when they read your label?". The activity leader categorizes the answers under rejection, indifference or acceptance.

The students are asked if labels exist in real life and if labelling can make it difficult, in a working group or governing board, to do the work or reach the consensus needed to make a decision or solve a problem.

Possible words for use on labels: teacher, parent, gossip, clown, complainer, shy, honest, go-getter, authoritarian, friendly, liar, dopey, principal, leader, loud-mouth, etc.

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1. Translated and adapted from "Jeu des étiquettes", activity sheet 5.2 in the Acti-jeunes document *Jeunes en santé–Qualité de vie en classe,* Ministère de l'Éducation, 1998, p. 48.

Lively Debate

Learning objectives

➢ Realize that it is sometimes easy, and sometimes difficult, to carry out the duties assigned by the student committee when representing students on the governing board.

➢ Demonstrate creativity, clarity and an ability to summarize ideas.

➢ Develop verbal and nonverbal communication skills.

Role of activity leader

The activity leader explains that not all the students in the school are aware of the work done by the student representatives, and that representing fellow students is a task that is based on, among other things, a democratic process. To highlight the various facets of the representative's task, along with the qualities needed to act as a student representative, a debate allows the participants to discover the positive and negative aspects of being a student representative.

Procedure

The participants are divided into two equal teams. The first team defends the idea that it is difficult to represent fellow students on the governing board; the second team shows that it is possible, and even easy, to fulfill this role in a secondary school. (The group can also be divided into four teams, two for and two against.)

The activity leader gives the teams ten minutes to establish their position and designate a spokesperson (there will be four spokespersons if the group is divided into four teams.)

The activity leader chairs the meeting, and sets the following rules:

➢ the spokesperson for each group has two minutes to speak

➢ each team has five minutes to prepare arguments against the position of the other team

➢ the spokesperson for each group has one minute to sum up in a final statement

The activity leader notes and comments on the most convincing arguments presented, and asks the students to state which arguments they found most the most effective and why.

Activity Sheet 4

Debating

Learning objectives

➢ Obtain first-hand experience in communicating ideas and presenting a project to a governing board.

➢ Recognize that the ability to present and justify arguments and to convince the other members is a basic requirement for properly presenting the students' point of view to the governing board.

Role of activity leader

The activity leader tells the students that, to understand the best way to represent fellow students on the governing board, they must prepare arguments and make a proposal concerning the problem described in one of the scenarios below.

The activity leader acts as the chair of the meeting, and is careful to apply all the rules and procedures normally used during a meeting.

Procedure

The group is divided into two teams. Each team is given a different scenario to present; it must establish its opinion on the scenario and prepare the arguments it will use to present its case to the other team at the time indicated by the chair. Each team has ten minutes to prepare its case.

The chair calls the meeting to order, reads the agenda and applies the normal procedure for a deliberative assembly.

Some students can be asked to act as observers and to concentrate on the following points during the debate:

➢ compliance with procedure

➢ effective communications techniques

➢ verbal and non-verbal communication and the clarity of the ideas expressed

➢ the ability to sum up ideas

➢ the clarity of the proposals

➢ listening behaviours

Fifteen minutes is allocated to discuss each item on the agenda, in others words each situation. If, after that time, no proposal for an acceptable solution has been made, the group must define its position using the various means available to a deliberative assembly.

The chair sums up the meeting by highlighting the key moments, the quality of the presentations made and the weaknesses observed; the students are asked to participate in reviewing their actions. If some of the students acted as observers, they are asked to take part in the feedback activity.

First scenario: "A missed opportunity"

The students at the school who wanted to be able to wear halter tops and miniskirts to school missed their opportunity to change the school's dress code.

None of the hundreds of students who had demonstrated in front of the school the previous week attended the meeting on Tuesday evening, as requested by the governing board.

In the absence of the students, the teachers, parents and school administrators voted to maintain the current dress code.

The school principal was unable to explain why the students had missed the opportunity to attend the meeting. "Perhaps they haven't prepared their case properly," he suggested.

According to the chair of the governing board, the school's decision was based on the idea of decency. "We need to keep things decent. We have a dress code and it must be respected," she said, pointing out that the school was generally quite permissive.

The chair of the governing board also stated that some parents had called to say that they preferred the school to apply a strict dress code. "We have to be careful about setting a precedent," she said. "What would we do if next year's fashion was bikini tops?" she added.

(Translated and adapted from the daily newspaper *Le Droit*, May 27, 1999.)

As the student representatives, you must attend the governing board meeting and convince the members to reverse their decision on the dress code.

Second scenario: "Money for school activities"

Under section 94 of the *Education Act*, a governing board can look for sources of private funding, provided they are compatible with the school's educational values.

A major computer company has offered to give the school some new computers and replace its old computers, as long as its own advertising systematically appears every time one of the computers is used.

In addition, the local McDonald's has offered financial support for the school's sports team. The team has some excellent players but its budget has been slashed. The company would provide each player with a team uniform, provided the uniform was in the colours specified by the fast-food chain. The budget for educational outings would also be increased if the governing board agreed to allow a monthly announcement on the student radio station to advertise the special menus available at the company's restaurants.

You must work with the governing board to assess the two offers and to define the "educational values" that would enable you to accept the offers.

Measuring participation levels

Learning objective

➢ Give the participants an opportunity to assess and discuss their own level of participation in the preceding activity.

Procedure

First, each member of the group must assess his or her own contribution to the discussions based on the scenarios presented in the preceding activity.

Next, each member assesses the contribution of the other members to the activity.

Lastly, the group, with the help of the activity leader, analyzes the preceding activity and highlights the most revealing aspects.

Assessment of personal contribution

Self-assessment

I am satisfied in particular with the way I:_____

_____

I am dissatisfied in particular with the way I:_____

_____

Did I state clearly whether I was for or against the decisions made, and did I explain my reasons clearly?

In cases where I disagreed with the other members, did my sense of belonging to the group allow me to support the majority opinion?

Do I feel that people listened to and understood my opinions during the activity?

Do I feel comfortable expressing ideas that are not shared by the other members of the group?

Assessment of other group members

For each member of each team, identify three positive behaviour patterns or personality traits that the member should keep and develop.

For each participant, identify three negative or unproductive aspects that the participant should try to correct. Give concrete examples, with details.

For each participant, indicate elements connected with the participant's personality, behaviour or attitudes that he or she does not possess and should try to develop. Give examples.

Group assessment

Was each participant's opinion taken into account in the final outcome?

Were the participants able to influence each other? How?

Did it seem as though some members were being forced to agree with the majority?

Were there any problems in the way the activity was organized?

What words could be used to describe the group atmosphere during the discussions?

Were any decisions made? If so, what were they? If not, why were no decisions made?

How were the decisions made?

Making decisions[1]

Learning objective

➢ Examine the usual methods of making decisions.

Procedure

This activity encourages participants to reflect on how decisions are usually made during a meeting, in particular during a governing board meeting. The participants must read the following statements and choose the five that apply best to governing board meetings.

Circle five numbers.

1. When it is necessary to make a decision, somebody usually suggests that a small group (or the whole group) study the question in detail.
2. The people with the most authority generally make the decisions.
3. Everyone has an opportunity to express their point of view.
4. Everyone usually agrees with the decisions made.
5. Decisions are often made following a majority vote.
6. The chair actually makes the decisions.
7. People often agree with and support the decisions that are made.
8. Some representatives tend to band together to influence people's opinions.
9. The decisions made are generally based on a group consensus.
10. No decision is made until every participant has implicitly agreed with it.
11. People are free to express their point of view, but it's clear that the school administration makes the decision.
12. Some people tend to dominate the group because they are good speakers and have more experience.
13. No decision is made until everyone has indicated at least a minimum level of support for the proposal.
14. A majority vote is needed before a proposal can be accepted.
15. Each member actively supports the decisions made.

Circle the numbers that correspond to the five statements you have chosen.

STATEMENT NUMBER			TOTAL	TYPE OF DECISION
2	6	11		Individual decision
1	8	12		Minority decision
5	9	14		Majority decision
3	4	13		Consensus decision
7	10	15		Unanimous decision

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1. Adapted from *Guide de formation continue*, Association des élèves du Cégep de Sainte-Foy, 1999, p. 53.

Am I receptive?[1]

Learning objective

➢   To make participants aware of their ability to be receptive during a meeting.

Procedure

Give personal answers to the following questionnaire, and identify areas where you could improve.

	Often	**Generally**	**Sometimes**	**Rarely**
1. I can set aside my preconceived ideas about the people I speak to.	0	1	2	3
2. I wait until the person I am speaking to has finished before responding.	0	1	2	3
3. I carry on listening even if I think I know in advance what is going to be said.	0	1	2	3
4. If the other person hesitates, I encourage him or her to continue.	0	1	2	3
5. I sum up what has been said with the other person.	0	1	2	3
6. I am patient during a discussion.	0	1	2	3
7. I take the time to listen.	0	1	2	3
8. I focus all my attention on the person I am talking to.	0	1	2	3
9. I let the other person speak, even if they repeat themselves.	0	1	2	3
10. I wait until the end to express an opinion.	0	1	2	3

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1.   Adapted from: Yves Saint-Arnaud. *Les petits groupes: participation et communication*. Montréal: Presses de l'Université de Montréal et Éditions du CIM, 1978, 136 p.

	Often	Generally	Sometimes	Rarely
11. I can uncover the main ideas in what is being said.	0	1	2	3
12. The general context helps me to understand specific words.	0	1	2	3
13. I understand all the implications of what is being said.	0	1	2	3
14. I really try to put myself in the other person's position, and to understand their point of view.	0	1	2	3
15. The other person manages to get my personal attention.	0	1	2	3
16. I respect the other person's ideas and opinions.	0	1	2	3
17. I listen because I want to.	0	1	2	3
18. I stay calm even if the other person is excited or angry.	0	1	2	3
19. I perceive hidden feelings.	0	1	2	3
20. I let the other person finish speaking without interrupting.	0	1	2	3
21. I focus all my attention on the other person despite possible distractions.	0	1	2	3
22. I can identify and understand the other person's point of view over a long period of time.	0	1	2	3
23. I encourage the other person to continue, by smiling or nodding my head.	0	1	2	3
24. I ask questions to make sure I have understood.	0	1	2	3

PERSONAL REMARKS: AM I RECEPTIVE?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Test: How I Act in Conflicts[1]

The proverbs listed below can be thought of as descriptions of some of the different strategies for resolving conflicts. Proverbs state traditional wisdom. These proverbs reflect traditional wisdom for resolving conflicts. Read each of the proverbs carefully. Using the scale given below indicate how typical each proverb is of your actions in a conflict.

5:   **Very typical** of the way I act in a conflict.

4:   **Frequently typical** of the way I act in a conflict.

3:   **Sometimes typical** of the way I act in a conflict.

2:   **Seldom typical** of the way I act in a conflict.

1:   **Never typical** of the way I act in a conflict.

Proverb		Reaction			
1. It is easier to refrain than to retreat from a quarrel.	1	2	3	4	5
2. If you cannot make a person think as you do, make him or her do as you think.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Soft words win hard hearts.	1	2	3	4	5
4. You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Come now and let us reason together.	1	2	3	4	5
6. When two quarrel, the person who keeps silent first is the most praiseworthy.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Might overcomes right.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Smooth words make smooth ways.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Better half a loaf than no bread at all.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Truth lies in knowledge, not in majority opinion.	1	2	3	4	5

1.   Adapted from: David Johnson. *Reaching Out*. Englewoods Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1981, p. 201-203.

11. He who fights and runs away lives to fight
another day.   1   2   3   4   5

12. He hath conquered well that hath made his enemies flee.   1   2   3   4   5

13. Kill your enemies with kindness.   .   1   2   3   4   5

14. A fair exchange brings no quarrel.   1   2   3   4   5

15. No person has the final answer but every person
has a piece to contribute.   1   2   3   4   5

16. Stay away from people who disagree with you.   1   2   3   4   5

17. Fields are won by those who believe in winning.   1   2   3   4   5

18. Kind words are worth much and cost little.   1   2   3   4   5

19. Tit for tat is fair play.   1   2   3   4   5

20. Only the person who is willing to give up his or her
monopoly on truth can ever profit from the truths
that others hold.   1   2   3   4   5

21. Avoid quarrelsome people as they will only
make your life miserable.   1   2   3   4   5

22. A person who will not flee will make others flee.   1   2   3   4   5

23. Soft words ensure harmony.   1   2   3   4   5

24. One gift for another makes good friends.   1   2   3   4   5

25. Bring your conflicts into the open and face them
directly; only then will the best solution
be discovered.   1   2   3   4   5

26. The best way of handling conflicts is to avoid them.   1   2   3   4   5

27. Put your foot down where you mean to stand.   1   2   3   4   5

28. Gentleness will triumph over anger.   1   2   3   4   5

29. Getting part of what you want is better than
    not getting anything at all.   1   2   3   4   5

30. Frankness, honesty, and trust will move mountains.   1   2   3   4   5

31. There is nothing so important you have to fight for it.   1   2   3   4   5

32. There are two kinds of people in the world, the winners
    and the losers.   1   2   3   4   5

33. When one hits you with a stone, hit him or her with
    a piece of cotton.   1   2   3   4   5

34. When both people give in halfway, a fair settlement
    is achieved.   1   2   3   4   5

35. By digging and digging, the truth is discovered.   1   2   3   4   5

SCORING TABLE

Withdrawing	Forcing	Smoothing	Compromising	Challenging
1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

The column with the highest total indicates the strategy that you use most often in conflict situations.

The column with the lowest total indicates the strategy that you use the least often.

Support Kit for Student Members of a Governing Board

Acti-jeunes: Guide for Student Members of a Governing Board

Membership on the governing board

As a student member of the governing board, my role is to:

- represent the interests of all the students at the school (in accordance with section 64 of the *Education Act*) to help make my school an environment conducive to academic success.

- represent students with special needs who either have social, family, academic or personal difficulties, or a disability that makes it hard for them to integrate or achieve success.

During the meetings of the governing board, my position authorizes me to:

- share my observations with the governing board and propose solutions.

- present or request approval for projects that may have a positive effect on the life of the school.

- ask questions about things I don't understand, and check whether projects will have positive or negative consequences for life at school.

- give my opinion on subjects that could influence the quality of life for students at school.

Ground rules for being a good participant [1]

Arrive on time.　　　　　　Listen.　　　Give your opinion.

Try to understand.　　　　Trust other people.　　　Ask questions if you don't understand.

Take other people's point of view into account.　　　　Respect the agenda.

Try to establish a consensus.　　　Let people know if you're not going to be there.

Think positively.　　　Be clear, precise, concrete and concise.

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1. Adapted from: Cégep de Rivière-du-Loup. *Notes for the "Group leadership and teamwork" course.* 1998, p. 9.

Before each meeting of the governing board, I make sure that I

- understand my role

- have gone over the agenda

- have gathered information about the items on the agenda that could affect school life

- have found out opinions of the other students through the student committee or in another way

- have all the documents I need to back up my point of view

- am well prepared if I have to present a project or report

- can focus all my attention on the subject under discussion

- can keep a respectful attitude while giving my opinion or discussing other people's opinions

- can present facts (statistics, examples, etc.) and not just observations, which will increase my credibility

- understand the structure and operation of the governing board.

Rules to follow for good communication:

- Motivate others and encourage them to make a concrete contribution.

- Establish relationships based on cooperation and trust.

- Keep to the topic being discussed.

- Facilitate conflict resolution.

- Provide accurate information.

- Avoid communication breakdowns.

Six important elements for getting a message across[1]

1.   Have a clear image of what you want to communicate.

2.   Know the person you're talking to and adapt your communication style accordingly.

3.   Be familiar with the appropriate vocabulary.

4.   Use as few words as possible, but make sure they are accurate.

5.   Repeat the key elements of your message.

6.   Encourage feedback, check that the other person has understood, ask questions and ask for information to be reformulated.

The ten commandments of active listening [2]

1.   Let the other person speak, otherwise how can you listen?

2.   Put the other person at ease by making clear that he or she is free to speak.

3.   Show that you're willing to listen, show your interest and avoid doing something else at the same time (such as studying for an exam!).

4.   Avoid distractions, otherwise you could lose track of the discussion.

5.   Try to put yourself in the other person's shoes in order to understand his or her point of view.

6.   Be patient and leave the other person enough time to speak, without interrupting.

7.   Stay calm, to make sure you don't misunderstand anything.

8.   Try not to be critical or judgmental, which would put the other person on the defensive.

9.   Ask questions to show the other person that you're listening and to encourage him or her to continue.

10.   Always pay attention to what the other person is saying.

Since we have two ears and only one mouth, shouldn't we be twice as good at listening as we are at talking?[3]

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1.   Adapted from: Cégep de Rivière-du-Loup. *Notes for the "Group leadership and teamwork" course.* 1998, p. 28.

2.   Adapted from: Cégep de Rivière-du-Loup. *Notes for the "Group leadership and teamwork" course.* 1998, p. 30.

3.   Cégep de Rivière-du-Loup. *Notes and exercises for the "Communication techniques" course.* 1998, section 2.

Activity preparation guide

Introduction…

… introducing the participants

… presenting the context

                        What? Why?
                        When?
                        Where?

… setting objectives

                        Reason for the activity
                        Expected results

Description…

… explaining how the activity will take place
                        What will happen?
                        How will it work?

… defining the elements that make up the activity
                        What are the implications?
                        How will the obstacles, if any, be overcome? (Materials, funding, supervision, etc.)

… specifying the outcome

                        Expected results
                        What will happen after the activity?

… determining a timetable

                        What will be done? By whom? When?

Conclusion…

… highlighting the feasibility of the activity and the positive effects on school life.

Checklist of definitions[1]

Adopt	To "adopt" means to select and support a solution, or to make a decision or define a position on a subject. For example: the governing board adopts the school's educational project (section 74 of the *Education Act*.)
Adoption	A motion may be adopted unanimously or by a majority vote; "unanimously" means that all the members vote for the motion, while "by a majority vote" means that at least one member votes against. A person who "abstains" decides not to vote either for or against the motion; a person who votes against a motion may ask that his or her reasons for voting against the motion be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.
Adjourn	To "adjourn" a meeting means to end it, and to postpone discussions to another time or another day. If the period between the two meetings is quite short, it is not necessary to send out a new notice convening people to the meeting.
Amendment	An "amendment" is a change made to a motion that has already been tabled; the amendment can add, replace or remove certain words in the motion, but must leave it essentially intact. The amendment itself must be accepted before the motion is ratified. If the amendment changes the nature of the motion, it must be rejected and a new amendment must be presented.
Approve	To "approve" means to indicate agreement, and also to accept a decision; it is the last decision that is made on a particular topic. For example, the governing board approves the student supervision policy proposed by the school principal (section 75 of the *Education Act*). If the board decides not to approve the policy, the principal must prepare a new policy.
"Whereas..."	The word "whereas" is used to introduce an important fact that all the parties must be aware of. For example, a motion might begin as follows: "Whereas section 96.6 of the *Education Act* states that the student committee must encourage the collaboration of students in fostering academic success and in school activities...".
"Considering that.."	The words "considering that" are used to introduce a supporting argument that needs to be brought to the attention of the other parties; the argument often refers to the problem that needs to be solved. A motion could be phrased as follows: "Considering that after conducting a poll of the students, the student committee holds that the solution proposed is not in the best interest of the students...".

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1. Fédération des comités de parents de la province de Québec. *Guide de fonctionnement des comités*. 1998, chap. 3, p. 1.

6

Consult	To "consult" means to ask someone for information, an explanation or an opinion. When you consult someone, you acknowledge their expertise. For example, the parents' committee must be consulted on various matters (section 193 of the *Education Act*.)
Table	To "table" a document means to bring it to the attention of all the participants. The document will be examined and discussed at the appropriate time.
Give an opinion	To "give an opinion" means to say what you mean or to express yourself on a particular subject. For example, the parents' committee gives its opinion on matters likely to improve the operation of the school board (section 192.2 of the *Education Act*.) The opinion is intended to provide information and guide the person or body responsible for actually making the decision.
Elect	To "elect" somebody to a position means to vote for the person best suited to fill the position. An election officer is appointed to oversee the process by calling for candidates and organizing a vote, if necessary.
Participate	To "participate" means to play an active role in a conversation, activity or working group in which several people are involved.
Question of order	A "question of order" is raised when the rules for the meeting have been broken, the discussions are off-topic or someone is behaving improperly.
Question of privilege	A "question of privilege" is not directly connected to the subject under discussion, but concerns the rights and privileges of the members of the assembly; it must be dealt with immediately.
Propose	To "propose" (or "move") means to suggest a specific action or express a specific intention.
Motion	To make a "motion" means to suggest a course of action; it must be proposed and seconded. First, the proposal is clarified to make its meaning clear, and then discussed. If the proposal is adopted, it becomes a decision and is recorded in the minutes. Only one motion can be debated at a time. The motions must be voted on one by one; they can be adopted by the group unanimously or by a majority vote. A motion is sometimes called a "resolution". It must be clear; where necessary, it must specify to whom it applies, the deadline for applying it, and who must follow up on it. For example, a motion could be phrased as follows: "We move that the governing board review the situation at its next regular meeting and present a solution that responds to the needs of the students more effectively."

Quorum	A "quorum" is the minimum number of members who must attend a meeting to make the proceedings valid. For example, to obtain a quorum at a meeting of the board of governors, at least half of the members must be present, including two out of four parents' representatives (section 61 of the *Education Act*.)
Rules of internal management	The rules of internal management are the rules that a committee establishes to govern its own operations. They are generally discussed and accepted at the first meeting of the governing board, and are then reviewed each year. The rules can be temporarily suspended during a meeting if a majority of the members agree to do so.
	The rules must be based on the compulsory provisions of the *Education Act* concerning governing boards. The rules may state how the students at the school will be represented on the governing board, by specifying the status, rights and duties of the student representatives as voting members of the governing board.
	The rules of internal management are official rules and everyone must comply with them.
	In general, "a vote of two-thirds of the members is required to make, change or abolish a rule of internal management."[1]
Postpone	To "postpone" something means to decide to deal with it later. An item on the agenda can be postponed for various reasons and examined at a later date.
Casting vote	When a vote is tied (an equal number of people have voted for and against), the person chairing the meeting has a casting vote. In other words, in a deadlock situation, the chair has the final say.

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1. Victor Morin. *Procédure des assemblées délibérantes*. Laval: Éditions Beauchemin, 1991, p. 27.

Acting as a Student Representative on a Governing Board

Acting as a Student Representative on a Governing Board

Éducation
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